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Groton Community Calendar

Saturday, July 1

Amateurs host Redfield DQ, 7 p.m.
Catholic: SEAS Confession, 3:45-4:15 p.m.; SEAS Mass, 4:30 p.m.
Common Cents Community Thrift Store is Closed

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.)
St. John's Lutheran: Worship with communion at St. John's at 9 a.m. and Zion Lutheran at 11 a.m.

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

The recycling trailer is located west of the city shop. It takes cardboard, papers and aluminum cans.

OPEN: Recycling Trailer in Groton

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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.

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The Bulletin by Newsweek

World in Brief

The State Department under President Joe Biden and former President Donald Trump did not plan enough to assist the U.S.-backed Afghanistan government before it collapsed in 2021, according to a new report released in part by the Biden administration.

A judge has ruled most of North Carolina's new 12-week abortion ban will take effect July 1, with the exception of a paperwork requirement for medication that doctors worry could put them at risk of criminal charges.

Climbing Apple shares pushed the company's value to \$3 trillion ahead of the Fourth of July holiday weekend, marking the first time a public company has closed a day of trading at that value.

Former Fox News producer Abby Grossberg said the network agreed to pay her \$12 million to drop lawsuits in which she brought allegations of sexism in the workplace. Grossberg released a statement saying she stands by her allegations.

ESPN is reportedly laying off several of its top on-air commentators to cut costs. Some of the big names include: Monday Night Countdown host Suzy Kolber, NBA game analyst Jeff Van Gundy, Keyshawn Johnson and Max Kellerman.

Walgreens will close 150 locations in the U.S. and another 300 in the United Kingdom. The U.S. store closures, part of the drugstore company's latest efforts to reduce costs, are expected to happen before the end of the summer in 2024.

Florida Gov. Ron DeSantis has signed into law a bill which overrides regulation of residential tenancies and landlord-tenant relationships and hands them over to the state.

In the ongoing war in Ukraine, new satellite imagery has emerged revealing camps believed to house Wagner mercenary fighters in Belarus, just hours from the Lithuanian capital Vilnius, where NATO is due to hold its upcoming summit in July..

TALKING POINTS

"I predict that the Racist District Attorney in Atlanta, with the per capita WORST crime record in the Country, Fani Willis, where murderers 'get away with murder,' and are seldom charged and almost never prosecuted, will be dropping all charges against me for lack of a case," former President Donald Trump wrote on Truth Social regarding the investigation into his efforts to overturn the results of the 2020 election in Georgia – sparking new speculation that he could soon be indicted again.

"Somehow this makes so much sense from the actor wearing army green everyday, fully funded by U.S. warmongers, and who just recently canceled elections, controls his state media, and has a Nazi army," Rep. Marjorie Taylor Greene of Georgia said of Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky in comments that stirred controversy online.

"We lost a wonderful actor whose intelligence, sense of comedy and consummate professionalism over the past 70 years has left an indelible mark on our industry. My experience of working with Alan were some of my most memorable. He will be deeply missed. Sincere condolences to his wife, Suzanne, and his family," actor Michael Douglas said in memory of Alan Arkin, who died at 89..

WHAT TO WATCH IN THE DAY AHEAD

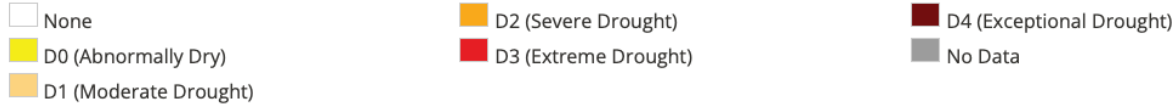
Former President Donald Trump is scheduled to deliver remarks in celebration of Independence Day today in Pickens, South Carolina. Governor Henry McMaster and Senator Lindsey Graham are also expected to speak at the event.

Spain assumes the floating Council of the European Union presidency from Sweden today. Spain will hold the presidency for six months before passing it next to Belgium.

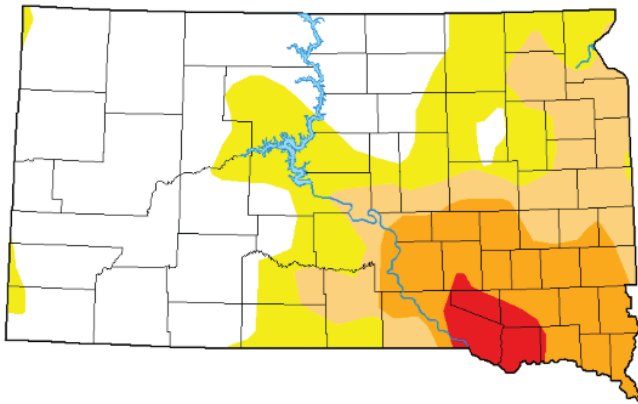
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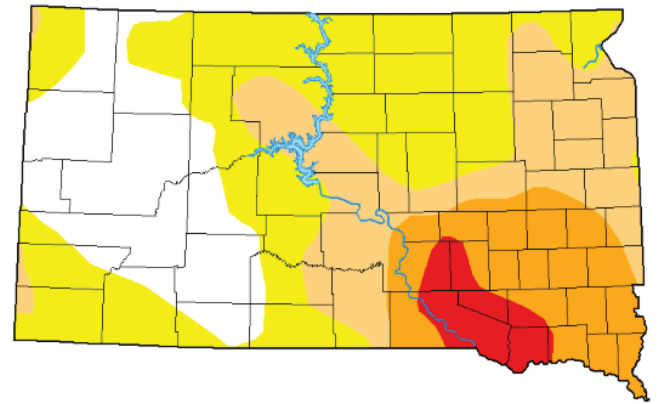
Drought Classification



Drought Monitor



June 27



June 20

This week's weather varied substantially across the High Plains region. Much of the Great Plains portion of the region, with the exception of eastern Nebraska and eastern Kansas, saw widespread precipitation, some of it heavy. Much of northwest Nebraska, eastern Wyoming, northeast Colorado, South Dakota and the southern half of North Dakota saw rainfall of at least 2 inches over the last week. In western Nebraska, eastern Wyoming and the Dakotas, this led to widespread improvements to the drought depiction in areas where the heaviest rains fell. Isolated heavy rains in central and western Kansas also led to localized improvements to ongoing drought areas. Meanwhile, conditions continued to worsen in southeast Nebraska, northeast Kansas and the Kansas City area, where mostly dry weather continued. Given continued decreases in soil moisture and groundwater, and growing short- and long-term precipitation deficits, exceptional drought was introduced in parts of the Omaha metropolitan area. North of Lincoln, Nebraska, hay production was reported to be about a third of normal for this time of year. Stress to other vegetation, including trees, also continued in southeast Nebraska this week.

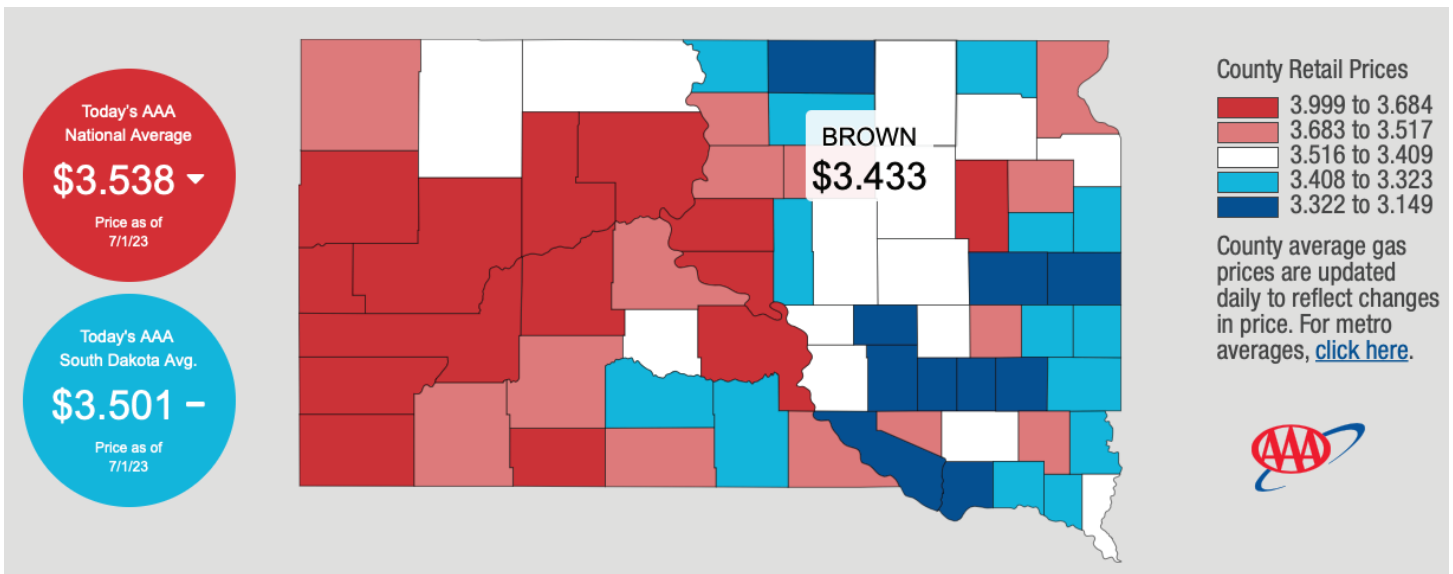
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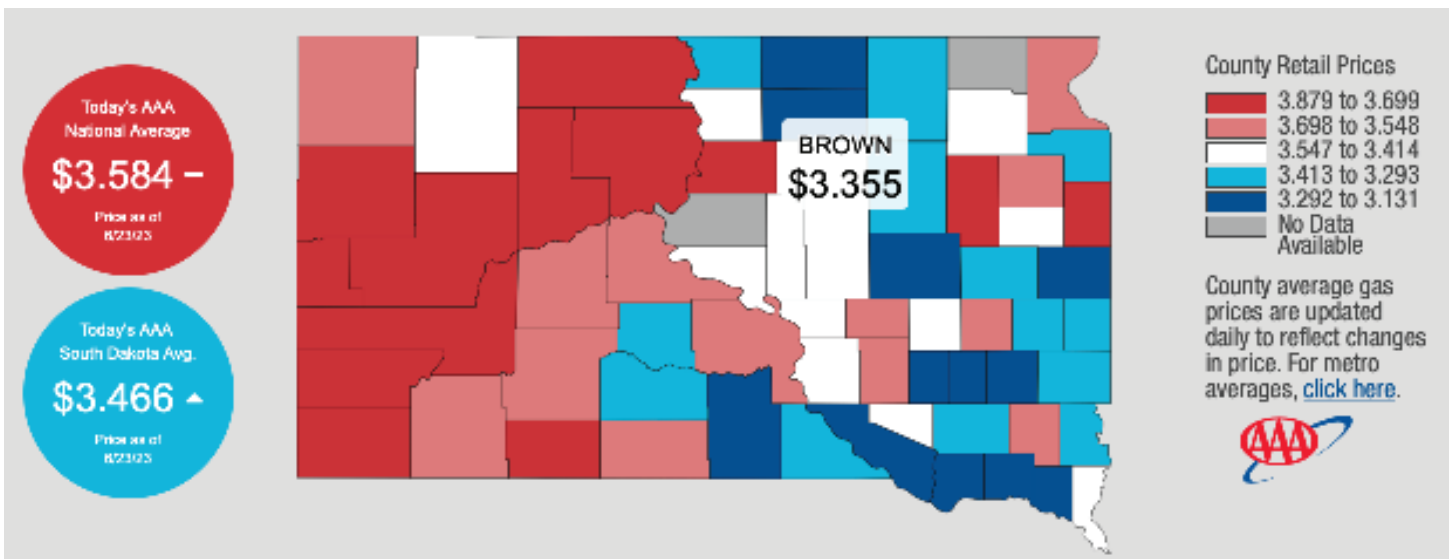
South Dakota Average Gas Prices

	Regular	Mid-Grade	Premium	Diesel
Current Avg.	\$3.501	\$3.653	\$4.133	\$3.689
Yesterday Avg.	\$3.501	\$3.647	\$4.126	\$3.698
Week Ago Avg.	\$3.470	\$3.630	\$4.105	\$3.725
Month Ago Avg.	\$3.466	\$3.614	\$4.077	\$3.763
Year Ago Avg.	\$4.739	\$4.900	\$5.358	\$5.401

This Week



Two Weeks Ago



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Service Notice: Steven Herron

Memorial services for Steven Herron, 66, of Groton will be 11:00 a.m., Friday, July 7th at Paetznick-Garness Funeral Chapel, Groton. Pastor Jeremy Yeadon will officiate. Inurnment will follow in Groton Union Cemetery.

Visitation will be held at the funeral home on Thursday from 5-7 p.m.

Steve passed away June 29, 2023 at his home in Groton.

Ag Preservation Bill Goes into Effect July 1

PIERRE, S.D. – Governor Noem’s bill to preserve the agriculture industry in South Dakota, HB 1090, will go into effect on July 1st. The prime sponsors of this legislation were Sen. Joshua Klumb (R-20) and Rep. James Wangsness (R-23).

“Agriculture is a \$32 billion industry, making it the largest in South Dakota by far – and we must preserve it for future generations. Ag accounts for 1 out of every 5 jobs in the state,” said Governor Kristi Noem. “As our economy continues to break record after record, it is more important now than ever that we preserve our ag industry so that we can pass these opportunities on to our kids and grandkids.”

This bill protects operations from frivolous claims that can delay development and increase costs for producers. It does this by providing additional liability protection for agricultural operations in the event that a nuisance claim is filed against them.

South Dakota will not let frivolous complaints undermine the hard-working farmers and rancher who get up every day to keep South Dakota, and the entire country, fed.

HB 1029 will also go into effect on July 1st. This bill removes legislative amendments made to the county zoning reform bill in 2020, restoring the bill back to the way it was intended. It also allows for approval of a conditional use by an affirmative majority vote of the members of the approving authority who are present and voting. Current law calls for approval of a majority of the entire approving authority, with those absent from the meeting counting as an automatic “no” vote. This will create a better county zoning process and increase economic potential for South Dakota.

GROTON'S EVENTS



July 4 Firecracker
Tourney at Olive
Grove Golf Course

July 9 Summer
Fest/Car Show at
the City Park



July 20 Summer
Downtown Sip &
Shop

July 20 Pro Am
Tourney at Olive
Grove Golf Course



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

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BROWN COUNTY
BROWN COUNTY COMMISSION AGENDA
REGULAR MEETING TUESDAY

July 6, 2023, 8:45 A.M.

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

1. Call To Order - Pledge of Allegiance
2. Approval of Agenda
3. Opportunity for Public Comment
4. Jessi Paysen & Jodi Hepperle with Avera St. Luke's Behavioral Health & Addiction Care Services – Services offered & how budget serves Brown County (FY24 Budget Request)
5. Discuss Bid for Surplus Property – 2914 Industrial Ave.
6. Consent Calendar
 - a. Approval of General Meeting Minutes from June 27, 2023
 - b. Claims/Payroll
 - c. HR Report
 - d. Claim Assignment
 - e. Auditors Report of Accounts
 - f. Plats
 - g. Leases
 - h. Fair Contract
 - i. Lottery Permit
 - j. Authorize Chairman to sign 3rd Qtr. LEMPG Report
7. Other Business
8. Executive Session (if requested per SDCL 1-25-2)
9. Adjourn

Brown County Commission Meeting

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

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

You can also dial in using your phone. United States: +1 (872) 240-3311

Access Code: 601-168-909 #

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

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

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

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

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

2024 Budget Work Session following the Commission Meeting

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It's hard to believe that I am going to be retiring from the newspaper delivery of the Aberdeen American News after what seems like decades of doing it. This was the card that I delivered with the paper this morning.

★ H A P P Y ★

4th of July

★ I N D E P E N D E N C E D A Y ★



Tina Kosel went to Nashville, Tenn., for the annual Plexus convention. She works at MJ's Sinclair and the Groton Dairy Queen.



Jeslyn celebrated her 17th birthday! She is a shift leader at the Groton Dairy Queen and helps with GDILIVE.COM.



Julianna is attending school at the Paul Mitchell School in Rapid City where she will be completing her cosmetology studies in August. She will be celebrating her 20th birthday this month.



GDI Publisher Paul Kosel aka PaperPaul (right) met with the CEO of South Dakota News Watch Carson Walker.

The GDI publishes many of their articles.

This is the final greeting card you will receive from your paper boy! Yes, it is official, at the end of July, after decades of delivering the Aberdeen American News, Paul will be officially giving up the routes.

There have been so many changes over the years with the paper delivery with several carriers doing the job of delivering the paper to your door. Now there is one, me (Paul), doing the whole town and delivering the paper in the tubes. It seems like the time is right to give it up. The hauler who drops off the papers to Groton will be delivering the papers starting in August. My last day will be July 29th.

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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>

Noem is investor in ethanol plant partnered with carbon pipeline company

BY: JOSHUA HAIAR AND SETH TUPPER - JUNE 30, 2023 4:35 PM

Gov. Kristi Noem is an investor in an ethanol plant that's partnered with a company proposing a controversial carbon dioxide pipeline.

The ethanol plant is Granite Falls Energy in Granite Falls, Minnesota. Noem's financial disclosures from her former service in Congress and her current time as governor reveal that she and her husband are investors in the plant. Summit Carbon Solutions, a company proposing a carbon pipeline through South Dakota, lists Granite Falls Energy as one of its partners.

Noem's congressional disclosure forms, which require only an estimated range of income rather than an exact amount, say she made between \$25,006 and \$70,000 in dividends from the plant between her first run for Congress in 2010 until the end of her service as a U.S. representative in early 2019. The state-level disclosures she's filed since then only require the identification of income sources, not amounts.

The disclosures raise questions about Noem's lack of support for anti-pipeline legislation, according to Ed Fischbach, an Aberdeen-area farmer whose land is near the pipeline route.

"She and the people in her office wouldn't even come talk to us when we came to the Capitol," Fischbach said.

Noem's spokesman, Ian Fury, responded to a message from South Dakota Searchlight with a written statement saying Noem "invested in Granite Falls many years ago and has always appropriately disclosed her finances."

"Governor Noem has always supported our ethanol industry," Fury's statement said. "Like many farmers and those who have made a living in agriculture, she puts her money where her mouth is."

Ethanol is a fuel additive made primarily from corn. Summit's multi-billion-dollar project would capture carbon dioxide emissions from 34 ethanol plants in the upper Midwest. The gas would be liquefied and transported by pipeline for underground sequestration in North Dakota.

The pipeline project would qualify for incentive payments from the federal government of \$85 per metric ton of carbon sequestered, for removing heat-trapping carbon from the atmosphere. It could also allow participating ethanol producers to sell their products in states and countries with stricter emissions standards.

A similar project, the Heartland Greenway pipeline, would also pass through South Dakota on its way to a sequestration site in Illinois. That project is proposed by a company called Navigator CO2.

Noem's actions, positions

Noem has been involved in carbon pipeline policymaking. In March 2022, she signed a bill that established taxes for carbon dioxide pipelines similar to oil and natural gas pipelines. Summit Carbon Solutions testified in favor of the bill. At that time, Granite Falls Energy was already a partner with Summit, according to multiple media reports.

About a month after Noem signed that bill into law, Granite Falls CEO Jeffrey Oestmann said the proposed pipeline is vital to the company's survival.

"We can't compete without it," he said during a landowner meeting in Sacred Heart, Minnesota, according to the Alexandria Echo Press newspaper.

No bills addressing carbon pipelines reached Noem's desk during the most recent legislative session last winter. The permitting process for the pipelines is being handled by the state Public Utilities Commission,

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whose members are independently elected and unconnected with the Governor's Office. The PUC's public permit hearings for Summit and Navigator are scheduled for later this summer.

Noem has talked publicly about the pipeline proposals lately, after taking criticism from landowners along the pipeline routes. Some say Noem is not doing enough to protect their property rights from eminent domain, which is a court process that Summit is using to obtain access to land from unwilling landowners (meanwhile, Summit says about 70% of affected South Dakota landowners have signed voluntary easements).

In a radio interview published earlier this week by KWAT in Watertown, Noem responded to that criticism by saying, "I'm with the landowners and always have been."

She then referenced recent reports that Summit has been using heavy equipment to conduct surveys that damaged some farmland.

"I'm shocked at some of those images and things that I'm seeing that's happening to these farmers and landowners," Noem said.

Her comments caused a backlash among some affected landowners and their allies. They have accused her of failing to support a bill last winter that would have prohibited carbon pipeline companies from using eminent domain. The bill passed the state House but failed in a Senate committee.

Fischbach, the Aberdeen-area farmer, said Noem not only failed to support the legislation but actively worked against it.

"Shoot, she had people in her office lobbying against the bill," he said.

Fury, Noem's spokesman, told South Dakota Searchlight that Noem "is particularly concerned about Summit's use of eminent domain. She is also concerned about Summit's financial ties to Chinese-influenced businesses."

In her interview with KWAT, Noem alleged that Summit is benefitting from hundreds of millions of dollars in investments from China. Summit has denied that allegation in a subsequent statement to Sioux Falls-based television station KELO, but KELO pointed out that Summit secured a \$300 million investment from TPG Rise Climate, and TPG Rise Climate has mentioned the Chinese Silk Road Fund as one of its investors.

Watchdog group criticizes Noem

On Thursday, a Washington, D.C.-based group called Accountable.US contacted South Dakota Searchlight with a tip and information revealing Noem's investment in Granite Falls Energy. The website InfluenceWatch describes Accountable.US as an advocacy group on the center-left portion of the ideological spectrum.

"Gov. Noem stands to gain personally from this pipeline deal that robs a growing number of farmers of their land," said Chris Marshall, spokesperson for Accountable.US, in a written statement. "If Noem is more committed to protecting her out-of-state investments, she should be upfront about her conflict of interest. If the governor really stands with farmers, action speaks louder than begrudging words of support."

South Dakota Searchlight independently confirmed the information about Noem's investment in Granite Falls Energy. Searchlight also found that while Noem was in Congress, she disclosed an investment in another ethanol plant, Glacial Lakes Energy in Watertown, which is also a Summit partner. She disclosed between \$603 and \$3,000 in income from that plant between her first run for Congress in 2010 until the end of her service as a U.S. representative in early 2019.

During her time as governor, Noem's financial disclosures have not listed an investment in Glacial Lakes Energy. Noem's spokesman, Ian Fury, told South Dakota Searchlight she is no longer invested in the Glacial Lakes plant. Not all of Noem's state-level financial disclosures are readily available, because some of the links to the documents on the South Dakota Secretary of State's website are broken.

But Noem has other connections to Summit Carbon Solutions. The company was one of five platinum sponsors for Noem's second inauguration in January, along with ethanol company POET. The South Dakota Ethanol Producers Association was a gold-level sponsor.

And Noem's son-in-law, Kyle Peters, is a registered lobbyist for Gevo Inc., which is building a plant to make jet fuel from corn in Lake Preston and plans to partner with Summit Carbon Solutions. Noem lauded Gevo's project during her State of the State address to lawmakers in January.

"Gevo's Net-Zero 1 Site in Lake Preston is the first ever billion-dollar investment in South Dakota," she said. "They will literally turn corn into jet fuel, as impossible as that sounds."

Some members of Noem's own Republican Party are calling for a special legislative session – which can be called by the governor or two-thirds of the Legislature – to protect landowners along the pipeline route from eminent domain. Those Republicans, organized as the South Dakota Freedom Caucus, say they will stage a rally at noon Central on Thursday in the state Capitol Rotunda.

"The governor claims to be looking for a way to help the landowners," said South Dakota Freedom Caucus Chairman and state Rep. Aaron Aylward, R-Harrisburg, in a news release. "Convening a special session would immediately address this crisis."

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.

Seth is editor-in-chief of South Dakota Searchlight. He was previously a supervising senior producer for South Dakota Public Broadcasting and a newspaper journalist in Rapid City and Mitchell.

Thanks to federal tax credits, it's boom time in the Midwest for carbon dioxide pipelines

BY: JACOB FISCHLER - JUNE 30, 2023 4:28 PM

Thousands of miles of carbon dioxide pipelines planned in the Midwest have been spurred, in part, by a major expansion of federal tax credits in Democrats' 2022 climate law.

That could lead to billions of dollars per year in federal tax credits benefiting the powerful Midwest ethanol industry, even as the proposals create intense conflicts between developers and local landowners worried about pipelines on their property.

Some critics also say it's going to be difficult to tell how much the federal government is spending on the tax credits and if they are really being earned by the companies claiming them. There are also questions about whether the pipelines will be that influential in removing carbon and advancing climate change.

The tax changes created incentives for larger-scale regional pipelines, Sasha Mackler, the executive director of the Center on Energy Policy at the nonprofit Bipartisan Policy Center, said.

Less than a year since Congress passed the law, the effect is hard to quantify, but the changes have generated huge interest in the nation's ethanol-producing states, he said.

"It's definitely created an enormous amount of enthusiasm and activity in the development community," he said. "It's very safe to say there's been a significant uptick in commercial activity around carbon capture."

Among the tax credits for various clean energy programs in the climate law, seen as the largest U.S. effort to date to address climate change, was a major expansion of tax credits for carbon sequestration, a technique of removing carbon emissions from industrial processes.

The 2022 law raised the credit from \$50 to \$85 per metric ton of carbon stored underground. It also extended a construction deadline and allowed for direct payment of the credit — making it simpler for companies to take advantage of — and made other changes that incentivized carbon storage.

Ethanol byproduct

Carbon dioxide is released during the fermentation process that's part of ethanol production. That byproduct is a relatively pure — and easy-to-transport — form of carbon dioxide, compared with other industries.

Because the ethanol byproduct is easy to move, carbon sequestration in the industry has long been cheaper than in coal power plants, concrete manufacturing or other sectors.

The cost to ethanol producers of sequestration ranges from about \$36 to \$41 per metric ton, according to a report from the clean energy group Energy Futures Initiative, meaning the \$50 tax credit was already profitable for the industry in most cases.

But costs varied on a case-by-case basis, depending on variables such as the length of a needed pipe-

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line, Mackler said. The \$85-per-ton credit provides even more of an incentive and makes more proposals profitable.

The expanded tax credits provide "a large economic opportunity" to retrofit or build new ethanol facilities with carbon capture in the Midwest, where plentiful corn crops helped create the center of domestic ethanol production, Joseph Hezir, executive vice president with Energy Futures Initiative, said in a late June event hosted by EFI and the environmental issues think tank Resources for the Future.

Producers may judge the potential benefits to outweigh the difficulties — including resistance from landowners opposed to pipeline construction — of building out carbon sequestration infrastructure, he said.

"Being able then to move that CO₂ once you capture it to a place where you can sequester it is going to be a challenge," Hezir said. "But the economics look promising and motivating enough for companies to want to begin to pursue that."

While the full scope of the tax credit is hard to determine, the individual companies proposing carbon pipelines could see billions of dollars in annual tax benefits.

Summit Carbon Solutions, which has proposed a pipeline network that would connect 34 ethanol plants across Iowa, Minnesota, Nebraska, South Dakota and North Dakota and deposit carbon dioxide in underground storage in North Dakota, says the project could permanently store 18 million tons of carbon dioxide annually.

At \$85 per ton, that would equal \$1.5 billion per year from the sequestration tax credit.

Navigator CO₂ Ventures, another company seeking permits to build pipelines across Iowa, estimates it could transport and store up to 15 million tons of carbon dioxide per year, which would earn tax credits of \$1.3 billion.

Transparency issues

In theory, climate scientists say incentivizing carbon capture is good policy. It's one of several climate solutions that major economies like the United States must use in combination to reach international climate goals.

"To meet all of our global climate goals we need to both rapidly scale up renewable energy, but then we also have to deal with the legacy carbon that's in the atmosphere," said Daniel Sanchez, a professor studying bioenergy at the University of California-Berkeley. "We need all of these tools at our disposal in order to effectively decarbonize the transportation sector."

But critics say it's hard to tell in practice exactly how much taxpayer money has been spent on carbon sequestration credits — or if the credits are going to facilities that are successfully removing carbon.

Companies must meet U.S. Environmental Protection Agency standards for underground carbon storage to qualify for the credit. But the agency and the Internal Revenue Service both lack the staffing to verify companies claiming the credits are earning them, said Jim Walsh, the policy director for the advocacy group Food and Water Watch, which opposes tax credits for carbon capture.

"These tax credits are shrouded in secrecy and ripe for corruption, with no ability for oversight by the public," he said.

Carbon capture itself is not an effective strategy to address climate change, Walsh said. Pipelines and storage wells can leak carbon, but even without those problems, sequestration is a half-measure, he added.

"The only way that we're going to address the climate crisis is to stop fossil fuel development and phase out fossil fuels quickly," he said.

Carbon storage and other technologies that boost fossil fuel use are counter-productive, he said.

"That leaves us with a lot of solutions that are going to waste money while enriching powerful interests and undermining our ability to address the climate crisis in a meaningful way."

Most climate scientists, though, say that carbon sequestration is part of a long-term solution.

The United Nations' Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change most recent report projected that reaching mid-century climate goals will require 6 gigatons of carbon dioxide sequestration.

Federal spending on carbon storage recognizes that the U.S. economy is largely fossil-fuel based, Mackler said.

"From a climate perspective, fossil fuels are not the problem," he said. "The problem is emissions from fossil fuels. And so if we can develop a pathway for continuing to use at some scale, especially with the oil and the natural gas that we take advantage of to power our economy, if we can use them in a way that does not damage the climate, that's fantastic."

Jacob covers federal policy as a senior reporter for States Newsroom. Based in Oregon, he focuses on Western issues. His coverage areas include climate, energy development, public lands and infrastructure.

US Supreme Court rules against Biden administration student loan debt relief plan

South Dakota's Thune, Johnson applaud decision

BY: ARIANA FIGUEROA - JUNE 30, 2023 12:02 PM

WASHINGTON — The U.S. Supreme Court on Friday ruled that the Biden administration does not have the legal authority to enact a one-time student debt relief program, dealing a blow to the 40 million Americans who would have qualified.

Last year, the Biden Administration rolled out a debt forgiveness plan for borrowers with federal student loans that would be a one-time cancellation of up to \$10,000.

Those student loan borrowers who had received Pell Grants — federal aid to help low-income students pay for higher education — could qualify for an additional \$10,000 in forgiveness, a policy that was meant to provide equitable relief to Black borrowers.

In a 6-3 decision, Chief Justice John Roberts, writing for the conservative majority of the court, deemed that a loan servicer in Missouri, the Higher Education Loan Authority, known as MOHELA, would have its revenue threatened by the debt relief.

The case was filed by Republican attorneys general of Nebraska, Missouri, Arkansas, Kansas and South Carolina, along with Iowa Republican Gov. Kim Reynolds' general counsel, and they argued the Biden administration overstepped its reach and that MOHELA would be harmed by a loss of profits from federal student loan debt relief.

The court majority agreed. "(T)he Secretary's plan would cost MOHELA, a nonprofit government corporation created by Missouri to participate in the student loan market, an estimated \$44 million a year in fees," Roberts wrote.

"MOHELA is, by law and function, an instrumentality of Missouri: Labeled an 'instrumentality' by the State, it was created by the State, is supervised by the State, and serves a public function. The harm to MOHELA in the performance of its public function is necessarily a direct injury to Missouri itself."

President Joe Biden said in a statement that "the fight is not over" to help borrowers.

"I believe that the Court's decision to strike down our student debt relief plan is wrong," Biden said in a statement, adding that his administration plans to announce more efforts to help borrowers.

"I will stop at nothing to find other ways to deliver relief to hard-working middle-class families," he said. "My Administration will continue to work to bring the promise of higher education to every American."

Later Friday, Biden at a press conference said the Department of Education will begin the negotiated rulemaking process to "compromise, waive or release loans under certain circumstances" under the Higher Education Act. The HEA has a provision to allow the secretary of education to "waive or modify" federal student loans. The first public hearing is on July 18.

Biden also announced that the Department of Education has finalized its new income repayment-driven program known as the "Saving on a Valuable Education," or SAVE. Biden said it will save borrowers more than a \$1,000 a year.

The new income repayment plan would cap payments for undergraduate loans to 5% of an individual's income rather than 10%, and borrowers with loans from undergraduate and graduate school would pay between 5% and 10% of what they originally borrowed in undergrad.

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Biden added that the Department of Education will create a temporary 12-month "on-ramp" repayment program for borrowers. Student loan repayments are set to begin Oct. 1.

"We know that figuring out how to pay these expenses can take time for borrowers, and they might miss payments at the front end as they get back into repayment," Biden said.

Thune, Johnson react

South Dakota Sen. John Thune and Rep. Dusty Johnson, both Republicans, issued written statements on the Supreme Court's decision.

Thune's statement: "Not only was President Biden's budget-busting student loan bailout fundamentally unfair, now it has been found unconstitutional. Instead of putting together a real plan to lower the costs of higher education, President Biden put forward an unserious scheme to force 87 percent of Americans who do not have student loan debt to bear the costs of the 13 percent of Americans who do. Anyone frustrated by today's decision should direct their complaints to the White House, where they knew this executive order would likely be struck down by the courts but did nothing whatsoever to meaningfully address exorbitant costs in higher education."

Johnson's statement: "Forgiving tens of thousands of dollars in debt for those who haven't made payments in years is insulting to the millions of Americans who have paid back every penny they borrowed. The cost of this debt forgiveness would be a baffling \$500 billion or more. Our national debt is skyrocketing, and a policy like President Biden's would only make it worse."

But the top Republican on the Senate Health, Education, Labor and Pensions Committee, Sen. Bill Cassidy of Louisiana, and the chair of the House Education and the Workforce Committee, Virginia Foxx of North Carolina, released a joint statement condemning the Biden administration for this latest proposal.

Cassidy pointed out that the 12-month "on ramp" violates the agreement that Biden made with House Speaker Kevin McCarthy to end the pause on student loan repayments.

Earlier in the day, Republicans celebrated the Supreme Court decision. Nebraska Attorney General Mike Hilgers and Missouri Attorney General Andrew Bailey held a Friday news conference.

Bailey said the case was about "protecting working Missouri families from getting saddled with Ivy League debt," and about "basic fairness."

"I paid for my college with blood, sweat and tears, and service to my country, and it's only fair that working families not be stuck with other people's debt," Bailey said.

All three liberal Justices, Sonia Sotomayor, Elena Kagan and Ketanji Brown Jackson, dissented. Kagan, writing for the dissenters, did not agree with the finding the states had standing.

"The plaintiffs here are six States: Arkansas, Iowa, Kansas, Missouri, Nebraska, and South Carolina," Kagan wrote. "They oppose the Secretary's loan cancellation plan on varied policy and legal grounds. But as everyone agrees, those objections are just general grievances; they do not show the particularized injury needed to bring suit."

The justices unanimously decided that a second case challenging the debt relief plan did not have legal standing. That case was brought by a two people with student loan debt who would either partially or entirely not qualify for the White House program. The case was backed by the conservative advocacy group the Job Creators Network Foundation.

Turbulent history for student debt relief

The Biden administration's student debt relief plan has not only been challenged in the courts by Republicans, but also in Congress. The House and the Senate voted to overturn the policy through the Congressional Review Act, but Biden vetoed the resolution.

More than 16 million borrowers had already been approved for relief, according to the Department of Education, before the agency was blocked from accepting more applicants following a nationwide injunction.

Repayments on federal student loans are set to resume Oct. 1, but interest accrual will begin starting Sept. 1, according to the Department of Education.

The Department of Education did not respond to a States Newsroom request for comment, but said on its website that the agency is "reviewing the Court's decision to determine next steps."

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More than 43 million Americans have student loan debt, and the Federal Reserve estimates that the total U.S. student loan debt is more than \$1.76 trillion.

A law passed in early June to address the nation's debt ceiling codified that the White House would not be able to extend the pause on repayment for federal student loans unless approved by Congress.

For three years, there has been a pause on federal student loan repayment due to the coronavirus pandemic that was initially put in place by the Trump administration and extended by the Biden administration.

In a statement, Iowa's Reynolds said the decision "affirms what Iowans have believed this entire time: the hard-working men and women of this country should not bear the burden of paying off others' loans."

"This plan belittles Iowans who paid their own debt or chose not to pursue a traditional four-year degree," she said.

HEROES Act central to ruling

Roberts disagreed with the Biden administration's argument that the federal HEROES Act allowed the secretary of education "to cancel \$430 billion of student loan principal." The HEROES Act, first enacted 20 years ago, was used by the Trump administration to suspend repayments on federal student loans at the onset of the pandemic.

During oral arguments in March, U.S. Solicitor General Elizabeth B. Prelogar — representing the Biden administration — argued that under the HEROES Act, the secretary of education can "waive or modify any statutory or regulatory provision" to help borrowers in a national emergency, such as the coronavirus pandemic.

Roberts said the administration went too far. "We hold today that the Act allows the Secretary to 'waive or modify' existing statutory or regulatory provisions applicable to financial assistance programs under the Education Act, not to rewrite that statute from the ground up," Roberts wrote.

Roberts invoked the "major questions doctrine," which means that if Congress wants to give an agency, such as the Department of Education, the power to make a decision of "economic and political significance," it has to explicitly say so.

Roberts wrote that "the question here is not whether something should be done; it is who has the authority to do it."

Congress reacts

Congress is unlikely to act on debt relief anytime soon, with control split between a Republican House and a Democratic Senate.

Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer, a New York Democrat, said in a statement that he was disappointed in the decision.

"This disappointing and cruel ruling shows the callousness of the MAGA Republican-controlled Supreme Court," he said. "The hypocrisy is clear: as justices accept lavish, six-figure gifts, they don't dare to help Americans saddled with student loan debt, instead siding with the powerful, big-money interests."

He called on the Biden administration to "do everything in its power to deliver for millions of working- and middle-class Americans struggling with student loan debt."

Congressional Republicans hailed the decision.

Senate Minority Leader Mitch McConnell, a Kentucky Republican, said in a statement that the court's decision "deals a heavy blow to Democrats' distorted and outsized view of executive power."

"The President of the United States cannot hijack twenty-year-old emergency powers to pad the pockets of his high-earning base and make suckers out of working families who choose not to take on student debt," McConnell said.

Cassidy, who introduced the Congressional Review Act resolution to overturn the Biden administration's debt relief policy, said in a statement that the court came to the right conclusion.

"This is an obvious but welcomed ruling," he said. "President Biden's student loan scheme does not 'forgive' debt, but unfairly transfers the burden from those who willingly took out loans onto those who chose not to attend college or already fulfilled their commitment to pay off their loans."

But Democratic Sen. Raphael Warnock of Georgia said in a statement that the news was devastating.

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"The Supreme Court's decision to usurp the President's executive authority to provide meaningful debt relief isn't just bad for the everyday, hardworking Georgians who are being held back financially by crippling debt, but it's also terrible for our entire economy and sets a dangerous precedent that binds the hands of the elected executive from taking action that reflects the will of the people," he said.

The chair of the House Education and Workforce Committee, Foxx of North Carolina, said in a statement that she was pleased the Supreme Court had held the Biden administration accountable.

"Mr. President, good riddance to your illegal, economically disastrous taxpayer-funded bailout for the wealthy," she said. "'This 'one-time' 'cancellation' of student loan debt was subterfuge for the radical Left's ultimate goal of taxpayer-funded 'free' college for all."

Foxx has held several hearings about the Biden administration's student debt relief program, and has spoken against the policy since it was announced.

The top Democrat on the House Education and Workforce Committee, Bobby Scott of Virginia, said in a statement that millions of borrowers will be denied "the relief they need to make ends meet."

"A college education should not depend on how much money a student's parents make," he said.

Scott said moving forward, Democrats should work to advance legislation to increase the funding of Pell Grants, lower interest rates for student loans and "make other critical reforms to make our student loan system work for students."

Rep. Frederica S. Wilson of Florida, who is the top Democrat on the Higher Education and Workforce Development Subcommittee, said in a statement that the decision will perpetuate inequality and continue to harm vulnerable borrowers of color.

"It is no secret that the pandemic has disproportionately impacted communities of color, exacerbating inequalities," she said. "Student debt cancellation would have been a bold step toward narrowing the racial wealth gap."

Youth vote

The decision is likely to become an issue in the race for the presidency. Youth organizations that back student debt relief said they will use the ruling to rally support.

Cristina Tzintzún Ramirez, president of NextGen America, one of the largest youth voting organizations, said in a statement that "young voters will remember this come 2024."

She added that, "heading into 2024, we will not forget the people who fight for us everyday and the people who would rather protect the pockets of shady billionaires."

Another Gen Z-led organization, Voters of Tomorrow, echoed similar sentiments.

"We hope that the Biden Administration is able to negotiate a deal through Congress or take executive action to relieve student debt for all Americans," the group said in a statement. "While we know it will be difficult with far-right politicians who have championed the removal of the plan, it is what is needed to remove the burden from millions of Americans."

Kendra Cotton, the CEO of New Georgia Project, a voter mobilization group, said in a statement that in "the wake of this decision, New Georgia Project will double down on our efforts to connect the issues Black, brown, and young Georgians need to secure their economic futures — an increased minimum wage, better access to healthcare, and more affordable housing — to the importance of voting."

GOP presidential candidates, such as Nikki Haley, praised the decision as stopping executive overreach from the White House.

"A president cannot just wave his hand and eliminate loans for students he favors, while leaving out all those who worked hard to pay back their loans or made other career choices," she said.

"The Supreme Court was right to throw out Joe Biden's power grab."

Another presidential candidate, Republican Sen. Tim Scott of South Carolina, released a video statement, arguing that there are other pathways to the "American Dream" that don't require a college degree.

"We need more welders, carpenters and electricians," he said. "These are the jobs that built America, and these are the jobs liberal elites can't ship to China."

Ariana covers the nation's capital for States Newsroom. Her areas of coverage include politics and policy, lob-

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Yesterday's Groton Weather

High Temp: 83 °F at 4:16 PM

Low Temp: 62 °F at 5:52 AM

Wind: 10 mph at 8:15 AM

Precip: : 0.00

Day length: 15 hours, 40 minutes

Today's Info

Record High: 101 in 1911

Record Low: 41 in 1995

Average High: 84

Average Low: 59

Average Precip in July.: 0.12

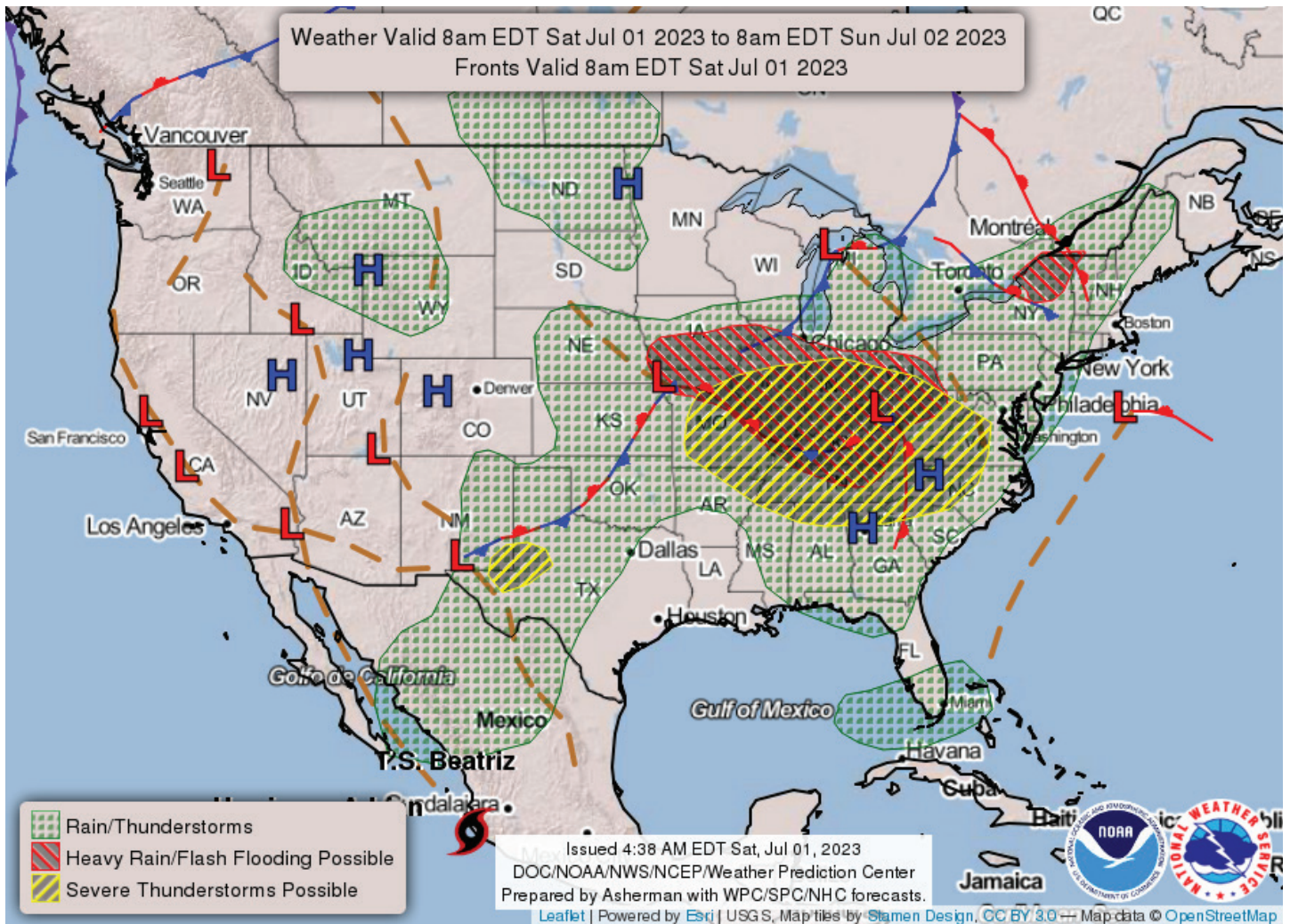
Precip to date in July.: 0.00

Average Precip to date: 11.13

Precip Year to Date: 11.35

Sunset Tonight: 9:26:29 PM

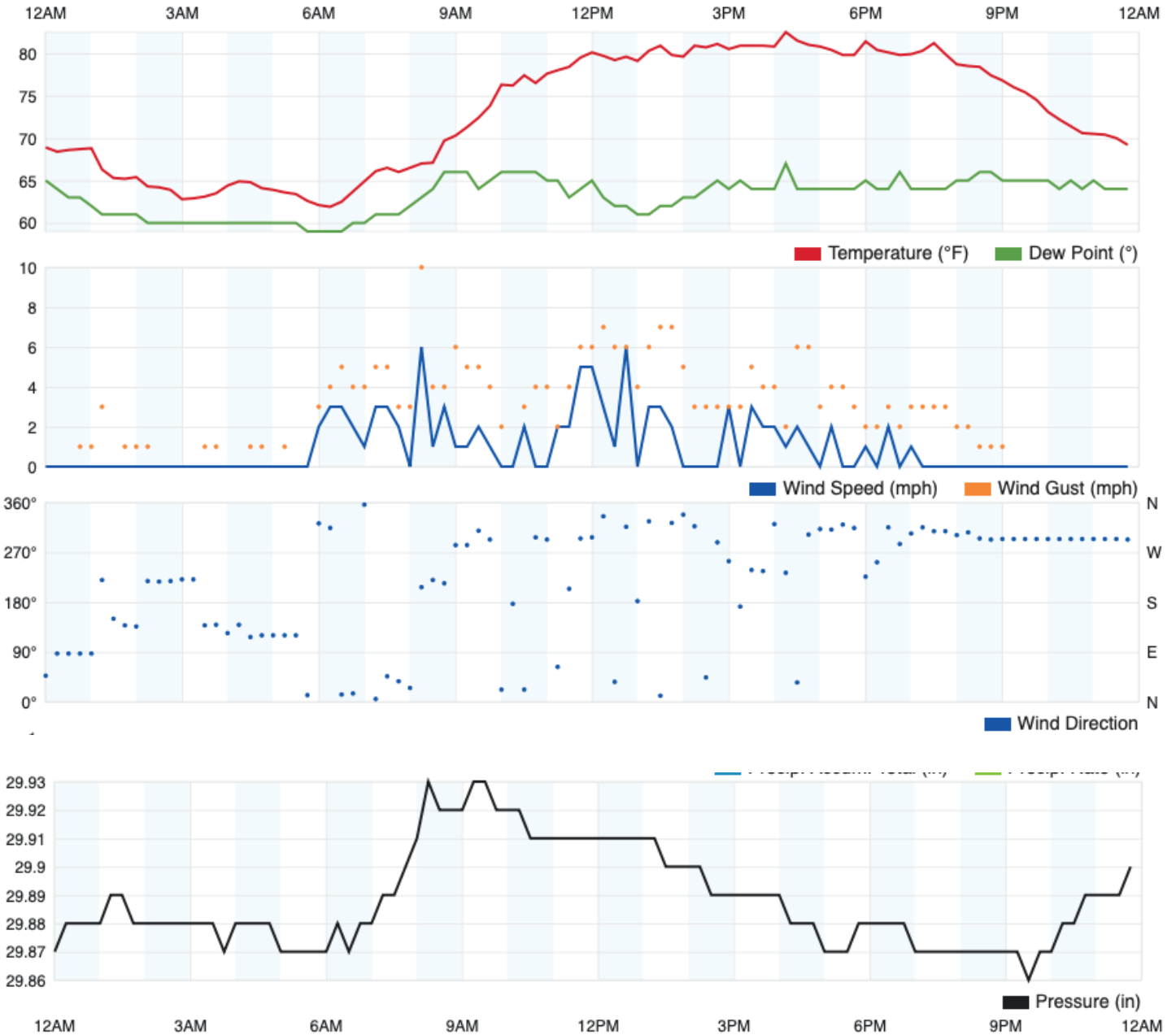
Sunrise Tomorrow: 5:46:41 AM



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Yesterday's Groton Weather Graphs



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Today	Tonight	Sunday	Sunday Night	Monday	Monday Night	Independence Day
						
Patchy Fog then Sunny	Mostly Clear	Hot	Mostly Clear	Sunny then Chance T-storms	Heavy Rain	Chance T-storms
High: 87 °F	Low: 63 °F	High: 93 °F	Low: 64 °F	High: 89 °F	Low: 62 °F	High: 81 °F



Holiday Weekend Forecast

July 1, 2023
2:06 AM



Today & Sunday

★ Mainly dry, Highs 80s today, 90s on Sunday

Monday & Tuesday

★ Chance of showers/storms, Highs 85-95° Monday, cooler Tuesday with highs 75-85°

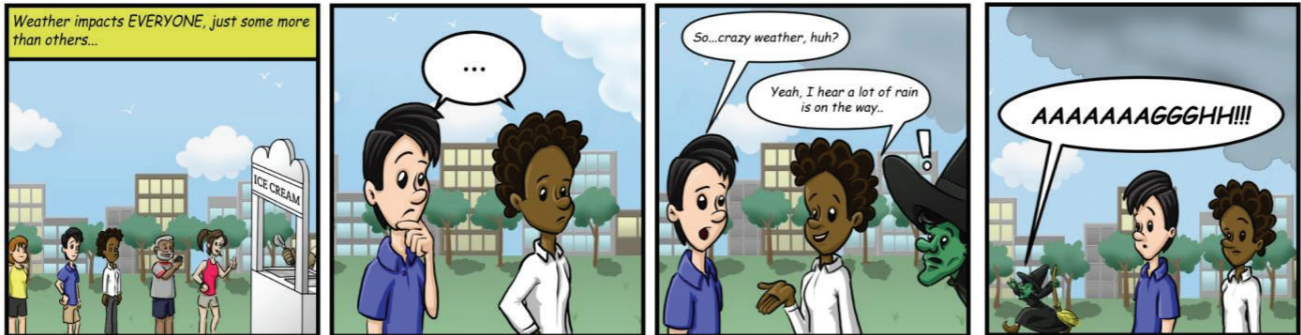
 National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration
U.S. Department of Commerce

National Weather Service
Aberdeen, SD

Weekend Outlook

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Today in Weather History

July 1, 1928: A powerful, estimated F4 tornado moved southeast from 6 miles west of Miller, Hand County, destroying farms near the start of the path. All buildings were leveled to the ground, including two homes. A checkbook from one residence was found 10 miles away. Estimated property damaged was set at \$50,000.

July 1, 1955: An estimated F2 tornado moved northeast near Bowdle. Two barns were destroyed. A small girl and a pony were reportedly carried a quarter mile without injury. A tornado was also spotted in Emmons County in North Dakota, causing \$10,000 worth of damage.

July 1, 2005: Torrential rains of three to seven inches fell across far eastern Brown, western and northern Day, and most of Marshall Counties in late June causing widespread flooding. The flood waters slowly receded through July 10th. Many township roads and highways were flooded along with thousands of acres of cropland. Water surrounded several homes resulting in people being rescued. Some of the houses were flooded. Many bridges were damaged, and roads and culverts were washed out. In Day County, 30 roads were washed out, and 15 bridges needed repairs.

July 1, 2006: With continued little or no rainfall along with much above average temperatures, a drought expanded and intensified through July across central and north central South Dakota. Severe (D2) to an extreme (D3) drought early in July worsened to an extreme (D3) to exceptional (D4) across all of the areas by the middle of July and remained there until the end of the month. Rainfall was 1.50 inches to 2.25 inches below average for the month and from 7 to 8 inches below average for the year. Soil moisture was 4 to 5 inches below average, and lakes and river flows were well below normal. Crops and pastures were devastated due to the extreme dryness and burn bans were in effect across all of the areas. Many ranchers had to sell off much of their cattle. Throughout July, periodic high winds, low relative humidity values, along with many lightning storms resulted in several fires across central and north central South Dakota. The fires burned tens of thousands of acres of pastureland and cropland. Hundreds of firefighters worked throughout the month to contain the flames. The governor of South Dakota declared a statewide emergency and the United States Department of Agriculture declared all of the counties drought disasters. Swan Lake, in north-central South Dakota between Lowry and Hoven, had completely dried up from the long period of dryness. The last time this happened to the lake was 30 years prior in 1976. Also, Lake Oahe at Pierre was four feet above its all-time low.

1792 - A tremendous storm (a tornado or hurricane) hit Philadelphia and New York City. Many young people were drowned while out boating on that Sunday. (David Ludlum)

1861: Cherrapunji, Meghalaya, India measured 366 inches of rain during the month of July 1861. From August 1, 1860, to July 31, 1861, Cherrapunji received a record-breaking 1,041.75 inches of precipitation.

1911 - The high of just 79 degrees at Phoenix AZ was their coolest daily maximum of record for the month of July. The normal daily high for July 1st is 105 degrees. (The Weather Channel)

1979 - It snowed almost half a foot (5.8 inches) at Stampede Pass WA, a July record. (The Weather Channel)

1987 - Lake Charles LA was drenched with a month's worth of rain during the early morning. More than five inches of rain soaked the city, including 2.68 inches in one hour. A thunderstorm in the southern Yakima Valley of Washington State produced high winds which downed trees up to six feet in diameter. (Storm Data) (The National Weather Summary)

1988 - Twenty-six cities in the north central and northeastern U.S. reported record low temperatures for the date. Lows of 48 degrees at Providence RI, 48 degrees at Roanoke VA, 49 degrees at Stratford CT, and 48 degrees at Wilmington, DE, were records for the month of July. Boston MA equalled their record for July with a low of 50 degrees. Five inches of snow whitened Mount Washington NH. (The National Weather Summary)

1989 - Showers and thunderstorms associated with the low pressure system which was once Tropical Storm Allison continued to drench parts of Mississippi, Louisiana and eastern Texas. Late night thunderstorms produced 12.58 inches of rain at Biloxi, MS, in six hours, and 10.73 inches at Gulfport MS. Flooding in Mississippi over the first six days of the month caused 55 million dollars damage. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

Daily Devotionals

Seeds of Hope

MAKING DIFFICULT DECISIONS

President McKinley was having a difficult time making a decision between two qualified candidates for a key position in his cabinet. He labored long and hard knowing that his decision would affect the nation and the world.

One evening he boarded a crowded streetcar on his way home. After finding a seat he noticed one of the men he was considering for the position seated near the entrance. At the next stop, an elderly lady with a large cumbersome package struggled to get onboard.

The candidate for the position turned his eyes, pretending that he did not see the lady who was having a difficult time. He kept his seat while he looked out the window as though she did not exist. The president not only helped her with her package, but he also gave her his seat.

The next morning McKinley made his decision. The man's lack of kindness eliminated him from further consideration, and the other man received the appointment.

God is aware of every decision we make and how we live because it reflects who we are and what is important to us. Paul said: "be kind, tenderhearted, and loving toward one another."

Prayer: Heavenly Father, make us aware of our decisions and deeds. What we do for and to and with others reflects our love for You. May our deeds always bless others. In Jesus' Name, Amen.

Scripture For Today: Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you. Ephesians 4:32



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:
06.30.23

13 22 47 51 55 9

MegaPlier: 3x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:
\$400,000,000

NEXT DRAW:

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

LOTTO AMERICA

WINNING NUMBERS:
06.28.23

9 28 33 43 47 1

All Star Bonus: 2x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:
\$4,780,000

NEXT DRAW: 14 Hrs 34 Mins 7
Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

LUCKY FOR LIFE

WINNING NUMBERS:
06.30.23

1 34 42 45 48 4

TOP PRIZE:
\$7,000/week

NEXT DRAW: 14 Hrs 49 Mins 7
Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

DAKOTA CASH

WINNING NUMBERS:
06.28.23

2 11 17 29 30

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:
\$124,000

NEXT DRAW: 14 Hrs 49 Mins 7
Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

POWERBALL

DOUBLE PLAY

WINNING NUMBERS:
06.28.23

27 33 48 64 69 23

TOP PRIZE:
\$10,000,000

NEXT DRAW: 15 Hrs 18 Mins 8
Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

POWERBALL

WINNING NUMBERS:
06.28.23

19 25 34 57 68 4

Power Play: 5x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:
\$493,000,000

NEXT DRAW: 15 Hrs 18 Mins 7
Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

News from the Associated Press

Minnesota saw 20% jump in abortions last year, partly due to patients from restrictive states

ST. PAUL, Minn. (AP) — Minnesota recorded a 20% jump in abortions in 2022, partly because more patients are traveling from states that have banned or limited the procedure since the U.S. Supreme Court overturned *Roe v. Wade*, according to an annual report released Friday.

The report by the Minnesota Department of Health said more than 16% of the 12,175 abortions performed last year involved women from elsewhere, with 1,714 patients traveling from states bordering Minnesota and 290 coming from distant ones such as Texas. That's the highest proportion since at least 1980.

And the number of abortions involving women from other states or countries was double the total from 2021, the *Star Tribune* of Minneapolis reported.

Last year marked a sharp reversal of Minnesota's gradual decline in abortions since the late 1980s.

Cathy Blaeser, executive director of Minnesota Citizens Concerned for Life, criticized a court ruling last summer that struck down most of the state's restrictions on abortion, including a parental notice requirement for minors. Lawmakers this year removed other barriers and cut grants for centers that encourage alternatives to abortion, she added.

"This abortion report is just the tip of the increase we are likely to see in the very near future," Blaeser said.

Sales tax cut, ban on gender affirming care for minors, take effect in South Dakota on Saturday

SIOUX FALLS, S.D. (AP) — More than 200 bills that passed during South Dakota's nine-week legislative session are set to become law Saturday.

More than \$104 million will be returned to taxpayers this year, and the general sales and use tax will drop from 4.5% to 4.2% until 2027. The sales tax reduction could become permanent if lawmakers remove the sunset clause next year, the *Sioux Falls Argus Leader* reported. Republican Gov. Kristi Noem has expressed interest in a permanent reduction.

South Dakota's ban on gender-affirming care for minors will also take effect. The new law prohibits several forms of surgery on minors, though such operations are rare. The biggest effects will be the loss of access to hormone therapy and puberty blockers for minors. Any minors taking drugs or hormones prohibited by the new law will have to stop taking them by Dec. 31.

One new law ensures that a woman who undergoes an unlawful abortion will not be criminally prosecuted.

People convicted of certain serious felonies after Saturday, such as murder and first-degree manslaughter, will be required to serve their full sentences before becoming eligible for release. Those convicted of other felonies, like aggravated assault or second-degree manslaughter, will have to serve at least 85% of their sentences.

The Legislature also passed 19 election-related laws. One bans ranked-choice voting, one establishes post-election audits and another limits access to where and when absentee ballot drop boxes can be placed. School boards will be allowed to change to two- or four-year terms instead of three-year terms, so they can combine school board elections with city elections.

While medical marijuana has been legal in South Dakota for three years, pregnant and breastfeeding women will no longer be eligible for medical cannabis cards. But lawmakers added six new qualifying conditions, including AIDS, multiple sclerosis, side effects from cancer treatments, Crohn's disease, epilepsy and seizures, and post-traumatic stress disorder.

Tuition will be free at technical colleges for children or spouses of members of the South Dakota National Guard who became disabled or died in the line of duty.

France arrests more than 1,300 people after fourth night of rioting over teen's killing by police

By JOHN LEICESTER, SYLVIE CORBET and LEWIS JOLY Associated Press

PARIS (AP) — Rioting raged in cities around France for a fourth night despite a huge police deployment and 1,311 arrests, with cars and buildings set ablaze and stores looted, as family and friends prepared Saturday to bury the 17-year-old whose killing by police unleashed the unrest.

France's Interior Ministry announced the new figure for arrests around the country, where 45,000 police officers fanned out in a so-far unsuccessful bid to quell violence.

Despite an appeal to parents by President Emmanuel Macron to keep their children at home, street clashes between young protesters and police raged on. About 2,500 fires were set and stores were ransacked, according to authorities.

The funeral ceremony for the teen, identified only as Nahel, who was killed by police in the Paris suburb of Nanterre on Tuesday, began on Saturday. Family and friends were viewing the open coffin before it will be taken to a mosque for a ceremony and later burial in a town cemetery.

As the number of arrests continued to mount, the government suggested the violence was beginning to lessen thanks to tougher security measures. Since the unrest began on Tuesday night, police have made a total of 2,400 arrests — more than half of those in the fourth night of violence.

Still, the damage was widespread, from Paris to Marseille and Lyon and even far away, in the French territories overseas, where a 54-year-old died after being hit by a stray bullet in French Guiana.

Hundreds of police and firefighters have been injured, including 79 overnight, but authorities haven't released injury tallies for protesters.

France's national soccer team — including international star Kylian Mbappe, an idol to many young people in the disadvantaged neighborhoods where the anger is rooted — pleaded for an end to the violence.

"Many of us are from working-class neighborhoods, we too share this feeling of pain and sadness" over the killing of 17-year-old Nahel, the players said in a statement. "Violence resolves nothing. ... There are other peaceful and constructive ways to express yourself."

They said it's time for "mourning, dialogue and reconstruction" instead.

Nahel's mother, identified as Mounia M., told France 5 television that she was angry at the officer, but not at the police in general. "He saw a little Arab-looking kid, he wanted to take his life," she said.

"A police officer cannot take his gun and fire at our children, take our children's lives," she said. The family has roots in Algeria.

The slaying of Nahel stirred up long-simmering tensions between police and young people in housing projects who struggle with poverty, unemployment and racial discrimination. The subsequent rioting is the worst France has seen in years and puts new pressure on Macron, who blamed social media for fueling violence.

Anger erupted in the Paris suburb after Nahel's death there Tuesday and quickly spread nationwide.

Early Saturday, firefighters in Nanterre extinguished blazes set by protesters that left scorched remains of cars strewn across the streets. In the neighboring suburb Colombes, protesters overturned garbage bins and used them for makeshift barricades.

Looters during the evening broke into a gun shop and made off with weapons in the Mediterranean port city of Marseille, police said. Officers in Marseille arrested nearly 90 people as groups of protesters lit cars on fire and broke store windows to take what was inside.

Buildings and businesses were also vandalized in the eastern city of Lyon, where a third of the roughly 30 arrests made were for theft, police said. Authorities reported fires in the streets after an unauthorized protest drew more than 1,000 people earlier Friday evening.

With fewer fires, cars burned and police stations attacked around France than on the previous night, according to the Interior Ministry, Interior Minister Gerald Darmanin claimed the violence was of "much less intensity."

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Nanterre Mayor Patrick Jarry said that France needs to “push for changes” in disadvantaged neighborhoods.

Despite repeated government appeals for calm and stiffer policing, there has been brazen daylight violence, too. An Apple store was looted in the eastern city of Strasbourg on Friday, That same day windows of a fast-food outlet were smashed in a Paris-area shopping mall.

In the face of the escalating crisis that hundreds of arrests and massive police deployments have failed to quell, Macron held off on declaring a state of emergency, an option that was used in similar circumstances in 2005.

Instead, his government ratcheted up its law enforcement response, with the mass deployment of police officers, including some who were called back from vacation.

Darmanin ordered a nationwide nighttime shutdown Friday of all public buses and trams, which have been among rioters’ targets. He also said he warned social networks not to allow themselves to be used as channels for calls to violence.

“They were very cooperative,” Darmanin said, adding that French authorities were providing the platforms with information in hopes of cooperation identifying people inciting violence.

“We will pursue every person who uses these social networks to commit violent acts,” he said.

Macron, too, zeroed in on social media platforms that have relayed dramatic images of vandalism and cars and buildings being torched. Singling out Snapchat and TikTok, he said they were being used to organize unrest and served as conduits for copycat violence.

The violence comes just over a year before Paris and other French cities are due to host Olympic athletes and millions of visitors for the summer Olympic Games, whose organizers were closely monitoring the situation as preparations for the competition continue.

The police officer accused of killing Nahel was given a preliminary charge of voluntary homicide. Preliminary charges mean investigating magistrates strongly suspect wrongdoing, but need to investigate more before sending a case to trial. Nanterre prosecutor Pascal Prache said that his initial investigation led him to conclude that the officer’s use of his weapon wasn’t legally justified.

Race was a taboo topic for decades in France, which is officially committed to a doctrine of colorblind universalism. In the wake of Nahel’s killing, French anti-racism activists renewed complaints about police behavior.

Thirteen people who didn’t comply with traffic stops were fatally shot by French police last year. This year, another three people, including Nahel, died under similar circumstances. The deaths have prompted demands for more accountability in France, which also saw racial justice protests after George Floyd’s killing by police in Minnesota.

This week’s protests echoed the three weeks of rioting in 2005 that followed the deaths of 15-year-old Bouna Traoré and 17-year-old Zyed Benna, who were electrocuted while hiding from police in a power substation in Clichy-sous-Bois.

Lewis Joly reported from Nanterre. Claire Rush in Portland, Oregon, and Angela Charlton in Paris, contributed to this report.

At least 51 people killed in road accident in western Kenya, 32 injured, police and Red Cross say

By EVELYNE MUSAMBI Associated Press

NAIROBI, Kenya (AP) — A truck rammed into several other vehicles and market traders in western Kenya killing at least 51 people, police said.

The Friday evening accident occurred at a location known for vehicle crashes near the Rift Valley town of Londiani, which is about 200 kilometers (125 miles) northwest of the capital, Nairobi.

Officers at the scene counted 51 bodies, but more people were believed to be trapped in the wreckage, Rift Valley police commander Tom Odera told The Associated Press.

The Kenya Red Cross Society said on Saturday 32 people were injured and hospitalized, and asked Kenyans to donate blood. It also said heavy rainfall interrupted rescue efforts and people were still trapped in wrecked vehicles.

Transport Minister Kipchumba Murkomen visited the scene on Saturday morning and said the government would relocate markets away from the highways to prevent such future accidents.

President William Ruto tweeted a condolence message to bereaved families describing the accident as "distressing" and urging motorists to be "extra cautious."

Witnesses quoted by local media said the truck veered off the major highway and hit several vehicles before hitting pedestrians and traders. Witnesses shared photos of the vehicle wreckages mangled beyond recognition.

Police had said on Friday rescue operations would continue into the night.

The Kenyan Red Cross Society said they have set up stations at hospitals where people can report loved ones still missing and are providing psychological support to those affected.

Climate change keeps making wildfires and smoke worse.

Scientists call it the 'new abnormal'

BY SETH BORENSTEIN and MELINA WALLING Associated Press

It was a smell that invoked a memory. Both for Emily Kuchlbauer in North Carolina and Ryan Bomba in Chicago. It was smoke from wildfires, the odor of an increasingly hot and occasionally on-fire world.

Kuchlbauer had flashbacks to the surprise of soot coating her car three years ago when she was a recent college graduate in San Diego. Bomba had déjà vu from San Francisco, where the air was so thick with smoke people had to mask up. They figured they left wildfire worries behind in California, but a Canada that's burning from sea to warming sea brought one of the more visceral effects of climate change home to places that once seemed immune.

"It's been very apocalyptic feeling, because in California the dialogue is like, 'Oh, it's normal. This is just what happens on the West Coast,' but it's very much not normal here," Kuchlbauer said.

As Earth's climate continues to change from heat-trapping gases spewed into the air, ever fewer people are out of reach from the billowing and deadly fingers of wildfire smoke, scientists say. Already wildfires are consuming three times more of the United States and Canada each year than in the 1980s and studies predict fire and smoke to worsen.

While many people exposed to bad air may be asking themselves if this is a "new normal," several scientists told The Associated Press they specifically reject any such idea because the phrase makes it sound like the world has changed to a new and steady pattern of extreme events.

"Is this a new normal? No, it's a new abnormal," University of Pennsylvania climate scientist Michael Mann said. "It continues to get worse. If we continue to warm the planet, we don't settle into some new state. It's an ever-moving baseline of worse and worse."

It's so bad that perhaps the term "wildfire" also needs to be rethought, suggested Woodwell Climate Research Center senior scientist Jennifer Francis.

"We can't really call them wildfires anymore," Francis said. "To some extent they're just not, they're not wild. They're not natural anymore. We are just making them more likely. We're making them more intense."

Several scientists told the AP that the problem of smoke and wildfires will progressively worsen until the world significantly reduces greenhouse gas emissions, which has not happened despite years of international negotiations and lofty goals.

Fires in North America are generally getting worse, burning more land. Even before July, traditionally the busiest fire month for the country, Canada has set a record for most area burned with 31,432 square miles (81,409 square kilometers), which is nearly 15% higher than the old record.

"A year like this could happen with or without climate change, but warming temperatures just made it a lot more probable," said A. Park Williams, a UCLA bioclimatologist who studies fire and water. "We're seeing, especially across the West, big increases in smoke exposure and reduction in air quality that are

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attributable to increase in fire activity.”

Numerous studies have linked climate change to increases in North American fires because global warming is increasing extreme weather, especially drought and mostly in the West.

As the atmosphere dries, it sucks moisture out of plants, creating more fuel that burns easier, faster and with greater intensity. Then you add more lightning strikes from more storms, some of which are dry lightning strikes, said Canadian fire scientist Mike Flannigan at Thompson Rivers University in British Columbia. Fire seasons are getting longer, starting earlier and lasting later because of warmer weather, he said.

“We have to learn to live with fire and smoke, that’s the new reality,” Flannigan said.

Ronak Bhatia, who moved from California to Illinois for college in 2018 and now lives in Chicago, said at first it seemed like a joke: wildfire smoke following him and his friends from the West Coast. But if it continues, it will no longer be as funny.

“It makes you think about climate change and also how it essentially could affect, you know, anywhere,” Bhatia said. “It’s not just the California problem or Australia problem. It’s kind of an everywhere problem.”

Wildfires in the U.S. on average now burn about 12,000 square miles (31,000 square kilometers) yearly, about the size of Maryland. From 1983 to 1987, when the National Interagency Fire Center started keeping statistics, only about 3,300 square miles (8,546 square kilometers) burned annually.

During the past five years, including a record low 2020, Canada has averaged 12,279 square miles (31,803 square kilometers) burned, which is three and a half times larger than the 1983 to 1987 average.

The type of fires seen this year in western Canada are in amounts scientists and computer models predicted for the 2030s and 2040s. And eastern Canada, where it rains more often, wasn’t supposed to see occasional fire years like this until the mid 21st century, Flannigan said.

If the Canadian east is burning, that means eventually, and probably sooner than researchers thought, eastern U.S. states will also, Flannigan said. He and Williams pointed to devastating fires in Gatlinburg, Tennessee, that killed 14 people in 2016 during a brief drought in the East.

America burned much more in the past, but that’s because people didn’t try to stop fires and they were less of a threat. The West used to have larger and regular fires until the mid-19th century, with more land settlement and then the U.S. government trying to douse every fire after the great 1910 Yellowstone fire, Williams said.

Since about the 1950s, America pretty much got wildfires down to a minimum, but that hasn’t been the case since about 2000.

“We thought we had it under control, but we don’t,” Williams said. “The climate changed so much that we lost control of it.”

The warmer the Arctic gets and the more snow and ice melt there — the Arctic is warming three times faster than the rest of Earth — the differences in the summer between Arctic and mid-latitudes get smaller. That allows the jet stream of air high above the ground to meander and get stuck, prolonging bouts of bad weather, Mann and Francis said. Other scientists say they are waiting for more evidence on the impact of bouts of stuck weather.

A new study published on June 23 links a stuck weather pattern to reduced North American snow cover in the spring.

For people exposed to nasty air from wildfire smoke, increasing threats to health are part of the new reality.

Wildfires expose about 44 million people per year worldwide to unhealthy air, causing about 677,000 deaths annually with almost 39% of them children, according to a 2021 study out of the United Kingdom.

One study that looked at a dozen years of wildfire smoke exposure in Washington state showed a 1% all-ages increase in the odds of non-traumatic death the same day as the smoke hit the area and 2% for the day after. Risk of respiratory deaths jumped 14% and even more, 35%, for adults ages 45 to 64.

Based on peer-reviewed studies, the Health Effects Institute estimated that smoke’s chief pollutant caused 4 million deaths worldwide and nearly 48,000 deaths in the U.S. in 2019.

The tiny particles making up a main pollutant of wildfire smoke, called PM2.5, are just the right size to

embed deep in the lungs and absorb into the blood. But while their size has garnered attention, their composition also matters, said Kris Ebi, a University of Washington climate and health scientist.

"There is emerging evidence that the toxicity of wildfire smoke PM2.5 is more toxic than what comes out of tailpipes," Ebi said.

A cascade of health effects may become a growing problem in the wake of wildfires, including downwind from the source, said Ed Avol, professor emeritus at the Keck School of Medicine at University of Southern California.

Beyond irritated eyes and scratchy throats, breathing in wildfire smoke also can create long-term issues all over the body. Avol said those include respiratory effects including asthma and COPD, as well as impacts on heart, brain and kidney function.

"In the longer term, climate change and unfortunately wildfire smoke is not going away because we really haven't done that much quick enough to make a difference," Avol said, adding that while people can take steps like masking up or using air filters to try to protect themselves, we are ultimately "behind the curve here in terms of responding to it."

Borenstein reported from Washington and Walling from Chicago.

Follow AP's climate and environment coverage at <https://apnews.com/hub/climate-and-environment>

Follow Seth Borenstein and Melina Walling on Twitter at @borenbears and @MelinaWalling.

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Morning-after pill vending machines gain popularity on college campuses post-Roe

By ED KOMENDA and SUSAN HAIGH Associated Press

SEATTLE (AP) — Need Plan B? Tap your credit card and enter B6.

Since last November, a library at the University of Washington has featured a different kind of vending machine, one that's become more popular on campuses around the country since the U.S. Supreme Court ended constitutional protections for abortion last year. It's stocked with ibuprofen, pregnancy tests and the morning-after pill.

With some states enacting abortion bans and others enshrining protections and expanding access to birth control, the machines are part of a push on college campuses to ensure emergency contraceptives are cheap, discreet and widely available.

There are now 39 universities in 17 states with emergency contraceptive vending machines, and at least 20 more considering them, according to the American Society for Emergency Contraception. Some, such as the University of Tulsa in Oklahoma, are in states where abortion is largely banned.

Over-the-counter purchase of Plan B and generic forms is legal in all 50 states.

The 2022 ruling overturning *Roe v. Wade* "is putting people's lives at stake, so it makes pregnancy prevention all the more urgent," said Kelly Cleland, the ASEC's executive director. "If you live in a state where you cannot get an abortion and you can't get an abortion anywhere near you, the stakes are so much higher than they've ever been before."

Washington this year became first U.S. state to set aside money — \$200,000 to fund \$10,000 grants that colleges can obtain next year through an application process — to expand access to emergency contraceptives at public universities and technical colleges through the automatic dispensers.

The University of Washington's machine was installed after a student-led campaign. It offers boxes of generic Plan B for \$12.60, about a quarter of what the name-brand versions sell for in stores, and more than 640 have been sold.

The drug is even cheaper in some machines than it is in UW's, as low as \$7 per box. That's because it is sold at just above wholesale cost, compared with pharmacy retail prices that might go up to \$50.

In Illinois and New York, lawmakers are developing legislation that would require at least one vending machine selling emergency contraceptives on state college campuses.

In Connecticut, Yale had to drop plans to install an emergency contraceptive vending machine in 2019 after learning it would violate state law.

But this year the state approved a measure allowing Plan B and other over-the-counter medications to be sold from vending machines on campuses and other locations.

The machines can't be placed in K-12 schools or exposed to the elements, and they must have temperature and humidity controls and include plans for power outages and expired items.

"This just enables people to have better access and easier access," said Rep. Nicole Klarides-Ditria, one of several Republicans in Connecticut's Democratic-controlled General Assembly who supported the measure. "You may need Plan B, as we all know, in the middle of the night, and you won't have access to a pharmacy until the morning."

Although the morning-after pill has been approved by the Food and Drug Administration for over-the-counter sale, many stores and pharmacies keep it behind the counter or locked up, require identification for purchase and make the experience of purchasing it intimidating.

"There is a stigma associated with getting access to these medications," said Zoe Amaris, a University of Washington pharmacy student and board member of UW Pharmacists for Reproductive Education and Sexual Health. "Having a vending machine is so easy. You don't need to go to a pharmacy. You don't need to go through your health care provider."

Plan B is more effective the sooner it is taken, and vending machine access could be particularly crucial for victims of rape when pharmacies are closed. The anonymity the machines afford may also be important to some assault victims.

"When you have a vending machine, it takes away a lot of those barriers," Cleland said. "Students can go on their own terms to get it when they need it."

Haigh reported from Hartford, Connecticut.

Affirmative action for white people? Legacy college admissions come under renewed scrutiny

By COLLIN BINKLEY AP Education Writer

WASHINGTON (AP) — The next big fight over college admissions already has taken hold, and it centers on a different kind of minority group that gets a boost: children of alumni.

In the wake of a Supreme Court decision that strikes down affirmative action in admissions, colleges are coming under renewed pressure to put an end to legacy preferences — the practice of favoring applicants with family ties to alumni. Long seen as a perk for the white and wealthy, opponents say it's no longer defensible in a world with no counterbalance in affirmative action.

President Joe Biden suggested colleges should rethink the practice after the court's ruling, saying legacy preferences "expand privilege instead of opportunity." Several Democrats in Congress demanded an end to the policy in light of the court's decision to remove race from the admissions process. So did Republicans including Sen. Tim Scott of South Carolina, who is vying for the GOP presidential nomination.

"Let's be clear: affirmative action still exists for white people. It's called legacy admissions," Rep. Barbara Lee, a California Democrat, said on Twitter.

For critics of legacy admissions, the renewed debate over fairness in admissions has offered a chance to swing public sentiment behind their cause.

As colleges across the U.S. pledge their commitment to diversity following the court's ruling, activists have a simple response: prove it. If schools want to enroll more Black, Hispanic and Indigenous students, activists say, removing legacy preferences would be an easy first step.

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"Now more than ever, there's no justification for allowing this process to continue," said Viet Nguyen, a graduate of Brown and Harvard who leads Ed Mobilizer, a nonprofit that has fought legacy preferences since 2018. "No other country in the world does legacy preferences. Now is a chance to catch up with the rest of the world."

Using the Supreme Court decision as a catalyst, Nguyen's group is rallying the alumni of top colleges to press their alma maters to end the practice. The goal is to get graduates of the 30 schools to withhold donations until the policy ends. The schools include Harvard and the University of North Carolina, which were at the center of the court case, along with the rest of the Ivy League and the University of Southern California.

It builds on other efforts taking aim at the practice. Colorado banned it at public universities in 2021, and lawmakers in Connecticut, Massachusetts and New York have introduced similar bills. In Congress, Rep. Jamaal Bowman of New York and Sen. Jeff Merkley of Oregon, both Democrats, are reviving legislation that would forbid it at all universities that accept federal money.

Legacy preferences have become an easy target in the wake of a Supreme Court decision that hinged on questions of merit in the college application process, said Julie Park, who studies college admissions and racial equity at the University of Maryland. Instead of getting in on their own merit, she said, legacy students are just "standing on their parents' shoulders."

"It's just low-hanging fruit," she said. "People want something to do, and there's a strong rationale to get rid of it."

Secretary Miguel Cardona urged colleges to "ask themselves the tough questions," adding that legacy admissions and other types of special treatment "have long denied well-qualified students of all backgrounds a level playing field."

"In the wake of this ruling, they could further tip the scales against students who already have the cards stacked against them," Cardona said in a statement to The Associated Press.

In the hazy world of college admissions, it's unclear exactly which schools provide a legacy boost and how much it helps. In California, where state law requires schools to disclose the practice, USC reported that 14% of last year's admitted students had family ties to alumni or donors. Stanford reported a similar rate.

At Harvard, which released years of records as part of the lawsuit that ended up before the Supreme Court, legacy students were eight times more likely to be admitted, and nearly 70% were white, researchers found.

An Associated Press survey of the nation's most selective colleges last year found that legacy students in the freshman class ranged from 4% to 23%. At four schools — Notre Dame, USC, Cornell and Dartmouth — legacy students outnumbered Black students.

Supporters of the policy say it builds an alumni community and encourages donations. A 2022 study of an undisclosed college in the Northeast found that legacy students were more likely to make donations, but at a cost to diversity — the vast majority were white.

Some prestigious colleges have abandoned the policy in recent years, including Amherst College and Johns Hopkins University. In the first year after dropping it, Amherst saw its share of legacy students in the freshman class fall by about half, while 19% of first-year students were the first in their families to attend college, the most in the school's history.

Some colleges argue that, as their student bodies become more racially diverse, the benefits of legacy status will extend to more students of color. Opponents argue that white families still have an advantage, with generations of relatives who had access to any college.

Ivory Toldson went to college at Louisiana State University, but it wasn't an option for his parents in the Jim Crow South.

"My parents couldn't legally go to LSU. Discrimination is a lot more recent in our history than a lot of people seem to understand," said Toldson, a Howard University professor and the director of education, innovation and research for the NAACP.

Toldson said there's growing awareness of the irony that preferences for athletes and legacy students are still allowed, while race must be ignored.

In May, an AP-NORC poll found that few Americans think legacy admissions or donations should play much of a role in college admissions. Just 9% say it should be very important that a family member attended and 18% say it should be somewhat important. Likewise, only 10% say donations to the school should be very important and 17% say that should be somewhat important.

That same poll found that most Americans support affirmative action in higher education but think race should play a small role. Sixty-three percent said the Supreme Court should not block colleges from considering race in admissions, but 68% said it should not be a big factor.

Several colleges declined to say whether they will continue providing a boost for legacy students next year, including Cornell and the University of Notre Dame.

Meanwhile, Nguyen said he's more optimistic than ever. In the past, colleges have been reluctant to be among the first to make the change, he said. Now he thinks that's changing.

"In the next few months, I think the hesitancy will actually be who will be the last," he said. "No university wants to be the last."

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As if air travel isn't hard enough, 5G wireless signals could disrupt flights starting this weekend

By DAVID KOENIG AP Airlines Writer

Airline passengers who have endured tens of thousands of weather-related flight delays this week could face a new source of disruptions starting Saturday, when wireless providers are expected to power up new 5G systems near major airports.

Aviation groups have warned for years that 5G signals could interfere with aircraft equipment, especially devices using radio waves to measure distance above the ground and which are critical when planes land in low visibility.

Predictions that interference would cause massive flight groundings failed to come true last year, when telecom companies began rolling out the new service. They then agreed to limit the power of the signals around busy airports, giving airlines an extra year to upgrade their planes.

The leader of the nation's largest pilots' union said crews will be able to handle the impact of 5G, but he criticized the way the wireless licenses were granted, saying it had added unnecessary risk to aviation.

Transportation Secretary Pete Buttigieg recently told airlines that flights could be disrupted because a small portion of the nation's fleet has not been upgraded to protect against radio interference.

Most of the major U.S. airlines say they are ready. American, Southwest, Alaska, Frontier and United say all of their planes have height-measuring devices, called radio altimeters, that are protected against 5G interference.

The big exception is Delta Air Lines. Delta says it has 190 planes, which include most of its smaller ones, that still lack upgraded altimeters because its supplier has been unable to provide them fast enough.

The airline does not expect to cancel any flights because of the issue, Delta said Friday. The airline plans to route the 190 planes carefully to limit the risk of canceling flights or forcing planes to divert away from airports where visibility is low because of fog or low clouds.

The Delta planes that have not been retrofitted include several models of Airbus jets: all of its A220s, most of its A319s and A320s and some of its A321s. The airline's Boeing jets have upgraded altimeters, as do all Delta Connection planes, which are operated by Endeavor Air, Republic Airways and SkyWest Airlines, the airline said.

JetBlue did not respond to requests for comment but told The Wall Street Journal it expected to retrofit 17 smaller Airbus jets by October, with possible "limited impact" some days in Boston.

Wireless carriers including Verizon and AT&T use a part of the radio spectrum called C-Band, which

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is close to frequencies used by radio altimeters, for their new 5G service. The Federal Communications Commission granted them licenses for the C-Band spectrum and dismissed any risk of interference, saying there was ample buffer between C-Band and altimeter frequencies.

When the Federal Aviation Administration sided with airlines and objected, the wireless companies pushed back the rollout of their new service. In a compromise brokered by the Biden administration, the wireless carriers then agreed not to power up 5G signals near about 50 busy airports. That postponement ends Saturday.

AT&T declined to comment. Verizon did not immediately respond to a question about its plans.

Buttigieg reminded the head of trade group Airlines for America about the deadline in a letter last week, warning that only planes with retrofitted altimeters would be allowed to land under low-visibility conditions. He said more than 80% of the U.S. fleet had been retrofitted, but a significant number of planes, including many operated by foreign airlines, have not been upgraded.

"This means on bad-weather, low-visibility days in particular, there could be increased delays and cancellations," Buttigieg wrote. He said airlines with planes awaiting retrofitting should adjust their schedules to avoid stranding passengers.

Airlines say the FAA was slow to approve standards for upgrading the radio altimeters and supply-chain problems have made it difficult for manufacturers to produce enough of the devices. Nicholas Calio, head of the Airlines for America, complained about a rush to modify planes "amid pressure from the telecommunications companies."

Jason Ambrosi, a Delta pilot and president of the Air Line Pilots Association, accused the FCC of granting 5G licenses without consulting aviation interests, which he said "has left the safest aviation system in the world at increased risk." But, he said, "Ultimately, we will be able to address the impacts of 5G."

The Supreme Court just issued its biggest rulings of the year. Here's what you need to know.

By JESSICA GRESKO Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — The Supreme Court just finished issuing its biggest decisions of the term, killing President Joe Biden's \$400 billion plan to cancel or reduce federal student loan debts, ending affirmative action in higher education and issuing a major decision that impacts gay rights. The decisions over the past week cap off a term that began in October in which the justices also considered big issues involving voting rights and religion.

The court will next meet in the fall to resume hearing cases. Here are a number of things to know about the Supreme Court's most recent term:

THERE WERE SURPRISES

The court has a solid six-justice conservative majority but ultimately issued some decisions in which the most conservative position did not win. That surprised some court watchers.

In four major cases, conservative and liberal justices joined to reject the most aggressive legal arguments advanced by conservative state elected officials and advocacy groups. Those included decisions on voting, a Native American child welfare law and a Biden administration immigration policy.

On voting rights, for example, the justices rejected a Republican-led effort to weaken a landmark voting rights law. Instead, they ruled in favor of Black voters in Alabama in a congressional redistricting case. The state, where more than one in four voters is Black, will now have to redraw its congressional districts in a way that gives Black voters more power. The decision was 5-4 with Chief Justice John Roberts and Justice Brett Kavanaugh joining the court's three liberals.

Separately, while the justices just last year overturned *Roe v. Wade* and allowed states to ban abortion, the court in April rejected a conservative-led effort to get a drug used in the most common method of abortion pulled from the market. The justices allowed the drug, mifepristone, to stay on the market for now while a lawsuit proceeds.

CONSERVATIVES STILL WON, A LOT

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While there were surprises among the justices' rulings, conservatives still won big. On affirmative action, they achieved a long-desired victory. While the court had narrowly upheld race-conscious college admissions programs in the past 20 years, including as recently as 2016, a conservative wing of the court strengthened by three appointees of former President Donald Trump struck down the practice 6-3.

Similarly, on student loans, the court split 6-3 along ideological lines to kill a signature Biden administration program. Other major rulings where the conservatives won included a 5-4 ruling that sharply limited the federal government's authority to police water pollution.

CHIEF JUSTICE JOHN ROBERTS WAS IN CONTROL

Chief Justice John Roberts led the court's biggest rulings, writing the majority opinions on student loans, affirmative action and voting cases from North Carolina and Alabama. Last year, the five conservatives to Roberts' right formed majorities to sometimes act more aggressively than the chief justice wanted, including overturning *Roe v. Wade* without his vote. Roberts' more narrow position in the case would have instead cut back on abortion rights.

As chief, Roberts gets to decide who writes the majority opinion in cases where he's in agreement. This time, he assigned those major opinions to himself, ensuring that his hand was steering the court.

JUSTICE KETANJI BROWN JACKSON MADE HER VOICE HEARD

The court's newest justice also wound up being its most vocal. Jackson began her first term on the court in October, and it was clear early on that she would be an active participant in arguments. Over the course of the term's 59 arguments, she spoke some 78,800 words, far more than the next most voluble justice, according to research by Adam Feldman and Jake Truscott.

Like her colleagues, Jackson wrote about a half a dozen majority opinions this term. Her first came in a dispute between states over unclaimed money while her most significant may have been a 7-2 ruling in which the court declined to broadly limit the right to sue government workers. She also authored a number of dissents, including one in the affirmative action in which Jackson, the court's first Black woman, accused her colleagues in the majority of "let-them-eat-cake obliviousness."

JUSTICE NEIL GORSUCH DEFENDED NATIVE RIGHTS, AGAIN

Since joining the court in 2017 Justice Neil Gorsuch has emerged as a champion of Native rights, sometimes breaking with fellow conservatives on Native issues. In 2020, for example, he was the author of a 5-4 decision in which the court ruled that a large chunk of eastern Oklahoma remains an American Indian reservation.

This term, he wrote passionately in two Native rights cases. He dissented from a ruling against the Navajo Nation in a dispute involving water from the drought-stricken Colorado River. And while he was in the majority in the court's case involving the Indian Child Welfare Act, he nonetheless wrote separately. The opinion ran 34 pages. Gorsuch wrote 38.

ETHICS ISSUES SWIRLED AROUND THE COURT

High-profile issues weren't the only reason the Supreme Court was in the news this term. A series of stories questioned the ethical practices of the justices, most notably of Justice Clarence Thomas but also Justice Samuel Alito. Investigative news site ProPublica detailed in a series of stories lavish trips and other gifts provided to Thomas by Republican megadonor Harlan Crow.

Both Thomas and Alito strenuously denied they had done anything wrong. But the stories led to calls from Democrats in Congress in particular for reforms and more transparency. Republicans made clear they oppose the effort. In May, Roberts said without offering specifics that there is more the court can do to "adhere to the highest standards" of ethical conduct.

Associated Press reporter Mark Sherman contributed to this report.

the teen was driving toward the officer — pushed leaders to quickly condemn the killing. French President Emmanuel Macron called the shooting “inexcusable” even before charges were filed against the officer.

That’s nothing new for Americans, who even before the excruciating footage of George Floyd’s death under a Minneapolis police officer’s knee had seen many videos of violent police encounters that were often taken by witnesses and at times contradicted the initial statements of police.

“I’ve never seen a case where the interior minister was so quick to condemn a shooting. In previous killings, there was unrest, but there was no video. It changes everything,” Hirschfield said.

Police in France typically go through training that runs for about 10 months, which is long compared with many U.S. cities, but one of the shortest training requirements in Europe.

However, experts said they did not believe French police receive training that is equivalent to the implicit bias training required of many U.S. police officers as an effort to improve policing in diverse communities, though many U.S. critics have questioned the training’s effectiveness.

France and other European countries have growing African, Arab and Asian populations.

“If you are in a country with a colonial past, it carries a stigma. And if that is painful enough that you can’t handle having that conversation about race, of course you aren’t going to have relevant training for officers,” Stacie Keese, co-founder of the Center for Policing Equity, who serves on the United Nations’ International Expert Mechanism to Advance Racial Justice and Equality in Law Enforcement.

Bertrand Cavallier, the former commander of France’s national gendarmerie training school, said French law enforcement should not be judged by the actions of one officer.

“This is the case of a police officer who made a mistake and didn’t have to do it. But he was arrested, and that, I think, should be a clear message concerning the will of the government,” he said.

Associated Press writers Alex Turnbull and Jeffrey Schaeffer in Nanterre, France, contributed to this report.

Youths clash with French police and loot in 4th night of riots triggered by fatal police shooting

By SYLVIE CORBET, JOHN LEICESTER and LEWIS JOLY Associated Press

NANTERRE, France (AP) — Young rioters clashed with police and looted stores overnight Friday in a fourth night of unrest in France triggered by the deadly police shooting of a teen, piling more pressure on President Emmanuel Macron after he appealed to parents to keep children off the streets and blamed social media for fueling violence.

While the situation appeared to be somewhat calmer compared to previous nights, turmoil gripped several cities across the country.

Firefighters in the Parisian suburb of Nanterre, where the shooting occurred Tuesday, extinguished the blazes set by protesters that left scorched remains of cars strewn across the streets. In the neighboring suburb Colombes, protesters overturned garbage bins and used them for makeshift barricades.

Looters during the evening broke into a gun shop and made off with weapons, and a man was later arrested with a hunting rifle, police said, and in the southern Mediterranean port city of Marseille, officers arrested nearly 90 people as groups of protesters lit cars on fire and broke store windows to take what was inside.

Buildings and businesses were also vandalized in the eastern city of Lyon, where a third of the roughly 30 arrests made were for theft, police said. Authorities reported fires in the streets after an unauthorized protest drew more than 1,000 people earlier in the evening.

By about 3 a.m., Interior Minister Gerald Darmanin told cable news channel BFMTV that 471 arrests were made during the night.

The fatal shooting of the 17-year-old, who has only been identified by his first name, Nahel, was captured on video, stirring up long-simmering tensions between police and young people in housing projects and disadvantaged neighborhoods.

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Nahel's burial is scheduled for Saturday, according to Nanterre Mayor Patrick Jarry, who said France needs to "push for changes" in disadvantaged neighborhoods.

Despite repeated government appeals for calm and stiffer policing, Friday saw brazen daylight violence, too. An Apple store was looted in the eastern city of Strasbourg, where police fired tear gas, and the windows of a fast-food outlet were smashed in a Paris-area shopping mall, where officers repelled people trying to break into a shuttered store, authorities said.

Violence was also erupting in some of France's territories overseas.

Some 150 police officers were deployed Friday night on the small Indian Ocean island of Reunion, authorities said, after protesters set garbage bins ablaze, threw projectiles at police and damaged cars and buildings. In French Guiana, a 54-year-old was killed by a stray bullet Thursday night when rioters fired at police in the capital, Cayenne, authorities said.

In the face of the escalating crisis that hundreds of arrests and massive police deployments have failed to quell, Macron held off on declaring a state of emergency, an option that was used in similar circumstances in 2005.

Instead, his government ratcheted up its law enforcement response. Already massively beefed-up police forces were boosted by another 5,000 officers for Friday night, increasing the number to 45,000 overall, the interior minister said. Some were called back from vacation. The minister, Darmanin, said police made 917 arrests on Thursday alone and noted their young age — 17 on average. He said more than 300 police officers and firefighters have been injured.

It was unclear how many protesters have been injured in the clashes.

Darmanin on Friday ordered a nationwide nighttime shutdown of all public buses and trams, which have been among rioters' targets. He also said he warned social networks not to allow themselves to be used as channels for calls to violence.

"They were very cooperative," Darmanin said, adding that French authorities were providing the platforms with information in hopes of cooperation identifying people inciting violence.

"We will pursue every person who uses these social networks to commit violent acts," he said.

Macron, too, zeroed in on social media platforms that have relayed dramatic images of vandalism and cars and buildings being torched, saying they were playing a "considerable role" in the violence. Singling out Snapchat and TikTok, he said they were being used to organize unrest and served as conduits for copycat violence.

Macron said his government would work with technology companies to establish procedures for "the removal of the most sensitive content," adding that he expected "a spirit of responsibility" from them.

Snapchat spokesperson Rachel Racusen said the company has increased its moderation since Tuesday to detect and act on content related to the rioting.

The violence comes just over a year before Paris and other French cities are due to host 10,500 Olympians and millions of visitors for the summer Olympic Games. Organizers said they are closely monitoring the situation as preparations for the Olympics continue.

The police officer accused of killing Nahel was handed a preliminary charge of voluntary homicide, which means investigating magistrates strongly suspect wrongdoing but need to investigate more before sending a case to trial. Nanterre prosecutor Pascal Prache said his initial investigation led him to conclude that the officer's use of his weapon wasn't legally justified.

Prache said officers tried to pull Nahel over because he looked so young and was driving a Mercedes with Polish license plates in a bus lane. He allegedly ran a red light to avoid being stopped and then got stuck in traffic.

The officer said he feared he and his colleague or someone else could be hit by the car as Nahel attempted to flee, according to the prosecutor.

Nahel's mother, identified as Mounia M., told France 5 television that she was angry at the officer but not at the police in general. "He saw a little Arab-looking kid, he wanted to take his life," she said, adding that justice should be "very firm."

"A police officer cannot take his gun and fire at our children, take our children's lives," she said.

Deadly use of firearms is less common in France than in the United States, although 13 people who didn't comply with traffic stops were fatally shot by French police last year. This year, another three people, including Nahel, died under similar circumstances. The deaths have prompted demands for more accountability in France, which also saw racial justice protests after George Floyd's killing by police in Minnesota.

Race was a taboo topic for decades in France, which is officially committed to a doctrine of colorblind universalism. In the wake of Nahel's killing, French anti-racism activists renewed complaints about police behavior in general.

This week's protests echoed the three weeks of rioting in 2005 that followed the deaths of 15-year-old Bouna Traoré and 17-year-old Zyed Benna, who were electrocuted while hiding from police in a power substation in Clichy-sous-Bois.

Corbet and Leicester reported from Paris. Associated Press journalists Jeffrey Schaeffer and Aurelien Morissard in Nanterre; Claire Rush in Portland, Oregon; Frank Jordans in Berlin; and Angela Charlton in Paris contributed to this report.

Judge allows nearly all of North Carolina's revised 12-week abortion law to take effect

By GARY D. ROBERTSON Associated Press

RALEIGH, N.C. (AP) — A federal judge ruled on Friday that nearly all of North Carolina's revised 12-week abortion law scheduled to begin this weekend can take effect, while temporarily blocking one rule that doctors feared could expose them to criminal penalties.

The decision by U.S. District Judge Catherine Eagles sets aside that rule but allows the law's remaining provisions to begin on Saturday while litigation continues.

Abortion providers had last week requested a blanket order halting all of the July 1 restrictions pending their court challenge. Planned Parenthood South Atlantic and a physician said several sections in the newly revised law were so vague and seemingly contradictory that doctors could unintentionally break the law, leaving them unable to care for women seeking legal abortions.

But the Republican-controlled General Assembly passed legislation this week revising or repealing nearly all of the challenged provisions, making arguments against most of them moot. Among other things, the lawmakers clarified that medication abortions will be legal in nearly all cases through 12 weeks, and that a lawful abortion remains an exception to North Carolina's fetal homicide statute.

Eagles, who was nominated by former President Barack Obama, had said in court that it would be overly broad to block enforcement of the entire law. Instead, she directed that for at least the next two weeks, the state cannot enforce a rule saying doctors must document the existence of a pregnancy within the uterus before conducting a medication abortion.

The abortion providers' lawyers argued that the language raised questions about whether abortion pills can be dispensed when it's too early in a pregnancy to locate an embryo using an ultrasound — subjecting a provider to potentially violating the law.

"If the pregnancy is in early stages and the physician cannot document the existence of an intrauterine pregnancy, then the physician cannot comply with this requirement," Eagles wrote. She said she'll revisit the rule as well as other challenges in upcoming hearings.

Peter Im, a Planned Parenthood attorney, said the plaintiffs had already received much of what they had sought in the lawsuit through the legislature's revisions. And now with Eagles' order, "it is clear that we can provide care to patients at the very earliest stages of pregnancy," Im said.

Lauren Horsch, a spokesperson for Senate leader Phil Berger, said that "the General Assembly provided the clarity physicians asked for."

Before Saturday, North Carolina has had a ban on most abortions after 20 weeks. The new rules, developed after the U.S. Supreme Court in June 2022 struck down *Roe v. Wade*, reduce it to 12 weeks, but

add new exceptions through 20 weeks for cases of rape and incest and through 24 weeks for "life-limiting" fetal anomalies. A medical emergency exception also remains in place.

Democratic Gov. Roy Cooper vetoed the abortion law in May, but Republicans overrode him using their veto-proof GOP majorities in both chambers. Cooper then signed on Thursday the clean-up bill, which had overwhelming bipartisan support. Although a strong abortion-rights supporter, Cooper said it was important to clarify the rules because the original measure was "so poorly written that it is causing real uncertainty for doctors and other health care providers."

GOP legislators backing the new restrictions called them a middle-ground change in a state where some anti-abortion advocates wanted a ban imposed as soon as an ultrasound can detect cardiac activity, or around six weeks. They also pointed to \$160 million contained in the law for services benefiting children, mothers and families — spending that isn't part of the litigation.

Caitlin Connors with the anti-abortion group SBA Pro-Life America said Friday's ruling was "a crucial win for the unborn and their mothers."

Critics say the 12-week standard, along with new restrictions on providers, abortion clinics and patients, will make it harder for low-income women and those in rural areas to obtain lawful abortions. They point in part to a requirement that someone seeking an abortion must visit a provider's office in person before the state's 72-hour waiting period — already in place for years — can begin. Before, that initial contact could be done over the phone.

Broadly, the new restrictions will "absolutely harm patients. Our patients are devastated and the doctors who care for them are devastated," Dr. Katherine Farris, Planned Parenthood South Atlantic's chief medical officer, told reporters Friday. This week, the group "had to start navigating patients out of state, knowing that they would not be eligible for care" starting Saturday, she added.

The new abortion law also says that starting Oct. 1, surgical abortions — also known as procedural abortions — performed after 12 weeks of pregnancy must be completed in hospitals. The lawsuit still challenges that requirement. New licensing of abortion clinics also is slated to begin in October.

The Supreme Court rules for a designer who doesn't want to make wedding websites for gay couples

By JESSICA GRESKO Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — In a defeat for gay rights, the Supreme Court's conservative majority ruled on Friday that a Christian graphic artist who wants to design wedding websites can refuse to work with same-sex couples. One of the court's liberal justices wrote in a dissent that the decision's effect is to "mark gays and lesbians for second-class status" and that the decision opens the door to other discrimination.

The court ruled 6-3 for designer Lorie Smith, saying she can refuse to design websites for same-sex weddings despite a Colorado law that bars discrimination based on sexual orientation, race, gender and other characteristics. The court said forcing her to create the websites would violate her free speech rights under the Constitution's First Amendment.

The decision suggests that artists, photographers, videographers and writers are among those who can refuse to offer what the court called expressive services if doing so would run contrary to their beliefs. But that's different from other businesses not engaged in speech and therefore not covered by the First Amendment, such as restaurants and hotels.

Justice Neil Gorsuch wrote for the court's six conservative justices that the First Amendment "envisions the United States as a rich and complex place where all persons are free to think and speak as they wish, not as the government demands." Gorsuch said the court has long held that "the opportunity to think for ourselves and to express those thoughts freely is among our most cherished liberties and part of what keeps our Republic strong."

The decision is a win for religious rights and one in a series of cases in recent years in which the justices have sided with religious plaintiffs. Last year, for example, the court ruled along ideological lines for a

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football coach who prayed on the field at his public high school after games. And on Thursday the court in a unanimous decision used the case of a Christian mail carrier who did not want to deliver Amazon packages on Sundays to solidify protections for workers who ask for religious accommodations.

The decision is also a retreat on gay rights for the court. For nearly three decades, the court has expanded the rights of LGBTQ people, most notably giving same-sex couples the right to marry in 2015 and announcing five years later in a decision written by Gorsuch that a landmark civil rights law also protects gay, lesbian and transgender people from employment discrimination.

In the latest decision, however, Gorsuch said that a ruling against Smith would allow the government "to force all manner of artists, speechwriters, and others whose services involve speech to speak what they do not believe on pain of penalty." For example, a gay website designer could be forced to design websites for an organization that advocates against same-sex marriage, he wrote. "Countless other creative professionals, too, could be forced to choose between remaining silent, producing speech that violates their beliefs, or speaking their minds and incurring sanctions for doing so."

The court's dissenting liberal justices led by Justice Sonia Sotomayor warned that the decision will allow a range of businesses to discriminate.

"Today, the Court, for the first time in its history, grants a business open to the public a constitutional right to refuse to serve members of a protected class," Sotomayor wrote in a dissent joined by Justice Elena Kagan and Justice Ketanji Brown Jackson.

Sotomayor, who read a summary of her dissent in court to underscore her disagreement, said the decision's logic "cannot be limited to discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation or gender identity." A website designer could refuse to create a wedding website for an interracial couple, a stationer could refuse to sell a birth announcement for a disabled couple, and a large retail store could limit its portrait services to "traditional" families, she wrote.

President Joe Biden said in a statement that the ruling was "disappointing," adding that it "weakens long-standing laws that protect all Americans against discrimination in public accommodations – including people of color, people with disabilities, people of faith, and women."

Sotomayor referenced the court's history with the issue of gay rights in her dissent, writing: "The LGBT rights movement has made historic strides, and I am proud of the role this Court has recently played in that history. Today, however, we are taking steps backward."

"Today is a sad day in American constitutional law and in the lives of LGBT people. ... the immediate, symbolic effect of the decision is to mark gays and lesbians for second-class status," she wrote at another point.

Even as it has expanded gay rights, however, the court has been careful to say those with differing religious views needed to be respected. The belief that marriage can only be between one man and one woman is an idea that "long has been held — and continues to be held — in good faith by reasonable and sincere people here and throughout the world," Justice Anthony Kennedy wrote in the court's gay marriage decision.

The court returned to that idea five years ago when it was confronted with the case of a Christian baker who objected to designing a cake for a same-sex wedding. The court issued a limited ruling in favor of the baker, Jack Phillips, saying there had been impermissible hostility toward his religious views in the consideration of his case. Phillips' lawyer, Kristen Waggoner, of the Alliance Defending Freedom, also brought the most recent case to the court. On Friday, she said the Supreme Court was right to reaffirm that the government cannot compel people to say things they do not believe.

"Disagreement isn't discrimination, and the government can't mislabel speech as discrimination to censor it," she said in a statement.

While basking in the legal win, Smith was forced to answer questions about revelations this week that a man her legal team said requested a wedding website had never asked to work with her.

The request, from a person identified as "Stewart," wasn't the basis for the federal lawsuit filed preemptively by Smith before she started making wedding websites, but it was referenced by her attorneys.

Stewart told The Associated Press he never submitted the request and didn't know his name was invoked

Shooting in France shows US is not alone in struggles with racism, police brutality

By CLAUDIA LAUER and ALANNA DURKIN RICHER Associated Press

A police killing caught on video. Protests and rioting fueled by long-simmering tensions over law enforcement treatment of minorities. Demands for accountability.

The events in France following the death of a 17-year-old shot by police in a Paris suburb are drawing parallels to the racial reckoning in the U.S. spurred by the killings of George Floyd and other people of color at the hands of law enforcement.

Despite the differences between the two countries' cultures, police forces and communities, the shooting in France and the outcry that erupted there this week laid bare how the U.S. is not alone in its struggles with systemic racism and police brutality.

"These are things that happen when you're French but with foreign roots. We're not considered French, and they only look at the color of our skin, where we come from, even if we were born in France," said Tracy Ladji, an activist with SOS Racisme. "Racism within the police kills, and way too many of them embrace far-right ideas so ... this has to stop."

In an editorial published this week, the French newspaper Le Monde wrote that the recent events "are reminiscent" of Floyd's 2020 killing by a white Minneapolis police officer that spurred months of unrest in the U.S. and internationally, including in Paris.

"This act was committed by a law enforcement officer, was filmed and broadcast almost live and involved an emblematic representative of a socially discriminated category," the newspaper wrote.

The French teen, identified only as Nahel, was shot during a traffic stop Tuesday in the Paris suburb of Nanterre. Video showed two officers at the window of the car, one with his gun pointed at the driver. As the teenager pulled forward, the officer fired once through the windshield.

Nahel's grandmother, who was not identified by name, told Algerian television Ennahar TV that her family has roots in Algeria.

Preliminary charges of voluntary homicide were filed against the officer accused of pulling the trigger, though that has done little to quell the rioting that has spread across the country and led to hundreds of arrests. The officer said he feared he and his colleague or someone else could be hit by the car as Nahel attempted to flee, a prosecutor has said.

Officials have not disclosed the race of the officer. His lawyer said he did what he thought was necessary in the moment. Speaking on French TV channel BFMTV, the lawyer said the officer is "devastated," adding that "he really didn't want to kill."

Nahel's mother, identified only as Mounia M., told France 5 television she's not angry at the police in general. She's angry at the officer who killed her only child.

"He saw an Arab-looking little kid. He wanted to take his life," she said.

Police shootings in France are significantly less common than in the U.S. but have been on the rise since 2017. Several experts believe that correlates with a law loosening restrictions on when officers can use lethal force against drivers after a series of terrorist attacks using vehicles.

Officers can shoot at a vehicle when a driver fails to comply with an order and when a driver's actions are likely to endanger their lives or those of others. French police have also been regularly criticized for their violent tactics.

Unlike the U.S., France does not keep any data on race and ethnicity as part of its doctrine of colorblind universalism — an approach purporting to see everyone as equal citizens. Critics say that doctrine has masked generations of systemic racism.

"I can't think of a country in Europe that has more longstanding or pernicious problems of police racism, brutality and impunity," Paul Hirschfield, director of the criminal justice program at Rutgers University, said of France. Hirschfield has published multiple papers comparing policing practices and killings in America to those in other countries.

Experts said the video of the shooting — which appeared to contradict initial statements from police that

in the lawsuit until he was contacted this week by The New Republic, which first reported his denial.

"I was incredibly surprised given the fact that I've been happily married to a woman for the last 15 years," he said. He declined to give his last name for fear of harassment and threats. It was not included in court documents listing his phone number and email address.

Waggoner said the wedding request naming Stewart was submitted through Smith's website and denied it was fabricated. The lawyer suggested it could have been a troll making the request.

Smith, who owns a Colorado design business called 303 Creative, does not currently create wedding websites. She has said that she wants to but that her Christian faith would prevent her from creating websites celebrating same-sex marriages. And that's where she ran into conflict with state law.

Colorado, like most other states, has a law forbidding businesses open to the public from discriminating against customers. And about half of the states have laws explicitly prohibiting discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity. Colorado said that under its so-called public accommodations law, if Smith offers wedding websites to the public, she must provide them to all customers, regardless of sexual orientation. Businesses that violate the law can be fined, among other things. Smith argued that applying the law to her violates her First Amendment rights, and the Supreme Court agreed.

The case is 303 Creative LLC v. Elenis, 21-476.

Follow the AP's coverage of the U.S. Supreme Court at <https://apnews.com/hub/us-supreme-court>.

Virginia high school admissions case could be legal follow-up to affirmative action ruling

By MATTHEW BARAKAT Associated Press

FALLS CHURCH, Va. (AP) — A federal appeals court's ruling last month about the admissions policy at an elite public high school in Virginia may provide a vehicle for the U.S. Supreme Court to flesh out the intended scope of its ruling Thursday banning affirmative action in college admissions.

The Thomas Jefferson High School for Science and Technology, outside the nation's capital, routinely ranks as one of the best public schools in America; admission is highly competitive.

A coalition of parents, backed by a conservative legal foundation, filed a lawsuit in 2021 challenging the admissions policy at TJ, and the foundation is asking the Supreme Court to take up the case. The suit raises similar but not identical issues to those addressed by the high court's ruling rejecting admissions policies at Harvard and the University of North Carolina as unconstitutional.

The colleges' admissions rules took an applicant's race into account as one of many factors to be considered. In the TJ case, though, all sides agree the admissions policies are race-neutral on their face.

But the coalition that filed the lawsuit says the admissions criteria amount to "race-based proxies" implemented to achieve racial balancing. They say the policy discriminates against Asian Americans, who had constituted 70% of the student body.

The coalition also cites the debate among Fairfax County School Board members when they implemented their new policy in 2020. Board members and administrators expressed frustration that Black and Hispanic students had been woefully underrepresented at TJ for decades. The coalition argues the new policies are intended to boost Black and Hispanic representation at the expense of Asians.

The first freshman class admitted under the new rules saw a significantly different racial makeup. Black students increased from 1% to 7%; Hispanic representation increased from 3% to 11%. Asian American representation decreased from 73% to 54%.

The new policies replaced a standardized test with a process that allocates a percentage of seats on a geographic basis and takes a student's "experience factors" into account, like whether they come from a low-income household or speak English as a second language.

Last year, a federal judge found the admissions policy unconstitutional, saying "the discussion of admissions changes was infected with talk of racial balancing from its inception."

But in May, the 4th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals in Richmond reversed that ruling. In a 2-1 decision, the

judges said the school board had a legitimate interest in increasing diversity and that labeling those efforts as discrimination against Asian Americans "simply runs counter to common sense."

The Pacific Legal Foundation, which represents the parents claiming anti-Asian discrimination, is asking the U.S. Supreme Court to take the case.

"We think it presents a really strong vehicle and the time is right. And we're certainly hopeful the court will take it up," said Joshua Thompson, a senior attorney at the foundation.

Eugene Kontorovich, a law professor at George Mason University, said there will be years of follow-up cases to Thursday's ruling, as is typical with major Supreme Court cases, as colleges drag their feet and look for ways to salvage policies to which they are ideologically committed.

He was less certain, though, that the TJ case will be significant. He said the debate over the constitutionality of TJ's policies will be fact-intensive and center on what can be proved about the school board's motivations in implementing the policy.

More likely, he said, is debate over how colleges use essay questions on topics like diversity to achieve the same results as the now-banned affirmative action programs.

Supreme Court Chief Justice John Roberts' majority opinion left a little bit of wiggle room on that front when he wrote that colleges can consider an individual's application essay and "how race affected his or her life, be it through discrimination, inspiration or otherwise."

But Roberts also noted that colleges "may not simply establish through application essays or other means the regime we hold unlawful today."

Kontorovich said colleges will ask essay questions about topics like diversity "that will give them the latitude to quietly take race into consideration in ways that will be more subtle." Ultimately, though, he thinks the court, at least as it's currently constituted, will reject those sorts of end-around attempts.

Fairfax County Public Schools said Friday it is reviewing the Supreme Court ruling.

Thompson said Pacific Legal expects to formally submit its petition to the Supreme Court in August and will likely know by the end of the year whether the case will be heard.

Web designer in Supreme Court gay rights ruling cited client who denies making wedding site request

By COLLEEN SLEVIN, JESSE BEDAYN and MATTHEW BROWN Associated Press

DENVER (AP) — A Colorado web designer who the U.S. Supreme Court ruled Friday could refuse to make wedding websites for gay couples cited a request from a man who says he never asked to work with her.

The request in dispute, from a person identified as "Stewart," wasn't the basis for the federal lawsuit filed preemptively seven years ago by web designer Lorie Smith, before she started making wedding websites. But as the case advanced, it was referenced by her attorneys when lawyers for the state of Colorado pressed Smith on whether she had sufficient grounds to sue.

The revelation distracts from Smith's victory at a time when she might have been basking in her win, which is widely considered a setback for gay rights.

Smith named Stewart — and included a website service request from him, listing his phone number and email address in 2017 court documents. But Stewart told The Associated Press he never submitted the request and didn't know his name was invoked in the lawsuit until he was contacted this week by a reporter from The New Republic, which first reported his denial.

"I was incredibly surprised given the fact that I've been happily married to a woman for the last 15 years," said Stewart, who declined to give his last name for fear of harassment and threats. His contact information, but not his last name, were listed in court documents.

He added that he was a designer and "could design my own website if I need to" — and was concerned no one had checked into the validity of the request cited by Smith until recently.

Smith's lawyer, Kristen Waggoner, said at a Friday news conference that the wedding request naming Stewart was submitted through Smith's website and denied it was fabricated.

She suggested it could have been a troll making the request, something that's happened with other clients she has represented. In 2018 her client Colorado baker Jack Phillips won a partial U.S. Supreme Court victory after refusing to make a gay couple's wedding cake, citing his Christian faith.

"It's undisputed that the request was received," Waggoner said. "Whether that was a troll and not a genuine request, or it was someone who was looking for that, is really irrelevant to the case."

Colorado Attorney General Phil Weiser on Friday called the lawsuit a "made up case" because Smith wasn't offering wedding website services when the suit was filed.

Weiser didn't know the specifics of Stewart's denial, but said the nation's high court should not have addressed the lawsuit's merits "without any basis in reality."

About a month after the case was filed in federal court challenging an anti-discrimination law in Colorado, lawyers for the state said Smith had not been harmed by the law as they moved to dismiss the case.

Her lawyers maintained Smith did not have to be punished for violating the law before challenging it. In February 2017 they said even though she did not need a request in order to pursue the case, she had received one.

"Any claim that Lorie will never receive a request to create a custom website celebrating a same-sex ceremony is no longer legitimate because Lorie has received such a request," they said.

Smith's Supreme Court filings briefly mentioned she received at least one request to create a website celebrating the wedding of a same-sex couple. There did not appear to be any reference to the issue in the court's decision.

Associated Press researcher Rhonda Shafner contributed to this report from New York.

Jill Biden hosts military chefs crowned 'Chopped' champs for guest stint in White House Navy Mess

By DARLENE SUPERVILLE and COLLEEN LONG Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — An Air Force chef and a Marine Corps chef, both crowned "Chopped" champions during Jill Biden's appearance on a military-themed episode of the Food Network show, spent Friday whipping up lemon-herb scallops and osso buco in the White House Navy Mess.

Air Force chef Opal Poullard, 37, and Marine Corps chef Dustin Lewis, 34, accepted the mission from the first lady, who made a surprise appearance in a May episode of "Chopped," as part of her White House initiative to support active-duty and retired service members, their families and caregivers.

A panel of judges ruled that the four-person team of military chefs, which included an Army and a Navy cook, had defeated a team of four Food Network celebrity chefs. The first lady congratulated the winners, gave them White House aprons signed by herself and President Joe Biden and invited them to the executive mansion to help cook for the Fourth of July on Tuesday.

The guest chef stint at the White House came as Jill Biden on Friday visited the Marine Corps Recruit Depot on Parris Island, South Carolina, to help mark the 50th anniversary of the nation's all-volunteer military, which she and the president will also celebrate on Tuesday.

After returning to the White House, the first lady visited Lewis and Poullard and sampled the food, her office said. She also met with the Navy Mess staff.

Poullard is a Los Angeles native based at Fort Gregg-Adams in Virginia, where she is an advanced culinary instructor. Lewis, who was born in Dayton, Ohio, and is stationed in North Carolina, most recently was executive chef to the Marine Corps commandant. He previously served as the executive chef to Presidents Barack Obama and Donald Trump.

Lewis' signature dish was lemon-herb scallops with wild mushroom parmesan risotto and roasted asparagus with white truffle herb oil and charred focaccia. Poullard's, inspired by her travels to Rome, was braised osso buco, or veal shanks, served with polenta, shaved parmesan, crispy fennel and shallots.

The Navy Mess, located on the lower level of the West Wing of the White House, serves breakfast, lunch

and dinner for staff. The U.S. Navy's Presidential Food Service operates the mess' executive dining rooms and provides carryout and catering services.

Superville reported from Kissimmee, Florida.

Biden offers new student debt relief plan, lashes out at GOP after Supreme Court ruling

By WILL WEISSERT and COLLEEN LONG Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Joe Biden vowed Friday to push ahead with a new plan providing student loan relief for millions of borrowers, while blaming Republican "hypocrisy" for triggering the day's Supreme Court decision that wiped out his original effort.

Biden said his administration had already begun the process of working under the authority of the Higher Education Act of 1965, which he called "the best path that remains to provide as many borrowers as possible with debt relief."

In the meantime, since student loan-payment requirements are to resume in the fall, the White House is creating an "on ramp" to repayment and implementing ways to ease borrowers' threat of default if they fall behind over the next year.

The president said the new programs will take longer than his initial effort would have to ease student loan debt.

Speaking to reporters at the White House, Biden said borrowers now angry about the court's decision should blame Republicans. He is trying to stay on the political offensive even as the ruling undermined a key promise to young voters who will be vital to his 2024 reelection campaign.

"These Republican officials just couldn't bear the thought of providing relief for working class, middle class Americans," Biden said. "The hypocrisy of Republican elected officials is stunning."

Trying to place staunch opposition to student loan forgiveness on the GOP could allow Biden's reelection campaign to maintain the issue as one of strength in the short term. But that may ultimately offer little solace to 43 million Americans who benefited from the initial program and will now have to wait for its replacement to take shape.

"We do not want to go into excruciating debt for our entire lives to enhance our education," Voters of Tomorrow, a Gen Z-led organization that promotes the power of young Americans, said in a statement.

The White House efforts to forgive loans were an attempt to keep a Biden promise stretching back to his 2020 campaign to wipe out student loan debt — an idea that was especially popular with young voters and progressives. Both will be key for the president in next year's presidential race but may be less energized about supporting him after the high court's decision.

Wisdom Cole, the national director of the NAACP Youth & College Division, said Black Americans helped put Biden in the White House, so there's an obligation for him to "finish the job" with his pledges to provide relief for borrowers.

"It's going to have a huge impact on the next election," Cole said, adding, "If we don't do this, we continue the cycle of seeing our elected leaders make promises and not follow through."

A May poll from The Associated Press-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research found that 43% of U.S. adults approve of how Biden sought to handle student debt, similar to his approval rating overall of 40% in the same poll.

The poll suggested that Biden gets credit for his handling of the issue among young adults in particular. Fifty-three percent of adults under age 30 said they approved of Biden's handling of student debt, compared with only 36% who approved of his job performance overall.

Senior administration officials said Biden's top advisers had met frequently lately to prepare for a high court ruling on student loans. They also spoke with advocates and allies in Congress. After Friday's decision, Biden met with top advisers and ordered them to immediately begin implementing a new loan plan.

The White House argues that its new efforts will stand up to future legal challenges, even given the

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Supreme Court's 6-3 current conservative majority. However, the administration also insisted its original plan was legal .

Biden bristled at suggestions his efforts to ease student loan burdens got borrowers' hopes up unnecessarily.

"I didn't give any false hope," he said. "The Republicans snatched away the hope that they were given."

The political stakes are especially high since progressive Democrats in Congress and activists have been clamoring for the administration to offer an alternative to Biden's original student loan plan for months, fearing that the Supreme Court would ultimately move to block the president's original efforts.

Many progressives argued that the Higher Education Act was the best vehicle all along, though the administration worried that implementation might have been slower had it originally tried employing the act.

The new approach uses a provision allowing Education Secretary Miguel Cardona to "compromise, waive or release" student loans. The Biden administration used the same basis last year to forgive \$6 billion in loans for borrowers who were deceived by their colleges.

The details of the new forgiveness will be negotiated through a federal rulemaking process that the administration launched Friday. The process allows the Education Department to write or change federal regulations with the weight of law.

But there's no guarantee that the plan could survive another legal challenge.

The Higher Education Act has been used to cancel student debt but never at this scale, and lawyers for the Trump administration concluded in 2021 that the education secretary "does not have statutory authority to provide blanket or mass cancellation" under the act.

The GOP has long countered that repaying student loans is a fairness issue, and many leading Republicans celebrated Friday's ruling. Betsy DeVos, who served as secretary of education under President Donald Trump, called Biden's original plan "deeply unfair to the majority of Americans who don't have student loans."

Republicans now seeking their party's 2024 presidential nomination lined up to applaud the decision, with former Vice President Mike Pence saying he was "pleased that the court struck down the radical left's effort to use the money of taxpayers who played by the rules and repaid their debts in order to cancel the debt of bankers and lawyers in New York, San Francisco, and Washington."

Addressing the Moms for Liberty conference in Philadelphia on Friday, Trump slammed Biden's efforts on student loans as "a way of trying to buy votes, that's all it was." Former U.S. ambassador to the United Nation's Nikki Haley said the Supreme Court was "right to throw out Joe Biden's power grab."

After Biden announced his response, some Republicans were equally quick to reject it.

"Taxpayers just got sucker punched – again – by this administration," said Rep. Virginia Foxx, a North Carolina Republican. "Today, President Biden announced that taxpayers will be forced to pay for the costliest regulation in our nation's history."

Associated Press writers Chris Megerian and Collin Binkley contributed to this report.

Haze, heat and storms are bringing danger and discomfort to many parts of the US

By TOM DAVIES and KRISTIN M. HALL Associated Press

INDIANAPOLIS (AP) — Smoky haze, hot weather and powerful storms brought dangerous and uncomfortable conditions to parts of the U.S. heading into a long July Fourth weekend that typically draws Americans to outdoor gatherings.

From heat waves in the South and West to unhealthy air quality in the Northeast, much of the U.S. was under the threat of extreme weather. In the Midwest, some residents Friday were recovering from a powerful storm that moved through Illinois and Indiana a day earlier packing winds that reached more than 70 miles per hour (112 kilometers per hour).

That storm damaged trees and buildings in the central parts of both states from the Mississippi River to the Indianapolis area. Crews worked to replace electrical lines entangled in downed trees ahead of more

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expected thunderstorms and temperatures climbing to around 90 degrees Fahrenheit (32 degrees Celsius). Utility companies reported that more than 250,000 homes and businesses were still without electricity.

Brian Alexander, 55, swept up debris from the front yard of his Springfield, Illinois, home. Tree limbs that fell on his car left several small dents.

"Very lucky on that," Alexander said. "No power, but we'll manage. We're just waiting for the city to get us hooked up again and we'll get everything cleaned up."

The National Weather Service said the storm was a derecho, which is often described as an inland hurricane because of its line of strong winds stretching for hundreds of miles.

"We had damage all the way from northeast Kansas, all the way down into Kentucky and across Indiana," said John Bumgardner, a meteorologist with the National Weather Service in Illinois.

In the South, a dangerous heat wave that has been blamed for the deaths of at least 14 people was expected to last into the weekend in some areas. Parts of Tennessee, Arkansas and Mississippi were under excessive heat warnings Friday as heat indexes rose above 110 degrees Fahrenheit (43 degrees Celsius) in some places.

In Memphis, Tennessee, officials said relief efforts were focused on the thousands of people who still had no power after storms Sunday that knocked down trees and power lines. In Nashville, residents and tourists alike tried to keep comfortable as temperatures climbed toward the upper 90s.

Leo Bennett, an employee of the county sheriff and at a private traffic control company, said he prepares for long days outside by drinking several bottles of water and packing a cooler.

"One of my secrets is the pickle juice," Bennett said. "I bring pickle juice to keep from cramping up or whatever the case might be."

At a park just outside downtown, teenage baseball players participated in a tournament and used cold towels between innings to cope with the heat. Coach Jordan Sheffield said he planned to pick up a fan for the dugout.

"You can kind of see it on their face, really. The red face a lot. A lot more of them red faced," said Sheffield. "A lot of hands on their knees, things like that. So I kind of keep an eye on that and just try to keep them as cool as possible."

The EPA warned Friday that parts of Pennsylvania, New York, New Jersey and Connecticut could experience "unhealthy" air conditions because of ongoing wildfires in Quebec and northern Ontario.

"The primary concern is high concentrations of fine particle air pollution that is unhealthy, especially for sensitive groups such as people with respiratory disease, the elderly, or people with compromised health," the agency said.

The Midwest storm helped clear that smoke from the region's air. The Environmental Protection Agency had listed many cities, including Chicago, Detroit, Indianapolis and Cleveland, Ohio, as having "very unhealthy air" earlier in the week.

But the Midwest might only have a brief respite with another storm is poised to move through the region Sunday, meteorologist Bumgardner said.

"Behind that our winds will probably switch back to northerly, which theoretically could bring a little more smoke into the area," Bumgardner said. "But that's tough to predict more than a day or two out."

Parts of the West were anticipating extremely hot, dry conditions forecast through the Fourth of July, raising concerns about the danger of fireworks shows and wildfires. Parts of California were under excessive-heat warnings and heat advisories that were expected to last through the weekend.

"Looking at our high temperature forecast, we can't help but feel like we've fallen into a ring of fire," the National Weather Service's Sacramento office tweeted.

Airline travelers got some relief Friday, with none of the weather-induced restrictions imposed earlier this week on planes landing and taking off at major airports in the Northeast.

Still, by midday on the East Coast more than 2,000 flights had been delayed and more than 300 others canceled — more than 200 of those on United Airlines, according to FlightAware.

Hall reported from Nashville. Associated Press writers John O'Connor in Springfield, Ill., John Antczak in Los Angeles, David Koenig in Dallas, Adrian Sainz in Memphis, Tennessee and Bruce Shipkowski in Trenton, N.J. contributed.

The Supreme Court rejects Biden's plan to wipe away \$400 billion in student loan debt

By MARK SHERMAN Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — A sharply divided Supreme Court on Friday effectively killed President Joe Biden's \$400 billion plan to cancel or reduce federal student loan debts for millions of Americans. But he declared, "This fight is not over."

The 6-3 decision, with conservative justices in the majority, said the Biden administration overstepped its authority with the plan, and it left borrowers on the hook for repayments that are expected to resume in the fall.

The court held that the administration needed Congress' endorsement before undertaking so costly a program. The majority rejected arguments that a bipartisan 2003 law dealing with national emergencies, known as the HEROES Act, gave Biden the power he claimed.

Biden, who once doubted his own authority to offer student loan forgiveness, said later Friday he would push ahead with a new debt relief plan while blaming Republican "hypocrisy" for the decision that wiped out his original effort.

The president said he would work toward a new path for student debt relief, using the Higher Education Act, which he called "the best path that remains to provide as many borrowers as possible with debt relief." He also moved to create an "on ramp" that would help ease the risk of default for students who fail to make payments when the current pause ends.

The president said he would work under the authority of the Higher Education Act to begin a new program designed to ease borrowers' threat of default if they fall behind over the next year.

The Supreme Court ruling was blunt in rejecting Biden's first plan.

"Six States sued, arguing that the HEROES Act does not authorize the loan cancellation plan. We agree," Chief Justice John Roberts wrote for the court.

Justice Elena Kagan, wrote in a dissent, joined by the court's two other liberals, that the majority of the court "overrides the combined judgment of the Legislative and Executive Branches, with the consequence of eliminating loan forgiveness for 43 million Americans." Kagan read a summary of her dissent in court to emphasize her disagreement.

Roberts, perhaps anticipating negative public reaction and aware of declining approval of the court, added an unusual coda to his opinion, cautioning that the liberals' dissent should not be mistaken for disparagement of the court itself. "It is important that the public not be misled either. Any such misperception would be harmful to this institution and our country," the chief justice wrote.

Biden blame Republican officials for causing the dispute that led to Friday's ruling.

They "had no problem with billions in pandemic-related loans to businesses. ... And those loans were forgiven," Biden said. "But when it came to providing relief to millions of hard-working Americans, they did everything in their power to stop it."

Loan repayments will resume in October, although interest will begin accruing in September, the Education Department has announced. Payments have been on hold since the start of the coronavirus pandemic more than three years ago.

The forgiveness program would have canceled \$10,000 in student loan debt for those making less than \$125,000 or households with less than \$250,000 in income. Pell Grant recipients, who typically demonstrate more financial need, would have had an additional \$10,000 in debt forgiven.

Twenty-six million people had applied for relief and 43 million would have been eligible, the administration said. The cost was estimated at \$400 billion over 30 years.

Advocacy groups supporting debt cancellation condemned the decision while demanding that Biden find

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another avenue to fulfill his promise of debt relief.

Natalia Abrams, president and founder of the Student Debt Crisis Center, said the responsibility for new action falls “squarely” on Biden’s shoulders. “The president possesses the power, and must summon the will, to secure the essential relief that families across the nation desperately need,” Abrams said in a statement.

The loan plan joins other pandemic-related initiatives that faltered at the Supreme Court.

Conservative majorities ended an eviction moratorium that had been imposed by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and blocked a plan to require workers at big companies to be vaccinated or undergo regular testing and wear a mask on the job. The court upheld a plan to require vaccinations of health-care workers.

The earlier programs were billed largely as public health measures intended to slow the spread of COVID-19. The loan forgiveness plan, by contrast, was aimed at countering the economic effects of the pandemic.

In more than three hours of arguments last February, conservative justices voiced their skepticism that the administration had the authority to wipe away or reduce student loans held by millions.

Republican-led states arguing before the court said the plan would have amounted to a “windfall” for 20 million people who would have seen their entire student debt disappear and been better off than they were before the pandemic.

Roberts was among those on the court who questioned whether non-college workers would essentially be penalized for a break for the college educated.

In contrast, the administration grounded the need for the sweeping loan forgiveness in the COVID-19 emergency and the continuing negative impacts on people near the bottom of the economic ladder. The declared emergency ended on May 11.

Without the promised loan relief, the administration’s top Supreme Court lawyer told the justices, “delinquencies and defaults will surge.”

At those arguments, Justice Sonia Sotomayor said her fellow justices would be making a mistake if they took for themselves, instead of leaving it to education experts, “the right to decide how much aid to give” people who would struggle if the program were struck down.

The HEROES Act — the Health and Economic Recovery Omnibus Emergency Solutions Act — has allowed the secretary of education to waive or modify the terms of federal student loans in connection with a national emergency. The law was primarily intended to keep service members from being hurt financially while they fought in wars in Afghanistan and Iraq.

Biden announced the program last August and legal challenges quickly followed.

The court majority said the Republican-led states had cleared an early hurdle that required them to show they would be financially harmed if the program had been allowed to take effect.

The states did not even rely on any direct injury to themselves, but instead pointed to the Missouri Higher Education Loan Authority, a state-created company that services student loans.

Nebraska Solicitor General James Campbell, arguing before the court in February, said the Authority would lose about 40% of its revenues if the Biden plan went into effect. Independent research has cast doubt on the financial harm MOHELA would face, suggesting that the agency would still see an increase in revenue even if Biden’s cancellation went through. That information was not part of the court record.

A federal judge initially found that the states would not be harmed and dismissed their lawsuit before an appellate panel said the case could proceed.

In a second case, the justices ruled unanimously that two Texans who filed a separate challenge did not have legal standing to sue. But the outcome of that case has no bearing on the court’s decision to block the debt relief plan.

Associated Press writers Collin Binkley, Colleen Long and Darlene Superville contributed to this report.

Follow the AP’s coverage of the Supreme Court at <https://apnews.com/hub/us-supreme-court>

Wider than websites? LGBTQ+ advocates fear broader discrimination after Supreme Court ruling

By REBECCA BOONE Associated Press

A new U.S. Supreme Court ruling allowing a Colorado Christian graphic artist to refuse to work with same-sex couples has LGBTQIA+ people across the country worried about just how far the consequences will reach.

The high court's conservative majority sided with Lorie Smith, a designer of wedding websites for heterosexual couples who argued that a ruling against her would force writers, painters, musicians and other artists to do work that is against their beliefs. Opponents warned that a win for Smith would allow a range of businesses to discriminate, refusing to serve Black, Jewish or Muslim customers, interracial or interfaith couples or immigrants.

"We're treading into some weird territory as people. We're starting to become the 'Morality Police,' and that's not freedom as far as I am concerned," Dallas Lyn Miller-Downes, a queer visual artist and activist based in Portland, Oregon, said Friday, hours after the court's 6-3 ruling. "What I am scared of is that this goes beyond the art. Where do we stop with this?"

One of the court's liberal justices wrote in a dissent that the decision's effect is to "mark gays and lesbians for second-class status" and that it opens the door to other discrimination.

In Topeka, Kansas, where several dozen people gathered Friday for a transgender rights rally, Kirby Evers, a 31-year-old bisexual Lawrence resident, said the ruling will make people more comfortable being openly rude or using slurs, particularly to trans people.

He called the Supreme Court "compromised by fascists," adding, "They're going to do as much destruction to our Constitution as possible."

Raiden Gonzalez, a 22-year-old gay Salina, Kansas, resident participating in the rally, said he's regularly gotten looks over how he walks and talks — and brusque treatment in stores and school, even occasionally from teachers.

"People in the LGBTQ community should be scared of this," he said.

Miller-Downes said the ruling feels like just another way art is being used as a weapon against the queer community — with drag artists banned in some parts of the country and LGBTQ+ customers at risk of being banned from artistic businesses in others.

"Art should inspire people, heal people and start conversations. We should be known for how we love, not who we exclude — that's a morality I can stand behind as a Christian and an artist," Miller-Downes said. "We need to, as a society, celebrate businesses owned by marginalized people so other marginalized people, queer people, know where to get help."

Legal analysts on both sides of the issue have said the decision is narrow and won't apply to most businesses. Jennifer C. Pizer, the chief legal officer for Lambda Legal, said in a statement that the ruling applies specifically to businesses that create original artwork and pure speech, and then offer that work as limited commissions.

Still, she said, the ruling continued the court majority's "dangerous siren call to those trying to return the country to the social and legal norms of the Nineteenth Century."

Sarah Warbelow, legal director at Human Rights Campaign, said Friday's ruling does not dismantle the public accommodations laws that protect people based on sexual orientation and gender identity in 22 states.

Those states can still enforce their nondiscrimination laws for employment, housing and buying goods that are not highly customizable with speech, she said. For instance, someone preparing for a same-sex marriage could still buy a wedding gown customized with colors.

But Warbelow said the ruling also opens the door to businesses being allowed to discriminate against people for reasons other than sexual orientation, like religion.

Many conservative religious leaders welcomed the ruling, including Brent Leatherwood, president of the Southern Baptist Convention's public policy wing.

"If the government can compel an individual to speak a certain way or create certain things, that's not freedom — it's subjugation. And that is precisely what the state of Colorado wanted," said Leatherwood.

Francis DeBernardo, executive director of New Ways Ministry, which advocates for greater LGBTQ+ acceptance in the Catholic Church, said the decision "dangerously allows religious beliefs to be weaponized for discrimination."

"Religion should be a tool to help unite people across ideological lines, not cause greater isolation into camps that oppose one another," he said.

Christine Zuba, a transgender woman from Blackwood, New Jersey, has been active in seeking to increase acceptance of trans people in the Catholic Church. She said the justices who made the "extremely disappointing and concerning" ruling were "naïve" to think the decision wouldn't lead to discrimination against other groups as well.

While some small businesses could use the ruling to stop serving some customers, they should be aware that there will be repercussions, said Gene Marks, owner of The Marks Group, a small business consulting firm in Bala Cynwyd, Pennsylvania.

"If you're a business and you're going to turn down customers just because they're different or your religion doesn't support their style of life, fair enough, but it's going to be a loss of revenue to you not only from that customer, but also from their friends, their family, their community," he said. "And it can also be potentially bad press regardless of how the Supreme Court rules."

AP journalists Geoff Mulvihill in Cherry Hill, New Jersey; John Hanna in Topeka, Kansas; David Crary and Mae Anderson in New York; Meg Kinnard in Columbia, South Carolina; and Jessica Gresko in Washington contributed to this story. Boone reported from Boise, Idaho.

Fox News reaches \$12M settlement with former Tucker Carlson producer who testified in Dominion case

By LARRY NEUMEISTER Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — Fox News will pay one of its former producers \$12 million to settle her claims that she faced a discriminatory workplace and that the network coerced her into giving false or misleading testimony in Dominion Inc.'s defamation lawsuit, her lawyer said Friday.

The payout to Abby Grossberg will settle all litigation that she brought against Fox Corp., Fox News Network and her former co-workers, including former Fox host Tucker Carlson.

The settlement was revealed with the filing of a "Notice of Voluntary Dismissal" in a lawsuit she had brought this year in Manhattan federal court. The judge accepted the filing and closed the case.

Although the notice did not reference the terms of the settlement, Grossberg's attorney, Parisis G. Filipatos, said in an interview that his client will receive \$12 million.

In a statement, Fox News said: "We are pleased that we have been able to resolve this matter without further litigation."

Grossberg said in a statement that while she stands by claims she made in her Manhattan lawsuit and another lawsuit in the Delaware State Superior Court, she was "heartened that Fox News has taken me and my legal claims seriously. I am hopeful, based on our discussions with Fox News today, that this resolution represents a positive step by the Network regarding its treatment of women and minorities in the workplace."

The Manhattan lawsuit claimed that Fox's legal team "coerced, intimidated, and misinformed" Grossberg during preparations for her testimony in a legal battle between the network and Dominion, an elections technology company.

She maintained in the lawsuit that she had received "damaging and woefully inferior and inadequate legal representation" compared to male counterparts at Fox News and that the experience had resulted in "irretrievable reputational and emotional harm."

In April, just before opening statements were to begin at trial, Fox agreed to pay more than \$787 mil-

lion to settle the lawsuit with Dominion Voting Systems over the network's airing of false claims following the 2020 presidential election. The settlement was reached shortly before Carlson was expected to be called to testify.

Less than a week later, on April 24, Carlson, the network's most popular personality, was fired. Grossberg had worked as "Head of Booking" for Carlson from Sept. 5 until March.

In her federal lawsuit, Grossberg asserted that Carlson's show had a cruel and misogynistic workplace, and that she had been pressured to give misleading testimony during a pretrial deposition in the Dominion case.

As Grossberg noted in the lawsuit, Dominion had quoted from her deposition in one of its pretrial court filings to support its position that Fox News hosts, producers and executives knew statements about the 2020 election being "stolen" from President Donald Trump were false or recklessly disregarded the truth.

The lawsuit said Dominion directly cited Grossberg's answer when she was posed the question: "If someone says something untrue on one of your shows, do you think it's important to correct it?"

"No," she answered.

Her lawsuit said: "This was not the testimony Ms. Grossberg wanted to give but she had been conditioned and felt coerced to give this response that simultaneously painted her in a negative light as a professional."

According to her lawsuit, she requested a copy of her deposition transcript after her deposition and expressed concern that her testimony was not fully accurate because of the intimidating and confusing coaching she'd received. But lawyers at Fox News withheld the transcript.

When prominent media outlets called her journalism and professional ethics into question based on excerpts of her deposition included in Dominion's pretrial arguments, Grossberg began to experience severe anxiety and stress because of the public distribution of her uncorrected transcript, the lawsuit said.

Jan. 6 suspect arrested near Obama's Washington home had guns, machete in his van, feds say

Associated Press undefined

WASHINGTON (AP) — A man arrested near former President Barack Obama's Washington home on charges in the U.S. Capitol riot had two guns, 400 rounds of ammunition as well as a machete in his van, a federal prosecutor said Friday.

Taylor Taranto, 37, was arrested Thursday after being spotted a few blocks from the former president's home and chased by U.S. Secret Service agents. Court documents unsealed Friday show Taranto is charged with four misdemeanors related to the Jan. 6, 2021, Capitol attack, including disorderly and disruptive conduct in a restricted building or grounds.

The Justice Department, during a hearing in Washington's federal court, disclosed the details about the weapons found in the van that the man appeared to be living in, NBC News reported. Taranto was ordered to remain behind bars pending a detention hearing scheduled for next Wednesday.

An email seeking comment was sent to Taranto's attorney on Friday.

It was not clear whether the Obamas were at their home at the time of his arrest. The explosives team swept Taranto's van and said there were no threats to the public. No one was injured.

Taranto was a U.S. Navy veteran and a webmaster for the Republican Party in Franklin County, in Washington state, according to the Tri-City Herald newspaper. He told the newspaper in an interview last year that he was volunteering for the Republican Party.

After attending then-President Donald Trump's "Stop the Steal" rally on Jan. 6, Taranto joined rioters on the Upper West Terrace, where he picked up and threw pieces of metal scaffolding, according to court papers.

Taranto entered the Capitol building and was near another rioter, Ashli Babbitt, when a police officer shot and killed her as she climbed through a glass window leading to the House chambers, the FBI said in a court filing. Before he left the building, Taranto and other rioters scuffled with police officers, the filing says.

On a Facebook account authorities say appears to be run by Taranto and his wife, Taranto posted a video

in which he proclaimed to be inside the Capitol with the caption: "This is me 'stormin' the capitol' lol I'm only sharing this so someone will report me to the feds and we can get this party rolling!"

Taranto showed up in court this month for the sentencing hearing of another man who was convicted in the riot, authorities said. He was also interviewed for a video posted online this month in which he identified himself in footage during the riot, saying "That's me screaming."

More than 1,000 people have been charged with federal crimes related to the Capitol riot. Over 600 of them have pleaded guilty, while approximately 100 others have been convicted after trials decided by judges or juries. More than 550 riot defendants have been sentenced, with over half receiving terms of imprisonment ranging from six days to 18 years.

Brazil's Jair Bolsonaro is barred from running for office until 2030

By MAURICIO SAVARESE and DIANE JEANTET Associated Press

SAO PAULO (AP) — Far-right former Brazilian President Jair Bolsonaro was barred Friday from running for office again until 2030 after a panel of judges concluded that he abused his power and cast unfounded doubts on the country's electronic voting system.

The decision upends the 68-year-old's political future and likely erases any chance for him to regain power.

Five judges on the nation's highest electoral court agreed that Bolsonaro used government communication channels to promote his campaign and sowed distrust about the vote. Two judges voted against the move.

"This decision will end Bolsonaro's chances of being president again, and he knows it," said Carlos Melo, a political science professor at Insper University in Sao Paulo. "After this, he will try to stay out of jail, elect some of his allies to keep his political capital, but it is very unlikely he will ever return to the presidency."

The case focused on a July 18, 2022, meeting where Bolsonaro used government staffers, the state television channel and the presidential palace in Brasilia to tell foreign ambassadors that the country's electronic voting system was rigged.

In her decisive vote that formed a majority, Judge Carmen Lucia — who is also a Supreme Court justice — said "the facts are incontrovertible."

"The meeting did take place. It was convened by the then-president. Its content is available. It was examined by everyone, and there was never a denial that it did happen," she said.

Alexandre de Moraes, also a Supreme Court justice, said the decision represents rejection of "populism reborn from the flames of hateful, antidemocratic speech that promotes heinous disinformation."

Speaking to reporters in Minas Gerais, Bolsonaro lamented that the trial was unfair and politically motivated.

"We're going to talk with the lawyers. Life goes on," he said when asked what his next step would be. He called the ruling an attack on Brazilian democracy. "It's a rather difficult moment."

Melo said the decision is "very unlikely" to be overturned. It removes Bolsonaro from the 2024 and 2028 municipal elections as well as the 2026 general elections. The former president also faces other legal troubles, including criminal investigations. Future criminal convictions could extend his ban by years and subject him to imprisonment.

Former President Fernando Collor de Mello and current President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva were declared ineligible in the past, but Bolsonaro's case marks the first time a president has been suspended for election violations rather than a criminal offense. Brazilian law forbids candidates with criminal sentences from running for office.

Lula's eligibility was reinstated by Brazil's top court following rulings that then-judge and now Sen. Sergio Moro was biased when he sentenced the leftist leader to almost 10 years in prison for corruption and money laundering.

Maria Maris, a 58-year-old engineer in Rio de Janeiro, celebrated the ruling, though said she suspects it may have been politically motivated.

"My fear is that Bolsonaro appeals and runs in the next presidential election, even though he was made ineligible today," Maris said.

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Bolsonaro holds a ceremonial leadership role within his Liberal Party and has traveled around Brazil criticizing Lula, who won last October's election with the narrowest margin in over three decades.

Thousands of Bolsonaro supporters stormed government buildings on Jan. 8 — one week after Lula took power — in an attempt to oust the leftist from power. Swift jailing and prosecution of hundreds of those who participated had a chilling effect on their rejection of the election's results. Federal police are investigating Bolsonaro's role in inciting the uprising; he has denied any wrongdoing.

The chairwoman of Lula's Workers' Party, Gleisi Hoffmann, said on her social media channels that Bolsonaro's ineligibility offers a teachable moment.

"The far-right needs to know that the political struggle takes place within the democratic process, and not with violence and threatening a coup," she said. Bolsonaro "will be out of the game because he doesn't respect the rules. Not only him, his whole gang of coup mongers has to follow the same path."

The trial has reenergized Bolsonaro's base online, with supporters claiming he is a victim of an unfair judicial system and comparing his fate to that of former U.S. President Donald Trump, according to Marie Santini, coordinator of NetLab, a research group at the Federal University of Rio de Janeiro that monitors social media.

However, that engagement pales in comparison to the levels seen ahead of last year's polarizing election.

The expression of Katia Caminha, a 67 year-old retiree in Rio de Janeiro's Copacabana neighborhood, crumbled upon hearing the news that a majority of judges had voted against Bolsonaro. She told The Associated Press that she thought the whole trial had been a "clown show."

"Everything that has to do with the electoral court is biased and against" Bolsonaro. "This is terrible news for Brazil," Caminha said.

This week, his supporters showed their continued support with contributions to help him pay 1.1 million reais (about \$230,000) in fines levied by Sao Paulo state's government for Bolsonaro's repeated violations of health protocols during the COVID-19 pandemic.

While Bolsonaro aims to be the right's kingmaker, and his endorsement will carry significant heft, his decision to decamp to Florida for several months at the start of Lula's term weakened him, said Thomas Traumann, a political analyst. That is reflected by the limited right-wing outrage on social media throughout the eligibility trial, and no sign of protests.

"There won't be a mass movement, because he diminished in size. The fact that he went to Florida and didn't lead the opposition caused him to diminish in size," Traumann said. "The leader of the opposition is clearly not Bolsonaro."

As the trial drew to a close, a trumpeter standing outside the electoral court played the song that became a sensation during last year's presidential race: "It is Time for Jair to Go Away."

Jeantet reported from Rio. Associated Press Writer Carla Bridi contributed to this report.

The world's tallest flagpole. A tiny Maine town. An idea meant to unite people is dividing them

By DAVID SHARP Associated Press

COLUMBIA FALLS, Maine (AP) — Lobster boat engines rumble to life in quiet coves. Lumberjacks trudge deep into the woods. Farmers tend expanses of wild blueberries. Maine's Down East region is where the sunlight first kisses the East Coast of the United States each day, where the vast wilderness and ocean meet in one of the last places on the East Coast unspoiled by development.

Which makes it a striking backdrop to one family's bold vision for the region: a flagpole jutting upward from the woodlands toward spacious skies — the tallest one ever, reaching higher than the Empire State Building. And atop it? A massive American flag bigger than a football field, visible from miles away on a clear day.

To promoters, the \$1 billion project, funded in part by donations, would unite people of all political stripes and remind them of shared values in an era of national polarization. Here's how Morrill Worcester, founder

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of Worcester Wreath, tells it: "We want to bring Americans together, remind them of the centuries of sacrifice made to protect our freedom, and unite a divided America."

So far, the project — called the Flagpole of Freedom Park — has done precisely the opposite. In Columbia Falls, population 485, the place closest to the patch of land where the pole would rise, the debate has laid bare community and cultural flashpoints.

Does the quiet area want the visitors it would bring? Would the massive undertaking scar the landscape? How do you balance development and environmentalism? How do traditional industries fare alongside service-economy jobs?

And perhaps most significant of all: How does an American town demonstrate its love of country in an era when even the Stars and Stripes themselves have been politicized?

The flagpole alone is an audacious proposal. It would be 1,461 feet tall, surpassing the Empire State Building, with elevators bringing people to observation decks where they could see clear to Canada. Frets one resident: "It's like putting the Eiffel Tower in the Maine wilderness."

But that isn't all. Morrill Worcester envisions a village with living history museums telling the country's story through veterans' eyes. There would be a 4,000-seat auditorium, restaurants and monument walls with the name of every deceased veteran dating to the Revolution. That's about 24 million names. Slick presentations showed what amounted to a patriotic theme park, replete with gondolas to ferry visitors around.

In Columbia Falls, many were stunned by the scale. It would require paving over woods for parking spaces and construction of housing for hundreds, maybe thousands of workers, potentially transforming this oasis into a sprawl of souvenir shops, fast-food restaurants and malls.

From overhead, the landscape here remains a sprawling green canopy. Below are dozens of streams, ponds and lakes brimming with trout and historic runs of Atlantic salmon. Deer, moose, black bears, beaver and fisher cats wander the forest floor. Interspersed with the woods are wild blueberry barrens.

"This is the last wilderness on the East Coast," says Marie Emerson, whose husband, Dell, is a beloved native son, a longtime blueberry farmer and university research farm manager.

She says it's that rugged coast and pristine wilderness that make this corner of the world special, and a large development could destroy woodlands and wild blueberry barrens that have been here 10,000 years, with Native Americans being the first stewards. She asks: "Do you want to kill the goose that laid the golden egg?"

Yet not all is gold. Tourists flock here in the summer to escape cities, pollution and noise, and to enjoy clean air and dark starry skies. But behind the beauty lies a region where many are struggling.

Logging, blueberry picking and lobstering don't always provide year-round employment; resourceful residents supplement incomes by digging for clams or collecting balsam tips for wreath-making. The region vies for the state's highest jobless and poverty rates. The county's residents are among the state's oldest, and it is dealing with rampant abuse of opioids.

There's a joke people tell around here. It goes something like this: We may send lobsters, blueberries and wreaths to the world, but our biggest export is young people looking for work.

Worcester's unique-to-America story of pride, patriotism and hubris begins at Arlington National Cemetery and the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier, where sacrifices represented by headstones left an impression when he was a boy.

He never forgot, even as he built his wreath-making company. In 1992, he began providing thousands of balsam wreaths to adorn headstones at Arlington. That continued quietly for years until photos showing the cemetery wreaths against a backdrop of snow went viral. The annual effort became so big that its nonprofit spinoff, Wreaths Across America, run by his wife, now provides more than 1 million wreaths to military cemeteries and gravesites.

It has made this corner of the world synonymous with patriotic fervor. Motorists entering Columbia

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Falls encounter flags and phrases of the Pledge of Allegiance spaced along U.S. 1. A welcome proclaims, "Columbia Falls, Home to Wreaths Across America."

Few question the family's motives. But as the wreath program grew, some became skeptical. To them, it looked like Worcester had hitched his cart to a sacred cow — the nation's veterans.

Worcester unveiled his even grander gesture last year. Yes, he briefed local officials first. But most residents learned of details when, in an act of classic American showmanship, he and his sons staged a formal announcement with flashy graphics showing the flagpole rising — wait for it — 1,776 feet above sea level.

"Most people were, let's say, shocked to see that it was that large," says Jeff Greene, a contractor and one of the town Select Board's three members.

There was a bigger problem. The proposed site is not technically in Columbia Falls. The 10,000-acre plot is in a neighboring township overseen by a state agency. Worcester's solution: push through the Legislature a bill to let residents vote to annex the land.

He also landed in hot water months later when the Maine Department of Environmental Protection accused Worcester Holdings of constructing Flagpole View Cabins — more than 50 of them — without necessary permits.

Town residents began taking sides. Some saw a soft-spoken man trying to provide much-needed jobs and doing something good. Others saw a businessman accustomed to getting his way, trying to ram his version of America down others' throats. Patriotism, they said, isn't measured by the height of a flagpole. And divisive political discourse seeping into the local discussion? That's not great, either, says Greene.

"What we're desperately in need of in this area in the country, or in the world as a whole, is the ability to listen to somebody you disagree with in an attempt to find something of value," he says, adding: "Even if you disagree with them."

On a recent day, Charlie Robbins found himself deep in the woods alongside Peaked Mountain Pond. The silence was broken by chirping birds, the gentle breeze and the gurgling of water flowing into a stream that feeds the Machias River, where endangered Atlantic salmon return.

In the distance stood a hill rising several hundred feet at the far end of the pond. That's where the flagpole would loom above the landscape, topped with an observation tower with blinking lights cutting through the dark stillness of night.

"It would be out of place," says Robbins, a retired Maine Department of Transportation worker who enjoys hunting and fishing, accompanied by his dogs, German pointers Max and Libby. His Eiffel Tower comparison notwithstanding, he doesn't question the motives of the flagpole. "It's just different than my vision," he says. "I hunt and fish the area. I don't like the crowds. It's kind of selfish, but that's the way I feel."

Many agree. In March, residents overwhelmingly approved a six-month moratorium on large developments to give the town time to develop the needed rules and regulations. Until they figure it out, no flagpole. No giant flag. No patriotic theme park.

Still, it's a delicate matter to criticize the flag, which intersects with fault lines in a country where politicians have wrapped themselves in red, white and blue.

During one town meeting, a resident said she didn't like the idea of waking up each morning and looking out her window to see a giant flagpole. Her comment struck a nerve.

"That didn't sit too well with me," says Peter Doak, puffing on a pipe in the kitchen of his house, which was built in the 1700s. "Maybe one day we'll wake up to the hammer and sickle flying up there," he growls, describing the flag of the former Soviet Union.

The retired school principal comes from a seafaring family stretching back across five generations, including Naval officers. He broke ranks and joined the Army. He was a Green Beret in Vietnam. Criticizing Old Glory sounds unpatriotic to him and others who served — and to families who lost loved ones to war.

"To say that the flagpole with the United States flag on it is an eyesore, I don't particularly like it," he says. "But they don't mind looking out the window at cellphone towers or the windmills."

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Morrill Worcester isn't saying much about it all these days. The Worcester family declined repeated requests for interviews. In a statement, the family said the project will move forward — while leaving the door open to changes.

The family is buoyed by support and donations — though it won't say how much money — and respects the wishes of town residents who want more time to study the proposal, Mike Worcester, one of Morrill Worcester's sons, said in a statement to The Associated Press.

"As we refine our plans," the statement said, "we remain committed to our vision, and remain more confident than ever that our evolving plan will result in a place where all Americans can celebrate our country's history of service together."

And so the project stands for now, frozen by administrative moratorium — a curious moment in the life of a town, and a glimpse into how the love of home and of country can be powerful, and can sometimes be at odds.

Doak, the army veteran, knows Morrill Worcester as a humble but determined man. And though Worcester never served in the military, no one questions his patriotism. Each week, Worcester stands alongside U.S. 1 waving flags alongside a group of residents, even in blizzards and rain.

Doak describes his friend as a visionary. He frames it like this: People thought Walt Disney World, built in a Florida swampland, was a crazy idea. They thought Mount Rushmore was outlandish. Both are now treasured.

"I'm gonna tell you right now, he's gonna build that flagpole," Doak says. "So why shouldn't it be Columbia Falls?"

David Sharp covers Maine for the AP. Follow him on Twitter at http://twitter.com/David_Sharp_AP

Alan Arkin, Oscar-winning 'Little Miss Sunshine' actor, dies at 89

By BOB THOMAS AP Entertainment Writer

LOS ANGELES (AP) — Alan Arkin, the wry character actor who demonstrated his versatility in everything from farcical comedy to chilling drama as he received four Academy Award nominations and won an Oscar in 2007 for "Little Miss Sunshine," has died. He was 89.

His sons Adam, Matthew and Anthony confirmed their father's death through the actor's publicist on Friday. "Our father was a uniquely talented force of nature, both as an artist and a man," they said in a statement.

Hollywood was in mourning, with Paul Reiser, Michael Rapaport and Patton Oswalt among those praising Arkin. "Such a wonderful, original voice for comedy. And on the few occasions I was in his presence, a kind and generous soul. I learned so much from watching him. And the laughs I got from his glorious work seem endless," tweeted Jason Alexander.

A member of Chicago's famed Second City comedy troupe, Arkin was an immediate success in movies with the Cold War spoof "The Russians Are Coming, The Russians Are Coming" and peaked late in life with his win as best supporting actor for the surprise 2006 hit "Little Miss Sunshine." More than 40 years separated his first Oscar nomination, for "The Russians are Coming," from his nomination for playing a conniving Hollywood producer in the Oscar-winning "Argo."

In recent years he starred opposite Michael Douglas in the Netflix comedy series "The Kominsky Method," a role that earned him two Emmy nominations.

"When I was a young actor people wanted to know if I wanted to be a serious actor or a funny one," Michael McKean tweeted Friday. "I'd answer 'Which kind is Alan Arkin?' and that shut them up."

Arkin once joked to The Associated Press that the beauty of being a character actor was not having to take his clothes off for a role. He wasn't a sex symbol or superstar, but was rarely out of work, appearing in more than 100 TV and feature films. His trademarks were likability, relatability and complete immersion in his roles, no matter how unusual, whether playing a Russian submarine officer in "The Russians are Coming" who struggles to communicate with the equally jittery Americans, or standing out as the foul-

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mouthed, drug-addicted grandfather in "Little Miss Sunshine."

"Alan's never had an identifiable screen personality because he just disappears into his characters," director Norman Jewison of "The Russians are Coming" once observed. "His accents are impeccable, and he's even able to change his looks. ... He's always been underestimated, partly because he's never been in service of his own success."

While still with Second City, Arkin was chosen by Carl Reiner to play the young protagonist in the 1963 Broadway play "Enter Laughing," based on Reiner's semi-autobiographical novel.

He attracted strong reviews and the notice of Jewison, who was preparing to direct a 1966 comedy about a Russian sub that creates a panic when it ventures too close to a small New England town. In Arkin's next major film, he proved he could also play a villain, however reluctantly. Arkin starred in "Wait Until Dark" as a vicious drug dealer who holds a blind woman (Audrey Hepburn) captive in her own apartment, believing a drug shipment is hidden there.

He recalled in a 1998 interview how difficult it was to terrorize Hepburn's character.

"Just awful," he said. "She was an exquisite lady, so being mean to her was hard."

Arkin's rise continued in 1968 with "The Heart Is a Lonely Hunter," in which he played a sensitive man who could not hear or speak. He starred as the bumbling French detective in "Inspector Clouseau" that same year, but the film would become overlooked in favor of Peter Sellers' Clouseau in the "Pink Panther" movies.

Arkin's career as a character actor continued to blossom when Mike Nichols, a fellow Second City alumnus, cast him in the starring role as Yossarian, the victim of wartime red tape in 1970's "Catch-22," based on Joseph Heller's million-selling novel. Through the years, Arkin turned up in such favorites as "Edward Scissorhands," playing Johnny Depp's neighbor; and in the film version of David Mamet's "Glengarry Glen Ross" as a dogged real estate salesman. He and Reiner played brothers, one successful (Reiner), one struggling (Arkin), in the 1998 film "The Slums of Beverly Hills."

"I used to think that my stuff had a lot of variety. But I realized that for the first twenty years or so, most of the characters I played were outsiders, strangers to their environment, foreigners in one way or another," he told The Associated Press in 2007.

"As I started to get more and more comfortable with myself, that started to shift. I got one of the nicest compliments I've ever gotten from someone a few days ago. They said that they thought my characters were very often the heart, the moral center of a film. I didn't particularly understand it, but I liked it; it made me happy."

Other recent credits included "Going in Style," a 2017 remake featuring fellow Oscar winners Michael Caine and Morgan Freeman, and "The Kominsky Method." He played a Hollywood talent agent and friend of Douglas' character, a once-promising actor who ran an acting school after his career sputtered.

He also was the voice of Wild Knuckles in the 2022 animated film "Minions: The Rise of Gru."

Arkin also directed the film version of Jules Feiffer's 1971 dark comedy "Little Murders" and Neil Simon's 1972 play about bickering old vaudeville partners, "The Sunshine Boys." On television, Arkin appeared in the short-lived series "Fay" and "Harry" and played a night court judge in Sidney Lumet's drama series "100 Centre Street" on A&E. He also wrote several books for children.

Born in New York City's borough of Brooklyn, he and his family, which included two younger brothers, moved to Los Angeles when he was 11. His parents found jobs as teachers, but were fired during the post-World War II Red Scare because they were Communists.

"We were dirt poor so I couldn't afford to go to the movies often," he told the AP in 1998. "But I went whenever I could and focused in on movies, as they were more important than anything in my life."

He studied acting at Los Angeles City College; California State University, Los Angeles; and Bennington College in Vermont, where he earned a scholarship to the formerly all-girls school.

He married a fellow student, Jeremy Yaffe, and they had two sons, Adam and Matthew.

After he and Yaffe divorced in 1961, Arkin married actress-writer Barbara Dana, and they had a son, Anthony. All three sons became actors: Adam starred in the TV series "Chicago Hope."

"It was certainly nothing that I pushed them into," Arkin said in 1998. "It made absolutely no difference

to me what they did, as long as it allowed them to grow.”

Arkin began his entertainment career as an organizer and singer with The Tarriers, a group that briefly rode the folk musical revival wave of the late 1950s. Later, he turned to stage acting, off-Broadway and always in dramatic roles.

At Second City, he worked with Nichols, Elaine May, Jerry Stiller, Anne Meara and others in creating intellectual, high-speed impromptu riffs the fads and follies of the day.

“I never knew that I could be funny until I joined Second City,” he said.

Bob Thomas, a longtime Associated Press journalist who died in 2014, was the principal writer of this obituary. AP National Writer Hillel Italie contributed to this report from New York.

Cuban boy castaway Elián González becomes a lawmaker

By ANDREA RODRÍGUEZ Associated Press

HAVANA (AP) — Elián González has the same big, expressive eyes he did 23 years ago when an international custody battle transformed him into the face of the long-strained relations between Cuba and the United States.

Now 29, González is stepping into Cuban politics. He recently entered his country’s congress with hopes of helping his people at a time of record emigration and heightened tension between the two seaside neighbors.

“From Cuba, we can do a lot so that we have a more solid country, and I owe it to Cubans,” he said during an exclusive interview with The Associated Press. “That is what I’m going to try to do from my position, from this place in congress — to contribute to making Cuba a better country.”

González has given only a handful of interviews since he was unwittingly thrust into the geopolitical spotlight as a boy. In 1999, at just 5 years old, he and his mother were aboard a boat of Cuban migrants headed toward Florida when the boat capsized in the Florida Straits. His mother and 10 others died while González, tied to an inner tube, drifted in open water until his rescue.

Granted asylum under U.S. refugee rules at the time, González went to live with his great uncle, a member of the Cuban exile community in Miami that is often a center of fierce criticism of Cuba’s government. In Cuba, his father begged then-President Fidel Castro for help. Castro led protests with hundreds of thousands of people demanding little Elián’s return. Anti-Castro groups in Miami pressed for him to stay in the U.S.

The tug-of-war quickly gained the world’s attention and became emblematic for the testy feelings between the two neighboring nations. Then-U.S. Attorney General Janet Reno ruled the boy should be returned to his father, but González’s relatives refused. AP photojournalist Alan Diaz captured the moment when armed immigration agents seized González in a Miami home, and the photo later won a Pulitzer Prize.

“Not having my mom has been difficult, it has been a burden, but it has not been an obstacle when I have had a father who has stood up for me and been by my side,” González told AP.

He is a father himself now, of a 2-year-old daughter. He works for a state company that facilitates tourism to the island nation his mother left, underscoring the alternate track his life has followed since his homecoming.

What’s more, he recently became a lawmaker.

In April, González was sworn in as a member of Cuba’s National Assembly of People’s Power, effectively Cuba’s congress. He represents Cárdenas, a town in Matanzas province about 80 miles (about 130 kilometers) east of Havana where he lived until his mother took him to sea. He still lives in the province.

Dressed in black pants and T-shirt, with a discreet braided bracelet on his right hand and his wedding ring on his left, González was interviewed in Havana’s Capitol, the renovated seat of congress.

“I think the most important thing is that I have grown up like other young people. I have grown up in Cuba,” he said.

For years, his father made it nearly impossible to get close to the child. From afar, the boy could sometimes be seen playing with other children or accompanying his father to political events. Castro would

visit him on his birthday.

Over the years, González was a military cadet and later became an industrial engineer. Because Cuba's congressional positions are unpaid, he will continue to work his tourism job.

The legislative body has faced criticism for lacking opposition voices and for carrying out the agenda set by the country's leadership.

González's legislative term comes amid historic emigration from the crisis-stricken Caribbean island, as many young Cubans seek a new life in the U.S. — just as his mother did.

It also comes at a moment of heightened tensions between the two nations. There have been allegations that Cuba hosted a Chinese spy base, which Cuba adamantly denies. Meanwhile, Cuba claims Biden has yet to ease tough policies enacted by former U.S. President Donald Trump that target the island, while the U.S. points to resumption of some flights and sending of remittances.

Amid a deepening political and energy crisis in Cuba, González cast blame on decades of American sanctions stifling the island's economy as the root of many of Cuba's problems, echoing many in the government. He said he believes in Cuba's model of providing free access to education and health services among other things, but acknowledged there is a long way to go for that to be perfected.

Despite harsh prison sentences doled out by Cuban courts, punishments defended by the communist government, González said his people have the right to demonstrate. But he added that the causes of current crises should be analyzed before condemning the state.

He also had kind words for the hundreds of thousands of Cubans who, like his mother, chose to emigrate.

"I respect all those who made the decision to leave Cuba, I respect those who do so today, just as I do my mom," he said. "My message will always be that (those who leave) do all they can to ensure that Cuba has a status (without sanctions) equal to any country in the world."

Heat waves like the one that's killed 14 in the southern US are becoming more frequent and enduring

By ANITA SNOW Associated Press

PHOENIX (AP) — Heat waves like the one that engulfed parts of parts of the South and Midwest and killed more than a dozen people are becoming more common, and experts say the extreme weather events, which claim more lives than hurricanes and tornadoes, will likely increase in the future.

A heat dome that pressured the Texas power grid and killed 13 people there and another in Louisiana pushed eastward Thursday and was expected to be centered over the mid-South by the weekend. Heat index levels of up to 112 degrees (44 Celsius) were forecast in parts of Florida over the next few days.

Eleven of the heat-related deaths in Texas occurred in Webb County, which includes Laredo. The dead ranged in age from 60 to 80 years old, and many had other health conditions, according to the county medical examiner. The other two fatalities were Florida residents who died while hiking in extreme heat at Big Bend National Park.

Scientists and medical experts say such deaths caused by extreme heat will only increase in the U.S. each summer without more action to combat climate change that has pushed up temperatures, making people especially vulnerable in areas unaccustomed to warm weather.

"Here in Boston we prepare for snowstorms. Now we need to learn how to prepare for heat," said Dr. Gaurab Basu, a primary care physician and the director of education and policy at the Center for Climate, Health, and the Global Environment at Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health.

Planting more trees to increase shade in cities and investing in green technology like heat pumps for home cooling and heating could help, Basu said.

Extreme heat already is the deadliest of all weather events in the United States, including hurricanes, tornadoes, wildfires and flooding.

"Heat waves are the deadliest because they affect such large areas and can go on for days or weeks," said Joellen Russell, a climate scientist who teaches at the University of Arizona in Tucson and is currently on a Fulbright scholarship in Wellington, New Zealand. "And they catch people by surprise."

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Phoenix, the hottest large city in America, faces an excessive heat warning headed into the weekend. Dangerously hot conditions are forecast from Saturday through Tuesday, including temperatures of 107-115 degrees (41.6-46.1 Celsius) across south-central Arizona.

"Arizona already understands heat to a certain extent, but it's getting hotter for us, too," said Russell. "That means a lot of people will continue to die."

Counting heat deaths has become a science in Arizona's Maricopa County, which includes metro Phoenix. The county tallied 425 heat-associated deaths last year, a 25% increase over 2021.

Located in the Sonoran Desert, Maricopa County counts not just deaths due to exposure but also deaths in which heat is among several major contributing factors, including heart attacks and strokes.

The county's Office of the Medical Examiner updates suspected and confirmed heat-associated deaths every week through the warm season, which runs from May through October. So far this season, there have been six heat-associated deaths in Maricopa County, home to nearly 4.5 million people.

Dr. Sameed Khatana, a staff cardiologist at the Philadelphia VA Medical Center and assistant professor at the University of Pennsylvania's Perelman School of Medicine, said deaths in which heat contributed significantly to fatalities from causes like heart failure should also be considered to provide a more complete picture.

Khatana participated in research published last year that suggested that from 2008 and 2017 between 13,000 to 20,000 adult deaths were linked to extreme heat, about half due to heart disease.

Older people and those with diabetes, obesity, heart disease and other serious health conditions are most at risk, he said.

"Hurricanes, flooding and wildfires are very dramatic," said Khatana. "Heat is harder to see and especially affects people who are socially isolated or living on the margins."

The city of Phoenix's Office of Heat Response and Mitigation has opened summertime shelters for homeless people, operates cooling centers in libraries and other community spaces to help people get out of the sun and distributes bottled water, hats and sunscreen. The city also has a "Cool Callers" program with volunteers dialing vulnerable residents who ask to be checked on during hot periods.

Even the Phoenix Zoo is taking measures to cool off the monkeys, big cats and rhinos, spraying them with water, delivering frozen treats, and providing shaded areas and cooled water pools.

Extreme heat deaths are a global problem.

Mexican health authorities this week said there have been at least 112 heat-related deaths so far this year, acknowledging for the first time the deadliness of a recent heat wave that President Andrés Manuel López Obrador previously dismissed as an invention of alarmists.

The report released Wednesday also shows a significant spike in heat-related fatalities in the last two weeks. So far this year, Mexico's overall heat-related deaths are almost triple the figures seen in 2022.

A flash study released this spring said record-breaking April temperatures in Spain, Portugal and northern Africa were made 100 times more likely by human-caused climate change.

Deaths and widespread hospitalizations were caused by searing heat wave that broiled parts of southern Asia in April with temperatures of up to 113 degrees (45 Celsius) was made at least 30 times more likely by climate change, according to a rapid study by international scientists.

Associated Press writers Adrian Sainz in Memphis, Tennessee; Michael Goldberg in Jackson, Mississippi; Jim Salter in St. Louis, Missouri; Curt Anderson in Miami, Florida; and Sara Cline in Baton Rouge, Louisiana, contributed.

The Supreme Court will decide if some judges have gone too far in striking down gun restrictions

By MARK SHERMAN Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — A year after its sweeping gun rights ruling, the Supreme Court agreed Friday to decide whether judges are going too far in striking down restrictions on firearms.

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The justices will hear the Biden administration's appeal of one such ruling that struck down as unconstitutional a federal law meant to keep guns away from people who have domestic violence restraining orders against them.

Arguments will take place in the fall in the first case in which the court could define the limits on new standards for evaluating gun laws that its conservative majority set out last June.

That decision in the case, which has come to be known as Bruen, has upended gun laws across the country. It's led to a rash of rulings invalidating some long-standing restrictions on firearms, but also produced confusion about what laws can survive.

Governments have to justify gun control laws by showing they are "consistent with the Nation's historical tradition of firearm regulation," Justice Clarence Thomas wrote in an opinion that was joined by the other five conservative justices. Until that ruling, judges could consider whether a law serves public interests such as enhancing public safety.

In the past year, judges also have struck down federal laws barring people from having guns if they have been charged with serious crimes or use marijuana. Other rulings have called into question a federal ban on possessing guns with serial numbers removed, the prohibition on licensed federal firearms dealers selling handguns to young adults under 21 and Delaware's ban on the possession of homemade "ghost guns."

Lower courts are also considering challenges to states' bans on the sale of so-called assault weapons and large-capacity magazines. The Supreme Court in May denied an emergency request to put an Illinois law on hold while that court challenge plays out.

The case now before the court involves Zackey Rahimi, whose conviction on possessing guns while subject to a restraining order was thrown out by a panel of three Republican appointees on the 5th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals.

Rahimi was involved in five shootings over two months in and around Arlington, Texas, U.S. Circuit Judge Cory Wilson noted. When police identified Rahimi as a suspect in the shootings and showed up at his home with a search warrant, Rahimi admitted both to having guns in the house and being subject to a domestic violence restraining order that prohibited gun possession, Wilson wrote.

But though "hardly a model citizen," Rahimi did not lose his constitutional right to have guns, Wilson concluded. The law at issue could not be justified by looking to history, he wrote for a unanimous panel.

Wilson and Judge James Ho were nominated by President Donald Trump. The third judge, Edith Jones, was chosen by President Ronald Reagan.

The appeals court initially upheld the conviction, then reconsidered once the Supreme Court ruled in Bruen. At least one district court has upheld the law since the Bruen decision.

Solicitor General Elizabeth Prelogar, the Biden administration's top Supreme Court lawyer, cited an earlier high court decision involving gun bans for domestic violence convictions to urge the justices to take up the case. "More than a million acts of domestic violence occur in the United States every year, and the presence of a firearm increases the chance that violence will escalate to homicide," Prelogar wrote.

On the day the court finished deciding the cases argued in recent months, the legal fight over a gun law was among six cases that the justices added to their agenda for the term that begins on the first Monday in October.

The other cases include:

—a Biden administration appeal of a 5th Circuit ruling that could have far-reaching effects on the Securities and Exchange Commission and other regulatory agencies. The appeals court threw out stiff financial penalties imposed on hedge fund manager George R. Jarkesy by the SEC.

—a question about whether workers can pursue job discrimination claims under federal civil rights law when those workers are not demoted or docked pay. The case taken up by the court involve a sex discrimination claim by a St. Louis police sergeant who was transferred against her will.

A week after an armed rebellion rattled Russia, key details about it are still shrouded in mystery

By The Associated Press undefined

Did mercenary chief Yevgeny Prigozhin have inside help from the military and political elite in his armed rebellion that rattled Russia?

A week after the mutiny raised the most daunting challenge to President Vladimir Putin's rule in over two decades, key details about the uprising are still unknown.

Uncertainty also swirls around the fate of Prigozhin and his Wagner private military forces, along with the deal they got from the Kremlin, and what the future holds for the Russian defense minister they tried to oust.

Finally, and perhaps the biggest unknown: Can Putin shore up the weaknesses revealed by the events of last weekend?

DID PRIGOZHIN HAVE INSIDE HELP?

Many observers argue that Prigozhin wouldn't have been able to take over military facilities in the southern city of Rostov-on-Don so easily on June 24 and mount his rapid march toward Moscow without collusion with some members of the military brass.

Thousands of members of his private army drove nearly 1,000 kilometers (about 620 miles) across Russia without facing any serious resistance and shot down at least seven military aircraft, killing at least 10 airmen.

Prigozhin said they got as close as 200 kilometers (about 125 miles) from Moscow when he ordered them to turn back under a deal brokered by Belarusian President Alexander Lukashenko. That agreement granted amnesty to him and forces from his Wagner Group of private contractors, allowing them to move to Belarus.

Some Kremlin watchers believe senior military officers could have backed his push for the ouster of Defense Minister Sergei Shoigu and the chief of the General Staff, Gen. Valery Gerasimov. Or they simply decided to wait and see what happened.

"The Wagner mercenary boss was counting on solidarity from senior army officers, and since he came close to reaching Moscow without encountering any particular resistance, he might not have been completely mistaken," analyst Mikhail Komin wrote in a commentary for Carnegie Endowment.

"It's entirely possible that by the start of his 'march for justice,' Prigozhin believed he would find solidarity among many officers in the armed forces, and that if his uprising was successful, they would be joined by certain groups within the ruling elite."

Russian law enforcement agencies might share this belief. Some military bloggers reported that investigators were looking at whether some officers had sided with Prigozhin.

One senior military official, Gen. Sergei Surovikin, who had longtime ties with Prigozhin, is believed to have been detained, two people familiar with the matter told The Associated Press, citing U.S. and Ukrainian intelligence assessments. It's not clear whether Surovikin faces any charges or where he is being held.

Russian military bloggers reported that some border guards were accused of failing to put up resistance to Wagner's convoy as it crossed into Russia from Ukraine, and some pilots also are facing possible charges for refusing to halt the convoy movement toward Moscow.

There was no official confirmation of those claims, however, and it was impossible to verify them.

In noting the lack of a more forceful military response to the mutiny, some have cited the chaotic and uncertain situation and the Kremlin's doubts about using force in populated areas.

Mark Galeotti, a London-based expert on Russian security affairs, said the government system is "hierarchical and slow," and doesn't encourage initiative.

"In that context, people would just not be willing to act without direct orders, either because they just feared being hanged out to dry if they guessed wrong or else because actually, they had a certain sympathy for Prigozhin," he added.

Pro-Kremlin analyst Sergei Markov said some in the Russian military might have been reluctant to con-

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front Prigozhin initially but their attitude hardened after Wagner forces downed several military helicopters.

A MURKY DEAL AND A MURKY FUTURE

Another mystery is the deal ending the mutiny. Russia's main intelligence agency opened an investigation against Prigozhin for the rebellion, but the case was later dropped as part of that agreement. Putin, Prigozhin and Lukashenko all described it as a compromise intended to avoid bloodshed, but few details have been released.

Also uncertain is the future of Prigozhin and Wagner. Putin said the mercenaries who didn't participate in the mutiny can sign contracts with the Defense Ministry, retire or move to Belarus, but it's unknown how many will join him and whether they will continue to be a single force.

Prigozhin may not feel fully safe under Lukashenko, who is known for his harsh rule and relies on Putin's political and financial support. The mercenary chief's exact whereabouts are unknown. Lukashenko confirmed he is in Belarus; Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov wouldn't say where he is.

Lukashenko can be expected to maintain tight control over Prigozhin's troops.

"I suspect the way Moscow hopes this will play out is the commanders will move to Belarus and then possibly decamp for operations in Africa," said Michael Kofman, an expert with the Center for Naval Analyses. "Meanwhile, they will try to get back Wagner's heavy equipment, and then figure out how to use the rank and file that chooses to stay,"

Others believe the Kremlin won't allow Prigozhin to operate independently abroad as he did before. Reports from Syria this week indicated that Wagner troops were told to report to the main Russian military base in the country.

Even though Russia closed its criminal inquiry into the mutiny, Putin signaled the authorities will look into Wagner's books for any wrongdoing. That could set the stage for potential charges of financial crime.

In a stunning revelation, Putin declared that the government poured billions of dollars into Wagner, a statement that followed his previous denials of any link between the state and the mercenary group.

"It turns out that Vladimir Putin actually paid for the mutiny with taxpayers' money," analyst Andrei Kolesnikov wrote.

WILL THE DEFENSE MINISTER SURVIVE?

While Prigozhin's stated goal was the ouster of the top military leaders, including the defense minister, some see that Shoigu could emerge strengthened.

"Intriguingly, the main beneficiary seems to be Shoigu: With Prigozhin and Wagner out of the picture, Putin is now immunized against a similar mutiny and any sort of experiences with private military companies," said analyst Tatiana Stanovaya.

Shoigu could use the showdown to get rid of any sign of dissent among the brass, she said.

But Komin, of the Carnegie Endowment, said Prigozhin's mutiny "revealed the scale of the crisis within the Russian armed forces, which are disillusioned by constant failures and tired of war, and within the military and security elites."

It could set the stage for more such tests of authority.

"When senior and mid-ranking officers effectively respond to an armed mutiny with a 'go slow' strike, there can be little doubt that the Wagner boss will not be the last challenger to square off against Shoigu and his allies and seek to capitalize on the unspoken but growing resentment within the Russian armed forces," Komin added.

There also is a debate about the future of military contractors in Russia.

Vladislav Surkov, a former senior aide to Putin, strongly argued that they pose a major threat to Russia's integrity, saying private armies like Wagner could turn Russia into a "Eurasian tribal zone."

WILL PUTIN BE ABLE TO RECOVER FROM THIS?

Even though the quick deal with Prigozhin averted a battle for Moscow that could have plunged the whole country into chaos, the crisis revealed shocking weaknesses in Putin's government.

After a stumbling response to the mutiny, Putin tried to repair the damage to his standing with a series of events aimed at projecting strength and authority. State television hammered home the message that a quick end to the rebellion made Putin even stronger.

He spoke to army troops and law enforcement officers in a Kremlin ceremony that mimicked the pomp-laden military rites of the Russian empire.

He traveled to the city of Derbent in the mostly Muslim region of Dagestan, on the Islamic holiday of Eid al-Adha on Wednesday. He walked among cheering crowds, talking to people and shaking hands, and even posed for a photo — extremely rare behavior for a secretive and reserved leader who was notoriously cautious about social contacts during the coronavirus pandemic.

In an apparent bid to turn the page on the rebellion, Putin focused on issues such as the development of tourist industries in Derbent or technological innovations.

But despite such attempts and damage-control efforts by the state propaganda machine, Putin's weakness and vulnerability has become obvious.

"This mutiny was so shocking that the regime appeared to many as near to collapse, which significantly undermines Putin's ability to secure control in the eyes of the political class," Stanovaya said.

But Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov on Friday rejected claims that the abortive mutiny exposed any weakness, saying that "Russia always has come out stronger from any troubles ... and it will so this time as well."

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An inflation gauge tracked by the Federal Reserve falls to its lowest point in 2 years

By CHRISTOPHER RUGABER AP Economics Writer

WASHINGTON (AP) — An inflation index that is closely monitored by the Federal Reserve tumbled last month to its lowest level since April 2021, pulled down by lower gas prices and slower-rising food costs.

At the same time, consumers barely increased their spending last month, boosting it just 0.1%, after a solid 0.6% gain in April.

The inflation index showed that prices rose 3.8% in May from 12 months earlier, down sharply from a 4.4% year-over-year surge in April. And from April to May, prices ticked up just 0.1%.

Still, last month's progress in easing overall inflation was tempered by an elevated reading of "core" prices, a category that excludes volatile food and energy costs. The increase underscored the Fed's belief that it will need to keep raising interest rates to conquer high inflation.

Core prices rose 4.6% in May from a year earlier, down slightly from the annual increase of 4.7% in April. It was the fifth straight month that the core figure was either 4.6% or 4.7% — a sign that the Fed's streak of 10 rate hikes over the past 15 months hasn't subdued all categories of prices. From April to May, core prices increased 0.3%, a pace that, if it lasts, would keep inflation well above the Fed's 2% target.

Friday's report from the government suggested that consumer spending is slowing under pressure from high prices and interest rates, a trend that is also likely cooling inflation. As a result, many economists think growth in the current April-June quarter will slow from the 2% annual pace in the first three months of the year.

That cooldown could lead the Fed to decide to skip a rate hike when it meets in September, after a widely expected increase at its next meeting in late July.

"The stickiness of core inflation continues to be the proverbial bee in the bonnet of policymakers at the Fed," said Shernette McLeod, an economist at TD, a bank. "Consumers continue to be a pillar of support for the U.S. economy. Nevertheless, they are coming under increasing pressures, with high prices, tightening credit and other indicators pointing to a slowdown on the way."

Grocery prices edged up just 0.1% from April to May, providing some relief to consumers, though food costs are still 5.8% higher than they were a year ago. Gas prices, which sank 5.6% just from April to May, have plunged 22% over the past year.

Used cars soared 4.7% from April to May, though they're still 2.2% cheaper than they were a year ago. Economists expect used car prices to fall soon because measures of wholesale used car costs are declining.

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Housing costs keep rising and fueling overall inflation, with rents increasing 0.5% from April to May and 8.7% over the past year.

Friday's report also showed that Americans' incomes rose a solid 0.4% from April to May, outpacing inflation and providing more fuel for future spending.

The report arrives two days after Chair Jerome Powell said the Fed was prepared to keep interest rates at their peak for an extended period to tame the still-rising prices that have shrunk Americans' inflation-adjusted paychecks and disrupted businesses. The Fed's policymakers, as a group, envision two additional rate hikes this year.

"The bottom line is that (interest rate) policy hasn't been restrictive enough for long enough," Powell said in his remarks at an international forum in Sintra, Portugal. He reiterated his view that prices for services, such as restaurant meals, hotel rooms and health care, are still rising too fast, driven in part by the need of many companies to raise pay to attract and keep workers.

Inflation has also eased in the 20 countries that use the euro, according to a separate report released Friday. Prices rose 5.5% in June compared with a year ago, down from 6.1% in May. But as in the United States, core inflation has proved more stubborn: It ticked up from 5.3% to 5.4%.

European Central Bank President Christine Lagarde and Bank of England Governor Andrew Bailey, along with Powell, warned in remarks at the Sintra conference that they, too, will keep raising borrowing costs to fight high inflation.

The U.S. inflation gauge that was issued Friday, called the personal consumption expenditures price index, is separate from the government's better-known consumer price index. The government reported earlier this month that the CPI rose 4% in May from 12 months earlier.

The Fed prefers the PCE index because it accounts for changes in how people shop when inflation jumps — when, for example, consumers shift away from pricey national brands in favor of cheaper store brands. And rents, which are among the biggest inflation drivers but many economists think aren't well-measured, carry about half the weight in the PCE than the CPI.

Beginning with its first hike in March 2022, the Fed has lifted its benchmark interest rate to about 5.1%, its highest level in 16 years, before forgoing a hike at its most recent meeting earlier this month.

The economy has shown surprising resilience despite the Fed's rate hikes, defying long-standing forecasts of a recession. A measure of the economy's growth in the first three months of the year was sharply upgraded Thursday to a solid annual pace of 2%, from a previous estimate of 1.3%.

Still, the economy's durability could prove a mixed blessing. The Fed is raising rates to try to cool borrowing and spending by businesses and consumers. It hopes employers will then reduce their demand for workers, which, in turn, could slow wage increases and inflation pressures.

Yet if the economy continues to expand at a solid pace, the Fed would likely feel compelled to send rates even higher to achieve its goal of bringing inflation back down to 2%.

The key players in last weekend's armed rebellion in Russia

By The Associated Press undefined

The key players in last weekend's armed rebellion by Russian mercenary chief Yevgeny Prigozhin:

YEVGENY PRIGOZHIN

Prigozhin, 62, owed his position and his fortune to links with President Vladimir Putin. The former convict who became a St. Petersburg restaurateur was dubbed "Putin's chef" for lucrative Kremlin catering contracts. He expanded into other areas and founded the Wagner Group — a private military contractor that was active in Syria and several African countries.

The Kremlin relied on Wagner to help shore up its forces in Ukraine after the regular military suffered humiliating setbacks there. Wagner spearheaded attacks on the eastern Ukrainian city of Bakhmut and captured it after a long and bloody battle, during which Prigozhin complained of not enough Defense Ministry support.

Prigozhin launched his rebellion after the Defense Ministry demanded that all private contractors come

under its authority by July 1, a move that would make him lose control over Wagner. He declared a "march of justice" to oust Defense Minister Sergei Shoigu and chief of the General Staff Gen. Valery Gerasimov.

SERGEI SHOIGU

The 68-year-old defense minister is the longest-serving member of Putin's Cabinet. He began his government career under Russia's first president, Boris Yeltsin, serving as the minister for emergency situations since 1994.

After becoming defense minister in 2012, Shoigu presided over bolstering military arsenals and expanding the number of volunteer contract soldiers. He helped engineer Russia's military intervention in Syria that shored up President Bashar Assad's rule and the illegal annexation of Ukraine's Crimean Peninsula in 2014.

After Moscow's invasion of Ukraine, Shoigu faced criticism for military setbacks, including a botched attempt to capture Kyiv early on and a chaotic retreat from broad areas in the east and south amid a Ukrainian counteroffensive. Some commentators also blamed him for failing to contain the armed rebellion last weekend soon enough.

VALERY GERASIMOV

A career soldier, the 67-year-old Gerasimov became Russia's chief of the General Staff in 2012. He began his military service as a tank platoon commander in 1977, rising steadily through the Soviet and then Russian ranks.

He was praised for boosting the armed forces' capabilities and oversaw the deployment of more mobile and combat-ready forces. Some Russian military bloggers held Gerasimov responsible for blunders in Ukraine, but Putin in January put him directly in charge of all forces there.

Since last weekend's rebellion, Gerasimov hasn't been seen in public.

SERGEI SUROVIKIN

The 56-year-old Surovikin, who has longtime links to Prigozhin, was nicknamed "General Armageddon" by Western media for his brutal tactics leading Russian forces in Syria.

In Ukraine, he was credited with shoring up Russian defenses after the retreat from broad areas last fall amid a swift counteroffensive by Kyiv. While Prigozhin assailed top military leaders, he repeatedly praised Surovikin and suggested naming him to replace Gerasimov.

Surovikin hasn't been seen since the rebellion began when he posted a video urging an end to it, and he is believed to be detained.

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Families of tens of thousands missing in Syria draw some hope from new UN push to find loved ones

By KAREEM CHEHAYEB and GHAITH AL-SAYED Associated Press

IDLIB, Syria (AP) — In her small apartment in opposition-held Idlib in northwest Syria, Umm Mohammed is depressed and lethargic. But when her phone rings or someone knocks on the door she becomes suddenly alert. Maybe, finally, her husband has come back.

In 2013, Syrian soldiers broke into the couple's home in Damascus as they were having breakfast, she said. She and her husband had previously taken part in anti-government protests.

"They beat him up in front of my young daughter" and then took him away, said Umm Mohammed, or "mother of Mohammed," the name of her oldest son. She did not want to give her own full name for fear the authorities would harm her husband if he is still alive.

The only news she has received about him since that day came in 2015, when someone claimed to have seen him in the Syrian military intelligence's 248 Branch prison — which former detainees and human rights groups have called a torture center.

"When someone is martyred, they're buried and you know they're dead," she said, sitting on floor cushions. "In this case, you don't know and you'll always be wondering."

Her husband is among more than 130,000 people believed to have gone missing in Syria since the 2011

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uprising against President Bashar Assad that quickly turned into a civil war. Their families, trapped in painful uncertainty for years, might now have reason for hope.

The U.N. General Assembly voted Thursday to form an independent international institution to search for the missing in Syria in both government and opposition-held areas.

The resolution was adopted by the 193-member world body on a vote of 83-11 with 62 abstentions. The countries voting for the resolution included the United States and other Western nations. Syria and key allies Russia, Iran, and China opposed the move. Arab countries that in recent months rekindled ties with Damascus abstained, except for Assad skeptics Qatar and Kuwait, which endorsed the move.

Some of the missing are believed to be languishing in government prisons. Others were taken by non-state armed groups. Others are buried in mass graves, which have been found on both sides of the front line.

The newly created institution would collect information from families, Syrian civil society organizations, whistle blowers, U.N. agencies and through inquiries to the Syrian government and authorities in opposition-held areas.

The resolution gives three months for U.N. officials to set up the institution's structure and start recruiting staff.

There have been long-standing demands to investigate the fate of the missing, from the families and from human rights activists.

Hanny Megally, a member of a commission set up by the U.N. in 2011 to investigate human rights violations in Syria, said he hopes a single team focusing on the missing could encourage more whistle blowers to come forward, and could collect scattered data from rights groups.

In recent years, whistle blowers and defectors have come forth with some information, including the so-called Caesar photos, a trove of 53,000 images taken in Syrian prisons and military hospitals. The photos showed the bodies of detainees with signs of torture.

A video shot in the Damascus suburb of Tadamon in 2013 revealed the fate of dozens of Syrians who went missing. The video showed Syrian security agents leading blindfolded men into a pit, shooting them and setting the bodies on fire.

The Caesar photos allowed some families to identify missing loved ones. The leak also enabled European courts to try and convict former Syrian military officers who were seeking asylum in European countries for their involvement in forced disappearances and torture.

Setting up an international body would be a significant move in a region scarred by war, where tens of thousands of families in neighboring countries are waiting for information about their loved ones.

In Lebanon, family members of some 17,000 people kidnapped by sectarian militias during its 1975-1990 civil war are dying of old age, never knowing the fate of their loved ones. In Yemen, despite recent prisoner swaps between Saudi Arabia and Iran-backed Houthi rebels, human rights groups say hundreds are still missing.

In Iraq, over 43,000 people remain missing since a U.S.-led invasion in 2003 toppled dictator Saddam Hussein, followed by a ferocious civil war and the rise of the Islamic State extremist group. The UN set up an investigation in 2017 into human rights abuses by the militant group, including enforced disappearances, which led to the discovery of over a dozen mass graves.

Setting up an investigative body for Syria's missing "might set a precedent for addressing the suffering of different people in different parts of the world," said Wafa Mustafa, whose father Ali disappeared in July 2013 in Damascus. Mustafa had joined her father, an outspoken Assad critic, in protests.

Mustafa, who welcomed the vote, is one of many Syrian civil society activists who have spent years campaigning for international action on the missing.

Investigating their fate should also pave the way for addressing other human rights issues in Syria, including the dire conditions for political prisoners. "A lot should be happening, a lot should be done in parallel to this institution," Mustafa said.

In the Kurdish-held city of Qamishli in northeast Syria, Hamed Hemo believes that an investigation could uncover the fate of his missing son.

Hemo has turned his living room into a shrine for his son, Ferhad, a journalist who went missing after IS

militants kidnapped him and a colleague, Masoud Aqil, in 2014. Aqil, released in a prisoner swap, relocated to Germany. Ferhad never came home.

"To this day our lives have completely changed," Hemo said, taking a drag from his cigarette. "His mother once weighed 70 kilos (154 pounds), and she's dropped to 40 (88 pounds)."

Islamic State's so-called "caliphate" once stretched across large areas of Syria and Iraq, but the extremists lost their last hold on the land in 2019.

Thousands of captured IS fighters are held in prisons run by Kurdish-led forces who Hemo believes could provide information about the missing.

Umm Mohammad is less hopeful of getting information about her husband from Syrian authorities.

Assad has denied holding political prisoners, labeling the opposition as terrorists. Direct cooperation with Syria by investigators could also be difficult as it does not extradite its citizens.

"What's he going say?" she wondered. "All those people I detained were killed under my custody?"

—
Chehayeb reported from Beirut. Associated Press writer Fay Abuelgasim contributed to this report from Beirut, and Hogir Al Abdo from Qamishli, Syria.

Supreme Court's affirmative action ruling leaves colleges looking for new ways to promote diversity

By COLLIN BINKLEY AP Education Writer

WASHINGTON (AP) — The Supreme Court has sent shockwaves through higher education with a landmark decision that struck down affirmative action and left colleges across the nation searching for new ways to promote student diversity.

Leaders of scores of universities said Thursday that they were disappointed by what they see as a blow to diversity. Yet many also voiced optimism that they would find new ways to admit more Black and Hispanic students, despite evidence that eliminating the practice often leads to steep enrollment decreases among them.

President Joe Biden said he disagreed with the decision and asked the Education Department to explore policies that could help colleges build diverse student bodies. He also pushed against policies like legacy preferences — admissions boosts given to the children of alumni — that tend to help white, wealthy students.

"We should never allow the country to walk away from the dream upon which it was founded," Biden told reporters. "We need a new path forward, a path consistent with the law that protects diversity and expands opportunity."

Yet evidence from states that previously outlawed affirmative action show it will be a daunting challenge.

As an alternative to affirmative action, colleges from California to Florida have tried a range of strategies to achieve the diversity they say is essential to their campuses. Many have given greater preference to low-income families. Others started admitting top students from every community in their state.

But years of experimentation — often prompted by state-level bans on considering race in admissions — left no clear solution. In states requiring race-neutral policies, many colleges saw enrollment drops among Black and Hispanic students, especially at selective colleges that historically have been mostly white.

At Amherst College, officials had estimated going entirely race-neutral would reduce Black, Hispanic and Indigenous populations by half.

"We fully expect it would be a significant decrease in our population," said Matthew McGann, Amherst's director of admission, earlier this year.

Facing a conservative Supreme Court that appeared skeptical from the start, colleges have been preparing for a rollback. Some were considering adding more essays to get a better picture of an applicant's background, a strategy invited in Thursday's Supreme Court ruling.

"Nothing prohibits universities from considering an applicant's discussion of how race affected the applicant's life, so long as that discussion is concretely tied to a quality of character or unique ability that

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the particular applicant can contribute to the university," Chief Justice John Roberts wrote for the court's conservative majority.

Other colleges were planning to boost recruiting in racially diverse areas, or admit more transfer students from community colleges.

The court took up affirmative action in response to challenges at Harvard University and the University of North Carolina. Lower courts upheld admission systems at both schools, rejecting claims that the schools discriminated against white and Asian American applicants. But at Supreme Court arguments in late October, all six conservative justices expressed doubts about the practice, which had been upheld under Supreme Court decisions reaching back to 1978, and as recently as 2016.

Nine states already have banned affirmative action, starting with California in 1996 and, most recently, Idaho in 2020.

After Michigan voters rejected it in 2006, the University of Michigan shifted attention to low-income students.

It sent graduates to work as counselors in low-income high schools. It started offering college prep in Detroit and Grand Rapids. It offered full scholarships for low-income Michigan residents. More recently, it started accepting fewer early admission applications, which are more likely to come from white students.

Despite those efforts, the share of Black and Hispanic undergraduates hasn't fully rebounded from a falloff after 2006. And while Hispanic enrollments have been increasing, Black enrollments continued to slide, going from 8% of undergraduates in 2006 to 4% now.

The campus is drawing more low-income students, but that hasn't translated to racial diversity, said Erica Sanders, director of undergraduate admissions at Michigan.

"Socioeconomic status is not a proxy for race," Sanders said.

At the same time, some of Michigan's less selective colleges have fared better. At nearby Eastern Michigan University, the number of students of color increased, reflecting demographic shifts in the state. It illustrates what experts say is a chilling effect seen most acutely at selective colleges — students of color see fewer of their peers at places like Ann Arbor, prompting them to choose campuses that appear more welcoming.

Growing up in Ann Arbor, there was an expectation that Odia Kaba would attend the University of Michigan. When her application was deferred, she started at Eastern Michigan with plans to transfer to Ann Arbor her sophomore year.

By then, Kaba was getting daily texts from her sister, who attended U-M, describing the microaggressions she faced as a Black student on campus. Rooms went silent when she walked in. She was ignored in group projects. She felt alone and suffocated.

"Why would I go to U of M?" Kaba, 22, remembers thinking. "I'm just going to be stuck with people that don't look like me, can't relate to me, and with no way to escape it."

Kaba stayed at Eastern Michigan and graduated with a degree in quantitative economics this year. Even though it's a mostly white campus, Kaba said she found pockets of diversity that helped make her comfortable.

"I'm in economics, which is a white male-dominated space. But I can walk out of the classroom and be surrounded by my people, and I just feel safe," she said.

The University of California also saw enrollment slides after a statewide ban in 1996. Within two years, Black and Hispanic enrollments fell by half at the system's two most selective campuses, Berkeley and UCLA. The system would go on to spend more than \$500 million on programs aimed at low-income and first-generation college students.

It also started a program that promises admission to the top 9% of students in each high school across the state, an attempt to reach strong students from all backgrounds. A similar promise in Texas has been credited for expanding racial diversity, and opponents of affirmative action cite it as a successful model.

In California, the promise drew students from a wider geographic area but did little to expand racial diversity, the system said in a brief to the Supreme Court. It had almost no impact at Berkeley and UCLA, where students compete against tens of thousands of other applicants.

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Today at UCLA and Berkeley, Hispanic students make up 20% of undergraduates, higher than in 1996 but lower than their 53% share among California's high school graduates. Black students, meanwhile, have a smaller presence than they did in 1996, accounting for 2% of undergraduates at Berkeley.

Opponents of affirmative action say some states have fared well without it. After Oklahoma outlawed the practice in 2012, the state's flagship university saw "no long-term severe decline" in minority enrollments, the state's attorney general told the Supreme Court.

It pointed to a recent freshman class at the University of Oklahoma that had more Hispanic, Asian and Native American students than in 2012. The share of Black students fell, but it wasn't far from flagship universities in other states that allow affirmative action, the state said.

Still, many colleges expect racial diversity could take a hit. With affirmative action struck down, colleges fear they will unknowingly admit fewer students of color. In the long run, it can be self-perpetuating — if numbers fall, the campus can appear less attractive to future students of color.

That's a problem, colleges say, because racial diversity benefits the entire campus, exposing students to other worldviews and preparing them for a diverse workforce.

Beyond race, the decision has the impact to reshape other admissions policies. To draw more underserved populations, experts say colleges may need to do away with policies that advantage white students, from legacy preferences and early admission to standardized test scores.

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Today in History: July 1, Medicare program takes effect

By The Associated Press undefined

Today in History

Today is Saturday, July 1, the 182nd day of 2023. There are 183 days left in the year.

Today's Highlight in History:

On July 1, 1966, the Medicare federal insurance program went into effect.

On this date:

In 1863, the pivotal, three-day Civil War Battle of Gettysburg, resulting in a Union victory, began in Pennsylvania.

In 1867, Canada became a self-governing dominion of Great Britain as the British North America Act took effect.

In 1903, the first Tour de France began. (It ended on July 19; the winner was Maurice Garin.)

In 1944, delegates from 44 countries began meeting at Bretton Woods, New Hampshire, where they agreed to establish the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank.

In 1963, the U.S. Post Office inaugurated its five-digit ZIP codes.

In 1973, the Drug Enforcement Administration was established.

In 1991, President George H.W. Bush nominated federal appeals court judge Clarence Thomas to the Supreme Court, beginning an ultimately successful confirmation process marked by allegations of sexual harassment.

In 1997, Hong Kong reverted to Chinese rule after 156 years as a British colony.

In 2004, actor Marlon Brando died in Los Angeles at age 80.

In 2009, actor Karl Malden, 97, died in Brentwood, California.

In 2015, after more than a half-century of hostility, the United States and Cuba declared they would re-open embassies in each other's capitals, marking a historic full restoration of diplomatic relations between the Cold War foes.

In 2019, 15-year-old Coco Gauff, the youngest player to qualify at Wimbledon in the professional era, defeated 39-year-old Venus Williams in the first round.

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Ten years ago: Ex-convict Nicholas T. Sheley, suspected in eight grisly slayings in two states, was arrested outside a bar in Granite City, Ill. (Sheley is serving multiple life sentences.) The Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Denver agreed to pay \$5.5 million to settle 18 more claims by people who said they'd been sexually abused by priests when they were children. Clay Felker, founding editor of New York magazine, died at age 82.

Five years ago: Mexican voters, angry over corruption and violence, elected leftist Andres Manuel Lopez Obrador as president. Canada began imposing tariffs on \$12.6 billion in U.S. goods as retaliation for the Trump administration's new taxes on steel and aluminum imported to the United States. LeBron James announced that he would be signing with the Los Angeles Lakers, leaving Cleveland for the second time in his career.

One year ago: The U.S. announced it would provide Ukraine with \$820 million in new military aid, including new surface-to-air missile systems and counter-artillery radars, to respond to Russia's heavy reliance on long-range strikes in the war. American basketball star Brittney Griner went on trial in Russia after her arrest on charges of possessing cannabis oil while returning to play for a team there, in a case that unfolded amid tense relations between Moscow and Washington. (Griner would be found guilty and sentenced to nine years in prison, but would be released months later in a U.S.-Russia prisoner exchange). Canadian rock legend Randy Bachman was reunited in Tokyo with a cherished guitar, ending a 45-year search after it was stolen from a Toronto hotel.

Today's Birthdays: Actor-dancer Leslie Caron is 92. Actor Jean Marsh is 89. Actor Jamie Farr is 89. Cookiemaker Wally Amos is 87. Dancer-choreographer Twyla Tharp is 82. Actor Genevieve Bujold is 81. Rock singer-actor Deborah Harry is 78. Movie-TV producer-director Michael Pressman is 73. Actor Daryl Anderson is 72. Actor Trevor Eve is 72. Actor Terrence Mann is 72. Rock singer Fred Schneider (B-52s) is 72. Pop singer Victor Willis (Village People) is 72. Actor-comedian Dan Aykroyd is 71. Actor Lorna Patterson is 67. Actor Alan Ruck is 67. Mystery novelist Louise Penny is 65. R&B singer Evelyn "Champagne" King is 63. Olympic gold medal track star Carl Lewis is 62. Country singer Michelle Wright is 62. Actor Andre Braugher is 61. Actor Dominic Keating is 61. Actor Pamela Anderson is 56. Rock musician Mark Pirro is 53. Rock musician Franny Griffiths (Space) is 53. Actor Henry Simmons is 53. Hip-hop artist Missy Elliott is 52. Actor Julianne Nicholson is 52. Actor Melissa Peterman is 52. Actor/writer Jill Kargman is 49. Rock musician Bryan Devendorf (The National) is 48. Singer/songwriter Sufjan Stevens is 48. Actor Thomas Sadoski is 47. Actor Liv Tyler is 46. Actor Hilarie Burton is 41. Actor Lynsey Bartilson is 40. Actor Lea Seydoux (LEE'-uh say-DOO') is 38. Actor Evan Ellingson is 35. Actors Andrew and Steven Cavarno are 31. Actor/singer Chloe Bailey is 25. Actor Storm Reid is 20.