

Groton Daily Independent

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Monday, July 24

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

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

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

Senior Citizens meet at Community Center with potluck at noon.

Amateur District in Groton (Redfield DQ vs. Miller at 4 p.m., Northville Merchants vs. Groton Locke Electric at 7 p.m.)

Jr. Legion Region Tourney, at Northville (Sisseton vs. Redfield at noon; Redfield vs. W.I.N. at 2:30 p.m., W.I.N. vs. Groton at 5 p.m. Top two teams advance to state.)

Tuesday, July 25

St. John's Lutheran Church Vacation Bible School Senior Menu: Ranch chicken bread, rice pilaf, cauliflower and pea salad, blushing pears, whole wheat bread, fruit.

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

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

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

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



"When you recover or discover something that nourishes your soul and brings joy, care enough about yourself to make room for it in your life."

-Jean Shinoda Bolen

Olive Grove: Bridge, Ladies League at 6 p.m.
Amateur District in Groton

Wednesday, July 26

St. John's Lutheran Church Vacation Bible School Senior Menu: Baked cod, parsley buttered potatoes, coleslaw, fruit cocktail, whole wheat bread.

Emmanuel Lutheran: Project/Game night, 7 p.m.
United Methodist: Community Coffee Hour, 9:30 a.m.

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

Olive Grove: Kid's Lessons; Men's League
Amateur District in Groton

Thursday, July 27

St. John's Lutheran Church Vacation Bible School Senior Menu: Spaghetti with meat sauce, tossed salad with dressing, apple juice, mandarin oranges, whole wheat bread.

Amateur District in Groton

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The Bulletin by Newsweek

JULY 24, 2023

World in Brief

de France for the second year in a row.

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu underwent an emergency heart procedure Sunday, as mass protests continue over his government's judicial overhaul plan.

The party of prime minister Hun Sen declared a "landslide" victory in Cambodia's election Sunday, despite having no real competition against his authoritarian rule.

Barbie came out on top at the weekend's box office, taking in a total of \$155 Million, while Oppenheimer took in \$80 Million.

In the ongoing war in Ukraine, Russian missile strikes hit the Ukrainian city of Odesa once again early Sunday, killing one and wounding 22 in the attack.

Elon Musk has officially rebranded Twitter to X, launching a new logo on Monday and announcing that the URL "X.com" will now redirect to Twitter.com.

A "conversation has commenced" between Washington and Pyongyang over U.S. Army Pvt. Travis King, who was detained by North Korea after sprinting over the border into the country last week.

Greece has evacuated 19,000 people as raging wildfires on the island of Rhodes have been burning since Tuesday. Officials call it the largest evacuation effort in the country's history.

Danish rider Jonas Vingegaard claims victory at the Tour

TALKING POINTS

"I know I did my duty that day under the Constitution. I've said many times that the president's words were reckless that day. I had no right to overturn the election. But while his words were reckless, based on what I know, I'm not yet convinced that they were criminal[...] I really do hope it doesn't come to that," 2024 presidential nominee and former vice president Mike Pence on CNN's State of the Union, saying he is unsure if Donald Trump's actions before the January 6, 2021, attack on the Capitol building were criminal.

"The conduct here by the US Attorney in Delaware and by the Justice Department just can't be justified. It does not take five years to investigate two misdemeanor tax counts and to dismiss a gun charge, and we need to know what they were investigating and why these are the charges they concluded to. This is not just any person, this is the son of the president of the United States. And while justice needs to be equal...it doesn't appear to me that this is the way to do it," 2024 GOP nominee Chris Christie slamming the investigation into Hunter Biden as "incompetent" on CBS News' Face the Nation.

"The only thing I can say is I want everyone to stop bullying her. I know what it seems like what she did. Just stop bullying on social media. Think about her mental health. She doesn't deserve that. She doesn't. Nobody deserves to be cyberbullied," Carlee Russell's boyfriend Thomar Simmons said in an interview with the New York Post, pleading to the public to stop harassing Russell after her abduction story could not be verified by police.

WHAT TO WATCH IN THE DAY AHEAD

Vice President Kamala Harris will be in Chicago to speak at the Latino advocacy organization UnidosUS' annual conference.



American Legion Post 39 Groton would like to thank the following contributors to the painting of the US Flag on the new Groton Water Tower.

- Bierman Farm Service
- Dacotah Bank Groton
- Fliehs Farms - Larry & Val Fliehs
- Groton Chamber of Commerce
- James Valley Telecommunications
- Pharis Farms
- Rix Farms Inc
- Sippel Farms
- Strom Johnson Farms - Johnson Family
- Strom Johnson Farms – Strom Family
- Voss Farms Inc



AVANTARA



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has the following positions open:

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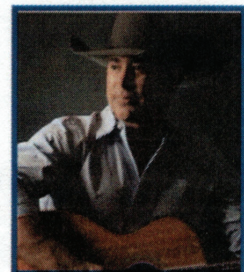
2ND ANNUAL **COLUMBIA FEST** & PARKS DEDICATION “A BLAST FROM THE PAST” **JULY 29, 2023**



COME FOR A FULL DAY OF FUN!

- 10:00 AM.....PARADE!
- 10:00 AM - 3:00 PM.....Vendors
- 11:00 AM.....Parks Dedication
- 12:00 - 3:00 PM.....Ballgames
- 3:00 - 4:00 PM.....Home Run Derby
- 4:00 - 5:00 PM.....Harry Luge Performs
- 5:00 PM.....Duck Race
- 6:00 - 8:00 PM.....Karaoke
- 9:00 PM.....Harry Luge

Lots of **GREAT ENTERTAINMENT, DELICIOUS FOOD** and **FUN ACTIVITIES**. Bring your lawn chairs and picnic blanket.



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Region Game

In Walk-Off, Groton Legion Post 39 Lose To Redfield Post 92, Clay Kiser

A walk-off left Groton Legion Post 39 on the wrong end of an 11-10 defeat to Redfield Post 92, Clay Kiser on Tuesday. The game was tied at 10 in the bottom of the seventh when Brevin Flihs induced Kellan Hurd to hit into a fielder's choice, but one run scored.

Despite the loss, Groton Legion Post 39 did collect 11 hits in the high-scoring affair. Unfortunately, Redfield Post 92, Clay Kiser had nine hits on the way to victory.

Groton Legion Post 39 were the first to get on the board in the first when an error scored one run.

A double by Bradin Althoff, and a single by Dillon Abeln helped Groton Legion Post 39 extend their early lead in the third.

Redfield Post 92, Clay Kiser jumped into the lead in the bottom of the fifth when an error scored one run, an error scored two runs, and Seth Siebrecht hit a sacrifice fly, scoring one run.

Groton Legion Post 39 took the lead, 10-7, in the top of the seventh thanks to singles by Althoff, and Colby Dunker.

Redfield Post 92, Clay Kiser took the lead in the bottom of the seventh inning after Groton Legion Post 39 committed an error, Groton Legion Post 39 committed an error, Groton Legion Post 39 committed an error, and Hurd hit into a fielder's choice, each scoring one run.

Peyton Osborn earned the win for Redfield Post 92, Clay Kiser. The reliever gave up five hits and four runs over one and one-third innings, striking out two and walking two. Ryan Groeblinghoff stepped on the mound first for Groton Legion Post 39. The starting pitcher allowed eight hits and eight runs (one earned) over six innings, striking out four and walking one. Nolan Gall started on the mound for Redfield Post 92, Clay Kiser. The righty gave up four hits and five runs (three earned) over five innings, striking out six and walking six.

Groton Legion Post 39 tallied 11 hits in the game. Althoff led Groton Legion Post 39 with three hits in five at bats. Flihs and Abeln each collected multiple hits for Groton Legion Post 39. Tate Larson paced Groton Legion Post 39 with four walks. Overall, the team had patience at the plate, collecting nine walks for the game.

Redfield Post 92, Clay Kiser piled up nine hits in the game. Gall and Owen Osborn each collected two hits for Redfield Post 92, Clay Kiser. Erik Salmen led Redfield Post 92, Clay Kiser with four runs batted in. The right-handed hitter went 1-for-4 on the day. Gall stole two bases. Redfield Post 92, Clay Kiser ran wild on the base paths, piling up six stolen bases for the game.

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Groton Legion Post 39 **10 - 11** Redfield Post 92, Clay Kiser

📍 Away 📅 Tuesday July 18, 2023

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	R	H	E
GRTN	1	0	3	1	0	1	4	10	11	9
RDFL	0	0	0	3	4	0	4	11	9	2

BATTING

Groton Legion Post	AB	R	H	RBI	BB	SO
B Flihs (3B, 2B, P)	5	2	2	0	0	2
C Simon (CF)	4	2	0	0	1	3
B Althoff (1B)	5	2	3	3	0	0
T Larson (DH, 3B)	1	1	1	1	4	0
C Dunker (LF)	3	0	1	3	2	2
L Ringgingberg (R...	5	0	0	0	0	0
C Larson (C)	3	1	1	0	1	0
D Abeln (2B, P, 2B)	4	1	2	2	0	1
K Hoover (SS)	3	1	1	0	1	1
Totals	33	10	11	9	9	9

2B: B Althoff, **TB:** K Hoover, T Larson, B Althoff 4, C Dunker, B Flihs 2, C Larson, D Abeln 2, **LOB:** 11

PITCHING

Groton Legioi	IP	H	R	ER	BB	SO	HR
R Groebing...	6.0	8	8	1	1	4	0
D Abeln	0.0	1	3	0	0	0	0
B Flihs	0.1	0	0	0	0	0	0
Totals	6.1	9	11	0	1	4	0

L: D Abeln, **P-S:** B Flihs 7-4, R Groeblinghoff 100-63, D Abeln 16-9, **HBP:** R Groeblinghoff, **BF:** B Flihs 2, R Groeblinghoff 31, D Abeln 4

Redfield Post 92, C	AB	R	H	RBI	BB	SO
K Hurd (CF)	5	0	1	1	0	1
O Osborn (2B)	4	1	2	0	0	1
P Osborn (SS, P)	4	1	1	0	0	0
K Rohfls (LF, C, LF)	3	3	1	1	0	0
N Gall (P, LF, SS)	3	3	2	0	1	0
E Salmen (1B, 3B)	4	2	1	4	0	0
S Siebrecht (1B)	3	1	0	2	0	1
E Komraus (RF)	4	0	1	1	0	1
E Morrissette (C,...	4	0	0	0	0	0
Totals	34	11	9	9	1	4

2B: N Gall, E Salmen, **TB:** K Hurd, K Rohfls, O Osborn 2, E Komraus, N Gall 3, E Salmen 2, P Osborn, **SF:** S Siebrecht, **HBP:** K Rohfls, **SB:** K Rohfls, S Siebrecht, O Osborn, N Gall 2, E Salmen, **LOB:** 5

Redfield Post	IP	H	R	ER	BB	SO	HR
N Gall	5.0	4	5	3	6	6	0
E Morrissette	0.2	2	1	1	1	1	0
P Osborn	1.1	5	4	4	2	2	0
Totals	7.0	11	10	8	9	9	0

W: P Osborn, **P-S:** E Morrissette 16-9, N Gall 108-59, P Osborn 39-24, **BF:** E Morrissette 5, N Gall 26, P Osborn 11

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Region Game

Groton Legion Post 39 Bats On Fire In Loss To FH Hitmen Legion

Both teams put up a bunch of runs, but Groton Legion Post 39 fell to Faulkton-Highmore Hitmen Legion 12-11 on Wednesday. FH Hitmen Legion collected 11 hits, while Groton Legion Post 39 had nine.

Groton Legion Post 39 was right in it until FH Hitmen Legion singled in the sixth inning.

Groton Legion Post 39 got on the board in the top of the second inning after Dillon Abeln singled, scoring one run, Brevin Flihs singled, scoring one run, an error scored one run, and Tate Larson singled, scoring two runs.

Groton Legion Post 39 scored five runs on four hits in the top of the third inning. Cade Larson grounded out, scoring one run, Flihs singled, scoring one run, Bradin Althoff tripled, scoring two runs, and Larson doubled, scoring one run.

FH Hitmen Legion tied the game in the bottom of the fourth thanks to a hit by a pitch, and a single by August Kopecky.

Groton Legion Post 39 took the lead in the top of the fifth. One run scored on another play, to give Groton Legion Post 39 the leg up, 11-10.

Carson Stephenson singled, which helped FH Hitmen Legion tie the game at 11 in the bottom of the fifth.

Layne Cotton earned the win for FH Hitmen Legion. They gave up zero hits and one run (zero earned) over four innings, striking out five and walking three. Flihs took the loss for Groton Legion Post 39. They went one and one-third innings, surrendering one run (zero earned) on three hits, striking out none and walking none. Larson started the game for Groton Legion Post 39. The righty allowed five hits and 10 runs (four earned) over three and two-thirds innings, striking out five and walking three. Gunner Brueggeman stepped on the mound first for FH Hitmen Legion. They allowed nine hits and 10 runs (seven earned) over three innings, striking out two and walking three.

Groton Legion Post 39 collected nine hits in the game. Flihs and Larson each collected two hits for Groton Legion Post 39. Larson drove the middle of the lineup, leading Groton Legion Post 39 with three runs batted in. They went 2-for-4 on the day. Cole Simon paced Groton Legion Post 39 with two walks. Overall, the team had patience at the plate, collecting six walks for the game. Ryan Groeblichhoff, Simon, and Colby Dunker each stole multiple bases for Groton Legion Post 39. Groton Legion Post 39 stole seven bases in the game. Groton Legion Post 39 turned one double play in the game.

FH Hitmen Legion amassed 11 hits in the game. Stephenson set the tone at the top of the lineup, leading FH Hitmen Legion with three hits in four at bats. Alex Sorensen led FH Hitmen Legion with four runs batted in. They went 2-for-3 on the day. Cotton and Kopecky each collected multiple hits for FH Hitmen Legion. Stephenson stole two bases. FH Hitmen Legion stole five bases in the game.

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Groton Legion Post 39 11 - 12 FH Hitmen Legion

📍 Away 📅 Wednesday July 19, 2023

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	R	H	E
GRTN	0	5	5	0	1	0	0	11	9	4
FHHT	0	2	4	4	1	1	X	12	11	2

BATTING

Groton Legion Pos	AB	R	H	RBI	BB	SO
B Flihs (3B, P, CF)	5	2	2	2	0	1
C Simon (CF, P)	2	2	0	0	2	0
B Althoff (1B)	2	1	1	2	1	1
T Larson (P, 3B)	4	0	2	3	0	1
R Groeblichhoff (...)	3	1	1	0	1	0
C Dunker (LF)	3	1	1	0	1	2
L Ringgingberg (R...)	2	2	1	0	1	1
C Larson (C)	4	0	0	0	0	1
D Abeln (2B)	4	2	1	0	0	0
Totals	29	11	9	7	6	7

2B: T Larson, L Ringgingberg, **3B:** B Althoff, **TB:** C Dunker, D Abeln, T Larson 3, B Althoff 3, L Ringgingberg 2, B Flihs 2, R Groeblichhoff, **CS:** B Althoff, **HBP:** B Althoff, L Ringgingberg, **SB:** C Dunker 2, C Simon 2, B Flihs, R Groeblichhoff 2, **LOB:** 5

PITCHING

Groton Legion	IP	H	R	ER	BB	SO	HR
T Larson	3.2	5	10	4	3	5	0
B Flihs	1.1	3	1	0	0	0	0
C Simon	1.0	3	1	1	0	1	0
Totals	6.0	11	12	5	3	6	0

L: B Flihs, **P-S:** T Larson 79-48, C Simon 19-12, B Flihs 17-10, **WP:** T Larson 2, **HBP:** T Larson, **BF:** T Larson 24, C Simon 5, B Flihs 3

FH Hitmen Legion	AB	R	H	RBI	BB	SO
C Stephenson (LF)	4	2	3	1	0	0
B Herdman (SS)	3	1	0	0	1	0
L Cotton (3B, P)	4	2	2	2	0	1
C Schick (C)	4	1	0	0	0	4
G Brueggeman (P,...)	3	3	1	0	1	1
A Sorensen (RF)	3	2	2	4	0	0
A Kopecky (1B)	3	0	2	2	1	0
L Coyle (2B)	3	0	0	1	0	0
P Coyle (2B)	1	0	0	0	0	0
D Hale (CF)	3	1	1	0	0	0
Totals	31	12	11	10	3	6

2B: A Sorensen, **3B:** L Cotton, **TB:** D Hale, A Kopecky 2, L Cotton 4, C Stephenson 3, A Sorensen 3, G Brueggeman, **HBP:** A Sorensen, **SB:** L Cotton, B Herdman, C Stephenson 2, G Brueggeman, **LOB:** 5

FH Hitmen Le	IP	H	R	ER	BB	SO	HR
G Bruegge...	3.0	9	10	7	3	2	0
L Cotton	4.0	0	1	0	3	5	0
Totals	7.0	9	11	7	6	7	0

W: L Cotton, **P-S:** L Cotton 61-39, G Brueggeman 77-47, **WP:** L Cotton, G Brueggeman, **HBP:** G Brueggeman 2, **BF:** L Cotton 15, G Brueggeman 22

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Weekly Vikings Recap - All-time Vikings Offense

By Jack & Duane Kolsrud

With the lack of Minnesota Vikings news continuing this offseason, except for Jordan Addison's recent speeding ticket where he was driving his Lamborghini 140 mph, we thought it would be fun to put together the all-time greatest Vikings' starting offense. To make it interesting, we will be picking players based on specific seasons, not based on their overall career with the Vikings.

Quarterback - Duante Culpepper (2004)

This might come as a shock to some fans who probably thought Fran Tarkenton or Randall Cunningham's 1998 season would make this list, but Duante Culpepper's 2004 season is the best season a Vikings' quarterback has ever had. In 16 games, Culpepper threw for 4,717 yards and 39 touchdowns, both still single-season records in Vikings history. Culpepper would have had a shot at winning MVP that season if it was not for the fact that Peyton Manning broke Dan Marino's record for touchdowns in a season that had stood for 20 years.

Running back - Adrian Peterson (2012)

This was the easiest choice to make when it came to putting this list together. Adrian Peterson's 2012 season is not only the greatest season for a running back in Vikings history, but it is also, in my opinion, the greatest season for a running back in NFL history. Peterson ran for 2,097 yards that season, finished with the MVP, and led a Vikings team that had gone 3-13 the previous season to the playoffs, all while coming back from a torn ACL the year before. It is truly the most impressive performance a Vikings player has ever had in this franchise's history.

Wide Receivers - Randy Moss (1998), Justin Jefferson (2022), Cris Carter (1995)

You could make the case that this is the best trio of wide receivers of all the NFL teams. You have the most athletic wide receiver of all time in Randy Moss, you have the greatest hands by a wide receiver of all time in Cris Carter, and you have the current best wide receiver in the NFL. I do not think there is a single other franchise in the NFL that could come close to this group. And what makes it even more impressive is that there are plenty of other great wide receivers that probably would make other franchises' all-time teams had they played for them but just could not crack this amazing Vikings trio.

Tight End - Jim Kleinsasser (2003)

When you have that trio of wide receivers in your lineup, your tight end is not going to need to go out for passes. Instead, I want one of the toughest players the Vikings have ever had to play my tight end position, Jim Kleinsasser. Kleinsasser's 2003 season saw him catch four touchdown passes, so even with his great blocking and toughness, there will still be a decent pass-catching threat from the tight end position.

Offensive Line - Gary Zimmerman (1988), Steve Hutchinson (2009), Mick Tinglehoff (1965), Randall McDaniel (1995), Ron Yary (1975)

For a Vikings team that has, over the past decade, had horrendous offensive line play, it is amazing to see how impressive this offensive line group is. Not only are all five of these offensive linemen Hall-of-Famers, but they are also some of the best to play their respective positions. Without a doubt, Steve Hutchinson and Randall McDaniel were the best guards during each of their eras, and Ron Yary was the best right tackle of his too. And, if it were not for Anthony Munoz and Jim Otto, both Gary Zimmerman and Mick Tinglehoff would probably have been the greatest at their position during their era, as well.

“ Part Two: Getting the Most Out of Your Healthcare”



Based on Science, Built on Trust



Samantha Darnall-Werlinger, MD

- After your visit: Your physician may order blood work, x-rays or a scan of your body. If the concern is acute or potentially a threat to your immediate health, you may be asked to wait for your results in the clinic. Normally, patients may leave and await their results from home. If the physician has requested a follow-up appointment, please schedule prior to your departure. We highly encourage this step as the schedules fill up very quickly.

- Results: Nowadays, many health institutions offer an application for your phone or computer to track your information at the touch of a button. While this is incredibly convenient, it can also create anxiety. If an abnormal result occurs, please wait patiently to hear from the clinic. We are performing many tasks and seeing patients during the day. It may take time to hear from us. Depending on your preference, you will receive either a phone call or message from the doctor or nurse on your results along with what to do with the information. More serious results will likely come from the doctor themselves. The majority of the results and information will be relayed to you from the nursing staff.

- Messages/questions: With these new apps, many patients have the option to message their physician with questions/concerns. The questions go to a pool being covered by a litany of clinic staff. They will use their knowledge to help with the concern/question. When necessary, the staff will forward it to the physician. Depending on the institution, we may have 24-72 hours to respond. If your question involves symptoms like chest pain or shortness of breath - DO NOT MESSAGE. Please call the clinic to speak with a nurse, call 911 or proceed to the Emergency Room.

- Medication refills: There's nothing more frustrating than going to the pharmacy and find there are no refills available on medications. Most healthcare systems likely have a timeframe set for when medications are required to be sent, the average is about 24-48 hours. That being said, please watch your medication supply carefully. When you have about 5-7 days left, call your pharmacy and request a refill, send a request via your application or call the clinic. Please plan accordingly around vacations/travel and holidays. If available, sign up for your pharmacy's notification system for your convenience. This will ensure timely refills so you do not go without your medications or make unnecessary trips to the pharmacy.

In closing, the healthcare system is a very busy entity providing care to thousands of patients simultaneously through various avenues. I'm hoping this essay can give patients some insight and assistance on how to navigate the systems and get the most seamless care.

Dr. Samantha Darnall-Werlinger is a family medicine physician with a special interest in obstetrics. Dr. Darnall-Werlinger practices at the Sanford Health Watertown Clinic in Watertown, SD. Follow The Prairie Doc® at www.prairiedoc.org and on Facebook featuring On Call with the Prairie Doc® a medical Q&A show based on science, built on trust for 21 seasons, broadcast on SDPB and streaming live on Facebook most Thursdays at 7 p.m. central.

EARTHTALK ™

Dear EarthTalk: Are some of the newfangled entrance restriction tactics to reduce overcrowding at U.S. national parks having the desired effect?

— P. Smith, Provo, UT

With each passing day we grow more aware of our environment and its beauty. The U.S. has seen this newfound appreciation in the form of a high influx in visitors to national parks across the country. In the past year, visitors to U.S. national parks have increased by five percent—and since 1976, visitation has increased overall by some 75 percent. In 2022, two of the busiest national parks—Yellowstone and Yosemite—began to require reservations for entry for the first time in the history of the National Park Service (NPS). Increased awareness of our natural world is wonderful, but overcrowding creates detrimental effects, from the songbirds in the trees to the employees at the parking lot.

Environmental luminary John Muir once said, “The mountains are calling and I must go.” And now Americans are heeding this call like never before. To wit, some 312 million trips were made to national parks in the last year, with 12 parks breaking previous attendance numbers. Concentrated in tight weekend windows and school breaks, this trend has overwhelmed these tranquil sanctuaries of nature.

Making matters worse is that national parks weren’t initially developed to accommodate massive crowds. Combine the narrow roads, limited parking and lack of public transport with an impatient mob of visitors waiting to get their share of nature and you come up with a generous serving of chaos.

Yosemite National Park’s experimentation with requiring reservations in order to pass through the gates did help reduce Yosemite’s notorious overcrowding as much as rangers didn’t like turning people away. Zion National Park now disallows cars beyond the visitor center parking lot just inside the park gates. Visitors instead now rely on an efficient shuttle bus system which moves everyone right along between stops and hiking trailheads throughout the park’s main artery. Zion also offers visitors options like renting e-bikes and e-scooters for those who would rather skip the shuttle bus.

Arches National Park has implemented a timed-entry program that may be the secret sauce to figuring out overcrowding. Through the first three months of 2023, visitor numbers were down when compared to the two previous years. Innovative solutions like driverless shuttles and other sustainable technologies will only improve with time. It’s been a long journey for our parks over the last few years, but rays of optimism shine through the trees. While our parks aren’t exactly back to their peaceful, serene states yet, they sure are on the right trail back.



A timed entry system at Arches National Park has worked wonders in terms of keeping overcrowding to a minimum there. Credit: NPS.



SOUTH DAKOTA SEARCHLIGHT

<https://southdakotasearchlight.com>

After Noem turns down federal cyber money, lawmaker suggests using state funds

Or, legislative push could convince governor to accept federal grant, legislator says

BY: MAKENZIE HUBER - JULY 23, 2023 6:00 AM

After legislators learned that Gov. Kristi Noem's administration didn't apply for a share of \$1 billion in nationwide cybersecurity grants for county and city governments, one legislator suggested funding grants with state money.

The revelation about the state's non-participation in the federal grant program emerged during a legislative summer study committee meeting on county funding earlier this month. The state refused about \$5 million in fiscal year 2023 from the grant and will turn down even more funding in fiscal year 2024, a representative with the Department of Homeland Security told legislators. South Dakota and Florida are the only two states that haven't applied for the federal funding.

"If we're not going to accept the grant, then we'll legislate an appropriation on a similar program and use South Dakota taxpayer money to do it instead, because it's so important," said Sen. Randy Deibert, R-Spearfish.

Deibert is the vice chair of the legislative summer study committee, a county commissioner for Lawrence County and serves on the board of the South Dakota Association of County Commissioners. Lawrence County wrote a letter to Noem's office during her reelection campaign last year encouraging her to apply for the grant, Deibert said.

Local governments are commonly targeted for cybersecurity and ransomware attacks because they hold valuable personal information, said Jim Edman, DHS statewide coordinator, during the meeting. South Dakota local governments have paid "thousands or even hundreds of thousands of dollars to remediate the risk" to their IT networks, according to the South Dakota Public Assurance Alliance.

The federal grant makes \$1 billion available to states over four years: \$200 million was available last year, \$400 million this year, \$300 million in 2024 and \$100 million in 2025.

"We are trying to answer the question, why in the world are we not participating in this?" said Rep. Roger Chase, R-Huron, and chair of the committee, during the meeting.

That's because Noem doesn't want to accept one-time federal funding that would establish long-term programs, said her spokesman Ian Fury.

States are required to have a cybersecurity plan when they receive the grant money and create a planning committee made up of officials from different industries.

The grant is an example of the federal government's "wasteful spending," Fury said to South Dakota Searchlight, adding that the spending is "oftentimes not the best solution to the problem it is seeking to solve."

"Federal spending often comes with strings attached, and more of it is often not a good thing," Fury said in an emailed statement. "These dollars would have required us to set up a new committee, create an ongoing program with one-time dollars (something we never do), and the administrative burden would have far exceeded the allowable administrative cost."

The state would have to apply for the grant and then distribute 80% of the grant to local governments, with 20% staying with the state. The nationwide grant stems from the 2021 Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act.

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Legislators at the committee hearing discussed creating a centralized email system for local governments, similar to the state's K-12 email system. The K-12 centralized email system gave local school districts and their teachers, administrators and students a standardized email with data backup. The annual operating cost for the system is slightly over \$1 million for the center's 130,000 users.

Currently, local governments select their own email platform and server — ranging from Yahoo to state email addresses.

Deibert also envisions having the state offer training to counties and city officials on phishing, spam and ransomware. Few counties offer such training to their employees.

He hopes raising public awareness about South Dakota's inaction on the grant and passing legislation next session to create a program will convince Noem's office to apply next year.

"If we pass a bill through both bodies and it's on Noem's desk," Deibert said, "she'll choose the lesser of two evils."

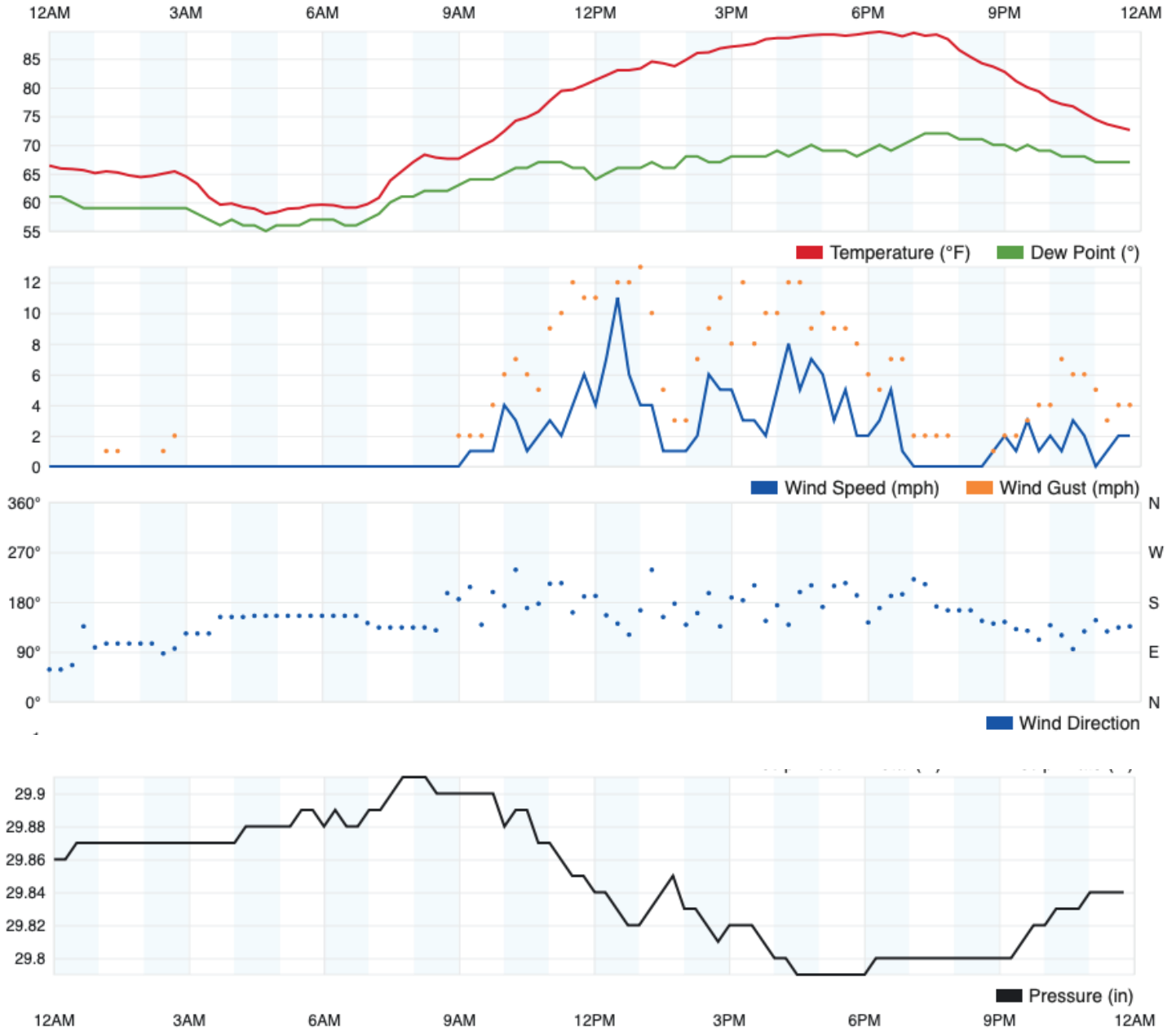
This is not the first time Noem has refused federal funds. Most recently, South Dakota was one of four states that turned down the Climate Pollution Reduction Grant program, which would have provided state government with \$3 million for planning and access to a \$4.6 billion fund for implementation. She also turned down extended unemployment benefits from the Trump administration in 2020.

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

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Yesterday's Groton Weather Graphs



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Today	Tonight	Tuesday	Tuesday Night	Wednesday	Wednesday Night	Thursday
						
Hot	Partly Cloudy	Slight Chance T-storms	Slight Chance T-storms	Hot	Partly Cloudy	Mostly Sunny then Slight Chance T-storms
High: 92 °F	Low: 65 °F	High: 92 °F	Low: 65 °F	High: 99 °F	Low: 68 °F	High: 93 °F

The Week Ahead

July 24, 2023
3:16 AM

	Maximum Temperature Forecast					Maximum Heat Index Forecast																							
	7/24	7/25	7/26	7/27	7/28	7/24 Mon		7/25 Tue		7/26 Wed		7/27 Thu		7/28 Fri		7/24	7/25	7/26	7/27	7/28									
	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	12pm	6pm	12am	6am	12pm	6pm	12am	6am	12pm	6pm	12am	6am	12pm	6pm	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri					
Aberdeen	94	93	100	94	88	0	0	0	0	15	20	25	10	0	5	15	10	10	15	15	10	5	5	95	93	104	97	87	
Britton	91	91	95	90	85	0	0	0	0	5	10	5	30	20	0	5	10	5	5	15	30	30	20	20	92	89	98	90	83
Brookings	90	89	93	93	85	0	0	0	5	10	5	30	20	0	5	10	5	5	15	30	30	20	20	91	89	95	94	85	
Chamberlain	97	97	98	98	90	0	0	0	5	10	20	15	5	0	5	10	10	5	10	25	25	10	15	100	101	102	101	92	
Clark	88	88	93	92	83	0	0	0	0	15	20	30	10	0	5	10	10	10	15	20	15	10	5	90	88	96	94	84	
Eagle Butte	95	97	97	93	87	0	0	0	20	15	20	10	5	5	5	15	15	10	15	20	20	5	10	93	95	94	90	85	
Ellendale	91	90	96	86	83	0	0	0	0	15	20	25	5	0	5	10	5	10	15	20	10	5	10	91	89	97	88	82	
Eureka	91	91	97	91	83	0	0	0	10	15	20	20	5	0	5	15	10	10	15	20	10	5	10	91	92	97	89	82	
Gettysburg	92	94	98	93	85	0	0	0	20	20	20	15	5	0	5	15	10	5	15	20	20	5	5	93	96	100	94	85	
Huron	94	91	96	95	88	0	0	0	5	10	10	25	5	0	5	10	5	5	15	30	30	20	15	96	93	99	99	90	
Kennebec	95	99	100	98	91	0	0	5	20	15	20	10	0	0	5	10	10	5	10	20	20	5	10	96	102	101	99	90	
McIntosh	93	94	93	88	83	0	0	5	25	15	20	10	10	0	10	10	20	15	20	20	10	10	10	92	94	93	86	82	
Milbank	90	93	97	94	87	0	0	0	5	15	25	20	0	5	15	15	10	15	15	15	5	5	91	92	101	95	86		
Miller	91	93	97	94	86	0	0	0	5	15	20	20	5	0	5	15	10	10	15	15	20	10	5	93	96	100	98	88	
Mobridge	95	96	100	94	87	0	0	0	15	15	20	10	5	0	5	15	10	10	15	20	15	10	10	95	97	101	93	85	
Murdo	97	100	100	97	91	0	0	20	20	15	15	5	0	0	5	10	10	5	10	20	20	5	10	96	101	99	97	90	
Pierre	98	100	104	100	93	0	0	10	20	15	20	10	0	0	5	15	10	5	15	20	20	5	10	97	104	105	102	92	
Redfield	92	93	98	95	88	0	0	0	0	15	20	25	5	0	5	10	5	5	15	20	20	10	10	94	94	100	97	88	
Sisseton	91	92	98	93	87	0	0	0	0	10	20	25	10	0	5	15	15	10	15	15	10	5	10	91	91	99	94	85	
Watertown	89	90	96	93	85	0	0	0	0	10	15	30	15	0	5	15	10	5	15	15	15	5	5	90	88	99	94	84	
Webster	89	90	93	92	84	0	0	0	0	10	20	30	10	0	5	15	10	10	15	20	15	5	5	88	87	94	93	83	
Wheaton	92	92	97	90	88	0	0	0	0	5	10	15	15	0	5	15	15	10	15	15	10	5	5	91	91	98	91	85	

% of storms

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

National Weather Service
Aberdeen, SD

The week ahead features temperatures above average with a touch of humidity for eastern South Dakota and western Minnesota. We'll see off and on storm chances but not a lot of widespread moisture.

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Severe Weather Threat Overview

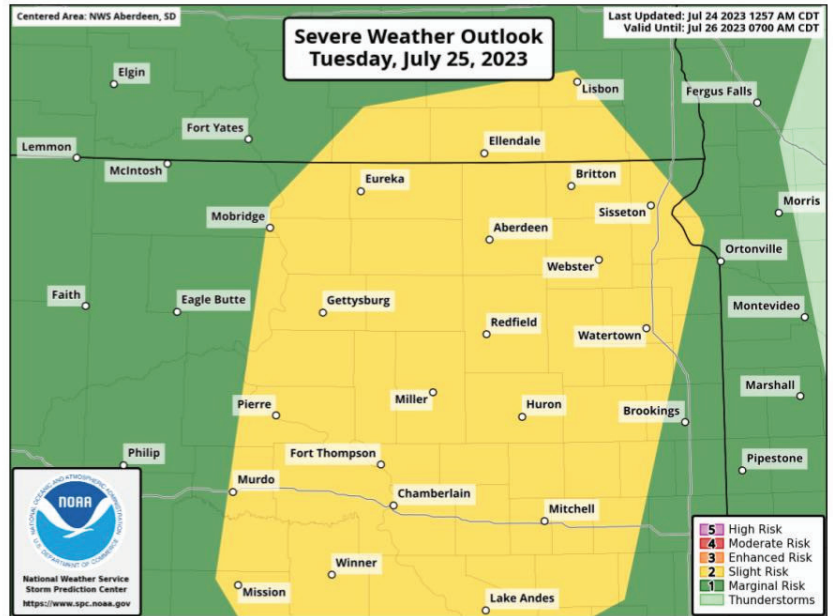
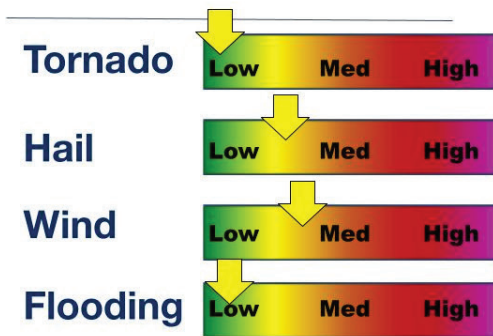
July 24, 2023
2:46 AM

Tuesday Evening

Hazards/Timing

Isolated to Scattered evening storms could develop in the heat of the afternoon/evening with the main threats being large hail and strong winds.

Primary Threats for the **YELLOW** areas



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

National Weather Service
Aberdeen, SD

A weak wave and hot temperatures will allow for isolated to scattered afternoon and evening storms. Main threats include strong winds and large hail, primarily in the yellow highlighted area.

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Yesterday's Groton Weather

High Temp: 90 °F at 6:17 PM

Low Temp: 58 °F at 4:52 AM

Wind: 13 mph at 11:32 AM

Precip: : 0.00

Day length: 15 hours, 05 minutes

Today's Info

Record High: 108 in 1931

Record Low: 46 in 1905

Average High: 85

Average Low: 60

Average Precip in July.: 2.52

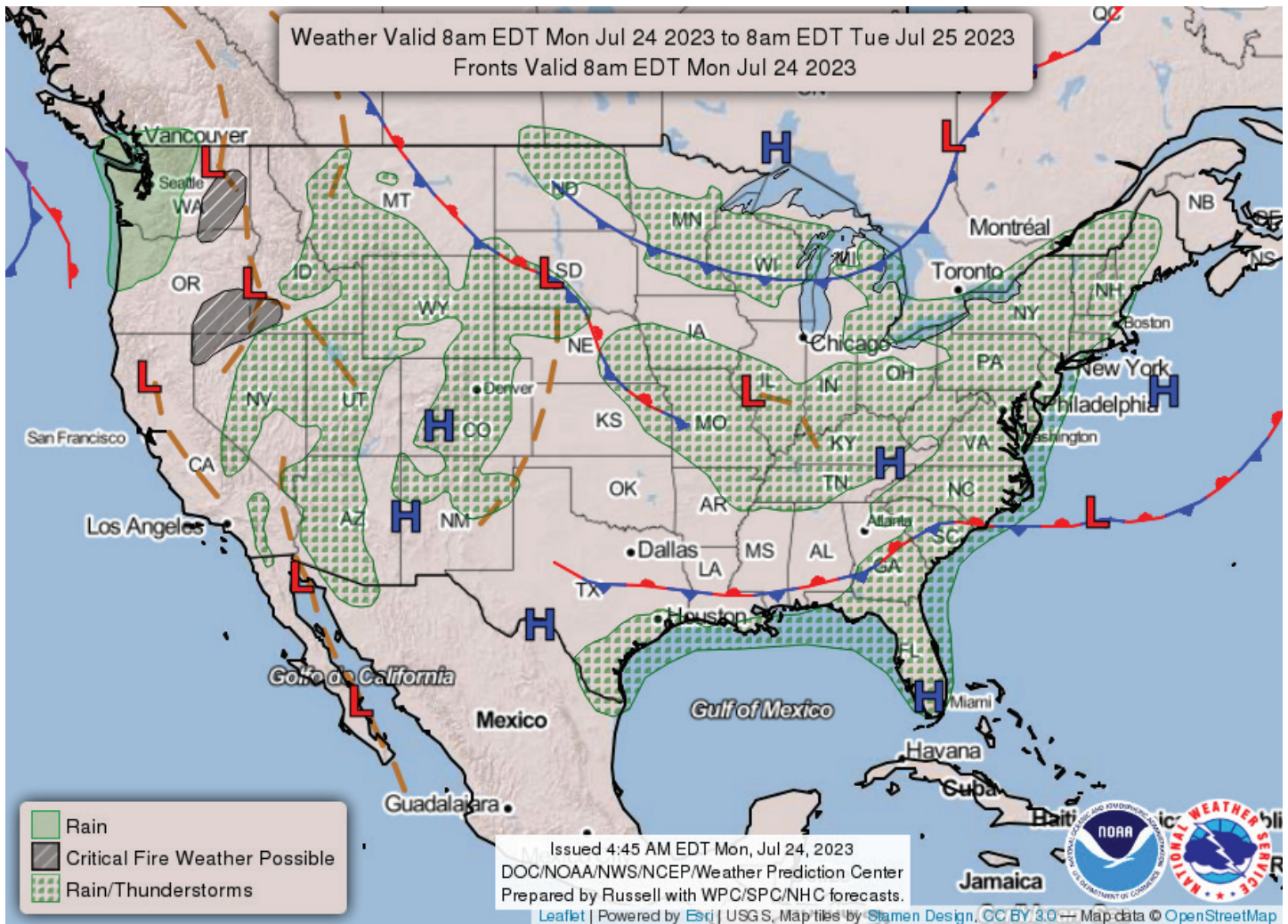
Precip to date in July.: 1.32

Average Precip to date: 13.53

Precip Year to Date: 12.67

Sunset Tonight: 9:11:53 PM

Sunrise Tomorrow: 6:07:04 AM



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Today in Weather History

July 24, 1993: A severe thunderstorm struck southern Hyde County, including the city of Highmore, with winds more than 60 mph and heavy rains of two to four inches. Near Stephan, in far southern Hyde County, an estimated of over four inches of rain in 20 minutes caused flooding damage to a bridge. Three to nine inches of rain caused widespread flash flooding and flood damage to Day, Roberts, and southeastern Marshall Counties. Especially hard hit was an area from Webster, northeastward through the Pickerell and Buffalo Lakes area, to Sisseton. A state of emergency was declared in Sisseton. The heavy rains overwhelmed a small creek that flows through Sisseton, swelling it to three blocks wide and up to five feet deep. The rushing water carried lumber, railroad ties, propane tanks, and several vehicles. Flood damage occurred to 70 percent of all buildings in Sisseton, including 100 homes. In Webster, the excessive rain flooded all the sewer lifts that pump water out of low-lying areas in town. The sewer system then backed up into homes and businesses. The rainstorm flooded nine of the 12 main floor rooms at the Super 8 motel in Webster. Roads and bridge damage was also extensive in Roberts, Day, and Marshall Counties with about 50 roads and bridges in Day County damaged by the flooding. Areas lakes, including Pickerell, Blue Dog, Enemy Swim, and Buffalo lakes rose over two feet, inundating areas around lake homes and submerging docks. Some estimated storm total rainfall amounts include; 4.60 inches in Webster; 3.91 in Waubay; 3.90 in Britton; and 3.60 inches near Ashton.

July 24, 1997: Over 6 inches of rain fell in the Conde area in far northeast Spink County. Water was over Highway 37, and many town basements were flooded. One basement filled with 5 feet of water. Nearly 7 inches of rain was received at Lake Poinsett, and over 6 inches of rain was received in Estelline. Hidewood Creek in Hamlin County overflowed its banks. Water went into many residences homes, and some people were evacuated. A small bridge was taken out by the high water, and Highway 28 was closed for an hour.

1886 - Rain fell at Lawrence, KS, for the first time in four weeks. Rain fell over much of the state of Kansas that day relieving a severe drought which began in May. The very dry weather ruined crops in Kansas. (David Ludlum)

1930: An estimated, F5 tornado tore through Montello, Veneto, and Friuli in Italy. The tornado killed 23 people along its 50 miles path.

1936 - A record all time Kansas state high temperature set just 6 days earlier was tied in the town of Alton, located in Osborne County. (US National Weather Service Wichita)

1942 - The temperature at Las Vegas, NV, hit 117 degrees to set an all-time record for that location. The record was tied on July 19, 2005.

1947 - One of the most powerful strokes of lightning ever measured yielded 345,000 amperes of electricity in Pittsburgh, PA. (The Weather Channel)

1952 - The temperature at Louisville, GA, soared to 112 degrees to establish a state record. (The Weather Channel)

1980 - Claudette, a weak tropical storm, deluged southeastern Texas with torrential rains. The Houston suburb of Alvin received 43 inches, a 24 hour record for the U.S. (David Ludlum)

1987 - Twenty-one cities in the eastern U.S. reported record high temperatures for the date. The high of 91 degrees at Beckley, WV, was their hottest reading in 25 years of records, and marked their third straight day of record 90 degree heat. Bakersfield, CA, dipped to 60 degrees, marking their eighth straight morning of record cool weather. (The National Weather Summary)

1989 - Afternoon thunderstorms produced some flash flooding in New Mexico. Albuquerque, NM, was deluged with an inch and a half of rain in forty minutes. Evening thunderstorms soaked Whie Pine, PA, with two inches of rain in one hour. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

2008: A tornado fluctuated between the category EF1 and the more destructive EF2 strikes Northwood and Pittsfield, as well as nine other towns in New Hampshire. It first touches down in Deerfield, then travels through Northwood, Epsom, Pittsfield, Barnstead, and Alton. From there, it rages through New Durham, Wolfeboro, Freedom, Ossipee, and Effingham. The storm destroys several homes, damaged dozens of others and kills at least one person.

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Daily Devotionals

Seeds of Hope

A SURE SIGN OF WISDOM

"Dr. Guido," she said rather timidly, "how do you see yourself? All of the teachers we have are different. But tell us, what makes you different from all of the others?"

My first thought was to explain how my world view differed from most other professors because of my faith in Christ. That would have been a safe, standard answer. But I wanted to say something that made the way I taught distinct from other professors. As I reflected on the importance of her question, I realized how critical my answer would be.

After a few moments, God brought a word to my mind that I had never associated with teaching before. I looked at the young lady and said, "I see my role as being similar to the role of a midwife. I believe that it is my responsibility to bring in to your life, and the lives of others, what God has planted or will plant within you. My role is to work with God to bring what He plants in your head and heart to life, and to prepare you for the life He has for you."

"The fruit of the righteous is a tree of life, and the one who is wise saves lives," wrote Solomon. What we do in our relationships with others is a matter of life and death. We are responsible, with the opportunities and guidance that God gives us, to bring others into a saving relationship with Him. We are to use whatever gifts, talents, skills, influence or position God has given us to bring His message of "life" to others.

A "tree of life" will grow in the life of one who has been redeemed by Christ. And, that "tree" will also bear fruit and bring "the tree of life" to others by its fruit. By this we will be known.

Prayer: Lord, we plant "seeds" continually by what we do and what we say. May we constantly plant Your "seeds," bring "life" and "near fruit" wherever we go. In Jesus' Name, Amen.

Scripture For Today: The fruit of the righteous is a tree of life, and the one who is wise saves lives. Proverbs 11:30



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
- 08/10/2023 Family Fun Fest, 5:30 p.m. to 7:30 p.m.
- 08/11/2023 GHS Basketball Golf Tournament
- 09/09/2023 Lion's Club Fall Citywide Rummage Sale 8am-3pm (1st Saturday after Labor Day)
- 09/10/2023 Couples Sunflower Golf Tournament
- 10/14/2023 Pumpkin Fest at the City Park 10am-3pm
- 10/31/2023 Downtown Trick or Treat 4-6pm (working day on or closest to Halloween)
- 10/31/2023 United Methodist Church Trunk or Treat 5:30-7pm
- 11/23/2023 Community Thanksgiving at the Community Center 11:30am-1pm (Thanksgiving)
- 12/02/2023 Tour of Homes & Holiday Party
- 12/09/2023 Santa Claus Day at Professional Management Services 9-11am

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The Groton Independent Printed & Mailed Weekly Edition

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WINNING NUMBERS

MEGA MILLIONS

WINNING NUMBERS:
07.21.23

29 40 47 50 57 25

MegaPlier: 2x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:
\$820,000,000

NEXT 1 Days 15 Hrs 56
DRAW: Mins 29 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

LOTTO AMERICA

WINNING NUMBERS:
07.22.23

1 20 23 36 41 1

All Star Bonus: 2x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:
\$6,200,000

NEXT 15 Hrs 11 Mins 29
DRAW: Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

LUCKY FOR LIFE

WINNING NUMBERS:
07.23.23

8 12 17 19 31 12

TOP PRIZE:
\$7,000/week

NEXT 15 Hrs 26 Mins
DRAW: 30 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

DAKOTA CASH

WINNING NUMBERS:
07.22.23

4 5 12 23 34

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:
\$20,000

NEXT 2 Days 15 Hrs 26
DRAW: Mins 29 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

POWERBALL

DOUBLE PLAY

WINNING NUMBERS:
07.22.23

31 37 39 54 65 14

TOP PRIZE:
\$10,000,000

NEXT 15 Hrs 55 Mins
DRAW: 30 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

POWERBALL

WINNING NUMBERS:
07.22.23

25 27 36 37 63 7

Power Play: 2x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:
\$28,000,000

NEXT 15 Hrs 55 Mins
DRAW: 30 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

News from the Associated Press

Saudi Arabian soccer team Al-Hilal makes record \$332 million bid for France striker Kylian Mbappe

By JAMES ROBSON AP Soccer Writer

SYDNEY (AP) — Saudi Arabian soccer team Al-Hilal made a record 300 million euro (\$332 million) bid for France striker Kylian Mbappe on Monday.

Paris Saint-Germain confirmed the offer for its player and has given Al-Hilal permission to open negotiations directly with Mbappe.

The 2018 World Cup winner is in a contract standoff with PSG after his decision not to take up the option of a 12-month extension on his deal.

Instead, he plans to walk away as a free agent at the end of the upcoming season when he is widely expected to join Real Madrid.

PSG cut Mbappe from its preseason tour of Japan on Saturday, with the French club determined to sell him unless he can be convinced to sign a new contract.

James Robson is at <https://twitter.com/jamesalanrobson>

AP soccer: <https://apnews.com/hub/soccer> and https://twitter.com/AP_Sports

Netanyahu leaves hospital as Israel faces a key vote — and a crisis — over divisive legal changes

By TIA GOLDENBERG and ISAAC SCHARF Associated Press

JERUSALEM (AP) — Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu was released from the hospital Monday after an emergency heart procedure and now faces an unprecedented national crisis ahead of parliament's vote on the first major piece of legislation to remake the country's justice system.

Demonstrators, many of whom feel the very foundations of their country are being eroded by the government's plan, stepped up their opposition, blocking a road leading up to parliament. Businesses shuttered their doors to protest the vote.

Driven by a governing coalition made up of ultranationalist and ultra-religious parties, the judicial overhaul has divided Israel, testing the delicate social ties that bind the country, rattling the cohesion of its powerful military and repeatedly drawing concern from even its closest ally, the United States.

Efforts to find a last-ditch compromise were underway, with President Isaac Herzog shuttling between the sides, including a meeting at the hospital where Netanyahu was treated, to find an agreement over the way forward. But it was unclear whether those would result in a compromise ahead of the final vote, expected Monday afternoon.

Parliament gathered in a stormy session ahead of the vote.

"We are headed for disaster," said opposition leader Yair Lapid in a speech. "If you vote today on this bill, you are bringing the end of the people's army closer. You are strengthening Israel's enemies. You are harming the security of the state of Israel."

Protesters banging on drums and blowing horns blocked a road leading to the Knesset, and police used water cannons to push them back. The protest movement said one of its leaders was arrested.

"The state of Israel stands before destruction and ruin that is being brought upon it by a gang of extremists and kooks. We must go up to Jerusalem today!" one branch of the protest movement called out to demonstrators on social media.

Israeli media reported that a consortium of businesses announced late Sunday that some of their members wouldn't open on Monday to protest the government's plans, leading to big mall chains and some

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gas stations sealing their doors.

The dramatic events were being watched closely in Washington, from where the Biden administration has frequently spoken out against Netanyahu's government and its overhaul plan. In a statement to the news site Axios late Sunday, Biden warned against pushing ahead with the legal changes that were sparking so much division.

"Given the range of threats and challenges confronting Israel right now, it doesn't make sense for Israeli leaders to rush this — the focus should be on pulling people together and finding consensus," he told the site.

Biden has also been critical of the government's steps to deepen Israel's occupation of the West Bank. The massive, sustained democracy protests have shunned mention of Israel's 56-year occupation of lands the Palestinians seek for their hoped-for independent state, fearing the issue might alienate supporters. But critics portray this rule over another people as a major stain on Israel's claim to be a liberal democracy and accuse the protesters of harboring a significant blind spot in their struggle.

Netanyahu's sudden hospitalization for the implant of a pacemaker added another dizzying twist to an already dramatic series of events that have bitterly divided his country and are certain to shape Israel's future.

Netanyahu's doctors said Sunday the procedure had gone smoothly. In a short video statement from the hospital late Sunday, Netanyahu, 73, said he felt fine and thanked his doctors for his treatment and the public for wishing him well.

Wearing a white dress shirt and dark blazer, Netanyahu said he was pursuing a compromise with his opponents while also preparing for a vote on Monday that would enshrine a key piece of the legislation into law.

"I want you to know that tomorrow morning I'm joining my colleagues at the Knesset," he said.

The overhaul calls for sweeping changes aimed at curbing the powers of the judiciary, from limiting the Supreme Court's ability to challenge parliamentary decisions to changing the way judges are selected.

Netanyahu and his far-right allies, a collection of ultranationalist and ultra-Orthodox parties, say the changes are needed to curb the powers of unelected judges. Their opponents, coming largely from Israel's professional middle class, say the plan will destroy the country's fragile system of checks and balances and push Israel toward authoritarian rule.

President Herzog, who returned Sunday from a trip to the White House, immediately rushed to Netanyahu's hospital room.

"We are in a state of national emergency," Herzog said in a statement Monday, saying he was continuing efforts to find an agreement. "During these decisive hours, I call on elected officials to act with courage, and to reach out in order to arrive at understanding."

Herzog held meetings later Sunday with Israel's opposition leader, Lapid, and Benny Gantz, head of National Unity, another opposition party.

Just ahead of Monday's vote, Lapid told reporters that compromise efforts had failed.

"We made every effort to come to a broad agreement," he said. "There's no way to continue to deal with them."

There was no immediate comment from Gantz or Herzog.

As they spoke, tens of thousands of people gathered for mass rallies for and against the plan. Netanyahu's supporters thronged central Tel Aviv — normally the setting for anti-government protests — while his opponents marched on Israel's Knesset, or parliament.

Many of the protesters in Jerusalem had camped out in a nearby park, after completing a four-day march into the city from Tel Aviv on Saturday.

Further ratcheting up the pressure on the Israeli leader, thousands of military reservists have been declaring their refusal to serve under a government taking steps that they see as setting the country on a path to dictatorship. Those moves have prompted fears that the military's preparedness could be compromised.

"These are dangerous cracks," military chief Lt. Gen. Herzi Halevi wrote in a letter to soldiers Sunday meant to address the tensions. "If we will not be a strong and cohesive military, if the best do not serve

in the IDF, we will no longer be able to exist as a country in the region.”

Despite the attempts to project business as usual, Netanyahu’s schedule was disrupted by his hospitalization. His weekly Cabinet meeting scheduled for Sunday morning was postponed. Two upcoming overseas trips, to Cyprus and Turkey, were being rescheduled, his office said.

In Monday’s vote, legislators are to decide on an overhaul measure that would prevent judges from striking down government decisions on the basis that they are “unreasonable.”

Proponents say the current “reasonability” standard gives judges excessive powers over decision-making by elected officials. Critics say removing it would allow the government to pass arbitrary decisions, make improper appointments or firings and open the door to corruption.

Protesters, who come from a wide swath of Israeli society, see the overhaul as a power grab fueled by personal and political grievances of Netanyahu — who is on trial for corruption charges — and his partners who want to deepen Israel’s control of the occupied West Bank and perpetuate controversial draft exemptions for ultra-Orthodox men.

Netanyahu and his far-right allies announced the overhaul plan in January, days after taking office.

Netanyahu paused the overhaul in March after intense pressure by protesters and labor strikes that halted outgoing flights and shut down parts of the economy. After talks to find a compromise failed last month, he said his government was pressing on with the overhaul.

Goldenberg reported from Tel Aviv, Israel.

Fukushima nuclear plant water release within weeks raises worries about setbacks to businesses

By MARI YAMAGUCHI Associated Press

IWAKI, Japan (AP) — Beach season has started across Japan, which means seafood for holiday makers and good times for business owners. But in Fukushima, that may end soon.

Within weeks, the tsunami-hit Fukushima Daiichi nuclear power plant is expected to start releasing treated radioactive wastewater into the sea, a highly contested plan still facing fierce protests in and outside Japan.

The residents worry that the water discharge 12 years after the nuclear disaster could deal another setback to Fukushima’s image and hurt their businesses and livelihoods.

“Without a healthy ocean, I cannot make a living,” said Yukinaga Suzuki, a 70-year-old innkeeper at Usuiso beach in Iwaki about 50 kilometers (30 miles) south of the plant. And the government has yet to announce when the water release will begin.

It’s not yet clear whether, or how, damaging the release will be. But residents say they feel “shikataganai” — meaning helpless.

Suzuki has requested officials to hold the plan at least until the swimming season ends in mid-August.

“If you ask me what I think about the water release, I’m against it. But there is nothing I can do to stop it as the government has one-sidedly crafted the plan and will release it anyway,” he said. “Releasing the water just as people are swimming at sea is totally out of line, even if there is no harm.”

The beach, he said, will be in the path of treated water traveling south on the Oyashio current from off the coast of Fukushima Daiichi. That’s where the cold Oyashio current meets the warm, northbound Kuroshio, making it a rich fishing ground.

The government and the operator, Tokyo Electric Power Company Holdings, or TEPCO, have struggled to manage the massive amount of contaminated water accumulating since the 2011 nuclear disaster, and announced plans to release it to the ocean during the summer.

They say the plan is to treat the water, dilute it with more than a hundred times the seawater and then release it into the Pacific Ocean through an undersea tunnel. Doing so, they said, is safer than national and international standards require.

Suzuki is among those who are not fully convinced by the government’s awareness campaign that critics say only highlights safety. “We don’t know if it’s safe yet,” Suzuki said. “We just can’t tell until much later.”

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The Usuiso area used to have more than a dozen family-run inns before the disaster. Now, Suzuki's half-century old Suzukame, which he inherited from his parents 30 years ago, is the only one still in business after surviving the tsunami. He heads a safety committee for the area and operates its only beach house.

Suzuki says his inn guests won't mention the water issue if they cancel their reservations and he would only have to guess. "I serve fresh local fish to my guests, and the beach house is for visitors to rest and chill out. The ocean is the source of my livelihood."

The March 11, 2011, earthquake and tsunami destroyed the Fukushima Daiichi plant's cooling systems, causing three reactors to melt and contaminating their cooling water, which has since leaked continuously. The water is collected, filtered and stored in some 1,000 tanks, which will reach their capacity in early 2024.

The government and TEPCO say the water must be removed to make room for the plant's decommissioning, and to prevent accidental leaks from the tanks because much of the water is still contaminated and needs retreatment.

Katsumasa Okawa, who runs a seafood business in Iwaki, says those tanks containing contaminated water bother him more than the treated water release. He wants to have them removed as soon as possible, especially after seeing "immense" tanks occupying much of the plant complex during his visit few years ago.

An accidental leak would be "an ultimate strikeout ... It will cause actual damage, not reputation," Okawa says. "I think the treated water release is unavoidable." It's eerie, he adds, to have to live near the damaged plant for decades.

Fukushima's badly hit fisheries community, tourism and the economy are still recovering. The government has allocated 80 billion yen (\$573 million) to support still-feeble fisheries and seafood processing and combat potential reputation damage from the water release.

His wife evacuated to her parents' home in Yokohama, near Tokyo with their four children, but Okawa stayed in Iwaki to work on reopening the store. In July, 2011, Okawa resumed sale of fresh fish—but none from Fukushima.

Local fishing was returning to normal operation in 2021 when the government announced the water release plan.

Fukushima's local catch today is still about one-fifth of its pre-disaster levels due to a decline in the fishing population and smaller catch sizes.

Japanese fishing organizations strongly opposed Fukushima's water release, as they worry about further damage to the reputation of their seafood as they struggle to recover. Groups in South Korea and China have also raised concerns, turning it a political and diplomatic issue. Hong Kong has vowed to ban the import of aquatic products from Fukushima and other Japanese prefectures if Tokyo discharges treated radioactive wastewater into the sea.

China plans to step up import restrictions and Hong Kong restaurants began switching menus to exclude Japanese seafood. Agricultural Minister Tetsuro Nomura acknowledged some fishery exports from Japan have been suspended at Chinese customs, and that Japan was urging Beijing to honor science.

"Our plan is scientific and safe, and it is most important to firmly convey that and gain understanding," TEPCO official Tomohiko Mayuzumi told The Associated Press during its plant visit. Still, people have concerns and so a final decision on the timing of the release will be a "a political decision by the government," he said.

Japan sought support from the International Atomic Energy Agency for transparency and credibility. IAEA's final report, released this month and handed directly to Prime Minister Fumio Kishida, concluded that the method meets international standards and its environmental and health impacts would be negligible. IAEA Director General Rafael Grossi said radioactivity in the water would be almost undetectable and there is no cross-border impact.

Scientists generally agree that environmental impact from the treated water would be negligible, but some call for more attention on dozens of low-dose radionuclides that remain in the water, saying data on their long-term effect on the environment and marine life is insufficient.

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Radioactivity of the treated water is so low that once it hits the ocean it will quickly disperse and become almost undetectable, which makes pre-release sampling of the water important for data analysis, said University of Tokyo environmental chemistry professor Katsumi Shozugawa.

He said the release can be safely carried out and trusted "only if TEPCO strictly follows the procedures as planned." Diligent sampling of the water, transparency and broader cross-checks — not just limited to IAEA and two labs commissioned by TEPCO and the government — is key to gaining trust, Shozugawa said.

Japanese officials characterize the treated water as a tritium issue, but it also contains dozens of other radionuclides that leaked from the damaged fuel. Though they are filtered to legally releasable levels and their environmental impact deemed minimal, they still require close scrutiny, experts say.

TEPCO and government officials say tritium is the only radionuclide inseparable from water and is being diluted to contain only a fraction of the national discharge cap, while experts say heavy dilution is needed to also sufficiently lower concentration of other radionuclides.

"If you ask their impact on the environment, honestly, we can only say we don't know," Shozugawa, referring to dozens of radionuclides whose leakage is not anticipated at normal reactors, he says. "But it is true that the lower the concentration, the smaller the environmental impact," and the plan is presumably safe, he said.

The treated water is a less challenging task at the plant compared to the deadly radioactive melted debris that remain in the reactors, or the continuous, tiny leaks of radioactivity to the outside.

Shozugawa, who has been regularly measuring radioactivity of groundwater samples, fish and plants near Fukushima Daiichi plant since the disaster, says his 12 years of sampling work shows small amounts of radioactivity from the Fukushima Daiichi has continuously leaked into groundwater and the port at the plant. He says its potential impact on the ecosystem also requires closer attention than the controlled release of the treated water.

TEPCO denies new leaks from the reactors and attributes high cesium in fish sometimes caught inside the port to sediment contamination from initial leaks and a rainwater drainage.

A local fisheries cooperative executive Takayuki Yanai told a recent online event that forcing the water release without public support only triggers reputational damage and hurts Fukushima fisheries. "We don't need additional burden to our recovery."

"Public understanding is lacking because of distrust to the government and TEPCO," he said. "The sense of safety only comes from trust."

Elon Musk reveals new black and white X logo to replace Twitter's blue bird

LONDON (AP) — Elon Musk has unveiled a new black and white "X" logo to replace Twitter's famous blue bird as he follows through with a major rebranding of the social media platform he bought for \$44 billion last year.

Musk replaced his own Twitter icon with a white X on a black background and posted a picture on Monday of the design projected on Twitter's San Francisco headquarters.

The X started appearing on the top of the desktop version of Twitter on Monday, but the bird was still dominant across the phone app.

Musk had asked fans for logo ideas and chose one, which he described as minimalist Art Deco, saying it "certainly will be refined."

"And soon we shall bid adieu to the twitter brand and, gradually, all the birds," Musk tweeted Sunday.

The X.com web domain now redirects users to Twitter.com, Musk said.

In response to questions about what tweets would be called when the rebranding is done, Musk said they would be called Xs.

Musk, CEO of Tesla, has long been fascinated with the letter. The billionaire is also CEO of rocket company Space Exploration Technologies Corp., commonly known as SpaceX. And in 1999, he founded a startup

called X.com, an online financial services company now known as PayPal,

He calls his son with the singer Grimes, whose actual name is a collection of letters and symbols, "X."

Musk's Twitter purchase and rebranding are part of his strategy to create what he's dubbed an "everything app" similar to China's WeChat, which combines video chats, messaging, streaming and payments.

Linda Yaccarino, the longtime NBC Universal executive Musk tapped to be Twitter CEO in May, posted the new logo and weighed in on the change, writing on Twitter that X would be "the future state of unlimited interactivity — centered in audio, video, messaging, payments/banking — creating a global marketplace for ideas, goods, services, and opportunities."

Experts, however, predicted the new name will confuse much of Twitter's audience, which has already been souring on the social media platform following a raft of Musk's other changes. The site also faces new competition from Threads, the new app by Facebook and Instagram parent Meta that directly targets Twitter users.

UN Command says it's communicating with North Korea about detained US soldier

By KIM TONG-HYUNG Associated Press

SEOUL, South Korea (AP) — The American-led U.N. Command said Monday it has started a conversation with North Korea about a U.S. soldier who ran into the North last week across one of the world's most heavily fortified borders.

Andrew Harrison, a British lieutenant general who is the deputy commander at the U.N. Command, refused to say when the conversation started, how many exchanges have taken place and whether the North Koreans responded constructively, citing the sensitivity of the discussions. He also declined to detail what the command knows about Pvt. Travis King's condition.

"None of us know where this is going to end," Harrison said during a news conference in Seoul. "I am in life an optimist, and I remain optimistic. But again, I will leave it at that."

It wasn't immediately clear whether Harrison's comments referred to meaningful progress in communications after the command said in a statement last week that it was "working with" its North Korean counterparts. The U.N. Command, which was created to fight the Korean War, has remained in South Korea to supervise the implementation of the 1953 armistice that stopped the fighting in the conflict.

The contact happened through "mechanisms" set up under the armistice, Harrison said. That could refer to the so-called pink phone, a telephone line between the command and the North Korean People's Army at the border truce village of Panmunjom, where King crossed.

The Koreas are still technically at war since a peace treaty was never signed. The U.S., which fought alongside the South Koreans and other allies during the war, never established diplomatic relations with the North, but the line is a common way they communicate.

North Korea has remained publicly silent about King, who crossed the border during a tour of Panmunjom, while he was supposed to be heading to Fort Bliss, Texas, following his release from prison in South Korea on an assault conviction.

U.S. officials have expressed concern about his well-being and said previously that North Korea ignored requests for information about him.

Analysts say North Korea may wait weeks or even months to provide meaningful information about King to maximize leverage and add urgency to U.S. efforts to secure his release. Some say North Korea may try to wrest concessions from Washington, such as tying his release to the United States cutting back its military activities with South Korea.

King's crossing came at a time of high tensions in the Korean Peninsula, where the pace of both North Korea's weapons demonstrations and the United States' combined military exercises have intensified in a tit-for-tat cycle.

On Monday, South Korea's military said a nuclear-propelled U.S. submarine arrived at a port on Jeju Island. The arrival of the USS Annapolis adds to the allies' show of force to counter North Korean nuclear threats.

Last week, the USS Kentucky became the first U.S. nuclear-armed submarine to come to South Korea since the 1980s. North Korea reacted to its arrival by test-firing ballistic and cruise missiles in apparent demonstrations that it could make nuclear strikes against South Korea and deployed U.S. naval vessels.

North Korea's defense minister also issued a veiled threat, saying the Kentucky's docking in South Korea could be grounds for the North to use a nuclear weapon against it. North Korea has used similar rhetoric before, but the statement underscored how strained relations are now.

The United States and South Korea have expanded their combined military exercises and increased regional deployments of U.S. aircraft and ships, including bombers, aircraft carriers and submarines in a show of force against North Korea, which has test-fired around 100 missiles since the start of 2022.

The Annapolis, whose main mission is destroying enemy ships and submarines, is powered by a nuclear reactor but is armed with conventional weapons. The Annapolis mainly docked at Jeju to load supplies, but Jang Do Young, a spokesperson of South Korea's navy, said the U.S. and South Korean militaries were discussing whether to arrange training involving the vessel.

Russia says Moscow and Crimea hit by Ukrainian drones while Russian forces bombard Ukraine's south

By FELIPE DANA Associated Press

KYIV, Ukraine (AP) — Russian authorities accused Ukraine of launching a drone attack on Moscow early Monday that saw one of the aircraft fall near the Defense Ministry's main headquarters and striking Crimea, while the Russian military unleashed new strikes on port infrastructure in southern Ukraine.

Moscow Mayor Sergei Sobyanin said there were no casualties when the drones struck two nonresidential buildings. The Defense Ministry claimed that the military jammed both attacking drones, forcing them to crash.

Russian media reported that one of the drones fell on the Komsomolsky highway near Moscow's center, shattering shop windows and damaged the roof of a house just about 200 meters (just over 200 yards) away from the towering riverside Defense Ministry building. The ministry's main headquarters has Pantsyr air defense systems placed on the roof.

It wasn't immediately clear whether the drone targeted the Defense Ministry's headquarters, which is located 2.7 kilometers (1.7 miles) away from the Kremlin, or was heading to some other target in central Moscow.

Another drone hit an office building in southern Moscow, gutting several upper floors — more visible damage compared to earlier drone strikes on the Russian capital.

Emergency workers were inspecting the damage and traffic was halted on sections of highways where the drones fell.

Ukrainian authorities didn't immediately claim responsibility for the strike, which was the second drone attack on the Russian capital this month.

In the previous attack on July 4, the Russian military said four of the five drones were downed by air defenses on the outskirts of Moscow and the fifth was jammed by electronic warfare means and forced down. The raid prompted authorities to temporarily restrict flights at Moscow's Vnukovo airport and divert flights to two other Moscow airports.

Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov noted Monday that "the intensity of attempts to attack our regions with drones has grown."

"So measures are being taken, a very intense daily 24-hour work is underway," Peskov said, without offering any details about whether Russia's air defence systems have been enhanced because of the increased attacks.

Russian authorities said that another Ukrainian drone attack early Monday struck an ammunition depot in northern Crimea and forced a halt in traffic on a major highway and a railway crossing the Black Sea peninsula that was illegally annexed by Moscow in 2014. Railway traffic was restored several hours later.

The Moscow-appointed head of Crimea, Sergei Aksyonov, said that authorities also ordered the evacu-

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ation of several villages within a five-kilometer (three-mile) radius of the depot that was hit.

Aksyonov said the military shot down or jammed 11 attacking drones, while the Defense Ministry claimed later that 11 of the 17 attacking drones were jammed and crashed into the Black Sea and another three were shot down.

Mykhailo Fedorov, Ukraine's digital transformation minister, noted on his messaging app channel that Monday's drone attacks on Moscow and Crimea signaled that Russia's electronic warfare means and air defenses are "less and less able to protect the skies of the invaders," adding that "there will be more of it."

Ukrainska Pravda reported that the drone attack on Moscow was a special operation by Ukrainian military intelligence.

On Saturday, a previous drone attack on Crimea hit another ammunition depot, sending huge plumes of black smoke skyward and also forcing the evacuation of residents,

Russian forces, meanwhile, struck port infrastructure on the Danube River in southern Ukraine with exploding drones early Monday, wounding seven people and destroying a grain hangar and storage for other cargo, Ukrainian officials said. Ukraine's military reported downing three of the attacking drones.

The strike was the latest in a barrage of attacks that has damaged critical port infrastructure in southern Ukraine in the past week. The Kremlin has described the strikes as retribution for last week's Ukrainian strike on the crucial Kerch Bridge linking Russia with Crimea.

Speaking at the Aspen Security Forum via video link over the weekend, Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy called the bridge a legitimate target for Ukraine, noting that Russia has used it to ferry military supplies and it must be "neutralized."

Since Moscow canceled a landmark grain deal a week ago amid Kyiv's grinding efforts to retake its occupied territories, Russia has launched repeated attacks on Odesa, a key hub for exporting grain.

On Sunday, at least one person was killed and 22 others wounded in an attack on Odesa that severely damaged 25 landmarks across the city, including the Transfiguration Cathedral.

UNESCO strongly condemned the attack on the cathedral and other heritage sites and said it will send a mission in coming days to assess damage. Odesa's historic center was declared a UNESCO World Heritage site earlier this year, and the agency said the Russian attacks contradict Moscow's pledge to take precautions to spare World Heritage sites in Ukraine.

The Russian military denied that it targeted the Transfiguration Cathedral, claiming without offering evidence that it was likely struck by a Ukrainian air defense missile. Peskov on Monday echoed that claim, insisting without any evidence that the accusations against Russia "are an absolute lie."

Overall, a total of 10 people have been wounded in Russian attacks on Ukraine over the past 24 hours, according to Ukrainian officials.

In addition to those injured in the Odesa region, one civilian was wounded during the shelling of 24 towns and villages in the partially occupied Kherson region, while another was wounded in artillery fire close to the Zaporizhzhia nuclear power plant, Ukraine's presidential office said.

A 70-year-old woman was also reportedly wounded after FAB-250 guided aerial bombs were dropped on the village of Kucherivka in Ukraine's Kharkiv region.

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

Oui, oui: Jill Biden is in Paris to mark the US return to the UN's educational and scientific agency

By DARLENE SUPERVILLE Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Jill Biden has represented her country at the Olympics in Tokyo, a king's coronation in London and a royal wedding in Jordan. She gets another chance to put her ambassadorial skills to work this week when the United States formally rejoins a United Nations agency devoted to education, science and culture around the globe.

Biden arrived in Paris early Monday, accompanied by her daughter, Ashley Biden, after flying overnight

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from Washington to join other VIPs and speak at a ceremony Tuesday at the headquarters of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization. The American flag will be raised to mark the U.S. return to UNESCO membership after a five-year absence.

UNESCO aims to foster global collaboration in education, science and culture. It also designates World Heritage sites, deeming them worthy of eternal preservation.

The agency on Sunday condemned Russia's attack on a cathedral in Odesa and other heritage sites in Ukraine in recent days and said it will send a team to the Black Sea port city to assess damage.

In a statement, UNESCO noted that Odesa's historic center was declared a UNESCO World Heritage site earlier this year and said attacks by Russian forces contradict recent promises by Russian authorities to take precautions to spare such sites across the country.

Before returning to Washington on Wednesday, Biden will tour a historic venue in France, Mont-Saint-Michel, a 1,000-year-old Benedictine abbey that was listed as a World Heritage site in 1979. It sits on an island in Normandy, in the north of the country.

A daughter and mother of U.S. service members, the first lady will also visit Brittany American Cemetery and Memorial to pay respects to the more than 4,400 U.S. service members buried there, most of whom died in Normandy and Brittany during World War II.

She will also stop at the Elysée Palace in Paris on Tuesday to catch up with Brigitte Macron, a former teacher and the wife of French President Emmanuel Macron. The women have met several times over the past two years, including in Washington last December when Macron was on a state visit to the U.S.

Senior Biden administration officials said returning to UNESCO fits President Joe Biden's goal of strengthening global partnerships and recommitting to American leadership at the U.N. and other international organizations to serve as a counter to nations that do not share U.S. values.

Others said Jill Biden, who teaches English and writing at a Virginia community college, was best suited to represent the United States in Paris on Tuesday.

"The first lady, as a lifelong educator and believer in the power of educational opportunity across the world, is honored to help celebrate this important milestone," said Elizabeth Alexander, a spokesperson. "She looks forward to raising the flag for the United States once again at the UNESCO headquarters, showing our country's commitment to international cooperation in education, science, and culture."

The U.S. pulled out of the Paris-based organization in 2018, under then-President Donald Trump, a Republican who claimed UNESCO was biased against Israel.

The administration of Biden, a Democrat, pushed to rejoin over concerns that China was filling the void in leadership created by the U.S. absence.

The administration announced in June that it would apply to rejoin the 193-member organization, which also plays a major role in setting international standards for artificial intelligence and technology education.

The organization's governing board voted earlier this month to approve the Biden plan to rejoin, and the U.S. delivered a document certifying that it would accept the invitation to become the 194th member of UNESCO.

"Our organization is once again moving towards universality," UNESCO Director-General Audrey Azoulay said at the time. She cast the U.S. return as "excellent news for multilateralism as a whole. If we want to meet the challenges of our century, there can only be a collective response."

The Trump administration in 2017 announced that the U.S. would withdraw from UNESCO, citing anti-Israel bias. That decision took effect a year later.

The U.S. and Israel stopped financing UNESCO after it voted to include Palestine as a member state in 2011.

The Biden administration has requested \$150 million for the 2024 budget to go toward UNESCO dues and arrears. The plan foresees similar requests for the ensuing years until the full debt of \$619 million is repaid.

That makes up a big chunk of UNESCO's \$534 million annual operating budget. Before leaving, the U.S. contributed 22% of the agency's overall funding.

The United States previously pulled out of UNESCO under the Reagan administration in 1984 because

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it viewed the agency as mismanaged, corrupt and used to advance Soviet interests. It rejoined in 2003 during George W. Bush's presidency. Bush's wife, Laura, a former elementary school teacher and librarian, spoke at that ceremony.

Standing in for the president at home and abroad has become a big part of a first lady's unofficial job description, and Jill Biden travels at least several times a week to promote administration initiatives.

The trip to Paris is her fourth solo international excursion this year.

She visited Namibia and Kenya in February, followed by a trip to London in May for the coronation of King Charles III. In June, she traveled to Jordan to attend the royal wedding of a son of King Abdullah II, followed by stops in Egypt, Morocco and Portugal.

Before flying to Paris on Sunday night, she headlined fundraisers Friday and Saturday in Massachusetts for her husband's reelection campaign.

Specter of right wing entering Spanish government fades after inconclusive national election

By JOSEPH WILSON and CIARÁN GILES Associated Press

MADRID (AP) — Spain may be facing political gridlock and possibly a new election, but a national ballot produced one result that will be welcomed across the capitals of Europe: a far-right party aiming to get its hands on the levers of power was thwarted.

Spain's Vox party, with its ultranationalist bent, lost support among voters in Sunday's election, dashing its hopes to be a kingmaker and enter a governing coalition that would have given the far right its first share of power in Spain since Francisco Franco's 20th century dictatorship.

The mainstream conservative Popular Party won the election, but performed well below polling data that had forecast it could oust Socialist Prime Minister Pedro Sánchez if it formed a government with Vox as a junior partner.

Even though Sánchez's Socialists finished second, they and their allied parties celebrated the outcome as a victory since their combined forces gained slightly more seats than the Popular Party and Vox. The bloc that would likely support Sánchez totaled 172 seats, while parties on the right had 170.

"This is a major victory for the left," Dr. Jason Xidias, a lecturer in Political Science at New York University's Madrid campus, said Monday.

Political horse-trading in coming weeks, when smaller regional parties could offer their support for a government in return for concessions, will be "very complicated," Xidias said.

The closer-than-expected outcome placed a question mark over Spain's future leadership. But the Popular Party insisted it could not be denied its shot at forming a government.

"Nobody would understand it now if (other parties) all came together to prevent the party that won the elections from becoming the government," the PP's deputy secretary Miguel Tellado told public broadcaster RTVE on Monday.

Sánchez put together Spain's first ever coalition government, which took power in Jan. 2020. Sánchez has been Spain's prime minister since 2018.

Socialist voter Delphine Fernández said she hopes Sánchez can stay in power. She is crossing her fingers that she and the 37 million Spaniards called to vote don't have to do it all over again like in 2019, when Sánchez had to score back-to-back election victories before he was able to forge a coalition government.

"It was always going to be difficult. Now we are (practically) tied, but let's see if we can still govern," said Fernández, a lawyer. "I don't want to vote again in a few weeks. It's now or never."

But the chances of Sánchez picking up the support of the 176 lawmakers needed to have an absolute majority in the Madrid-based Lower House of Parliament are not great.

The divided results have made the Catalan separatist party Junts (Together) key to Sánchez forming a government. But if Junts asked for a referendum on independence for northeast Catalonia, that would likely be far too costly a price for Sánchez to pay.

"We won't make Pedro Sánchez PM in exchange for nothing," Míriam Nogueras of Junts said.

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With all votes counted, the Popular Party collected 136 seats of the 350 up for grabs. Even with the 33 seats that the far-right Vox got and the one seat going to an allied party, the PP was still seven seats short of a majority.

The Socialists gathered 122 seats, two more than they previously held. Sánchez could likely call on the 31 seats of its junior coalition partner Sumar (Joining Forces) and several smaller parties to at least total more than the sum of the right-wing parties, but also would fall four short of a majority unless Junts joined them.

"Spain and all the citizens who have voted have made themselves clear. The backward-looking bloc that wanted to undo all that we have done has failed," Sánchez told a jubilant crowd gathered at Socialists' headquarters in Madrid.

After his party took a beating in regional and local elections in May, Sánchez could have waited until December to face a national vote. Instead, he stunned his rivals by moving up the vote in hopes of gaining a bigger boost from his supporters.

Sánchez can add this election night to yet another comeback in his career that has been built around beating the odds. The 51-year-old had to mount a mutiny among rank-and-file Socialists to return to heading his party before he won Spain's only no-confidence vote to oust his Popular Party predecessor in 2018.

PP leader Alberto Núñez Feijóo seemed even more unlikely to put together a majority.

Feijóo focused the PP's campaign on what he called the lack of trustworthiness of Sánchez. The Socialists and other leftist parties, meanwhile, drummed on the fear of having Vox in power as a junior partner in a PP-led coalition.

A PP-Vox government would have meant another EU member moved firmly to the right, a trend seen recently in Sweden, Finland and Italy. Countries such as Germany and France are concerned about what such a shift would portend for EU immigration and climate policies.

Vox, however, lost 19 seats from four years earlier. The election took place during Spain's six-month rotating presidency of the European Union, and a strong Vox showing would have sent shockwaves through EU politics.

Feijóo sought to distance the PP from Vox during the campaign. But Sánchez, in moving up the election, made the campaign coincide with the PP and Vox striking deals to govern together in town halls and regional governments following the May ballots.

Vox campaigned on rolling back gender violence laws. And both the PP and Vox agreed on wanting to repeal a new transgender rights law and a democratic memory law that seeks to help families wanting to unearth the thousands of victims of Franco's regime still missing in mass graves.

"PP has been a victim of its expectations, and the Socialists have been able to capitalize on the fear of the arrival of Vox. Bringing forward the elections has turned out to be the right decision for Pedro Sánchez," said Manuel Mostaza, director of Public Policy at the Spanish consulting firm Atrevia.

Spain's new Parliament will meet in a month. King Felipe VI then appoints one of the party leaders to submit him or herself to a parliamentary vote to form a new government. Lawmakers have a maximum period of three months to reach an agreement. Otherwise, new elections would be triggered.

Wilson reported from Barcelona. AP journalists Aritz Parra, Renata Brito, David Brunat, Iain Sullivan, María Gestoso, Alicia León and José María García contributed to this report.

Russia wants allies, so it is hosting an Africa summit. Food security and Wagner are key questions

By CARA ANNA Associated Press

NAIROBI, Kenya (AP) — As Russia seeks more allies during its invasion of Ukraine, longtime U.S. security partner Kenya might not be an obvious choice. But hours after Russia terminated a deal to keep grain flowing from Ukraine, Moscow's ambassador saw an opening to appeal to one of the African countries that would feel the effects the most.

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homosexual relations: "We are a traditional Christian country. Every time you have an anti-gay bill, we're with you," he said.

That could play to U.S. allies like Nigeria and Ghana as well, Kalyegira said.

Uganda faced Washington's criticism this year for a new law that prescribed the death penalty for "aggravated homosexuality." President Joe Biden threatened sanctions amid "democratic backsliding" by a longtime partner.

Now Ugandan President Yoweri Museveni is listed as a panelist at the Russia-Africa Summit for a discussion on "What forms of new colonialism are being imposed on the global majority by the West today?"

Uganda also has been one of the largest buyers of weapons from Russia, Africa's top arms supplier, along with Algeria, Egypt, Morocco, Ethiopia, Angola and Burkina Faso.

Kalyegira said Russia now could broker grain supply deals with individual African nations, weakening any continental stance on the war.

The U.S. hosted its own Africa summit last year as part of a growing number of such Africa gatherings by powers including China, France, Turkey, Japan and the U.K.

"It's worth asking why Americans should care about competing in Africa or investing in its stability. The answer is clear: Africa is poised to shape the 21st century as the world's fastest-growing demographic and economic power," Joseph Sany with the U.S. Institute of Peace told a U.S. House subcommittee this month.

"By 2050, Africans will make up a quarter of the global population," he said.

The delegations heading to Russia are being urged to use that to their advantage.

"African states would no doubt rather be kingmakers than be caught in another proxy war," a consultant with the Africa-based Institute for Security Studies, Ronak Gopaldas, wrote earlier this year. "A smart approach is to straddle these powers for maximum benefit."

Associated Press writers Jim Heintz in Tallinn, Estonia, Vladimir Isachenkov in Moscow and Gerald Imray in Cape Town, South Africa, contributed to this report.

New evacuations ordered in Greece as high winds and heat fuel wildfires

By MICHAEL VARAKLAS and DEREK GATOPOULOS Associated Press

RHODES, Greece (AP) — A weeklong wildfire on the Greek island of Rhodes tore past defenses Monday, forcing more evacuations, as three major fires raged elsewhere in the country fueled by strong winds and successive heat waves. The latest evacuations were ordered in south Rhodes after 19,000 people, mostly tourists, were moved in buses and boats over the weekend out of the path of the fire that reached several coastal areas from nearby mountains. Help continued to arrive from the European Union and elsewhere, with Turkish firefighting planes joining the effort in Rhodes, where eight water-dropping planes and 10 helicopters buzzed over flames up to five meters (16 feet) tall despite low visibility. "The risk of fire will be extreme in several areas of Greece today," Fire Service spokesperson Vassilis Vathrakogiannis said a day after temperatures on the southern Greek mainland soared as high as 45 degrees Celsius (113 degrees Fahrenheit). Overnight, evacuations were also ordered on the western island of Corfu, where more than 2,000 people including tourists were moved to safety, on the island of Evia and in a mountainous area in the southern Peloponnese region. European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen contacted Greek Prime Minister Kyriakos Mitsotakis late Sunday to offer additional assistance. "I called (Prime Minister) Mitsotakis to express our full support for Greece, which is confronted with devastating forest fires and a heavy heat wave due to climate change," she wrote in a tweet. On Rhodes, officials from the Greek Foreign Ministry were working at the international airport with several embassies and diplomats who traveled from the U.K. to assist tourists who had lost their travel documents. British tourist Kevin Evans was evacuated twice Saturday with his wife and three young children — first from Kiotari to Gennadi, and then as the fire approached to the island's capital in the northeast, he told Britain's PA news agency.

"There were lots of people in Gennadi sent from the hotels — many in just swimsuits having been told to leave everything in the hotel," he told PA. "As night fell, we could see the fire on the top of the hills in Kiotari. They said all the hotels were on fire."

The army was also helping to set up temporary accommodations on Rhodes, where schools and sporting facilities were opened to help with the effort.

A relative respite from the heat on Monday, with highs of 38 C (100 F) forecast, is to be followed by yet more high temperatures starting Tuesday. However, it should get significantly cooler on Thursday, with temperatures in the low- to mid-30s Celsius, the country's Meteorological Service said Sunday evening.

___ Gatopoulos reported from Athens.

Gene therapy eyedrops restored a boy's sight. Similar treatments could help millions

By LAURA UNGAR and FREIDA FRISARO Associated Press

MIAMI (AP) — Dr. Alfonso Sabater pulled up two photos of Antonio Vento Carvajal's eyes. One showed cloudy scars covering both eyeballs. The other, taken after months of gene therapy given through eyedrops, revealed no scarring on either eye.

Antonio, who's been legally blind for much of his 14 years, can see again.

The teen was born with dystrophic epidermolysis bullosa, a rare genetic condition that causes blisters all over his body and in his eyes. But his skin improved when he joined a clinical trial to test the world's first topical gene therapy. That gave Sabater an idea: What if it could be adapted for Antonio's eyes?

This insight not only helped Antonio, it also opened the door to similar therapies that could potentially treat millions of people with other eye diseases, including common ones.

Antonio's mom, Yunielkys "Yuni" Carvajal, teared up thinking about what Sabater did for her son.

"He's been there through everything," she said in Spanish during a visit to the University of Miami Health System's Bascom Palmer Eye Institute. "He's not only a good doctor but such a good human being and provided us with hope. He never gave up."

The family came to the U.S. from Cuba in 2012 on a special visa allowing Antonio to get treatment for his condition, which affects around 3,000 people worldwide. He had surgeries to remove scar tissue from his eyes, but it grew back. Antonio's vision kept getting worse, eventually deteriorating so much that he didn't feel safe walking around.

Sabater had no answers then, and tried to reassure the boy: "I'll find a solution. I just need some time. I'm working on it."

"Yeah, I know you're going to do it," Sabater recalled Antonio saying. "That gave me the energy to continue."

At one point, Carvajal told Sabater about the experimental gene therapy gel for Antonio's skin lesions. He contacted drugmaker Krystal Biotech to see if it could be reformulated for the boy's eyes.

Suma Krishnan, co-founder and president of research and development for the Pittsburgh-based company, said the idea made sense and "it didn't hurt to try it."

Antonio's condition is caused by mutations in a gene that helps produce a protein called collagen 7, which holds together both skin and corneas. The treatment, called Vyjuvek, uses an inactivated herpes simplex virus to deliver working copies of that gene. The eyedrops use the same liquid as the skin version, just without the added gel.

After two years, which included testing the drug in mice, the team got "compassionate use" approval from the U.S. Food and Drug Administration and permission from university and hospital review boards. Last August, Antonio had surgery on his right eye, after which Sabater started treating him with the eyedrops.

Krishnan said they were cautious, frequently watching to see that it was safe.

Antonio's eye recovered from the surgery, the scarring didn't return and there was significant improvement each month, Sabater said. Doctors recently measured the vision in Antonio's right eye at a near-perfect 20/25.

This year, Sabater began treating Antonio's left eye, which had even more scar tissue. That one is also

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steadily improving, measuring close to 20/50, which Sabater said "is pretty good vision."

Antonio comes to the eye institute for checkups almost weekly and gets the drops once a month. During visits, Antonio must wear protective clothing covering his arms, hands, legs and feet. Like other kids with the condition — who are sometimes called "butterfly children" — his skin is so fragile that even a touch can wound him.

Antonio still uses the skin gel, which was approved by the FDA in May and can also be used off-label on eyes. It doesn't modify DNA, so it's not a one-time treatment like many gene therapies.

Sabater, director of the Corneal Innovation Lab at the eye institute, said gene therapy eyedrops could potentially be used for other diseases by changing the gene delivered by the virus. For example, a different gene could be used to treat Fuchs' dystrophy, which affects 18 million people in the U.S. and accounts for about half the nation's corneal transplants.

The prospect of treating more conditions this way is "exciting," said Dr. Aimee Payne, a dermatology professor at the University of Pennsylvania who isn't involved in the research. The approach "delivers gene therapy that really addresses the root cause of disease."

With his vision restored, Antonio has enjoyed a typical teen pastime he's wanted to do for quite a while: playing video games with his friends. And he finally feels safe walking around.

Sabater said the two-year journey seeking government and hospital approvals "was worth it. Just for Antonio, it was worth it ... but also because it opens the space to treat other patients in the future."

Ungar reported from Louisville, Kentucky.

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Russian athletes can qualify for Olympic spots in an increasing number of sports with a year to go

By JAMES ELLINGWORTH AP Sports Writer

DUESSELDORF, Germany (AP) — A year before the Paris Olympics, and nearly a year-and-a-half since Russia's invasion of Ukraine, officials governing many of the sports on the 2024 program are still split on how to treat Russian athletes.

Increasingly, various governing bodies are allowing them back into Olympic qualifying competitions as neutral competitors without national flags or anthems. Most sports initially barred Russians from competing soon after last year's full-scale invasion.

The International Olympic Committee strongly backs those moves even as the body itself says it hasn't decided if athletes from Russia and ally Belarus can compete at the Paris Games. However, the IOC has delayed action on the one sport whose qualification it runs in-house, boxing.

Most of the sports which have allowed Russians to return also followed IOC advice on its preferred name — "individual neutral athletes" — and to keep barring those who are under contract with the military or who have supported the war publicly. The IOC also recommends blocking Russia from team sports like soccer or basketball.

Ukraine is opposed to any Russians competing. Since last year, Ukrainian athletes and national teams have been boycotting competitions which allow Russians back in, a policy enforced in April by a government decree. Activists from Ukraine have been trawling Russian athletes' social media for pro-war posts that could disqualify them from competing.

Here is a look at the situation for Russian and Ukrainian athletes in key sports on the Olympic program:
TRACK AND FIELD

World Athletics excluded athletes from Russia and Belarus from competitions after the invasion of Ukraine. That remains in place "for the foreseeable future," after a vote of the World Athletics council in March.

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President Sebastian Coe said at the time that deaths and destruction in Ukraine have only “hardened” his resolve to keep a ban in place.

SWIMMING

World Aquatics is one of the sports taking Russia’s return slowly. It has said it favors Russia and Belarus returning to its sports — swimming, diving, water polo, artistic swimming — but set up a task force that won’t report back with suggestions until late July. That means no Russians at the world championships this month in Japan.

TENNIS

The big exception among Olympic sports in tennis. The men’s and women’s tours didn’t exclude Russian or Belarusian players when Russia launched its invasion. They even fined tournaments including Wimbledon which did impose restrictions.

Ukrainian players continued competing but often refuse to shake hands with Russians or Belarusians. Aryna Sabalenka, who is from Belarus and won the Australian Open in January, has been questioned about her past support for Belarus’ authoritarian leader, President Alexander Lukashenko. She has said she does not support the war.

Russian and Belarusian players still can’t enter national team competitions like the Davis Cup and Billie Jean King Cup. The International Tennis Federation hasn’t made a final decision on the Olympics but has plenty of time because qualification is decided by the June 2024 world rankings.

GYMNASTICS

Gymnasts from Russia and Belarus will be allowed to take part in sanctioned competitions as “individual neutral athletes” from the start of 2024.

That timetable pushed their return beyond the world championships in early October in Belgium.

Russian gymnasts have been some of the most vocal supporters of the war. Days after the invasion, Ivan Kuliak wore a pro-war “Z” symbol on a competition podium while standing next to a Ukrainian athlete. He was suspended for a year. Other Russian gymnasts appeared on stage at a rally in support of the war, and Olympic gold medalist Nikita Nagornyy heads a military youth organization in Russia.

BOXING

This is the one sport the IOC has total control over, but that doesn’t mean a quick decision. The IOC is running Olympic boxing in Paris and qualifiers in-house after a long-running feud with the International Boxing Association and its Russian president. Qualifiers were held at the European Games in June but the host nation, Poland, refused to allow any Russian athletes. A plan to qualify Russians via the Asian Games has been suggested but not confirmed. That could mean any Russian return only happens at two last-chance qualifying tournaments in early 2024.

COMBAT SPORTS

Sports like fencing, judo and taekwondo have seen some of the bitterest disputes. Ukraine boycotted the world championships in both judo and taekwondo, taking a big hit to its Olympic qualifying hopes, after Russians were allowed to compete. In judo the “neutral” delegation of Russian athletes included some previously listed by the Defense Ministry as holding military ranks. The International Judo Federation, which had last year opposed excluding any Russians, said all the Russian competitors were employed at a state sports training facility.

Ukraine is also boycotting some events at the fencing world championships in Italy, another key Olympic qualifier. The International Fencing Federation — whose former president, Russian billionaire Alisher Usmanov, said last year he was stepping aside from his duties — has been a strong supporter of reintroducing Russian and Belarusian fencers this year. Competition organizers in several European countries canceled their events in protests, disrupting the Olympic qualifying calendar, and the European Championships were stripped of their status as a qualifier when Poland refused to allow Russians to compete.

TEAM SPORTS

Don’t expect to see Russian teams competing in soccer, volleyball, basketball or handball at the Paris Olympics. The IOC still backs excluding Russia from team sports and no Olympic sport has yet defied that

regulation. In some events, like men's basketball and soccer, Russia has already missed its last chance to qualify. The IOC also recommends a ban on "team events in individual sports" like relay races or the team all-around in gymnastics.

OTHER SPORTS

Russia is boycotting weightlifting events after its team refused to sign a waiver accepting the conditions for "neutral" status, including a promise to "continue to abstain from expressing any support to the war." Belarusian athletes signed and are competing.

Some sports like archery have delayed things further. World Archery is exploring plans for a Russian return but said in February it would be "very unlikely" this year, potentially restricting Russia to a limited number of events in the months just before the Olympics.

Canoeing is planning to allow Russians back in some Olympic qualifiers but is giving the local organizers of each competition a veto. Rowing will only allow single sculls and pairs, no larger Russian crews.

AP Sports Writer Graham Dunbar in Geneva contributed to this report.

AP coverage of the Paris Olympics: <https://apnews.com/hub/2024-paris-olympic-games> and https://twitter.com/AP_Sports

Democratic governor pushes back against transgender-related attacks by GOP in Kentucky campaign

By BRUCE SCHREINER Associated Press

FRANKFORT, Ky. (AP) — Kentucky Gov. Andy Beshear is pushing back hard against Republican efforts to cast him as an advocate of gender reassignment surgery for minors, saying his detractors have misrepresented his position and invoking his Christian faith and support for parental rights to explain why he vetoed a measure that banned gender-affirming care for children.

Beshear, a Democrat seeking a second term in a race that could test the political potency of Republican messaging on transgender issues, said in an interview that he has always opposed gender reassignment surgery for children.

"My position on this has always been clear," Beshear said. "I have never supported gender reassignment surgery for minors, and they don't happen in Kentucky."

It's a direct response to what he says is a patently false Republican narrative that suggested he supports such surgeries. The Courier Journal has reported there is no record of such surgeries for minors happening in Kentucky.

The GOP attacks, coming from groups backing Republican gubernatorial nominee Daniel Cameron and from the candidate himself, were meant to cut into Beshear's popularity in the conservative-leaning Bluegrass State.

Kentucky's showdown for governor is one of the most closely watched campaigns this year and could provide insight about voter sentiment heading into 2024 elections for the White House and Congress.

A new ad released Monday by the Beshear campaign doubles down on his previous statements opposing the surgeries for minors and his campaign's denunciation of the GOP attack. And it reflects the governor's determination to not cede so-called family values issues to Cameron, the state's attorney general.

Looking into the camera, Beshear invokes his Christian faith and support for parental rights to counter the drumbeat of GOP criticism he's faced in the months since he vetoed a sweeping transgender bill that included a ban on gender-affirming care for young transgender people. The veto was overridden by the state's GOP-dominated legislature.

"My faith guides me as governor and as a dad," Beshear says in the ad. "I'm a deacon in my church and I believe that all children are children of God."

In vetoing the bill, the governor said it allowed "too much government interference in personal healthcare issues and rips away the freedom of parents to make medical decisions for their children." The measure

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In an opinion piece for two of Kenya's largest newspapers, Ambassador Dmitry Maksimychev blamed the United States and European Union for the deal's collapse, asserting they had "used every trick" to keep Russian grain and fertilizer from the global markets.

"Now, my dear Kenyan friends, you know the whole truth about who is weaponizing food," he wrote.

It's the kind of brash outreach expected this week at the second Russia-Africa Summit. Grain supplies are in question. The future of the Wagner military group is, too. It's a notable time for Russia to host nearly 50 African countries that rely heavily on Moscow for agricultural products and security. It's not clear how many heads of state will attend.

President Vladimir Putin's government is under new pressure to show its commitment to a continent of 1.3 billion people that is increasingly assertive on the global stage.

Africa's 54 nations make up the largest voting bloc at the United Nations and have been more divided than any other region on General Assembly resolutions criticizing Russia's invasion. If they leave the two-day summit on Friday feeling unheeded, they might distance themselves from Russia, said analyst Cameron Hudson with the U.S.-based Center for Strategic and International Studies.

"I think you could see Africans beginning to vote with their feet," he said. "This is a decisive moment for both Africa and Putin in their relationship."

Putin has repeatedly said that Russia would offer free grain to low-income African countries now that the grain deal has been terminated. "I want to give assurances that our country is capable of replacing the Ukrainian grain both on a commercial and free-of-charge basis," Putin said in a statement Monday, asserting that Russia shipped almost 10 million tons of grain to Africa in the first half of this year.

The Russian military company Wagner, after its brief rebellion against Moscow, will be an urgent issue for countries like Sudan, Mali and others who contract with the mercenary group in exchange for natural resources like gold. Russia's foreign minister has said Wagner's work in Africa will continue.

As for a peace proposal for Ukraine that African leaders have tried to pursue, that "could be discussed" at the summit, Russian ambassador-at-large Oleg Ozerov told the Kommersant newspaper.

Putin himself is a question. He has visited sub-Saharan Africa only once in more than two decades in power. Last week, after considerable diplomatic pressure, South Africa announced that Putin had agreed not to attend an economic summit there in August because of an arrest warrant for him by the International Criminal Court over Ukraine.

South Africa's debate over whether to arrest him was another sign of the ambivalence toward Moscow by a once-steady U.S. ally. But President Cyril Ramaphosa's office on Friday made clear that African leaders are working "for an end to the destabilizing Ukraine-Russia war," saying it would be in the continent's economic interests.

The U.S.-backed Africa Center for Strategic Studies has predicted that Russia will try to pull other influential countries including Ethiopia, Congo, Nigeria and Senegal into its orbit. Africa is "the most welcoming region for Russia of any other region in the world," the center's Joseph Siegle said.

Like China, Russia tries to appeal to African nations' distaste at feeling dictated to by global powers.

A busy tweeter, Russia's ambassador to Kenya drew the praise of that country's foreign minister last week when he objected to a statement by the U.S. and allies expressing concern about live bullets used against Kenyan protests over the rising cost of living. "If it is not interference in internal affairs, what is it?" Maksimychev asked.

"Thank you @russembkenya for this principled position," Kenya's foreign minister, Korir Sing'Oei, replied — just a day after he called Russia's decision to end the grain deal a "stab on the back."

Despite its high profile in Africa, Russia invests relatively little in it. At the first Russia-Africa Summit in 2019, Putin vowed to double Russia's trade with the continent within five years. Instead, it has stalled at around \$18 billion a year. Moscow offers less than 1% of what goes to Africa in foreign direct investment, with almost no humanitarian aid.

But Russia can connect with African nations in ways that the West cannot, said Tim Kalyegira, a Ugandan analyst and writer. "Russia is one of the few European countries allied with Africa in views about

prevents trans youth from accessing puberty blockers and hormone therapy.

"When I took office, I vowed to support parents, because as parents, we know what's best for our kids, not politicians in Frankfort or Washington," Beshear says in the ad.

Tucked into the legislation was a ban on gender reassignment surgery for minors. Republican groups have used Beshear's veto as an opening to unleash the campaign attack on Beshear. In recent comments to news media outlets, the Republican Governors Association said: "If Andy Beshear doesn't support sex change surgery for minors he should have signed the bill that would ban sex change surgery for minors, plain and simple."

The Fairness Campaign, a Kentucky-based LGBTQ+ advocacy group, has never promoted such surgeries for minors, said Chris Hartman, the group's executive director.

Hartman called the Republican attack on Beshear a "gross mischaracterization" of the governor's position.

The transgender health care legislation in Kentucky was part of a national movement, with at least 20 states having enacted laws restricting or banning gender-affirming medical care for transgender minors. Most of those states face lawsuits.

Those who oppose gender-affirming care raise fears about the long-term effects treatments have on teens, argue research is limited and focus particularly on irreversible procedures such as genital surgery or mastectomies. Yet those are rare. Doctors typically guide kids toward therapy or voice coaching long before medical intervention. At that point, puberty blockers, anti-androgens that block the effects of testosterone, and hormone treatments are far more common than surgery. They have been available in the United States for more than a decade and are standard treatments backed by major doctors' organizations.

Beshear's decision to take on the GOP-driven transgender issue represents a new twist in ad strategy. He's focused on touting the state's surging economy — including record-setting economic development and historically low unemployment rates — messages that remain the central theme of his campaign.

Cameron, meanwhile, has played up social issues in his bid to unseat Beshear in November, accusing the governor of having "emboldened a radical gender ideology." In a tweet last month, the Republican nominee echoed the barrage of transgender-related attacks against the governor, saying Beshear and his allies "believe kids should have access to sex change surgery and drugs."

Cameron also has hammered away at Beshear's veto of a bill last year to ban transgender girls and women from participating in school sports matching their gender identity. That veto also was overridden.

"Andy Beshear could not be further from your values than anything," Cameron said in a recent speech. Beshear accuses his Republican challenger of trying to stoke divisions with such talk.

"I think we're better than that, and my faith teaches me that we're supposed to love each other as ourselves, and there's no exceptions," the governor said in the interview. "I think people out there are tired of division, are tired of groups of people yelling at each other, and just want to support a candidate or want a government that tries to focus on things that are good for everyone."

Israel's Netanyahu released from hospital ahead of key vote on legal overhaul

By JOSEF FEDERMAN Associated Press

JERUSALEM (AP) — Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu was released from the hospital on Monday after an emergency heart procedure, hours after tens of thousands of supporters and opponents of his government's judicial overhaul plan held rival rallies ahead of a key vote.

Netanyahu's sudden hospitalization for the implant of a pacemaker added another dizzying twist to an already dramatic series of events that have bitterly divided his country and are certain to shape Israel's future. Monday's vote in parliament is expected to approve the first major piece of legislation in the contentious plan.

Tensions over the legal plan spiked again late Sunday, as protesters waving Israeli flags blocked roads in Jerusalem, with police using water cannon to disperse them.

Netanyahu's office and the hospital said Netanyahu had been released. Netanyahu's doctors said Sunday

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the procedure had gone smoothly.

In a short video statement from the hospital, Netanyahu, 73, said he felt fine and thanked his doctors for his treatment and the public for wishing him well.

Wearing a white dress shirt and dark blazer, Netanyahu said he was pursuing a compromise with his opponents while also preparing for a vote on Monday that would enshrine a key piece of the legislation into law.

"I want you to know that tomorrow morning I'm joining my colleagues at the Knesset," he said.

The overhaul calls for sweeping changes aimed at curbing the powers of the judiciary, from limiting the Supreme Court's ability to challenge parliamentary decisions to changing the way judges are selected.

Netanyahu and his far-right allies, a collection of ultranationalist and ultra-Orthodox parties, say the changes are needed to curb the powers of unelected judges. Their opponents, coming largely from Israel's professional middle class, say the plan will destroy the country's fragile system of checks and balances and push Israel toward authoritarian rule.

The plan has triggered seven months of mass protests, drawn harsh criticism from business and medical leaders, and a fast-rising number of military reservists in key units have said they will stop reporting for duty if the plan passes, raising concern that Israel's security could be threatened.

President Joe Biden has called on Netanyahu to freeze the plan, and Israel's ceremonial president, Isaac Herzog, has attempted to broker a compromise between the prime minister and his opponents. Herzog, who returned Sunday from a trip to the White House, immediately rushed to Netanyahu's hospital room.

"This is a time of emergency," Herzog said. "We have to reach an agreement."

Herzog planned meetings later Sunday with Israel's opposition leader, Yair Lapid, and Benny Gantz, head of National Unity, another opposition party.

As they spoke, tens of thousands of people were gathering for mass rallies for and against the plan. Netanyahu's supporters thronged central Tel Aviv — normally the setting for anti-government protests — while his opponents marched on Israel's Knesset, or parliament.

Many of the protesters in Jerusalem had camped out in a nearby park, after completing a four-day march into the city from Tel Aviv on Saturday.

After seven months of mass protests against the plan, tensions were surging as lawmakers began a marathon debate over the first major piece of the overhaul ahead of Monday's vote.

In a fiery speech launching the session, Simcha Rothman, a main driver of the overhaul, denounced the courts, saying they damaged Israel's democratic ideals by arbitrarily striking down government decisions.

"This small clause is meant to restore democracy to the state of Israel," Rothman said. "I call on Knesset members to approve the bill."

Despite the attempts to project business as usual, Netanyahu's schedule was disrupted. His weekly Cabinet meeting scheduled for Sunday morning was postponed. Two upcoming overseas trips, to Cyprus and Turkey, were being rescheduled, his office said.

Israeli media said last-ditch efforts were underway to find a solution out of the impasse. But it wasn't clear whether those would bear fruit.

In Monday's vote, legislators are to vote on an overhaul measure that would prevent judges from striking down government decisions on the basis that they are "unreasonable."

Proponents say the current "reasonability" standard gives judges excessive powers over decision-making by elected officials. Critics say removing it would allow the government to pass arbitrary decisions, make improper appointments or firings and open the door to corruption.

Speaking in parliament, opposition leader Yair Lapid called for Netanyahu to resume compromise talks and lauded the protesters for standing up to the government.

"The government of Israel launched a war of attrition against the citizens of Israel and discovered the people can't be broken. We won't give up on our children's future," he said.

Orit Farkash HaCohen, of the opposition National Unity party, broke down into tears as she criticized the government. "Our country is on fire. You've destroyed the country," she said. "I can't believe what

I'm seeing."

Protesters, who come from a wide swath of Israeli society, see the overhaul as a power grab fueled by personal and political grievances of Netanyahu — who is on trial for corruption charges — and his partners who want to deepen Israel's control of the occupied West Bank and perpetuate controversial draft exemptions for ultra-Orthodox men.

Netanyahu was rushed to the hospital in the middle of the night a week after being hospitalized for what doctors said was dehydration.

The sudden hospitalization for the pacemaker procedure indicated that Netanyahu's health issues were more serious than what he initially said.

In a video statement, his doctors said they had implanted a device to monitor his heart after last week's health scare. When the device showed anomalies, they said he needed a pacemaker.

Professor Roy Beinart, senior physician and director at the Davidai Arrhythmia Center at Sheba Medical Center's Heart Institute, said Netanyahu has suffered from a "conduction disorder," or irregular heart beat, for years.

"The implantation went smoothly, without any complications. He is not in a life-threatening condition," Beinart said. "He feels great and is returning to his daily routine."

Netanyahu keeps a busy schedule and his office says he is in good health. But he has come under criticism in recent days for releasing few details about his well-being or medical records over the years.

Further ratcheting up the pressure on the Israeli leader, thousands of military reservists have been declaring their refusal to serve under a government taking steps that they see as setting the country on a path to dictatorship. Those moves have prompted fears that the military's preparedness could be compromised.

Over 100 retired security chiefs publicly supported the growing ranks of military reservists who plan to stop reporting for duty if the overhaul is advanced.

"These are dangerous cracks," military chief Lt. Gen. Herzi Halevi wrote in a letter to soldiers Sunday meant to address the tensions. "If we will not be a strong and cohesive military, if the best do not serve in the IDF, we will no longer be able to exist as a country in the region."

Netanyahu and his far-right allies announced the overhaul plan in January, days after taking office.

Netanyahu paused the overhaul in March after intense pressure by protesters and labor strikes that halted outgoing flights and shut down parts of the economy. After talks to find a compromise failed last month, he said his government was pressing on with the overhaul.

After decades of delays and broken promises, coal miners hail rule to slow rise of black lung

By LEAH WILLINGHAM and MATTHEW DALY Associated Press

CHARLESTON, W.Va. (AP) — A half-century ago, the nation's top health experts urged the federal agency in charge of mine safety to adopt strict rules protecting miners from poisonous rock dust.

The inaction since — fueled by denials and lobbying from coal and other industries — has contributed to the premature deaths of thousands of miners from pneumoconiosis, more commonly known as "black lung." The problem has only grown in recent years as miners dig through more layers of rock to get to less accessible coal, generating deadly silica dust in the process.

One former regulator called the lack of protection from silica-related illnesses "stunning" and one of the most "catastrophic" occupational health failures in U.S. history.

Now the federal Mine Safety and Health Administration has proposed a rule that would cut the current limit for silica exposure in half — a major victory for safety advocates. But there is skepticism and concern about the government following through after years of broken promises and delays.

James Bounds, a retired coal miner from Oak Hill, West Virginia, said nothing can be done to reverse the debilitating illness he was diagnosed with at 37 in 1984. But he doesn't want others to suffer the same fate.

"It's not going to help me — I'm through mining," said Bounds, 75, who now uses supplemental oxygen

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to breathe. "But we don't want these young kids breathing like we do."

The rule, published in the Federal Register this month, cuts the permissible exposure limit for silica dust from 100 to 50 micrograms per cubic meter of air for an 8-hour shift in coal, metal and nonmetal mines such as sand and gravel.

The proposal is in line with exposure levels imposed by the Occupational Safety and Health Administration on construction and other non-mining industries. And it's the standard The Centers for Disease Control was recommending as far back as 1974.

Silicosis is an occupational pneumoconiosis caused by the inhalation of crystalline silica dust present in minerals like sandstone. The U.S. Department of Labor began studying silica and its impact on workers' health in the 1930s, but the focus on stopping exposure in the workplace largely bypassed coal miners.

Instead, regulations centered on coal dust, a separate hazard created by crushing or pulverizing coal rock that also contributes to black lung.

In the decades since, silica dust has become a major problem as Appalachian miners cut through layers of sandstone to reach less accessible coal seams in mountaintop mines where coal closer to the surface has long been tapped. Silica dust is 20 times more toxic than coal dust and causes severe forms of black lung disease even after a few years of exposure.

An estimated one in five tenured miners in Central Appalachia has black lung disease; one in 20 has the most disabling form of black lung.

Miners are also being diagnosed at younger ages — some in their 30s and others with the advanced kind in their 40s. "That's just nuts," said Dr. Carl Werntz, a West Virginia physician who conducts black lung examinations and described cases as "skyrocketing."

United Mine Workers of America President Cecil Roberts said there's no reason a 35-year-old miner should be diagnosed with a disease "that's going to cost him his life."

"Nobody should be dying because of a job they have," Roberts said.

MSHA's existing silica standards were developed in the 1970s, around the time of the U.S. Coal Mine Health and Safety Act of 1969 and the Federal Mine Safety and Health Act of 1977.

West Virginia University law professor Pat McGinley, who was part of a state team investigating the 2010 Upper Big Branch mining disaster that killed 29 miners, called the resurgence of black lung "unparalleled" when it comes to occupational health failures. In the Upper Big Branch mine, 71% of the 24 miners who received autopsies were found to have black lung.

"I can't think of any occupation where there has been such devastation that's been ignored" by corporations and the government, he said. "It's stunning."

The new rule is supported by Democratic Sens. Joe Manchin of West Virginia, Sherrod Brown of Ohio, Bob Casey and John Fetterman of Pennsylvania, and Mark Warner and Tim Kaine of Virginia, who pushed for the change and released a joint statement saying protecting miners from "dangerous levels of silica cannot wait."

MSHA will be collecting comments on the proposal through Aug. 28, with three hearings scheduled in Arlington, Virginia, Beckley, West Virginia, and Denver.

One issue expected to come up: the use of respiratory protection equipment.

The National Mining Association, which represents mine operators, wants workers to be permitted to use respirators as a method of compliance with the rule.

"These are recognized industrial hygiene practices utilized by" federal regulators in other industries, "but not in mining," spokesman Conor Bernstein said, adding that better ventilation controls, safety awareness and regulations on coal dust have all contributed to "exponentially lower dust levels" inside U.S. mines in recent years.

The mine workers' union and others, however, say respirators are ineffective while performing heavy labor in hot, confined spaces common in mines. The proposed rule allows for the use of respirators on a temporary basis while operators are implementing engineering controls. But advocates say inspectors aren't present often enough to ensure they don't become a permanent solution.

"The history of miner safety and health enforcement teaches us that exceptions become the rule," said

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Sam Petsonk, a West Virginia attorney who represented miners who were diagnosed with black lung after operators knowingly violated regulations.

The proposed rule also includes a provision that allows companies to self-report silica levels. Federal inspectors conduct spot checks to ensure accuracy, but mine operators still have leeway to manipulate reporting data, said Willie Dodson, Central Appalachian field coordinator for Appalachian Voices, an advocacy group.

"Ideally, MSHA inspectors would take samples day after day after day in a given mine to determine compliance," he said.

A coal dust examiner who worked for a Kentucky mining company was sentenced to six months in prison last month for falsifying dust samples and lying to federal officials.

In rural Nickelsville, Virginia, near the Tennessee border, Vonda Robinson says miners and their families are owed more accountability from the federal government and mine operators. Her husband John was diagnosed with black lung about a decade ago at 47. Now, his doctors say he will need a lung transplant.

Vonda Robinson said her husband doesn't know what to say when his 5-year-old granddaughter asks why he can't run and play with her, why even walking down the end of the driveway leaves him physically spent.

"He'll tell her 'Honey, papaw can't do that,'" she said.

During his 28 years mining, John Robinson would come home with his face covered with dust. But she tried not to worry. Everyone in the community mined coal.

"He was one of those that wanted to go in the mines to give his family the American dream — the nice house, vehicles, put our kids through college," she said. "And this is what he got."

Daly reported from Washington.

Texas is using disaster declarations to install buoys and razor wire on the US-Mexico border

By VALERIE GONZALEZ and ACACIA CORONADO Associated Press

EAGLE PASS, Texas (AP) — Wrecking ball-sized buoys on the Rio Grande. Razor wire strung across private property without permission. Bulldozers changing the very terrain of America's southern border.

For more than two years, Texas Republican Gov. Greg Abbott has escalated measures to keep migrants from entering the U.S., pushing legal boundaries with a go-it-alone bravado along the state's 1,200-mile (1,930-kilometer) border with Mexico. Now blowback over the tactics is widening, including from within Texas.

A state trooper's account of officers denying migrants water in 100-degree Fahrenheit (37.7 Celsius) temperatures and razor wire leaving asylum-seekers bloodied has prompted renewed criticism. The Mexican government, the Biden administration and some residents are pushing back.

Abbott, who cruised to a third term in November while promising tougher border crackdowns, has used disaster declarations as the legal bedrock for some measures.

Critics call that a warped view.

"There are so many ways that what Texas is doing right now is just flagrantly illegal," said David Donatti, an attorney for the Texas American Civil Liberties Union.

Abbott did not respond to requests for comment. He has repeatedly attacked President Joe Biden's border policies, tweeting Friday that they "encourage migrants to risk their lives crossing illegally through the Rio Grande, instead of safely and legally over a bridge."

The Biden administration said illegal border crossings have declined significantly since new immigration rules took effect in May.

ALTERED BORDER

Under the international bridge connecting Eagle Pass, Texas, with Piedras Negras, Mexico, protesters gathered at Shelby Park this month, chanting "save the river" and blowing a conch shell in a ceremony. A few yards away, crews unloaded neon-orange buoys from trailers parked by a boat ramp off the Rio Grande.

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Jessie Fuentes stood with the environmental advocates, watching as state troopers restricted access to the water where he holds an annual kayak race. Shipping containers and layers of concertina wire lined the riverbank.

The experienced kayaker often took clients and race participants into the water through a shallow channel formed by a border island covered in verdant brush. That has been replaced by a bulldozed stretch of barren land connected to the mainland and fortified with razor wire.

"The river is a federally protected river by so many federal agencies, and I just don't know how it happened," Fuentes told the Eagle Pass City Council the night before.

Neither did the city council.

"I feel like the state government has kind of bypassed local government in a lot of different ways. And so I felt powerless at times," council member Elias Diaz told The Associated Press.

The International Boundary of Water Commission says it was not notified when Texas modified several islands or deployed the massive buoys to create a barrier covering 1,000 feet (305 meters) of the middle of the Rio Grande, with anchors in the riverbed.

The Justice Department has warned Texas that the buoy wall is unlawful and the Biden administration will sue if the state doesn't remove the wall. Abbott tweeted Friday that the state "has the sovereign authority to defend our border."

The floating barrier also provoked tension with Mexico, which says it violates treaties. Mexico's secretary of foreign relations asked the U.S. government to remove the buoys and razor wire in a June letter.

Fuentes sued over the buoys, arguing that border crossings are not covered by the Texas Disaster Act. As for the river islands, the Texas General Land Office gave the state Department of Public Safety access starting in April "to curb the ongoing border crisis."

"Additionally, the General Land Office will also permit vegetation management, provided compliance with all applicable state and federal regulations is upheld," said a letter from the office's commissioner, Dawn Buckingham.

The Texas Military Department cleared out carrizo cane, which Buckingham's office called an "invasive plant" in its response to questions from the AP, and changed the landscape, affecting the river's flow.

Environmental experts are concerned.

"As far as I know, if there's flooding in the river, it's much more severe in Piedras Negras than it is in Eagle Pass because that's the lower side of the river. And so next time the river really gets up, it's going to push a lot of water over on the Mexican side, it looks like to me," said Tom Vaughan, a retired professor and co-founder of the Rio Grande International Study Center.

Fuentes recently sought special permission from the city and DPS to navigate through his familiar kayaking route.

"Since they rerouted the water on the island, the water is flowing differently," Fuentes said. "I can feel it."

The state declined to release any records that might detail the environmental impacts of the buoys or changes to the landscape.

Victor Escalon, a DPS regional director overseeing Del Rio down to Brownsville, pointed to the governor's emergency disaster declaration. "We do everything we can to prevent crime, period. And that's the job," he added.

TRESPASSING TO STOP TRESPASSERS

For one property owner, the DPS mission cut him out of his land.

In 2021, as Eagle Pass became the preferred route by migrants crossing into the U.S., Magali and Hugo Urbina bought a pecan orchard by the river that they called Heavenly Farms.

Hugo Urbina worked with DPS when the agency built a fence on his property and arrested migrants for trespassing. But the relationship turned acrimonious a year later after DPS asked to put up concertina wire on riverfront property that the Urbinas were leasing to the U.S. Border Patrol to process immigrants.

Hugo Urbina wanted DPS to sign a lease releasing him from liability if the wire caused injuries. DPS declined but still installed concertina wire, moved vehicles onto the property and shut the Urbinas' gates.

That cut off the Border Patrol's access to the river, though it still leases land from Urbina.

"They do whatever it is that they want," Urbina said this month.

The farmer, a Republican, calls it "poison politics." Critics call it *déjà vu*.

"I also really see a very strong correlation to the Trump and post-Trump era in which most of the Trump administration's immigration policy was aggressive and extreme and very violative of people's rights, and very focused on making the political point," said Aron Thorn, an attorney with the Texas Civil Rights Project.

"The design of this is the optics and the amount of things that they sacrifice for those optics now is quite extraordinary," Thorn said.

DPS works with 300 landowners, according to Escalon. He said it is unusual for the department to take over a property without the landowner's consent, but the agency says the Disaster Act provides the authority.

Urbina said he supports the governor's efforts, "but not in this way."

"You don't go out there and start breaking the law and start making your citizens feel like they're second-hand citizens," he added.

Hun Sen's ruling party claims landslide win in Cambodian election after opposition was suppressed

By SOPHENG CHEANG and DAVID RISING Associated Press

PHNOM PENH, Cambodia (AP) — The ruling party of Cambodia's longtime Prime Minister Hun Sen claimed a landslide victory in Sunday's general election, an outcome that was virtually assured after the suppression and intimidation of the opposition in a vote called a farce of democracy.

Hun Sen posted on his Telegram channel late Sunday that unofficial results compiled by authorities in each province showed the Cambodian People's Party won 120 seats and the royalist FUNCINPEC party won five.

The National Election Committee said 84.6% of eligible voters had cast ballots. CPP spokesperson Sok Eysan told The Associated Press he believed his party captured 78-80% of the total turnout.

The European Union, the United States and other Western countries had refused to send observers to the polls, saying the election lacked the conditions to be considered free and fair. That left international officials from Russia, China and Guinea-Bissau to watch as Hun Sun voted shortly after the polls opened in his home district outside of the capital, Phnom Penh.

He held his ballot high for all to see, before depositing it into the silver metal box and leaving the station, pausing to take selfies and shake hands with supporters outside.

The longest-serving leader in Asia, Hun Sen has steadily consolidated power with strong-arm tactics over the last 38 years. But, at age 70, he has suggested he will hand off the premiership during the upcoming five-year term to his oldest son, Hun Manet, perhaps as early as the first month after the elections.

Hun Manet, 45, is chief of Cambodia's army. He is a West Point graduate with a master's degree from New York University and a doctorate from Bristol University in Britain.

Despite his Western education, however, observers don't expect any immediate shifts in policy after his father steadily moved Cambodia closer to China in recent years.

"I don't think anyone expects Hun Sen to sort of disappear once Hun Manet is prime minister," said Astrid Norén-Nilsson, a Cambodia expert at Sweden's Lund University. "I think they will probably be working closely together and I don't think that there is a big difference in their political outlook, including foreign policy."

Hun Manet is part of an expected generational change in the ruling party, which plans to install younger leaders in most ministerial positions.

"That's going to be the big change of guard, that's what I'm watching," Norén-Nilsson said. "It's all about the transition, it's all about who's going to come in and in what positions they find themselves."

At the station where Hun Sen cast his ballot, voter Nan Sy, a former lawmaker himself with a smaller royalist party, said the main issue for him was stability.

"Without stability we cannot talk about education, we cannot talk about development," the 59-year-old said without saying who he voted for.

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There were few reports of any protests against the elections, but Gen. Khieu Sopheak, Cambodia's national police spokesperson, said 27 people were being sought over allegations they called for voters to spoil their ballots in a Telegram chat channel. He said there had been two arrests at polling stations as well.

Hun Sen had been a middle-ranking commander in the radical communist Khmer Rouge responsible for genocide in the 1970s before defecting to Vietnam. When Vietnam ousted the Khmer Rouge from power in 1979, he quickly became a senior member of the new Cambodian government installed by Hanoi.

A wily and sometimes ruthless politician, Hun Sen has maintained power as an autocrat in a nominally democratic framework.

His party's stranglehold on power faltered in 2013 elections, in which the opposition Cambodian National Rescue Party won 44% of the popular vote to CPP's 48%. Hun Sen responded by going after leaders of the opposition, primarily through sympathetic courts, which eventually dissolved the party after local elections in 2017 when it again fared well.

Ahead of Sunday's election, the Candlelight Party, the unofficial successor to the CNRP and only other contender capable of mounting a credible challenge, was barred on a technicality from contesting the polls by the National Election Committee.

The methods prompted widespread criticism from rights groups.

Human Rights Watch said the "election bears little resemblance to an actual democratic process," while the Asian Network for Free Elections, an umbrella organization of almost 20 regional NGOs, said the National Election Committee had showed a "clear bias" toward the CPP in barring the Candlelight Party.

"Such disqualification further exacerbates the imbalanced and unjust political environment, leaving minimal room for opposition voices to compete on equal footing with the ruling party," the group said in a joint statement.

"Moreover, the shrinking space available for civil society and the deliberate targeting of human rights defenders and activists raise serious alarm. The constriction of civic space undermines the active participation of civil society in the electoral process without fear of reprisal."

Compared to the way the opposition was neutralized in 2018, popular discontent this time did not seem widespread, Norén-Nilsson said, because Hun Sen and the CPP have been effective at building a sense among Cambodians that they are part of a new national project.

The strategy has involved careful messaging, with sweeping slogans like "small country, big heart," and little talk about policy, she said.

"It's really quite astonishing how the CPP has managed to gain at least acceptance for what we see now," she said. "If before people thought that the glass was half empty, now it's half full, so you focus more on what you have than don't have."

With the Candlelight Party out of the running, 18 parties participated and only two won seats.

FUNCINPEC is a French acronym for the National Front for an Independent, Neutral and Cooperative Cambodia. It was founded in 1981 by Cambodia's late King Norodom Sihanouk and defeated the CPP in U.N.-run elections in 1993, but his son, Norodom Ranariddh, ended up having to agree to a co-premiership with Hun Sen. The party has evolved into a tamed opposition force that rarely challenges the ruling party's actions.

Spain at risk of political gridlock after conservative win falls short of toppling PM Sánchez

By CIARÁN GILES and JOSEPH WILSON Associated Press

MADRID (AP) — Spain appears headed for political gridlock after Sunday's inconclusive national elections left parties on both the right and left without a clear path toward forging a new government.

The conservative Popular Party won the elections, but it fell short of its hopes of scoring a much bigger victory and forcing the removal of Socialist Prime Minister Pedro Sánchez. Instead, the party led by candidate Alberto Núñez Feijóo performed below the expectations of most campaign polls.

Even though Sánchez's Socialists finished second, they and their allied parties celebrated the outcome

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as a victory since their combined forces gained slightly more seats than the PP and the far-right. The bloc that could likely support Sánchez totaled 172 seats; the right bloc behind Feijóo, 170.

"It was a Pyrrhic victory for the Popular Party, which is unable to form a government," said political analyst Verónica Fumanal, adding the conservatives will now have to reach out to the far-right, and even then it won't be enough. "I see a deadlock scenario in the Parliament."

The closer-than-expected outcome was likely to produce weeks of political jockeying and uncertainty over the country's future leadership. The next prime minister only would be voted on once lawmakers are installed in the new Congress of Deputies.

But the chances of Sánchez picking up the support of 176 lawmakers — the absolute majority in the Madrid-based Lower House of Parliament — needed to form a government are not great either. The divided results have made the hardline Catalan separatist party Junts (Together) emerge as Sánchez's potential kingmaker. If Junts asks for a referendum on independence for northeast Catalonia, that would likely be far too costly a price for Sánchez to pay.

"We won't make Pedro Sánchez PM in exchange for nothing," Míriam Nogueras of Junts said after the results left her party holding the keys to power.

With 98% of votes counted, PP is on track for 136 seats. Even with the 33 seats that the far-right Vox is poised to get and the one seat going to an allied party, the PP would still be seven seats from the absolute majority.

The Socialists are set to take 122 seats, two more than they had. But Sánchez can likely call on the 31 seats of its junior coalition partner Sumar (Joining Forces) and several smaller forces to at least total more than the sum of the right-wing parties.

"Spain and all the citizens who have voted have made themselves clear. The backward-looking bloc that wanted to undo all that we have done has failed," Sánchez told a jubilant crowd gathered at Socialists' headquarters in Madrid.

After his party took a beating in regional and local elections in May, Sánchez could have waited until December to face a national vote. Instead, he stunned his rivals by moving up the vote in hopes of gaining a bigger boost from his supporters.

Even if this goes to a new ballot, Sánchez can add this election night to yet another comeback in his career that has been built around beating the odds. The 51-year-old Sánchez had to mount a mutiny among rank-and-file Socialists to return to heading his party before he won Spain's only no-confidence vote to oust his PP predecessor in 2018.

But Feijóo would probably trade spots with his rival if he could.

Feijóo claimed his right to form a government as the most voted party in the election, adding he was "proud" of what his party's first national election victory since 2016.

"We have won the elections, it corresponds to us to form a government like it has always happened in Spanish democracy," he said, addressing a crowd aflutter with Spanish flags.

Feijóo focused the PP's campaign not on what he would do as prime minister, but rather as an attack on what he called the untrustworthiness of Sánchez. The strategy failed. The Socialists and other leftist parties seem to have motivated their voters by drumming up fear of having the anti-feminist, ultra-nationalist Vox in power as a junior member of a possible coalition with the PP.

A PP-Vox government would have meant another EU member has moved firmly to the right, a trend seen recently in Sweden, Finland and Italy. Countries such as Germany and France are concerned about what such a shift would portend for EU immigration and climate policies.

Vox, which had hoped to force its way into power much as other far-right parties have done in other European countries, lost 19 seats from four years earlier.

Vox leader Santiago Abascal said that the Socialists' results were "bad news for Spaniards."

"Pedro Sánchez, despite losing the elections, can block (Feijóo's) investiture and, even worse, Pedro Sánchez could even be invested with the support of communism, the coup-seeking separatism and terrorism, all of whom will now have more leverage in the blackmail than in his previous term," he said.

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Yet it seems that the specter of the far-right taking a seat in government, albeit as a junior member to the PP, for the first time since the 20th-century dictatorship of Francisco Franco had proved to be key to the left's resurgence.

Feijóo had tried to distance his PP from Vox during the campaign, refusing to say that a national coalition was a possibility. But Sánchez, in moving up the election, made the campaign coincide with the PP and Vox striking deals to govern together in several town halls and regional governments following the May ballots.

Even though Feijóo had pledged he would maintain his party's commitment to fighting gender violence, Vox campaigned on rolling back gender violence laws. And they both agree on wanting to repeal a new transgender rights law and a democratic memory law that seeks to help families wanting to unearth the thousands of victims of Franco's regime still missing in mass graves.

"PP has been a victim of its expectations, and the Socialists have been able to capitalize on the fear of the arrival of Vox. Bringing forward the elections has turned out to be the right decision for Pedro Sánchez," said Manuel Mostaza, director of Public Policy at Spanish consultancy firm Atrevia.

Spain's new Parliament will meet in a month. King Felipe VI then appoints one of the party leaders to submit him or herself to a parliamentary vote to form a new government. Lawmakers have a maximum period of three months to reach an agreement. Otherwise, new elections would be triggered.

The election took place at the height of summer, with millions of voters likely to be vacationing away from their regular polling places. However, postal voting requests soared.

Coming on the tail of a month of heat waves, temperatures were expected to average above 35 degrees Celsius (95 degrees Fahrenheit), or 5 to 10 degrees Celsius above normal in many parts of the country. Authorities distributed fans to many of the stations.

"We have the heat, but the right to exercise our vote freely is stronger than the heat," said Rosa María Valladolid-Prieto, 79, in Barcelona.

Associated Press writer Joseph Wilson reported from Barcelona. AP journalists Aritz Parra, Renata Brito, David Brunat, Iain Sullivan, María Gestoso, Alicia León and José María García contributed to this report.

Scholarships have helped displaced Afghan students find homes on university campuses across the US

By JAMIE STENGLE Associated Press

DALLAS (AP) — As the Taliban swept back into power in Afghanistan in the summer of 2021, Fahima Sultani and her fellow university students tried for days to get into the Kabul airport, only to be turned away by gun-wielding extremists.

"No education, just go back home," she recalled one shouting.

Nearly two years later, Sultani, now 21, is safely in the U.S. and working toward her bachelor's degree in data science at Arizona State University in Tempe on a scholarship. When she's not studying, she likes to hike up nearby Tempe Butte, the kind of outing she enjoyed in her mountainous homeland.

Seeing students like Sultani rush to leave in August 2021 as the U.S. withdrew from Afghanistan after 20 years, colleges, universities and other groups across the U.S. started piecing together the funding for hundreds of scholarships so they could continue their education outside of their home country.

Women of Sultani's generation, born around the time the U.S. ousted the Taliban after the 9/11 attacks in 2001, grew up attending school and watching as women pursued careers. The Taliban's return upended those freedoms.

"Within minutes of the collapse of the government in Kabul, U.S. universities said, 'We'll take one;' 'We'll take three;' 'We'll take a professor;' 'We'll take a student,'" said Allan Goodman, CEO of the Institute of International Education, a global not-for-profit that helps fund such scholarships.

The fears leading the students to quickly board flights were soon justified as the Taliban ushered in a harsh Islamic rule: Girls cannot attend school beyond the sixth grade and women, once again required to wear burqas, have been banned from universities, parks and gyms and are restricted from most employment.

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Sultani is one of more than 60 Afghan women who arrived at ASU by December 2021 after fleeing Afghanistan, where she'd been studying online through Asian University for Women in Bangladesh during the pandemic.

"These women came out of a crisis, a traumatic experience, boarded a plane not knowing where they were going, ended up in the U.S.," said Susan Edgington, executive director and head of operations of ASU's Global Academic Initiatives.

After making their way to universities and colleges across the U.S. over the last two years, many are nearing graduation and planning their futures.

Mashal Aziz, 22, was a few months from graduating from American University of Afghanistan when Kabul fell and she boarded a plane. After leaving, she began scouring the internet, researching which schools were offering scholarships and what organizations might be able to help.

"You've already left everything and you are thinking maybe there are barriers for your higher education," Aziz said.

She and three other Afghan students arrived at Northeastern University in Boston in January 2022 after first being taken to Qatar and then a military base in New Jersey.

Aziz graduated this spring with a bachelor's degree in finance and accounting management. She plans to start working on her master's degree in finance this fall at Northeastern.

The hurdles for students who left can include everything from needing help to overcome language barriers to getting credit for the courses they completed in their home country to affording tuition, Aziz said.

Just two days after the fall of Kabul, the University of Tulsa in Oklahoma announced it had created two scholarships for Afghans seeking refuge in the U.S. Later, the university created five more scholarships that went to some of the young Afghans who settled in the area. Five more Afghans have received scholarships to study there this fall.

Danielle Macdonald, an associate anthropology professor at the school, has organized a regular meetup between TU students and college-aged Afghans who have settled in the Tulsa area.

Around two dozen young people attend the events, where they talk about everything from U.S. slang to finding jobs. Their outings have included visiting a museum and going to a basketball game, Macdonald said.

"It's become a really lovely community," she said.

For many young people leaving Afghanistan, familiarity with the U.S. made the country a natural destination.

That was the case for Hamasa Zeerak, 24, and her 30-year-old husband, Hussain Saifnijat. In Kabul, Zeerak attended the American University of Afghanistan, while Saifnijat worked for a U.S.-based technology company.

They both began studying at Rutgers University, in New Jersey, last fall. He may be able to graduate as early as this fall with a master's degree in electrical and computer engineering. She is studying to get her bachelor's degree in business administration and graduates in 2025.

"My worries were a lot at the beginning because I was thinking about how to continue our life in America; how can we find a job?" Zeerak said. "It was stressful at the beginning but everything goes smooth."

Sultani, like many others who left Afghanistan, often thinks about those who remained behind, including her sister, who had been studying at a university, but now must stay home.

"I can go to universities while millions of girls back in Afghanistan, they do not have this opportunity that I have," Sultani said. "I can dress the way I want and millions of girls now in Afghanistan, they do not have this opportunity."

There will be 20 Afghans studying this fall at Western Kentucky University in Bowling Green. Atifa Kabuli, 46, had studied nursing there for the last two semesters but now is focused on studying for exams that will allow her to practice medicine in the U.S.

Older than most of the arriving students, Kabuli left behind her career as an obstetrician and gynecologist. During the Taliban's first rule, from 1996 to 2001, she was only able to continue her education by studying in Pakistan.

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When the Taliban regained control, she knew she and her husband would have to leave so their daughters, now 15 and 10, would be able to continue going to school. Her time at WKU, she said, helped her find the confidence to pursue a medical license in the U.S.

Since the initial flurry of scholarships, efforts to assist Afghan students have continued, including the creation of the Qatar Scholarship for Afghans Project, which has helped fund 250 scholarships at dozens of U.S. colleges and universities.

But there are still more young people in need of support to continue their educations in the U.S. or even reach the U.S. from Afghanistan or other countries, explained Jonah Kokodyniak, a senior vice president at the Institute of International Education.

Yasamin Sohrabi, 26, is among those still trying to find a way to the U.S. Sohrabi, who had been studying law at American University of Afghanistan, realized as the withdrawal of U.S. forces neared that she might need to go overseas to continue her studies. The day after the Taliban took Kabul, she learned of her admission to WKU but wasn't able to get into the airport to leave Afghanistan.

A year later, she and her younger sister, who also has been accepted at the university, got visas to Pakistan. Now they are trying to find a way to get into the U.S. Their brother, who accompanied them to Pakistan, is applying to the school, as well.

Sohrabi said she and her siblings try not to focus on what they have lost, but instead on how to get to the U.S. to continue their studies.

"That's one of the things in these days we think about," she said. "It keeps us going."

Musk says Twitter to change logo to "X" from the bird. Changes could come as early as Monday.

By ANNE D'INNOCENZIO AP Retail Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — Elon Musk said Sunday that he plans to change the logo of Twitter to an "X" from the famous blue bird, marking what would be the latest big change since he bought the social media platform for \$44 billion last year.

In a series of posts on his Twitter account starting just after 12 a.m. ET, Twitter's owner said that he's looking to make the change worldwide as soon as Monday.

"And soon we shall bid adieu to the twitter brand and, gradually, all the birds," Musk wrote on his account.

The change isn't surprising given Musk's long history with the name "X," says Allen Adamson, co-founder of marketing consultancy Metaforce. The billionaire Tesla CEO tweeted last October that "buying Twitter is an accelerant to creating X, the everything app."

Musk's rocket company, Space Exploration Technologies Corp., is commonly known as SpaceX. And in 1999, Musk founded a startup called X.com, an online financial services company now known as PayPal.

"Not sure what subtle clues gave it way, but I like the letter X," Musk tweeted Sunday.

Hours later on Sunday, Linda Yaccarino, the longtime NBC Universal executive Musk appointed as Twitter CEO in May, weighed in on the move.

"It's an exceptionally rare thing – in life or in business – that you get a second chance to make another big impression," she wrote on her Twitter account. "Twitter made one massive impression and changed the way we communicate. Now, X will go further, transforming the global town square."

Yaccarino wrote on Twitter that X would be "the future state of unlimited interactivity – centered in audio, video, messaging, payments/banking – creating a global marketplace for ideas, goods, services, and opportunities."

But the change on Twitter was met with skepticism on the social media platform.

The change will be very confusing to a huge chunk of the Twitter's audience, which has been already souring on the social platform given a slew of other major changes Musk has made, Adamson said.

"They won't get it," he said. "It's a fitting end to a phenomenal unwinding of an iconic brand and business."

Earlier this month, Musk put new curfews on his digital town square, a move that met with sharp criticism it could drive away more advertisers and undermine its cultural influence as a trendsetter.

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The higher tweet-viewing threshold is part of an \$8-per-month subscription service that Musk rolled out earlier this year in an attempt to boost Twitter revenue. Revenue has dropped sharply since Musk took over the company and laid off roughly three-fourths of the workforce to slash costs and avoid bankruptcy.

Luring advertisers is essential for Musk and Twitter after many fled in the early months after his takeover of the social media platform, fearing damage to their brands in the enveloping chaos. Advertisers have cut back on spending partly because of changes Musk has made that has allowed for more hateful content to flourish and that has offended a wider part of the platform's audience.

Musk said in late April that advertisers had returned, but provided no specifics.

Musk's move to change Twitter's logo to an "X" also comes as Twitter faces new competition from Meta's new app, Threads, launched earlier this month. It has been seen as an alternative for those who have been upset with Twitter.

Threads is being billed as a text-based version of Meta's photo-sharing app Instagram that the company has said offers "a new, separate space for real-time updates and public conversations."

In the first five days of its launch, 100 million people had signed up for Threads, according to a post on Threads by Instagram head Adam Mosseri.

Follow Anne D'Innocenzio: <http://twitter.com/ADInnocenzio>

One year old, US climate law is already turbocharging clean energy technology

By ISABELLA O'MALLEY and MICHAEL PHILLIS Associated Press

FRANKFORT, Ky. (AP) — On a recent day under the July sun, three men heaved solar panels onto the roof of a roomy, two-story house near the banks of the Kentucky River, a few miles upstream from the state capitol where lawmakers have promoted coal for more than a century.

The U.S. climate law that passed one year ago offers a 30% discount off this installation via a tax credit, and that's helping push clean energy even into places where coal still provides cheap electricity. For Heather Baggett's family in Frankfort, it was a good deal.

"For us, it's not politically motivated," said Baggett. "It really came down to financially, it made sense."

On August 16, after the hottest June ever recorded and a scorching July, America's long-sought response to climate change, the Inflation Reduction Act, turns one year old. In less than a year it has prompted investment in a massive buildout of battery and EV manufacturing across the states. Nearly 80 major clean energy manufacturing facilities have been announced, an investment equal to the previous seven years combined, according to the American Clean Power Association.

"It seems like every week there's a new factory facility somewhere" being announced, said Jesse Jenkins, a professor at Princeton and leader of the REPEAT Project which has been deeply involved in analysis of the law.

"We've been talking about bringing manufacturing jobs back to America for my entire life. We're finally doing it, right? That's pretty exciting," he said.

The IRA is America's most significant response to climate change, after decades of lobbying by oil, gas and coal interests stalled action, while carbon emissions climbed, creating a hotter, more dangerous world. It is designed to spur clean energy buildout on a scale that will bend the arc of U.S. greenhouse gas emissions. It also aims to build domestic supply chains to reverse China's and other nations' early domination of this vital sector.

One target of the law is cleaner transportation, the largest source of climate pollution for the U.S. Siemens, one of the biggest tech companies in the world, produces charging stations for EVs. Executives say this alignment of U.S. policy on climate is driving higher demand for batteries.

"When the federal government makes an investment, we get to the tipping point faster," said Barbara Humpton, CEO of Siemens USA, adding that the company has invested \$260 million in battery or battery storage projects in recent years.

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The law also encourages more of the type of batteries that feed electricity to the grid when the wind is slack, or at night when the sun isn't hitting solar panels. It could put the storage business on the same upward trajectory that solar blazed a decade ago, said Michael McGowan, head of North American infrastructure private markets for Mercer Alternatives, a consulting firm.

Derrick Flakoll, North America policy associate at Bloomberg NEF, pointed out that sales at the largest manufacturer of solar panels in the U.S., First Solar, skyrocketed after the law passed, creating a big backlog of orders.

"This is years and years of manufacturing capacity that is already booked out because people are bullish about the U.S.-produced solar market," he said.

The IRA is also helping technologies that are expensive, but promising for near-term decarbonization.

Jason Mortimer is senior vice president of global sales at EH2, which makes large, low-cost electrolyzers — machines that split hydrogen from water. Hydrogen as clean energy is still in its infancy. "The IRA accelerates the implementation of hydrogen at scale by about four to five years," making the U.S. competitive with Europe, he said.

But these changes, significant as they are, may just be the beginning, experts say.

"I think we're about to see a quite a flood of investment in wind and solar-related manufacturing in the U.S.," Jenkins said, adding that 2026 to 2028 is when the country will see the law's full impact.

Other countries, some of them ahead of the U.S. in addressing climate change, have enacted their own further efforts to speed the changeover to clean energy. Canada has announced a matching policy and Europe has its own measures to attract manufacturing, similar to the IRA.

"European and Japanese automakers are trying to think about how to change supply chains in order to try and compete," said Neil Mehrotra, assistant vice president and policy advisor at the Federal Reserve Bank of Minneapolis and contributor to a report about the U.S. law published by the Brookings Institution.

The Congressional Budget Office initially estimated the IRA's tax credits would cost about \$270 billion over a decade, but Brookings says businesses might take advantage of the credits far more aggressively and the federal government could pay out three or four times more.

The law is supposed to reduce the emissions of the U.S. — the country most responsible for greenhouse gases historically — by as much as 41% by 2030, according to a new analysis by Princeton researchers. That's not enough to hit U.S. goals, but is a significant improvement.

But those crucial greenhouse gas cuts are partially at risk if the U.S. electric grid cannot grow enough to connect new wind and solar farms and handle new demands, like mass vehicle charging.

Despite the new investment in red states, not everyone likes it. Republicans recently proposed repealing major elements of the law. And Frankfort resident Jessie Decker, whose neighbor has solar panels, said he wouldn't consider them, and doesn't think the federal government should be "wasting money" on dubious climate programs.

Nor does the law mean climate-warming oil and gas are going away.

"Frankly, we are going to be using fossil fuels for many decades to come," said Fred Eames, a regulatory attorney with the law firm Hunton Andrews Kurth.

Up on Baggett's roof, Nicholas Hartnett, owner of Pure Power Solar, is pleased that business is up and homeowners are opening up to solar once they see how they can financially benefit.

"You have the environmental side, which handles the left, and then you have the option to use your own tax money that the government would have otherwise taken, which gets the right checked off," he said.

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Brian Harman is unstoppable in a drama-free British Open win at Hoylake

By DOUG FERGUSON AP Golf Writer

HOYLAKE, England (AP) — Brian Harman stood in the tunnel and looked out to the 18th green at Royal Liverpool with his eyes on that shiny claret jug, waiting for his name to be called with the century-old introduction as “champion golfer of the year.” He always imagined this was possible.

Maybe not in a steady rain, his least favorite weather, on Sunday at the British Open. Perhaps not before a British Open crowd that seemed to want anyone but Harman to win, including one fan who he heard say over the weekend, “Harman, you don’t have the stones for this.”

All that was sweet music to the little lefty with Georgia grit and something to prove, to himself and anyone watching.

And did he ever.

Harman delivered a performance so remarkable he hit into only three bunkers all week, led the last 51 holes of the British Open and never gave anyone a chance. He closed with a 1-under 70 and won by six shots.

“I’ve always had a self-belief that I could do something like this,” Harman said. “It’s just when it takes so much time, it’s hard not to let your mind falter, like maybe I’m not winning again. I’m 36 years old. Game is getting younger. All these young guys coming out, hit it a mile and they’re all ready to win. Like, when is it going to be my turn again?”

“To come out and put a performance like that together ... I don’t know why this week, but I’m very thankful that it was this week.”

Harman turned back every challenge in the British Open, from big names to bad weather, and took his place among major champions Sunday with a victory that never was in doubt.

When his second bogey in the opening five holes reduced his lead to three, Harman answered with two straight birdies. When he dropped another shot on the 13th hole and his lead was down to four shots, Harman made two more birdies, the first one from 40 feet on No. 14.

By then, everyone else was playing for second.

“He won by six, so there’s nothing really any of us could have done,” said Masters champion Jon Rahm, one of four players who had to settle for the silver medal.

Harman, the great outdoorsman, made winning look as easy as shooting fish in a barrel.

He is the oldest first-time major winner since Sergio Garcia was 37 when he won the Masters in 2017. Garcia wasn’t a surprise. Not many would have imagined Harman’s name engraved on the claret jug at the start of the week.

Harman had gone 167 tournaments over six years since his last win, the 2017 Wells Fargo Championship. This is only his third title in his 12 years on the PGA Tour.

“Someone mentioned that I’ve had more top 10s than anyone since 2017, so that’s a lot of times where you get done, you’re like, ‘Damn it, man, I had that one.’ It just didn’t happen for whatever reason,” he said.

Now he has the claret jug, and “I’m not going to let it out of my sight for the time being.”

“I’m going to have a couple of pints out of this here trophy, I believe,” Harman said.

Rahm birdied his last hole for a 70 to make it a four-way tie for second place with Tom Kim (67), Sepp Straka (69) and Jason Day (69).

That turned out to be the B-flight.

Harman took the lead on Friday morning with the second of four straight birdies early in the second round. He never trailed over the final 51 holes, leading by five shots after the second round and five shots after the third round.

He started the round in the rain with a smattering of boos from the grandstand, fans either wanting a big star or perhaps not paying attention to the masterclass performance Harman had delivered. Playing with Tommy Fleetwood of England on Saturday, Harman said he heard a few comments he described as unrepeatable.

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He never wavered in rain or sunshine or wind over the final two days. And when it was over, Harman walked up toward the 18th green to a standing ovation, and tapped his hand to his heart to acknowledge the fans as he walked off the green.

He never contemplated winning until he blasted out of the pot bunker right of the green and slapped the chest of his caddie, Scott Tway, the brother of 1986 PGA champion Bob Tway.

Padraig Harrington was among those who envisioned how Sunday would unfold.

"Sometimes we see somebody leading a tournament and you kind of go, 'Oh, is he going to hang on?' I don't think that's the case with Brian Harman," Harrington said. "Nearly every day he goes out on the golf course he's playing with a chip on his shoulder like he's fighting something. I think this is ideal for him."

There was one anxious moment early on Sunday in a steady rain. Harman hit his drive into a gorse bush left of the fairway on the par-5 fifth hole and had to take a penalty drop. It led to his second bogey of the round.

Rahm, playing in the group ahead, looked to get one of those breaks that fall to major winners. His drive had landed between bushes, allowing for a shot just short of the green and a birdie.

The lead was down to three shots. The rain wasn't stopping. The rest of the links, along with the pressure that comes with Sunday at a major, was still ahead of him.

Harman went birdie-birdie, and the lead was back to five. He didn't make another mistake until missing the 13th green and taking bogey. And then he went birdie-birdie again.

The year of majors ended in more disappointment for Rory McIlroy, who had won the Scottish Open last week and was the last Open champion at Royal Liverpool in 2014. He was never really a factor, although he certainly teased the large galleries that followed him.

Sunday was no exception. McIlroy started nine shots behind and ran off three straight birdies, starting with a 50-foot putt on No. 3. He was within five shots and still on the front nine. And then he stalled, not making another birdie until Harman was well on his way.

McIlroy was one shot better each round — 71-70-69-68 — to tie for sixth with Emiliano Grillo (68). That wasn't nearly enough to match a performance like Harman delivered.

"I'm optimistic about the future and just got to keep plugging away," said McIlroy, who has gone 34 majors since winning his last one in 2014.

Harman now has a five-year exemption in all the majors and joins the list of Open champions at Hoylake that include McIlroy and Tiger Woods, Bobby Jones and Walter Hagen.

He also can think about a return to Europe in September for the Ryder Cup in Rome. The victory, worth \$3 million, moves him comfortably to No. 3 in the standings. The top six a month from now automatically qualify.

Harman never has played in a Ryder Cup. He moves to No. 10 in the world. This is new territory. Over four days at Royal Liverpool, he certainly looked like he belonged.

AP golf: <https://apnews.com/hub/golf> and https://twitter.com/AP_Sports

'Barbie' takes the box office crown and 'Oppenheimer' soars in a historic weekend

By LINDSEY BAHR AP Film Writer

"Barbenheimer" didn't just work — it spun box office gold. The social media-fueled fusion of Greta Gerwig's "Barbie" and Christopher Nolan's "Oppenheimer" brought moviegoers back to the theaters in record numbers this weekend, vastly outperforming projections and giving a glimmer of hope to the lagging exhibition business, amid the sobering backdrop of strikes.

Warner Bros.' "Barbie" claimed the top spot with a massive \$155 million in ticket sales from North American theaters from 4,243 locations, surpassing "The Super Mario Bros. Movie" (as well as every Marvel movie this year) as the biggest opening of the year and breaking the first weekend record for a film directed by a woman. Universal's "Oppenheimer" also soared past expectations, taking in \$80.5 million from 3,610

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theaters in the U.S. and Canada, marking Nolan's biggest non-Batman debut and one of the best-ever starts for an R-rated biographical drama.

It's also the first time that one movie opened to more than \$100 million and another movie opened to more than \$80 million in the same weekend. When all is settled, it will likely turn out to be the fourth biggest box office weekend of all time with over \$300 million industrywide. And all this in a marketplace that increasingly curved towards intellectual property-driven winner takes all.

The "Barbenheimer" phenomenon may have started out as good-natured competition between two aesthetic opposites, but, as many hoped, both movies benefitted in the end. Internationally, "Barbie" earned \$182 million from 69 territories, fueling a \$337 million global weekend. "Oppenheimer" did \$93.7 million from 78 territories, ranking above "Barbie" in India, for a \$174.2 million global total.

The only real casualty was "Mission: Impossible: Dead Reckoning Part I," which despite strong reviews and a healthy opening weekend fell 64% in weekend two. Overshadowed by the "Barbenheimer" glow as well as the blow of losing its IMAX screens to "Oppenheimer," the Tom Cruise vehicle added \$19.5 million, bringing its domestic total to \$118.8 million.

"Barbenheimer" is not merely counterprogramming either. But while a certain section of enthusiastic moviegoers overlapped, in aggregate the audiences were distinct.

Women drove the historic "Barbie" opening, making up 65% of the audience, according to PostTrak, and 40% of ticket buyers were under the age of 25 for the PG-13 rated movie.

"It's just a joyous time in the world. This is history in so many ways," said Jeff Goldstein, Warner Bros.' president of domestic distribution. "I think this marketing campaign is one for the ages that people will be talking about forever."

"Oppenheimer" audiences meanwhile were 62% male and 63% over the age of 25, with a somewhat surprising 32% that were between the ages of 18 and 24.

Both "Barbie" and "Oppenheimer" scored well with critics with 90% and 94% on Rotten Tomatoes, respectively, and audiences who gave both films an A CinemaScore. And social media has been awash with reactions and "takes" all weekend – good, bad, problematic and everywhere in between – the kind of organic, event cinema, watercooler debate that no marketing budget can buy.

"The 'Barbenheimer' thing was a real boost for both movies," Goldstein said. "It is a crowning achievement for all of us."

"Oppenheimer" had the vast majority (80%) of premium large format screens at its disposal. Some 25 theaters in North America boasted IMAX 70mm screenings (Nolan's preferred format), most of which were completely sold out all weekend — accounting for 2% of the total gross. Theaters even scrambled to add more to accommodate the demand including 1 a.m. and 6 a.m. screenings, which also sold out.

"Nolan's films are truly cinematic events," said Jim Orr, Universal's president of domestic distribution.

IMAX showings alone made up 26% of the domestic gross (or \$21.1 million) from only 411 screens and 20% of the global gross, and "Oppenheimer" will have at least a three-week run on those high-demand screens.

"This is a phenomenon beyond compare," said Rich Gelfond, the CEO of IMAX, in a statement. "Around the world, we've seen sellouts at 4:00 a.m. shows and people travelling hours across borders to see 'Oppenheimer' in IMAX 70mm."

This is the comeback weekend Hollywood has been dreaming of since the pandemic. There have been big openings and successes – "Spider-Man: No Way Home," "Top Gun: Maverick," "Avatar: The Way of Water" among them, but the fact that two movies are succeeding at the same time is notable.

"It was a truly historic weekend and continues the positive box office momentum of 2023," said Michael O'Leary, President & CEO of the National Association of Theatre Owners. "People recognized that something special was happening and they wanted to be a part of it."

And yet in the background looms disaster as Hollywood studios continue to squabble with striking actors and writers over a fair contract.

"Barbie" and "Oppenheimer" were the last films on the 2023 calendar to get a massive, global press tour. Both went right up to the 11th hour, squeezing in every last moment with their movie stars. "Op-

penheimer" even pushed up its London premiere by an hour, knowing that Emily Blunt, Matt Damon and Cillian Murphy would have to leave to symbolically join the picket lines by the time the movie began.

Without movie stars to promote their films, studios have started pushing some fall releases, including the high-profile Zendaya tennis drama "Challengers."

But for now, it's simply a positive story that could even continue for weeks to come.

"There could be a sequel next weekend," said Paul Dergarabedian, the senior media analyst for Comscore. "The FOMO factor will ratchet up because of this monumental box office event centered around the movie theater experience."

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

1. "Barbie," \$155 million.
2. "Oppenheimer," \$80.5 million.
3. "Sound of Freedom," \$20.1 million.
4. "Mission: Impossible-Dead Reckoning Part I," \$19.5 million.
5. "Indiana Jones and the Dial of Destiny," \$6.7 million.
6. "Insidious: The Red Door," \$6.5 million.
7. "Elemental," \$5.8 million.
8. "Spider-Man: Across the Spider-Verse," \$2.8 million.
9. "Transformers: Rise of the Beasts," 1.1 million.
10. "No Hard Feelings," \$1.1 million.

Russian strike on Ukraine's Odesa badly damages landmark Orthodox cathedral; 1 dead, many wounded

By HANNA ARHIROVA and ELISE MORTON Associated Press

ODESA, Ukraine (AP) — Russia struck the Ukrainian Black Sea city of Odesa on Sunday, keeping up a barrage of attacks that has damaged critical port infrastructure in southern Ukraine in the past week. At least one person was killed and 22 others wounded in the early morning attack, officials said.

Four children were among those wounded in the blasts, which severely damaged 25 landmarks across the city, including the historic Transfiguration Cathedral.

Russia has been launching repeated attacks on Odesa, a key hub for exporting grain, since Moscow canceled a landmark grain deal on Monday amid Kyiv's grinding efforts to retake its occupied territories.

After the fires were put out at the Orthodox cathedral, volunteers donned hard hats, shovels and brooms to begin removing rubble and try to salvage any artifacts — under the watchful gaze of the saints whose paintings remained intact. Local officials said the icon of the patroness of the city was retrieved from under the rubble.

"The destruction is enormous, half of the cathedral is now roofless," said Archdeacon Andrii Palchuk, as workers brought documents and valuables out of the building, its floor inundated with water used by firefighters to extinguish the blaze.

Palchuk said the damage was caused by a direct hit from a Russian missile that penetrated the building down to the basement. Two people inside were wounded.

"But with God's help, we will restore it," he said, bursting into tears.

A woman who came to help with the cleanup said she loved the cathedral "for its tranquility and grace."

"When you enter this church, you feel like you're beyond the world," said Liudmyla, who gave only her first name. "I have a feeling that God, to protect apartments, took this pain, this explosion upon himself."

Anna Fetchenko, who came to Odesa for a volunteer meeting, also pitched in to clear the debris. "I wanted to go to the seaside, but last night was so frightening that I cried for the first time in 2023," she said.

"This is our Ukrainian heritage, and now it's taken away from us."

Later Sunday, Palchuk urged people to gather in front of the destroyed part of the cathedral for an outdoor service and to pray in front of a sacred icon that "miraculously survived."

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"We will pray that it protects us from the Russians," he said.

The cathedral belongs to the Ukrainian Orthodox Church, which has been accused of links to Russia. The church has insisted that it is loyal to Ukraine, has denounced the Russian invasion from the start and even declared its independence from Moscow.

But Ukrainian security agencies have claimed that some in the Ukrainian church maintain close ties with Moscow. They've raided numerous church holy sites and posted photos of rubles, Russian passports and leaflets with messages from the Moscow patriarch as proof some church officials are loyal to Russia.

UNESCO strongly condemned the attack on the cathedral and other heritage sites and said it will send a mission in coming days to assess damage. Odesa's historic center was declared a UNESCO World Heritage site earlier this year, and the agency said the Russian attacks contradict Moscow's pledge to take precautions to spare World Heritage sites in Ukraine.

"This outrageous destruction marks an escalation of violence against the cultural heritage of Ukraine. I strongly condemn this attack against culture, and I urge the Russian Federation to take meaningful action to comply with its obligations under international law," UNESCO Director-General Audrey Azoulay said in a statement.

Regional Gov. Oleh Kiper said that six residential buildings were destroyed by the strikes.

Some people were trapped in their apartments following the attack, which left rubble strewn in the street and partly blocking the road.

Svitlana Molcharova, 85, was rescued by emergency workers. But after she received first aid, she refused to leave her destroyed apartment. "I will stay here," she said.

"I woke up when the ceiling started to fall on me. I rushed into the corridor," said Ivan Kovalenko, a 19-year-old resident of the building. "That's how I lost my home in Mykolaiv, and here, I lost my rented apartment."

His unit revealed a partially collapsed ceiling and a balcony that came off the side of the building. All the windows were blown out.

Ukraine's air force reported on the Telegram messaging app that Russia had launched 19 missiles in the Odesa region, including five high-precision winged Onyx missiles and four sea-to-shore Kalibr cruise missiles. It said that Ukrainian air defenses shot down nine.

Russia's Defense Ministry said Sunday its forces attacked sites in Odesa "where terrorist acts against the Russian Federation were being prepared."

In a later statement, the ministry denied that its attacks struck the Transfiguration Cathedral, claiming the destruction of the cathedral was likely due to "the fall of a Ukrainian anti-aircraft guided missile."

The attacks come days after President Vladimir Putin pulled Russia out of the Black Sea Grain Initiative, a wartime deal that enabled Ukraine's exports to reach many countries facing the threat of hunger.

Earlier Russian attacks have crippled significant parts of export facilities in Odesa and nearby Chornomorsk, and destroyed 60,000 tons of grain, according to Ukraine's Agriculture Ministry.

Putin vowed to retaliate against Kyiv for an attack Monday on the crucial Kerch Bridge linking Russia with the Crimean Peninsula, which the Kremlin illegally annexed in 2014.

In other developments:

— Putin and Belarusian President Alexander Lukashenko were meeting Sunday in St. Petersburg, two days after Moscow warned Poland that any aggression against its neighbor and ally would be considered an attack on Russia. Putin said talks would also take place Monday, and declared that Kyiv's counteroffensive had failed.

Lukashenko said Wagner troops, who launched joint drills with the Belarusian military on Thursday, almost a month after their short-lived rebellion against Moscow, wanted to go west "on an excursion to Warsaw, to Rzeszow" in Poland, but that Belarus would not allow the mercenary force to relocate.

"I am keeping them in central Belarus, like we agreed. ... We are controlling what is happening" with Wagner, he said.

— Kharkiv regional Gov. Oleh Syniehubov reported Sunday that two people were killed in Russian strikes on the northeastern province Saturday, when Russia attacked populated areas of the Kharkiv, Chuhuiv,

Kupiansk and Iziom districts.

Donetsk regional Gov. Pavlo Kyrylenko said four residents were also killed and 11 wounded in attacks Saturday.

Morton reported from London.

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

Next year's Olympics are pushing Paris to confront crack cocaine use on city streets

By YOUCEF BOUNAB Associated Press

PARIS (AP) — Neighborhoods in northeast Paris have struggled for years with the scourge of crack cocaine and its use in public. The Summer Olympics, kicking off a year from Wednesday, are offering an impetus to tackle the problem.

Yet despite a surge in arrests and new promises of tougher security around the 2024 Paris Games, some residents question whether the newfound focus is just pushing users elsewhere instead of treating medical and mental health problems, a lack of housing and jobs and other deeper ills at the root of the crack crisis.

Residents in the 18th and 19th arrondissements, or districts, of the French capital have long complained about the open-air crack use in their neighborhoods that stands in sharp contrast to the postcard-perfect tourist areas of Paris farther south.

Small groups of people could be seen using illicit drugs on Sunday at the Porte de la Chapelle metro station and a nearby tram stop located across the street from a new multi-purpose arena that is slated to host badminton and rhythmic gymnastics during the 2024 Olympics. Similar scenes play out along local quays and public parks.

Police cleared out a large encampment of drug users last year at Forceval Square, just outside a huge park that hosts the Paris Philharmonic and other cultural spaces. Since then, police have made an all-out effort to prevent more from gathering, deploying up to 600 officers a day in the northeastern part of the city alone.

Paris police chief Laurent Nuñez promised after taking his job in 2022 to eradicate crack from the streets before the Olympics. On Thursday, declared the efforts a success.

Police have arrested 255 people for selling crack cocaine in Paris so far this year, Nuñez said, compared to 285 in all of 2022. Paris Prosecutor Laure Beccuau said an average of two people a day were brought to justice on charges related both to the consumption and selling of crack this year.

While local residents welcome the attention to the problem, some say the number of users hasn't necessarily diminished, but instead been dispersed.

"If the chief of police congratulates himself today, it is because there have been no new camps," said Frédéric Francelle, the spokesperson of Collectif19, an association of 19th-arrondissement residents calling for an end to drug use in the streets. "But there are still places where consumption is done in the open."

Francelle said that while the city's current focus appears to be security, drug users need medical and social help.

"We doubt that they're really trying to treat them by the time the Olympics start," Francelle said. "They'll just pressure them to go somewhere else. They will try to move them to the provinces or the suburbs."

Last month, a treatment center across the street from the new Olympic arena was moved a few blocks away. It is run by two community associations, Gaïa-Paris and Aurore.

Workers at the center say the number of visitors jumped 30% after the Forceval Square site was cleared but has dropped again in recent weeks, to around 150 people per day.

Local authorities have asked the associations to hire more people, open earlier and close later, according to Gaïa-Paris deputy director Victor Deprez.

"The idea is to broaden our capacities," Deprez said. "In a way, their request is that these people are not visible in the streets during the day."

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Efforts also are underway to increase the number of hospital beds for crack users in the Paris region, up from the 39 at five sites currently to 50 by September, said Amélie Verdier, chief of the Paris region state health agency. She could not provide an estimate of the number of crack users in Paris today, though past estimates ran into several thousand.

Police chief Nunez said the law enforcement presence around the new arena and other places in the city will be increased "by five or 10 times" during the Olympics.

The arena is among only a few venues being built from scratch for the Paris Olympics, all in underprivileged, multi-ethnic neighborhoods to give the areas an economic boost. The facilities will also be used at the Paralympics before being handed over to local clubs and schools.

"The Olympics are an opportunity to ask ourselves questions about the people who remain in the street," Jamel Lazic, who oversees drug consumption rooms at Gaia-Paris that are intended to reduce the harm to addicts and prepare them for treatment. "Maybe it will be an opportunity to try to deal with the problem and to open up large-scale facilities that can accommodate these people and have a better strategy. Why not?"

Angela Charlton in Paris contributed.

More AP coverage of the Paris Olympics: <https://apnews.com/hub/2024-paris-olympic-games>

Former Brazilian President Bolsonaro fades from the spotlight

By ELÉONORE HUGHES Associated Press

RIO DE JANEIRO (AP) — Former Brazilian President Jair Bolsonaro is fading from the spotlight, showing the courts' power over the electoral system and the political shortcomings of the increasingly powerless former leader.

Brazil's top electoral court ruled last month that Bolsonaro is ineligible to run for any political office until 2030 for abusing his power and casting unfounded doubts on the country's electronic voting system.

Bolsonaro was once called the "Trump of the Tropics" after emerging as a crusading outsider promising to shake up the system and pursuing an aggressive brand of identity politics including conservative values. Trump, who also cast doubt on the U.S. electoral system and faces legal trouble, remains the front-runner for the Republican Party's nomination.

A clear demonstration of Bolsonaro's waning power was a tax reform vote in Congress' lower house this month.

A proposal supported by President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva's government to overhaul Brazil's notoriously complicated tax system was also backed by lawmakers and the general public. Bolsonaro tried to marshal opposition — his first attempt at doing so — but the reform passed by a greater than 3-to-1 margin. Almost two dozen members of Bolsonaro's party defied his will.

Bolsonaro has "little to no influence as a potential opposition leader," political analyst Leandro Loyola wrote after the vote.

A political cartoon in Brazil this month showed a scientist peering into a microscope at an irate, fist-clenching Bolsonaro.

"Fascinating," the caption read. "He keeps diminishing."

Construction executive Alexandre Cohim donated to Bolsonaro's re-election campaign but said Friday that the court making the former president ineligible was a "blessing."

"It will allow other people from the right who are more capable to emerge," Cohim, 60, said by phone from Salvador.

After he lost the race by the narrowest margin since Brazil's return to democracy over three decades ago, the presumption of many in his party was that Bolsonaro would lead fierce opposition against Lula.

But just before Lula's inauguration on Jan. 1, Bolsonaro decamped to Florida for an extended stay. He returned in March and now he may even lose the monthly salary he receives from his party, reported by

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local media to be around \$8,500. His allies have already called on supporters to help the former president pay his bills, while a newly founded Bolsonaro Store hawks everything from Bolsonaro-themed wall calendars to party decorations.

The threat of jail time also looms amid multiple criminal investigations into the former president's actions, and the question of who might lead a viable challenge to Lula's Workers Party in 2026 is being openly discussed.

"Bolsonaro seems to be on his way toward an inevitable end of his career," political columnist Merval Pereira wrote in newspaper O Globo this month.

Sao Paulo state Gov. Tarcísio de Freitas, Bolsonaro's former infrastructure minister and a close ally who backed his reelection bid, is among the politicians floated as potential standard-bearers for the right.

Some scoff at the conclusion that Bolsonaro has no shot of returning to the nation's highest office less than a year after he received 58 million votes against Lula's 60 million. But Geraldo Tadeu, a political scientist from the State University of Rio de Janeiro, said Bolsonaro's rise to power in 2018 could be mostly explained by a confluence of one-off factors.

Brazil had just suffered its worst recession in almost a century, and the Car Wash corruption probe implicated dozens of politicians, opening space for an outsider. Lula – who had been leading the polls – was ejected from the race by corruption and money-laundering convictions, and imprisoned. His convictions were later annulled.

"The circumstances left a vacuum that Bolsonaro filled," said Tadeu.

Bolsonaro's lack of "leadership and negotiation skills" and inability to maintain political support undermine his odds of a comeback, Tadeu said.

Since returning to Brazil from the U.S., Bolsonaro has been ordered to provide testimony to the Federal Police on several occasions, and criminal convictions could extend the ban on him running for office and subject him to imprisonment. Bolsonaro denies any wrongdoing.

Bolsonaro's lawmaker son Eduardo in February launched an online store selling Bolsonaro merchandise. Boosters can snap up notebooks bearing the president's smiling face, key rings and mugs with his silhouette, or wall calendars marking milestones of his administration. Eduardo Bolsonaro celebrated his own July 10 birthday with a party featuring the store's Bolsonaro-themed decor. Cursive on his cake read: "Our dream remains more alive than ever!"

"The shop is a form of propaganda, a way of maintaining Bolsonaro alive as a symbol," said Caio Marcondes, a political scientist from the University of Sao Paulo. "He's a brand, a product that represents the right in Brazil."

The shop is also a way to raise funds as his legal fees mount. A prosecutor has asked for Bolsonaro's party to be ordered to suspend his salary, and Bolsonaro faced hefty fines for disrespecting COVID-19 rules in Sao Paulo state. The latter prompted allies last month to ask supporters for electronic money transfers directly to Bolsonaro's bank account.

"Enough has been raised to pay current fines," Bolsonaro said in a video broadcast by conservative news channel Jovem Pan at the end of June. The former leader did not disclose how much.

Launching calls for donations is also a way to keep Bolsonaro's base mobilized, Marcondes said.

"The idea is to create opportunities for people to engage so that they feel part of a movement that is not dead," he said.

AP reporter Carla Bridi contributed from Brasilia.

Indian rescuers recover 27 dead but no sign of dozens of missing villagers swamped by a landslide

By ASHOK SHARMA Associated Press

NEW DELHI (AP) — Hundreds of rescuers ended a four-day search for scores of people still missing after heavy monsoon rains triggered a massive landslide in a village in western India, an official said Sunday.

The rescue teams recovered the bodies of 27 people killed in the Wednesday night landslide that hit the Raigadh district village of Irshalwadi, located nearly 80 kilometers (50 miles) from Mumbai, the Maharashtra state capital.

Seventy-eight people were thought to be missing as of Sunday, Deepak Avadh, an official of the National Disaster Response Force, said. The state government and the relief agency later decided to end the search operations, Avadh said, implying there was no hope of finding any survivors.

No more bodies were recovered Sunday, he said.

At least 17 of the 48 houses in the village were fully or partially buried under the debris, officials said. The dead included four children, the Press Trust of India news agency said, adding that 75 people were rescued. Four survivors were hospitalized.

Rescuers mostly used rods and shovels. Heavy equipment like earth movers and excavators could not reach the village, which has no paved roads and massive sludge around it, Avadh said. Sniffer dogs were also deployed in the search for survivors.

From the base of a hill, it took about 90 minutes to reach Irshalwadi village by foot. Rainfall and a threat of more landslides caused the rescue operation to be suspended during the night the landslide occurred, the rescue agency said.

India's weather department placed Maharashtra under alert as the state was lashed by incessant rains the past week. Local train service was disrupted at several places with water flowing inside stations and over tracks, media reported.

Record monsoon rains have killed more than 100 people in northern India over the last three weeks, officials said, as the downpours caused roads to cave in and homes to collapse.

India regularly experiences severe floods during the monsoon season, which runs between June and September and brings most of South Asia's annual rainfall. The rains are crucial for rain-fed crops planted during the season but often cause extensive damage.

Scientists say monsoons are becoming more erratic because of climate change, leading to frequent landslides and flash floods in India's Himalayan north.

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Democrats eye Wisconsin high court's new liberal majority to win abortion and redistricting rulings

By SCOTT BAUER Associated Press

MADISON, Wis. (AP) — Wisconsin's Supreme Court will flip from majority conservative to liberal control in August and Democrats have high hopes the change will lead to the state's abortion ban being overturned and its maps redrawn to weaken GOP control of the Legislature and congressional districts.

Democrats in the perennial battleground state focused on abortion to elect a liberal majority to the court for the first time in 15 years. The Democratic Party spent \$8 million to tilt the court's 4-3 conservative majority by one seat with the election of Janet Protasiewicz, who spoke in favor of abortion rights and against the Republican-drawn map in a campaign. Her April victory broke national spending records for a state Supreme Court race.

Still, there are no guarantees. Republicans were angered when a conservative candidate they backed in 2019 turned out to sometimes side with liberal justices.

While the court is widely expected to weigh in on abortion and redistricting, liberals also are talking about

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bringing new challenges to school choice, voter ID, the 12-year-old law that effectively ended collective bargaining for most public workers and other laws backed by Republicans.

"When you don't know the extent of the battle you may have to fight, it's concerning," said attorney Rick Esenberg, president of the conservative Wisconsin Institute for Law & Liberty. "It's very concerning."

Some issues could take years to reach the court, said liberal attorney Lester Pines, who like Esenberg has argued numerous times before the state Supreme Court. Unlike under the conservative majority, Pines said the new liberal court will be unlikely to rule on cases before lower courts have heard them.

"They're not going to do it," Pines said.

There is already a pending case challenging Wisconsin's pre-Civil War era abortion ban, and a circuit court judge ruled earlier this month that it can proceed, while also calling into question whether the law actually bans abortions.

The case is expected to reach the Supreme Court within months. Protasiewicz all but promised to overturn the ban by repeatedly speaking out for abortion rights, winning support from Planned Parenthood and others.

"When you're a politician and you're perceived by the voters as making a promise, and you don't keep it, they get angry," Esenberg said.

There is no current redistricting lawsuit, but Democrats or their allies are expected to file a new challenge this summer seeking new districts before the 2024 election.

The state Supreme Court upheld Republican-drawn maps in 2022. Those maps, widely regarded as among the most gerrymandered in the country, have helped Republicans increase their hold on the Legislature to near supermajority levels, even as Democrats have won statewide elections, including Tony Evers as governor in 2018 and 2022 and Joe Biden in 2020.

Protasiewicz declared those maps to be "rigged" and said during the campaign they should be given another look. Democrats also hope for new congressional maps improving their chances in the state's two most competitive House districts, held by Republicans.

"What we want to see is maps that are fair and that represent the will of the people and the actual make up of their state," Democratic strategist Melissa Baldauff said.

Four of the past six presidential elections in Wisconsin have been decided by less than a percentage point. The outgoing conservative court came within one vote of overturning Biden's win in 2020. The new court will be in control to hear any challenges leading up to the election and in the months after.

That includes voting rules. Courts have repeatedly upheld Wisconsin's voter ID requirement, in place since 2011, but some Democrats see a chance to challenge it again, particularly over what IDs can legally be shown. There is also a looming fight over the state's top elections administrator.

"It seems to me that the most consequential topics that could come before the new court would have to do with elections," said Alan Ball, a Marquette University Law School history professor who runs a statistical analysis blog of the court and tendencies of justices.

Considering comments Protasiewicz made during the campaign, "it's really hard for me to imagine she would not side with the liberals on those issues," Ball said.

A national Democratic law firm filed a lawsuit on Thursday seeking to undo a Wisconsin Supreme Court ruling last year banning absentee ballot drop boxes. The case could make its way to the state high court before the 2024 presidential election.

Other sticky issues that have garnered bipartisan criticism, including powers of the governor, also could come before the new court.

Evers surprised many with a veto this year putting in place a school spending increase for 400 years. Republicans said a challenge was likely.

In 2021, the court struck down three of Evers' previous partial vetoes but failed to give clear guidance on what is allowed.

A Wisconsin governor's veto power is expansive and used by Republicans and Democrats, but the new court could weigh in on whether it should be scaled back. Esenberg, who brought the previous case chal-

lenging Evers' veto powers, said he expected another legal challenge in light of the 400-year veto.

This story corrects the name in paragraph 6 to Lester Pines.

'Mama bears' may be the 2024 race's soccer moms. But where the GOP seeks votes, some see extremism

By SARA BURNETT Associated Press

In many election cycles, there's a snappy shorthand used to describe the type of voters who may help decide the winner. Think soccer moms or security moms. Even NASCAR dads.

And now, the "mama bears."

These conservative mothers and grandmothers, who in recent years have organized for "parental rights," including banning discussion of gender identity in schools, have been classified as extremists by the Southern Poverty Law Center. They have also been among the most coveted voters so far in the 2024 Republican presidential primary.

Donald Trump praised their work, saying organizations such as Moms for Liberty had taught the liberal left a lesson: "Don't mess with America's moms." Ron DeSantis said "woke" policies had "awakened the most powerful political force in the country: mama bears." His wife, Casey DeSantis, who launched "Mamas for DeSantis" in leadoff-voting Iowa, said moms and grandmas were the "game changer" in DeSantis' blowout win for a second term as Florida governor. She predicted they will be again as he runs for president.

"It's one thing when your policies come after us as mamas," Casey DeSantis said in a talk peppered with stories about raising kids in the governor's mansion. "It's another thing when your policies come after our children, and that's when the claws come out."

These so-called mama bears whom DeSantis and other Republicans are courting are conservative women living across the United States. They are largely white and may belong to official groups such as Moms for Liberty, which says it has 120,000 members nationally, or smaller groups like No Left Turn in Education. Some belong to no group at all.

The groups and their work took off during the COVID-19 pandemic, when they say parents got a closer look at what their children were being exposed to in public schools. They grew in numbers as Democrat Joe Biden defeated Trump in 2020 and were motivated by what they called government overreach and "woke" policies.

Geralyn Jones, 31, of Marion, Iowa, said she was not active in politics until the pandemic, when she grew concerned about mask requirements and online schooling for her son, who was in kindergarten. She started asking questions and did not like the answers she was getting.

Jones pulled her two kids out of public school after the district approved a policy that allows transgender students to use the bathroom or locker room of the gender they identify as, without alerting parents. She now leads the Linn County chapter of Moms for Liberty.

Jones, who voted for Trump in 2016 and 2020, says he and other 2024 candidates have reached out to Moms for Liberty to schedule time to meet with moms.

"I think we are going to be the most sought-out group or sought-out voice in this next election," she said.

Opponents say the warm-fuzzy image of a mama bear is a way to mask a cruel, extreme agenda that hurts children.

"Republicans have decided that this is, I think, their golden ticket for the primaries to rile up their base," said Katie Paris, who runs Red, Wine and Blue, a network of women pushing back on GOP-backed policies such as the anti-LGBTQ and anti-trans efforts of Moms for Liberty.

"The reality about 'parents' rights' is that it's just about the rights of a vocal minority that is trying to carry out an extreme political agenda."

The mama bear movement is "a contemporary iteration of a trend we've seen before," said Linda Beail, a professor at Point Loma Nazarene University and the author of a book about Sarah Palin, the 2008 Republican vice presidential nominee.

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During the suffrage movement, women pushed baby carriages as they marched for the right to vote. For decades, white Southern women held a powerful role in shoring up segregation and white supremacy, doing jobs such as keeping Black people off lists of eligible voters.

Palin was a game changer in many ways, Beail said. In the 2010 midterms, Palin used the phrase "mama grizzlies" to describe the conservative women she said would stop Democrats. It portrayed women as fiercely protective, defending a traditional way of life and motivated by their children.

"It's hard to argue with," Beail said. "It's selflessly protecting your cubs, right?"

In 2024, being a mama bear also may provide a space for conservative women who have not been politically active before or who may have sat out previous elections. If the mama bear narrative is persuasive, Beail said, there are a lot of women who could say, "That's the spot for me."

Women are generally more likely to vote for Democrats than men, but Democratic House candidates held only a 50% to 47% advantage among women in last year's midterms, according to AP VoteCast, a broad survey of the electorate. More men voted for Republicans than Democrats, 54% to 43%.

Last year, conservatives tried to get hundreds of "parents rights" activists elected to school boards, with help from millions in donations from groups such as the 1776 Project PAC. One-third of the roughly 50 candidates backed by the 1776 Project PAC won their races. About half the candidates supported by Moms for Liberty were successful.

The movement was energized after Republican Glenn Youngkin won the 2021 race for Virginia governor, defeating an establishment Democrat who had previously served as governor. He thanked "mama bears" for helping him win.

Red, Wine and Blue is among the groups that have pushed back, using programs such as "Troublemaker Trainings" to educate interested women on how to defeat groups such as Moms for Liberty.

Paris, Red, Wine and Blue, criticized the "parental rights" movement for focusing school district resources on issues such as transgender athletes, which may account for a handful of kids in a state, at the expense of broader issues such as helping millions of kids with reading after pandemic setbacks.

Jones, the Iowa mother, defended the work Moms for Liberty and other groups are doing, saying they're getting backlash for simply trying to protect their children. She says the criticism is evidence of the momentum behind their movement.

"There's a mom in every household for the most part," she said, "so that's a voice that definitely carries a lot of weight."

AP polling director Emily Swanson in Washington contributed to this report.

Today in History: July 23, Amy Winehouse dies at age 27

By The Associated Press undefined

Today in History

Today is Sunday, July 23, the 204th day of 2023. There are 161 days left in the year.

Today's Highlight in History:

On July 23, 1983, an Air Canada Boeing 767 ran out of fuel while flying from Montreal to Edmonton; the pilots were able to glide the jetliner to a safe emergency landing in Gimli, Manitoba. (The near-disaster occurred because the fuel had been erroneously measured in pounds instead of kilograms at a time when Canada was converting to the metric system.)

On this date:

In 1958, Britain's Queen Elizabeth II named the first four women to peerage in the House of Lords.

In 1967, five days of deadly rioting erupted in Detroit as an early morning police raid on an unlicensed bar resulted in a confrontation with local residents, escalating into violence that spread into other parts of the city; 43 people were killed.

In 1982, actor Vic Morrow and two child actors, 7-year-old Myca Dinh Le and 6-year-old Renee Shin-Yi Chen, were killed when a helicopter crashed on top of them during filming of a Vietnam War scene for

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"Twilight Zone: The Movie." (Director John Landis and four associates were later acquitted of manslaughter charges.)

In 1990, President George H.W. Bush announced his choice of Judge David Souter of New Hampshire to succeed the retiring Justice William J. Brennan on the U.S. Supreme Court.

In 1996, at the Atlanta Olympics, Kerri Strug made a heroic final vault despite torn ligaments in her left ankle as the U.S. women gymnasts clinched their first-ever Olympic team gold medal.

In 1997, the search for Andrew Cunanan, the suspected killer of designer Gianni Versace and others, ended as police found his body on a houseboat in Miami Beach, an apparent suicide.

In 1999, the space shuttle Columbia blasted off with the world's most powerful X-ray telescope and Eileen Collins became the first woman to command a U.S. space flight.

In 2003, Massachusetts' attorney general issued a report saying clergy members and others in the Boston Archdiocese had probably sexually abused more than 1,000 people over a period of six decades.

In 2006, Tiger Woods became the first player since Tom Watson in 1982-83 to win consecutive British Open titles.

In 2011, singer Amy Winehouse, 27, was found dead in her London home from accidental alcohol poisoning.

In 2019, Boris Johnson won the contest to lead Britain's governing Conservative Party, putting him in line to become the country's prime minister the following day.

In 2020, the virus-delayed and shortened Major League Baseball season began with the World Series champion Washington Nationals hosting the New York Yankees at an empty Nationals Park; Dr. Anthony Fauci threw out the ceremonial first ball.

Ten years ago: With a high-stakes showdown vote looming in the House, the White House and congressional backers of the National Security Agency's surveillance program warned that ending the massive collection of phone records from millions of Americans would put the nation at risk for another terrorist attack. (The next day, the House narrowly voted against halting the NSA program.) Nine people were killed in Cairo in fighting between opponents and supporters of former Egyptian President Mohammed Morsi.

Five years ago: The White House said President Donald Trump was considering revoking the security clearances of six former top national security officials who had been critical of his administration. The New York Daily News cut half of its newsroom staff, including the paper's editor in chief. The Senate, by a vote of 86-9, confirmed Pentagon official Robert Wilkie to be secretary of Veterans Affairs. The U.S. Anti-Doping Agency suspended swimming star Ryan Lochte (LAHK'-tee) from competition for a year for violating anti-doping rules by getting an intravenous injection of vitamins.

One year ago: The World Health Organization said the expanding monkeypox outbreak in more than 70 countries was an "extraordinary" situation that qualified as a global emergency. Russian missiles hit Ukraine's Black Sea port of Odesa just hours after Moscow and Kyiv signed deals to allow grain exports to resume from there. Ukraine's Foreign Ministry denounced the airstrikes as a "spit in the face" to Turkey and the United Nations, which brokered the agreements.

Today's Birthdays: Retired Supreme Court Justice Anthony M. Kennedy is 87. Actor Ronny Cox is 85. Actor Larry Manetti is 80. Rock singer David Essex is 76. Singer-songwriter-politician John Hall is 75. Actor Belinda Montgomery is 73. Rock musician Blair Thornton (Bachman Turner Overdrive) is 73. Actor-writer Lydia Cornell is 70. Actor Woody Harrelson is 62. Rock musician Martin Gore (Depeche Mode) is 62. Actor Eriq LaSalle is 61. Rock musician Yuval Gabay is 60. Rock musician Slash is 58. Model-actor Stephanie Seymour is 55. Sen. Raphael Warnock, D-Ga., is 54. Actor Charisma Carpenter is 53. R&B singer Sam Watters is 53. Country singer Alison Krauss is 52. R&B singer Dalvin DeGrate is 52. Rock musician Chad Gracey (Live) is 52. Actor-comedian Marlon Wayans is 51. Country singer Shannon Brown is 50. Actor Kathryn Hahn is 50. Retired MLB All-Star Nomar Garciaparra is 50. Former White House intern Monica Lewinsky is 50. Actor Stephanie March is 49. Actor Shane McRae is 46. R&B singer Michelle Williams is 43. Actor Paul Wesley is 41. Actor Krysta Rodriguez is 39. Actor Daniel Radcliffe is 34. Actor Lili Simmons is 30.