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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

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

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



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

Amateur District in Groton

Friday, July 28

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

Olive Grove: BAE Tournament

State Legion Tournament in Redfield

Saturday, July 29

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

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

State Legion Tournament in Redfield

OPEN: Recycling Trailer in Groton

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The Bulletin by Newsweek

JULY 24, 2023

World in Brief

Florida Gov. Ron DeSantis laid off more than a third, or 38, of his presidential campaign staff in a move to “streamline operations and put Ron DeSantis in the strongest position to win this primary,” his campaign manager said.

The Education Department is investigating legacy admissions at Harvard University weeks after the Supreme Court struck down the use of affirmative action in college admissions decisions, according to The Associated Press.

Cambodian leader Hun Sen, who has led the country since 1985, has announced that he will step down as prime minister in three weeks, handing the position to his oldest son, Hun Manet.

Ghana has become the 124th nation to abolish the death penalty following a parliamentary vote, having not executed any prisoners since 1993.

In the ongoing war in Ukraine, Belarusian President Alexander Lukashenko used Vladimir Putin’s fears about the Wagner Group as leverage to call for more defense funding from Moscow during talks between the two this week, the Institute for the Study of War said..

TALKING POINTS

“We’ve changed the game, battling it out day and night to make sure our members won an agreement that pays strong wages, rewards their labor, and doesn’t require a single concession. This contract sets a new standard in the labor movement and raises the bar for all workers,” Teamsters General President Sean M. O’Brien said of the union’s new tentative agreement with UPS.

“Hate never goes away. It just hides. It hides under the rocks. And given a little bit of oxygen by bad people, it comes roaring out again. And it’s up to all of us to deal with that, up to all of us to stop it,” President Joe Biden said at an event establishing the Emmett Till and Mamie Till-Mobley National Monument.

“Our climate is in crisis & workers in every state are dying from the heat. [President Joe Biden] must create a federal heat rule and save lives — because #WorkersCantWait,” Democratic Rep. Greg Casar of Texas tweeted at the start of a thirst strike and vigil prompted in part by Texas’ new water break ban..

WHAT TO WATCH IN THE DAY AHEAD

The Federal Reserve is set to raise interest rates by a quarter-point at the end of its two-day monetary policy meeting even as inflation rates have steadily declined in recent months. Markets will watch for Fed Chair Jerome Powell’s comments at the press conference at 2:30 p.m. ET.

President Joe Biden’s son, Hunter Biden, is expected to formally plead guilty to tax and gun charges during a court hearing in Delaware.

The House Oversight Committee is scheduled to hold a hearing on UFOs at 10 a.m. ET. Three people who reported having multiple encounters with unidentified phenomena are expected to testify.

Jill Biden’s trip to France will continue with a visit to the Brittany American Cemetery, where the first lady will honor the American soldiers who died while fighting in World War II. She will later visit the UNESCO World Heritage Site Mont Saint-Michel.

House Speaker Kevin McCarthy, under pressure from the far-right members of the party, suggested he could launch an impeachment inquiry into President Joe Biden over his family finances.

A federal judge has voided a 2017 court-martial conviction for desertion against Bowe Bergdahl, a U.S. Army sergeant who abandoned his post in 2009 before becoming a prisoner of the Taliban for five years.

Chinese and Russian delegations have arrived in Pyongyang to attend the 70th anniversary of the end of the Korean War—their first visits to North Korea since the country closed its borders during the COVID-19 pandemic.



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



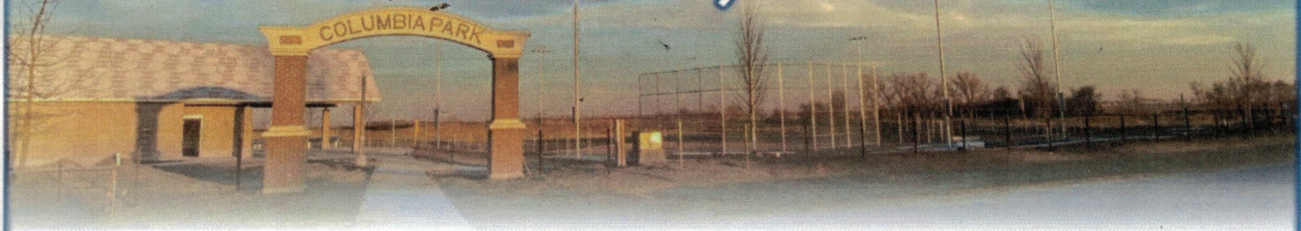
AVANTARA OF GROTON

has the following positions open:

- part-time house-keeping
- cook
- resident concierge

Apply at www.avantaragroton.com.

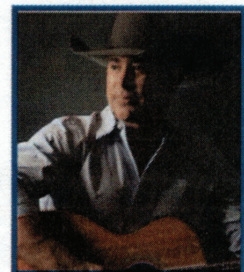
2ND ANNUAL **COLUMBIA FEST** & PARKS DEDICATION “A BLAST FROM THE PAST” **JULY 29, 2023**



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.



SDHSAA signs contract for help finding corporate sponsors

By Dana Hess For the S.D. Newspaper Association

PIERRE — The South Dakota High School Activities Association is going to get some help growing and managing its corporate partnerships. At its meeting Tuesday, the SDHSAA board of directors approved a 10-year contract with Teall Properties Group of North Carolina.

According to SDHSAA Executive Director Dan Swartos, the company specializes in helping high school activities associations attract corporate partners. Swartos has been overseeing corporate partners, but he told the board that he has no marketing experience. "I'm not an expert."

SDHSAA currently takes in \$560,000 from corporate sponsors that include Farmers Union Insurance, U.S. Army National Guard, Billion Auto, Dakotah Bank, Sanford Health, S.D. Public Broadcasting, Fine Designs and Baden. Some offer annual funding while others make their contributions through goods or services.

Swartos said the funding goes toward paying for catastrophic insurance policies for all member schools as well as paying rent and fees for some facilities that are used for state tournaments.

The agreement with Teall guarantees \$560,000 to the association and adds a minimum of \$10,000 a year through the life of the contract. As Teall attracts more corporate sponsors, that money will be split with the association.

Swartos said that the contract is for 10 years because the first years won't be lucrative for Teall. "They're losing money at the beginning of this."

Swartos explained that Teall will hire someone from South Dakota to work in the SDHSAA office. The association will have the final say on the new hire as well as whether sponsorships are accepted. "We don't want this to turn into NASCAR, with advertisements all over the place," Swartos said.

The association is considering renting gymnastics equipment for the state meet rather than having the host school transport its equipment to various sites. Swartos said that \$15,000 cost is an example of something that Teall may find a company to sponsor.

Swartos has talked to his peers who are working with Teall. "They all say, 'It's one of the best things we've ever done.'"

The board unanimously approved the contract.

The board also approved the annual renewal of the Billion Auto corporate sponsorship. Billion supplies four vehicles to the association for use by the executive director and the three assistant executive directors as they travel to activities across the state.

—30—

New rules govern fan ejection, fines for schools

By Dana Hess For the S.D. Newspaper Association

PIERRE — At its meeting Tuesday, the South Dakota High School Activities Association board of directors approved a new rule governing fan ejections and set a \$500 fine for schools that employ coaches who have not taken their required courses.

SDHSAA Executive Director Dan Swartos said member schools have been asking for a fan ejection policy that could serve as a baseline for the actions taken when an adult is ejected from a contest. Swartos said schools are free to set a stricter policy.

The policy approved on Tuesday says once a spectator is ejected from a contest, that fan is banned from the next contest as well. A second ejection results in a mandatory four-contest suspension. A third ejection in a single sports season results in the fan being suspended from the remaining contests in that season.

In order to be able to return to games or activities, the ejected spectator must meet with the local school administration as well as take an online sportsmanship course and show proof of course completion to SDHSAA.

There was some discussion among board members about how to interpret the policy. "We're interpreting this as per sport," Swartos said.

In other words, an ejection from a volleyball game would not preclude a spectator from attending a

basketball game. That spectator would be suspended from the next volleyball game.

The new \$500 fine for schools is a safety measure, according to Swartos, who explained that there have been too many incidents of schools vouching for coaches as having taken the required courses, only to find out later that they didn't complete the training.

"We find that people are lying about that," Swartos said.

Courses that must be completed once include Fundamentals of Coaching and Understanding Copyright. Concussion in Sports and Heat Illness Prevention must be renewed every year after June 1. A First Aid, Health and Safety course and a Collapsed Athlete course must be renewed every two years. A Cheer and Dance course is renewed every four years.

A coach who has not taken the proper course can put the school at risk of a lawsuit if there is an accident or injury on the field.

"You as a school are going to be flapping in the wind," Swartos said.

While the school will be fined for the infraction, there is nothing keeping it from passing that cost along to the coach. "If they want to charge that to their coach, they can charge that to their coach," Swartos said.

—30—

New SDHSAA goals include recruitment of coaches, study of transfer eligibility

By Dana Hess For the S.D. Newspaper Association

PIERRE — The South Dakota High School Activities board of directors has a couple of new goals for the new school year as well as some goals that have been held over from last year.

One new goal is to form a committee to study the eligibility of athletes that transfer from one school to another. SDHSAA Executive Director Dan Swartos said during a board meeting Tuesday there has been a disturbing trend of "super teams" being formed through athlete transfers.

Another committee will be formed, Swartos said, with the goal of looking at ways to recruit more athletic coaches. He said the committee will look at ways to work with South Dakota universities and the state Department of Education. The association will also continue its goal of trying to recruit more officials.

SDHSAA will continue to work on organizing an economic impact study. Swartos said gauging the economic impact of state events could lead to contracts for hotels or meals during state events.

Emphasizing the importance of sportsmanship is another goal held over from last year. The association will continue the effort "to clean up behavior at our events," Swartos said.

Two other holdover goals are the work of a calendar committee which will study when events are held during the school year and a classification committee which will study how decisions are made about placing schools in the right classification to ensure fair and safe competition.

—30—

Madison, Harrisburg principals elected to SDHSAA board

By Dana Hess For the S.D. Newspaper Association

PIERRE — Two high school principals have been elected to serve on the board of directors of the South Dakota High School Activities Association.

In a runoff election to decide who will represent Division III schools, Adam Shaw of Madison defeated Jeff Sheehan of Hamlin on a vote of 80 to 45. Shaw will serve a five-year term.

Ryan Rollinger of Harrisburg won a three-way election to be the board representative from large schools. Rollinger had 77 votes, defeating Rapid City Stevens Assistant Principal Krista Inman with 32 votes and Sioux Falls Jefferson Principal Dan Conrad with 15 votes. Rollinger will serve for two-years, filling out the remaining term of former board member Mike Talley of Rapid City.

All SDHSAA member schools had a vote in choosing the new board members.

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Groton Jr. Legion qualifies for state

In a round-robin style playoffs, the top two teams from the region will advance to the state tournament. Groton's two earlier wins was enough to send the local team to state, despite dropping a 13-3 game Tuesday night to Warner-Ipswich-Northwestern.

Warner-Ipswich-Northwestern Jr Legion got on the board in the bottom of the first inning after Drew Bakeburg singled, Tristan Gosch walked, and Alec Mikkelson walked, each scoring one run.

A walk by Bakeburg extended the Warner-Ipswich-Northwestern Jr Legion lead to 4-1 in the bottom of the second inning.

Warner-Ipswich-Northwestern Jr Legion scored five runs on three hits in the bottom of the third inning. Korbin Kucker induced Mikkelson to hit into a fielder's choice, but one run scored, Logan Fischbach drew a walk, scoring one run, Chase Mansfield was struck by a pitch, driving in a run, and Jarrett Erdmann induced Bakeburg to hit into a fielder's choice, but one run scored.

Bakeburg earned the win for Warner-Ipswich-Northwestern Jr Legion. They gave up four hits and three runs (one earned) over five innings, striking out four and walking one. Kucker took the loss for Groton Post 39 Jr. Legion. The right-handed pitcher went two and one-third innings, giving up nine runs (eight earned) on six hits, striking out three and walking seven.

Brevin Fliehs set the tone at the top of the lineup, leading Groton Post 39 Jr. Legion with two hits in three at bats. Kucker led Groton Post 39 Jr. Legion with one run batted in. The number three hitter went 1-for-2 on the day.

Mikkelson seized on their opportunities, leading Warner-Ipswich-Northwestern Jr Legion with three runs batted in from the number eight spot in the lineup. Xavier Kadlec and Gosch each collected two hits for Warner-Ipswich-Northwestern Jr Legion. Warner-Ipswich-Northwestern Jr Legion had a strong eye at the plate, accumulating 14 walks for the game. Gavin Lane and Mikkelson led the team with three walks each. Kadlec stole two bases.

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Groton Post 39 Jr. Legion **3 - 13** Warner-Ipswich-Northwestern Jr Legion

📍 Away 📅 Tuesday July 25, 2023

	1	2	3	4	5	R	H	E
GRTN	0	1	1	0	1	3	4	2
WRNR	3	1	5	2	2	13	8	1

BATTING

Groton Post 39 Jr.	AB	R	H	RBI	BB	SO
B Flihs (SS, C)	3	1	2	0	0	0
B Imrie (LF, 2B)	3	0	1	0	0	0
K Kucker (P, SS)	2	1	1	1	0	0
T Diegel (CF)	3	0	0	0	0	0
G Englund (1B)	1	1	0	0	0	0
N Morris (C, LF)	2	0	0	0	0	1
C Simon (3B)	0	0	0	0	1	0
C Mcinerney (RF)	1	0	0	0	0	1
J Erdmann (P)	1	0	0	0	0	0
L Krouse (2B, RF)	2	0	0	0	0	2
N Groeblichhoff...	0	0	0	0	0	0
Totals	18	3	4	1	1	4

2B: K Kucker, **TB:** B Flihs 2, B Imrie, K Kucker 2, **SF:** K Kucker, **HBP:** G Englund, C Simon, **SB:** G Englund, C Simon, K Kucker, **LOB:** 4

PITCHING

Groton Post 39 Jr.	IP	H	R	ER	BB	SO	HR
K Kucker	2.1	6	9	8	7	3	0
J Erdmann	2.0	2	4	4	7	2	0
Totals	4.1	8	13	12	14	5	0

L: K Kucker, **P-S:** J Erdmann 64-28, K Kucker 75-30, **HBP:** J Erdmann, K Kucker, **BF:** J Erdmann 15, K Kucker 20

Warner-Ipswich-Northwestern Jr Legion	AB	R	H	RBI	BB	SO
T Gosch (RF)	4	1	2	1	1	2
D Fischbach (SS)	3	1	1	1	0	0
L Fischbach (LF)	2	2	0	0	2	2
M Heinz	1	0	0	0	0	0
X Kadlec (CF)	2	1	2	1	1	0
C Mansfield (C)	1	1	0	1	1	1
D Bakeburg (P)	2	2	1	2	2	0
G Lane (2B)	1	2	1	0	3	0
L Little (1B)	2	1	1	1	1	0
A Mikkelson (3B)	1	2	0	3	3	0
Totals	19	13	8	10	14	5

TB: D Fischbach, X Kadlec 2, G Lane, L Little, T Gosch 2, D Bakeburg, **CS:** X Kadlec, D Bakeburg, **HBP:** C Mansfield, L Little, **SB:** L Fischbach, X Kadlec 2, T Gosch, D Bakeburg, **LOB:** 6

Warner-Ipswich-Northwestern Jr Legion	IP	H	R	ER	BB	SO	HR
D Bakeburg	5.0	4	3	1	1	4	0
Totals	5.0	4	3	1	1	4	0

W: D Bakeburg, **P-S:** D Bakeburg 63-41, **WP:** D Bakeburg, **HBP:** D Bakeburg 2, **BF:** D Bakeburg 22

Gov. Noem's "Freedom Works Here" Surpasses 3,500 Applicants

PIERRE, S.D. – Governor Noem's "Freedom Works Here" national workforce recruitment campaign has surpassed 3,500 applicants. 675 are in the final stages of the process of moving to South Dakota.

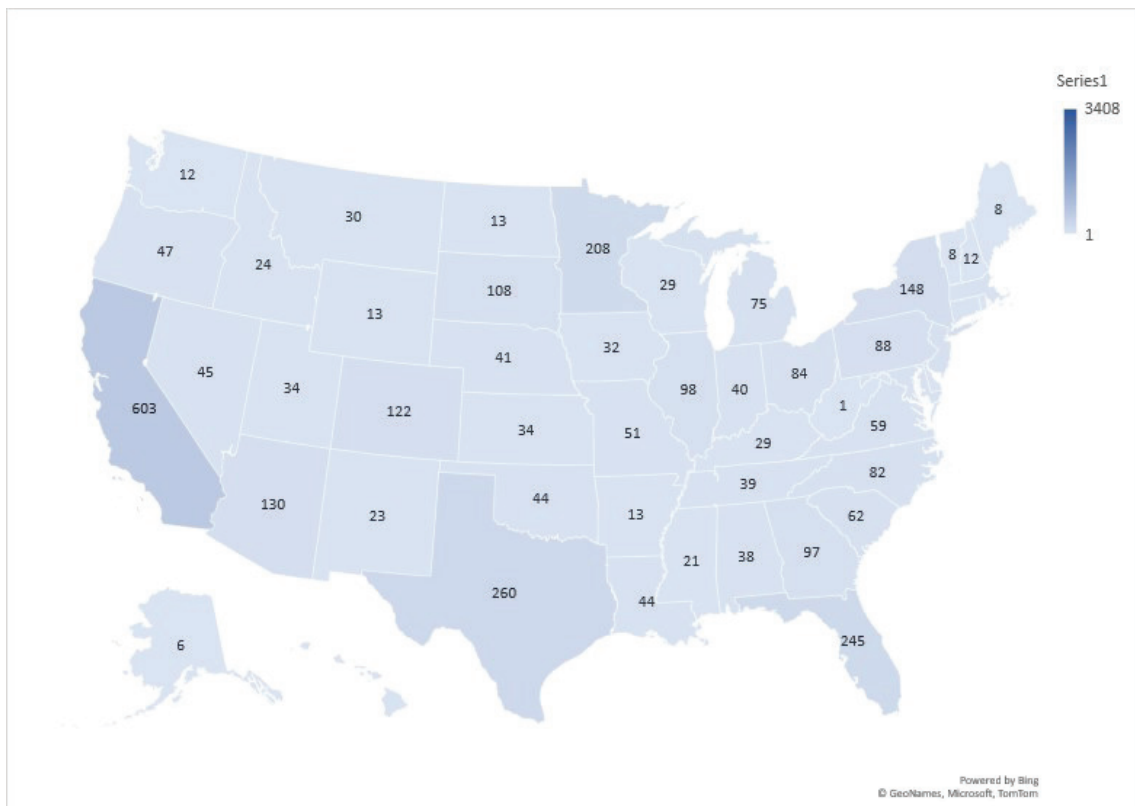
"South Dakota has the lowest unemployment rate in United States history at 1.8%. Even with these record-breaking levels, we have open jobs to spare," said Governor Noem. "The folks applying to move here through 'Freedom Works Here' will be filling these jobs and joining our winning workforce. Our momentum is showing no signs of slowing down!"

"Freedom Works Here" is already the most successful workforce recruitment campaign in South Dakota history:

- Thousands of calls have already been made to these applicants to help them take the first steps towards moving to our great state;
- Applicants who have progressed through the process to move to South Dakota received a "Freedom Works Here" South Dakota license plate;
- Governor Noem also sent personalized emails to applicants that hadn't yet connected with the Department of Labor. This email broke down next steps and provided them with options to begin their move to South Dakota;
- Mailers have been sent to individuals across the country that have been identified as particularly likely to make the move to South Dakota; and
- Digital advertisements are being targeted to that likely population, as well.

"These results are fantastic – and they only represent the folks working directly with us through the 'Freedom Works Here' program," said Governor Noem. "We have even more Freedom-loving Americans finding jobs and moving to South Dakota of their own accord after seeing our ads."

Over 310 million people have seen the "Freedom Works Here" ads. The most applications have come from California (603), Texas, (260), Florida (245), Minnesota (208), and New York (148). 108 South Dakotans have also used the campaign as a tool to get plugged in to career opportunities.





SOUTH DAKOTA SEARCHLIGHT

<https://southdakotasearchlight.com>

Carbon pipeline permit hearing kicks off with clashes on multiple fronts

Heartland Greenway is one of two carbon capture projects seeking state approval

BY: JOSHUA HAIAR - JULY 25, 2023 8:53 PM

FORT PIERRE — A multi-day permit hearing for a proposed carbon capture pipeline got off to a tense start Tuesday at the Casey Tibbs Rodeo Center as participants clashed over the rules of procedure and aspects of the project including land access, county-level regulations, safety and data quality.

Brian Jorde, the attorney for some affected landowners, expressed concerns about the fairness of the proceedings.

"I hate to say it, but it seems like there is a foregone conclusion, at least in certain aspects of argument here," Jorde told South Dakota Searchlight.

He said he was referring to a perceived bias in favor of the project on the part of some Public Utilities Commission staff members. The staff is assisting the three elected commissioners, Kristie Fiegen, Gary Hanson and Chris Nelson, who will ultimately decide whether to grant the permit.

The proposed 1,300-mile Heartland Greenway pipeline, with a projected cost of more than \$3 billion, is proposed by Navigator CO2. The pipeline would link more than 20 ethanol plants and several fertilizer plants across five states. There would be 111.9 miles of pipeline in eastern South Dakota, crossing five counties. The estimated cost of the South Dakota portion of the project is \$142 million.

The pipeline would capture carbon dioxide emitted by the plants and transport it in liquefied form for underground storage in Illinois, and for commercial and industrial uses. The project would be eligible for up to \$1.3 billion in annual federal tax credits, which are intended to help fight climate change by incentivizing the removal of heat-trapping carbon dioxide from the atmosphere.

The Heartland Greenway is one of two proposed pipeline projects that would pass through the state. But unlike the other project proposed by Summit Carbon Solutions, Navigator CO2 has not yet used eminent domain — a court process to gain access to land when an agreement can't be reached with a landowner.

During Tuesday's hearing, Jorde asked a Navigator CO2 executive if the company will use eminent domain.

"We strive to not go down that path," said Jeff Allen, founding member and chief financial officer of the company.

"So, the answer is no?" Jorde replied. Allen did not directly answer.

Navigator has thus far struck access agreements — called "easements" — with about 30% of the owners of land the pipeline would cross. Jorde argued the lack of agreements with 70% of impacted landowners is a reason for regulators to deny a permit.

Jorde asked Elizabeth Burns Thompson, Navigator's vice president of government and public affairs, if any landowners will testify in favor of the project.

"My understanding is no, we don't have a landowner as a witness," Burns Thompson said.

Procedural hiccups

The Public Utilities Commission's attorney tasked with administering the hearing, Adam de Hueck, found himself at the epicenter of confusion and frustrations concerning the ground rules.

Proposed rules included limiting testimony to people that signed up within the allotted window, and barring items such as some testimony from people who are not directly impacted, testimony about a court case in another state, a submitted question asking if state regulators are "familiar with the Fifth Amend-

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ment," and some news articles.

Navigator was in favor of the proposed rules.

"While it's a public proceeding, it's not an open forum," said James Moore, an attorney for the company. "It's a legal matter."

Rather than adopt all of the staff's recommended rules at once, commissioners voted on each rule individually.

At times, de Hueck participated in voting on the rules with the elected commissioners; at other times, only the three commissioners voted. Sometimes they all agreed. Sometimes the vote was split. And on another occasion, the attorney forgot to call for a vote.

"You gotta count votes down here, Mr. de Hueck," Nelson said after the staff presented one rule and de Hueck declared it adopted.

During voting on the adoption of another rule, two commissioners abstained, and de Hueck and Hanson cast opposing votes. Hanson told de Hueck, "My vote overrules yours."

Opponent landowners who are impacted by the project – including Kay Burkhart of Valley Springs – expressed concerns to South Dakota Searchlight about the process. She said regulatory staff appeared to have already decided they are for the project.

"At the beginning, there was an inequality as far as what testimony would be accepted by Navigator versus that of the landowners, and the landowners were being shorted," Burkhart said. She and some other opponent landowners expressed appreciation for the three elected commissioners pushing back on some of the staff's recommendations.

Issues debated

The hearing – which garnered the attendance of only about a dozen members of the public trickling in and out throughout the day – carried on with more debate and testimony after the rules were settled.

One subject that caused heated debate had to do with recently adopted Minnehaha County and Moody County ordinances regulating the distances that pipelines can be from certain buildings and other property.

"Counties don't have authority to do anything," Moore said. The company asked that the commission use its authority to preempt county zoning ordinances.

But the commissioners said it was wrong to make that decision without hearing from Minnehaha County officials, who were unable to attend on Tuesday.

"The burden is on Navigator to prove the statute should be invoked by us," said Commissioner Chris Nelson. The commissioners determined they would postpone consideration of the county issue until Thursday.

William Taylor, representing labor unions that would be contracted to build the pipeline, said that was not appropriate.

"First of all, Minnehaha County has been aware of this proceeding since the proceeding began," Taylor said. "Minnehaha County is crisscrossed by pipelines."

Ryan Cwach, an attorney representing opponents, pushed back.

"Navigator doesn't have a magic wand where it can take away laws cemented in place at the local level," he said.

Testimony also touched on the economics and safety of the project.

Moore argued the pipeline will create more jobs and boost economic prospects for the state's ethanol industry.

"It's important to the business community, it's important to agriculture," he said.

When commissioners asked the company's Chief Financial Officer Jeff Allen if he would feel safe living next to the project, he replied, "I would have no reservations to living near a CO2 pipeline."

Opponents have concerns about carbon dioxide plumes from potential pipeline leaks. In 2020, a leak in a carbon pipeline in Mississippi caused the evacuation of about 200 people and sent 45 to the hospital.

In a debate over data provided to the commission, Burns Thompson said the data is reputable and unbiased.

"I object," Jorde said, pointing out Burns Thompson's investment in the company. "She is not qualified."

de Hueck overruled Jorde's objection, but was soon after stopped by Commissioners Fiegen and Nelson, who agreed with Jorde that some data should not be included in the record.

Tuesday's proceeding was the first of nine days of scheduled testimony and deliberation. Wednesday and Thursday are scheduled to continue with more testimony and cross examination of Navigator's witnesses. Testimony from the opponents is scheduled next week.

The commission vowed to consider all available information and expert opinions before delivering a final decision on the permit.

"This room is like a courtroom, so we want to treat it like a courtroom," Fiegen said.

Hearings for the other pipeline, proposed by Summit Carbon Solutions, are scheduled to begin Sept. 11.

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

Senate approves Rounds amendment to block ag land purchases by adversaries

Measure would prohibit transactions by China, Iran, North Korea, Russia

BY: ASHLEY MURRAY - JULY 25, 2023 6:47 PM

WASHINGTON — U.S. senators approved bipartisan amendments to the annual defense policy bill Tuesday night that would prohibit China, Iran, North Korea and Russia from purchasing U.S. farmland and screen American investment in high-tech ventures on foreign adversary soil.

By a 91-7 vote (including yes votes from both of South Dakota's senators), the lawmakers approved a measure that would require review of — and direct the president to halt or waive — agricultural land transactions by the four nations.

The amendment would empower the Committee on Foreign Investment in the United States to evaluate the land deals. The committee already reviews other inbound investment transactions.

Of the 40 million acres of U.S. forest and farmland owned by foreign investors at the end of 2021, China accounted for 383,935 acres, or less than 1%, according to a U.S. Department of Agriculture report on foreign land holdings.

The 2022 purchase of 300 acres by a Chinese-owned corn processing company near an Air Force base in North Dakota triggered concern among some lawmakers, as did the discovery in February of a Chinese surveillance balloon hovering over Montana, home to many U.S. nuclear missiles.

The amendment was co-sponsored by Republican Sens. Mike Rounds of South Dakota, Steve Daines of Montana, John Kennedy of Louisiana, Joni Ernst of Iowa, Cynthia Lummis of Wyoming, Ted Cruz of Texas, Kevin Cramer and John Hoeven of North Dakota, Katie Britt of Alabama, and Democratic Sens. Jon Tester of Montana and Sherrod Brown of Ohio.

"In recent years, our country has seen firsthand attempts by our near peer competitors to acquire land adjacent to our military bases," Rounds said on the Senate floor Tuesday. "In 2020, a Chinese-led company planned to build a wind energy farm project near Del Rio, Texas, only miles away from Laughlin Air Force base, where U.S. pilots are trained."

State lawmakers blocked the wind farm project in 2021, but recently gave it a green light after a company from Spain backed it instead.

As of 2021, Canadian investors held the largest amount of forest and farmland, followed by the Netherlands, Italy, United Kingdom and Germany, according to the USDA.

Investment abroad

Senators also voted 91-6 on an amendment to screen investment by U.S. companies in China, Iran, North Korea and Russia in high-tech sectors, including artificial intelligence, advanced semiconductors, satellite

communications and quantum computing.

Democratic Sen. Bob Casey of Pennsylvania and GOP Sen. John Cornyn of Texas have been pushing legislation since 2021 that would monitor the offshoring of supply chains in industries and locations with national security implications.

The annual defense bill "tackles the toughest national security issues facing our nation," Casey said on the Senate floor Tuesday. "And the technological competition with the People's Republic of China is certainly at the top of that list."

"Right now we're in competition with a communist government that doesn't play by the rules," he continued in remarks before the vote. "The Chinese government employs economic espionage and it exploits the United States' open research and innovation to build up its own capabilities."

U.S. outbound investment totaled \$6.58 trillion at the end of 2022, according to the U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis.

Most was concentrated in the United Kingdom, the Netherlands, Luxembourg, Ireland and Canada. Just over \$1 trillion landed in Latin America and the Western Hemisphere, while roughly \$951 million went to Asia and the Pacific. The Middle East and Africa were near the bottom of the list with just over \$80 million and \$46 million respectively.

The Casey-Cornyn amendment would require U.S. corporations and other entities to notify the secretary of the Treasury prior to a deal.

Unlike foreign investment that comes into the U.S., no federal mechanism screens the dollars American companies are investing outside the nation.

Defense bill

The National Defense Authorization Act is the annual defense policy bill that continues defense policies, nuclear weapons programs and authorizes defense-related spending.

Lawmakers often use the massive bill as a vehicle for various policy matters because Congress consistently enacts the legislation each year. After the Senate bill is passed, it will go to a conference committee with a House-passed bill that targets abortion access, transgender health and racial equity.

The legislation does not appropriate money for the Department of Defense and other relevant federal agencies. Rather, the bill authorizes how the funds should be spent.

The 2022 NDAA authorized \$768.2 billion.

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

DOC: Abuse allegations by detained children in 2022, 2023 were unfounded

BY: JOHN HULT - JULY 25, 2023 5:31 PM

All 11 cases of alleged juvenile abuse and neglect in Department of Corrections facilities and its out-of-state contracted facilities since last June were unsubstantiated, according to a DOC official.

DOC Youth Services Director Kristi Bunkers walked through the reports with the Legislature's Government Operations and Audit Committee on Tuesday in Pierre. The group's daylong meeting saw committee members scrutinize the performance metrics of the DOC, Department of Human Services, Department of Social Services, Department of Health, and Department of Revenue.

The DOC abuse and neglect reports dealt with allegations of misconduct or unnecessary force against DOC employees or contractors who work with youth committed to state custody. Those placements typically follow severe or repeated criminal behavior.

The number of abuse and neglect allegations are a bright spot for the DOC this year, Bunkers said.

"The reports were trending down from last year in terms of numbers, and in terms of substantiated (claims), so that was certainly good news," Bunkers said.

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South Dakota has one DOC group home for young offenders and a range of options for group care, psychiatric and residential care within the state, but it also sends children to facilities in Florida, Utah, Minnesota, Iowa, Nevada and other states.

In-state allegations of abuse and neglect, Bunkers told the committee, are typically investigated by the state Department of Social Services, which is the licensing agency for juvenile care homes. Complaints from out-of-state are handled by the DOC.

The DOC report to lawmakers on Tuesday only covered allegations involving children in DOC custody, and most of them involved out-of-state placements. No allegations involving children placed by other agencies or placed in a facility by their parents were included.

Abuse/neglect allegation summaries

Here are summaries of the allegations and their outcomes, as reported by the DOC's Kristi Bunkers:

A child in custody at a facility in Arizona alleged that one of the employees who restrained him as he fought with staff had used unnecessary force. The child was seen by a nurse after calming down and was not seriously injured. The DOC found that the staff had acted appropriately.

A child in Utah who'd been acting out and spitting on staff was restrained by multiple staff members as they worked to affix a spit mask over his face. He fell to the ground during the struggle and later said a staff member had leaned on his neck. He was seen twice by medical staff. There was a mark on his neck, but he was not seriously injured. The DOC determined that the injury was related to the struggle, and that staff had not engaged in abuse.

A girl in a Wyoming facility who'd been placed in a standing restraint (which restricts a child's arms) claimed she'd been pushed into a wall. The claim was determined to be unsubstantiated.

A girl who'd been placed in a Nevada facility and was traveling home with a staff member bolted in a Denver airport, got in an elevator and eventually left the airport. She was found and returned to South Dakota. Nevada officials determined that the staff had not acted inappropriately.

A boy housed in a South Dakota facility alleged that he'd had a sexual relationship with two female staffers, and that they'd exchanged nude photographs with him. Law enforcement investigated the claim and determined it to be unfounded.

A boy who'd been housed at a Minnesota facility that's no longer operational said he'd had intercourse with a staff member in 2021 and 2022. He refused to offer a staff member's name and did not offer any additional details during an interview with the Rock County, Minnesota, sheriff. The Minnesota DOC took no action.

A boy housed at a psychiatric facility in Tennessee accused staff members of providing drugs and vape pens to children. Tennessee authorities ruled the allegation unsubstantiated.

A boy at an in-state facility who'd been punching a wall struck and tried to bite and trip the staff members who intervened to put him in a seated hold. He later complained of pain to his wrist, and he had a small red mark on his face. The boy was given ice that night and seen at an urgent care clinic the following day. He was not seriously injured. The staff reported the incident, and the DSS determined it to be unsubstantiated.

A boy in a Florida facility was restrained to stop him from fighting with other residents. He fell to the floor during the altercation. He filed a grievance about undue force. The Hernando County Sheriff's Office investigated, and prosecutors declined to prosecute.

A boy at an Ohio facility alleged sexual abuse by a staff member. Investigators from local police and social services ruled the child's story to be unreliable and ruled the allegations to be unfounded.

The final case, which was filed on July 19, remains under investigation by the South Dakota DSS. A boy accused a staff member of giving nicotine vape pens to residents.

John is the senior reporter for South Dakota Searchlight. He has more than 15 years experience covering criminal justice, the environment and public affairs in South Dakota, including more than a decade at the Sioux falls Argus Leader.

'We should not fear a government shutdown': Far-right U.S. House members slam spending bills

BY: JENNIFER SHUTT - JULY 25, 2023 2:18 PM

WASHINGTON — A handful of ultra-conservative U.S. House Republicans rebuked their leadership on Tuesday over the annual government funding process, but appeared at odds on whether they should force a government shutdown later this year.

Arizona Rep. Andy Biggs at a news conference mostly ruled out a funding lapse, though Virginia Rep. Bob Good left the option on the table, saying the GOP shouldn't fear the impacts on federal operations or the economy.

"I am not worried about a government shutdown at this point," Biggs said. "But that's my own perspective, I know I'm not speaking for everybody else."

Good then said that Speaker Kevin McCarthy, a California Republican, has an "opportunity to be a transformational, historical speaker" if he presses for spending cuts beyond what Republicans have already made in their bills.

"We should not fear a government shutdown; most of what we do up here is bad anyway, most of what we do up here hurts the American people," Good said.

The Republican House, he argued, should force the Democratic Senate and Biden administration to accept its dozen appropriations bills, once they comply with Freedom Caucus ideals.

The Freedom Caucus is a group of especially conservative members of the House Republican Conference that likely numbers somewhere between 30 and 50 lawmakers. The group doesn't publicly release its membership list, but is chaired by Pennsylvania Rep. Scott Perry.

That move to insist on the House version would throw out the conference process where the House and Senate reconcile their differences, an element of so-called "regular order" that Freedom Caucus members have repeatedly called for over the years.

"The House is going to say 'No,' we're going to pass a good Republican bill out of the House and force the Senate and the White House to accept it, or we're not going to move forward," Good said. "What would happen if Republicans for once stared down the Democrats and were the ones who refused to cave?"

Recent shutdowns

Republicans forced a partial government shutdown in 2013 in an attempt to defund the Affordable Care Act, or Obamacare. They didn't succeed.

Former President Donald Trump, backed by many within the GOP, forced a partial government shutdown over getting billions more for border wall construction than he asked for in his budget request. He didn't get the additional funds.

Freedom Caucus members in January pressed McCarthy to put more of their members on the House Appropriations Committee in order to keep an eye on the annual government funding process.

Those members had the opportunity to offer amendments during committee markups. And Freedom Caucus members have had the opportunity to propose amendments for the first two bills heading to the House floor this week, which many of them have done.

But that process hasn't assuaged their concerns with the funding levels or the process.

Montana Rep. Matt Rosendale on Tuesday appeared to back bundling all 12 of the annual bills together in an omnibus, a move that conservatives in both chambers have repeatedly spoken out against. Conservative Republicans, instead, have called on leaders to move the bills individually, which McCarthy is doing.

"We are united in the belief that we have to see what the entire cost is before we can start working on individual pieces of it," Rosendale said.

"The most reasonable and the smartest way to handle it is to look at all 12 bills together, so we can see what the total spending is and make sure we're at that 1.471 (trillion dollars)," he added.

The House Appropriations Committee, which is controlled by Republicans, has posted all dozen of its bills. Spending bills headed for floor debate

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Biggs also indicated he might not be paying especially close attention to his House Republican colleagues' work on the Appropriations Committee.

"We haven't even seen what's in there. I don't believe they're actually even drafted yet," Biggs said after being asked about the two spending bills heading to the House floor this week.

"We need to see what's in there. We need to know what's in there. We need the 72 hours that they promised they'd give us on every bill to be able to read those and digest them before we make a decision on that," Biggs added.

The House Appropriations Committee began releasing its annual bills in May and has since marked up the vast majority of those bills publicly in both subcommittee and full committee. All of the bills as well as summaries and committee reports are posted online and the committee debate has been live-streamed.

The Appropriations Committee released the two spending bills the House will debate this week in mid-May, more than two months ago.

The committee approved the Agriculture and the Military Construction-VA spending bills in mid-June, following committee debate and an amendment process.

The Freedom Caucus members at Tuesday's press conference didn't say how they'd vote on the two bills, though members there did broadly criticize party leaders.

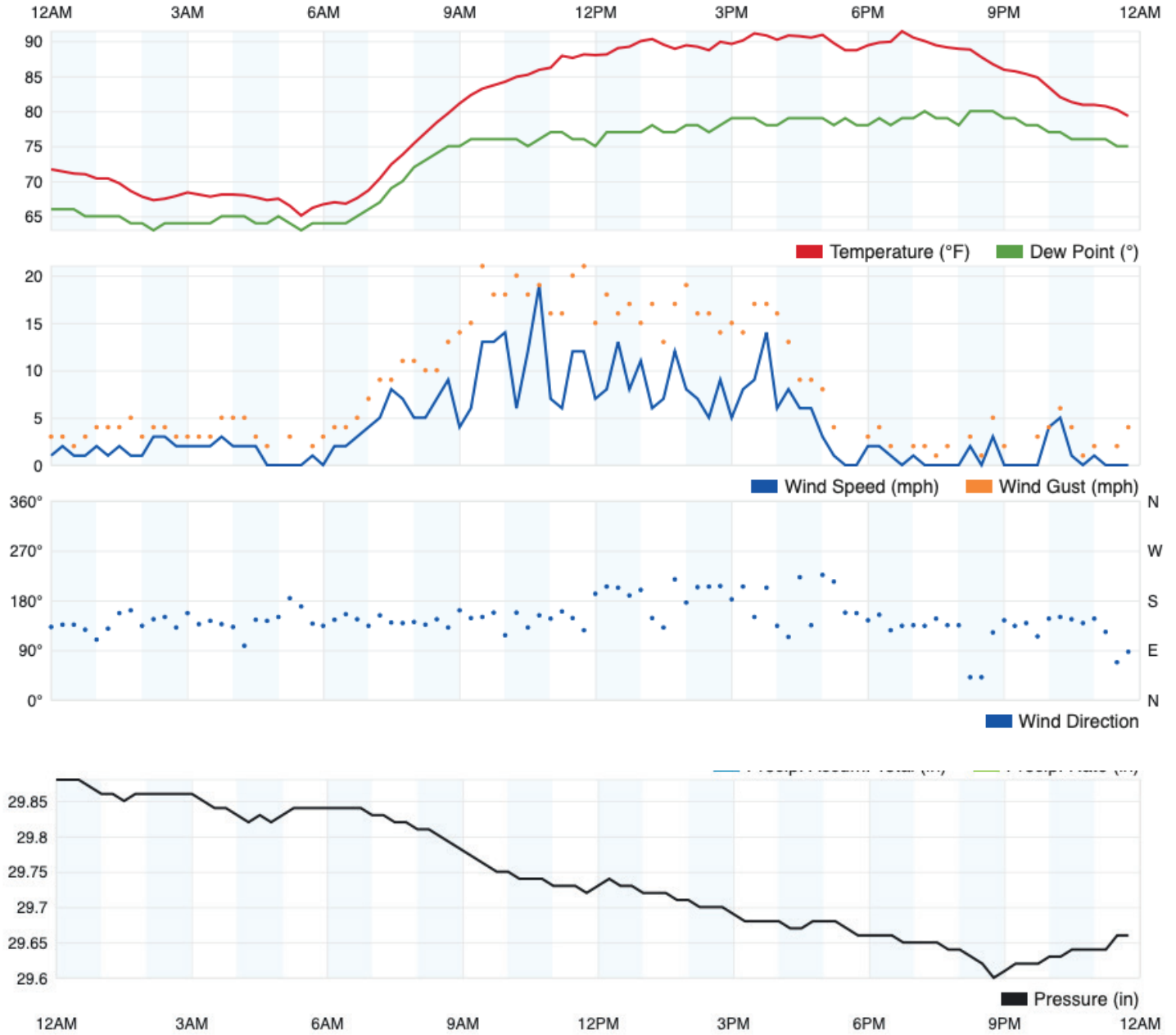
"We're sounding the warning call," Biggs said. "We're reminding our leadership, you need the votes and we're begging our leadership 'listen to us.'"

Jennifer covers the nation's capital as a senior reporter for States Newsroom. Her coverage areas include congressional policy, politics and legal challenges with a focus on health care, unemployment, housing and aid to families.

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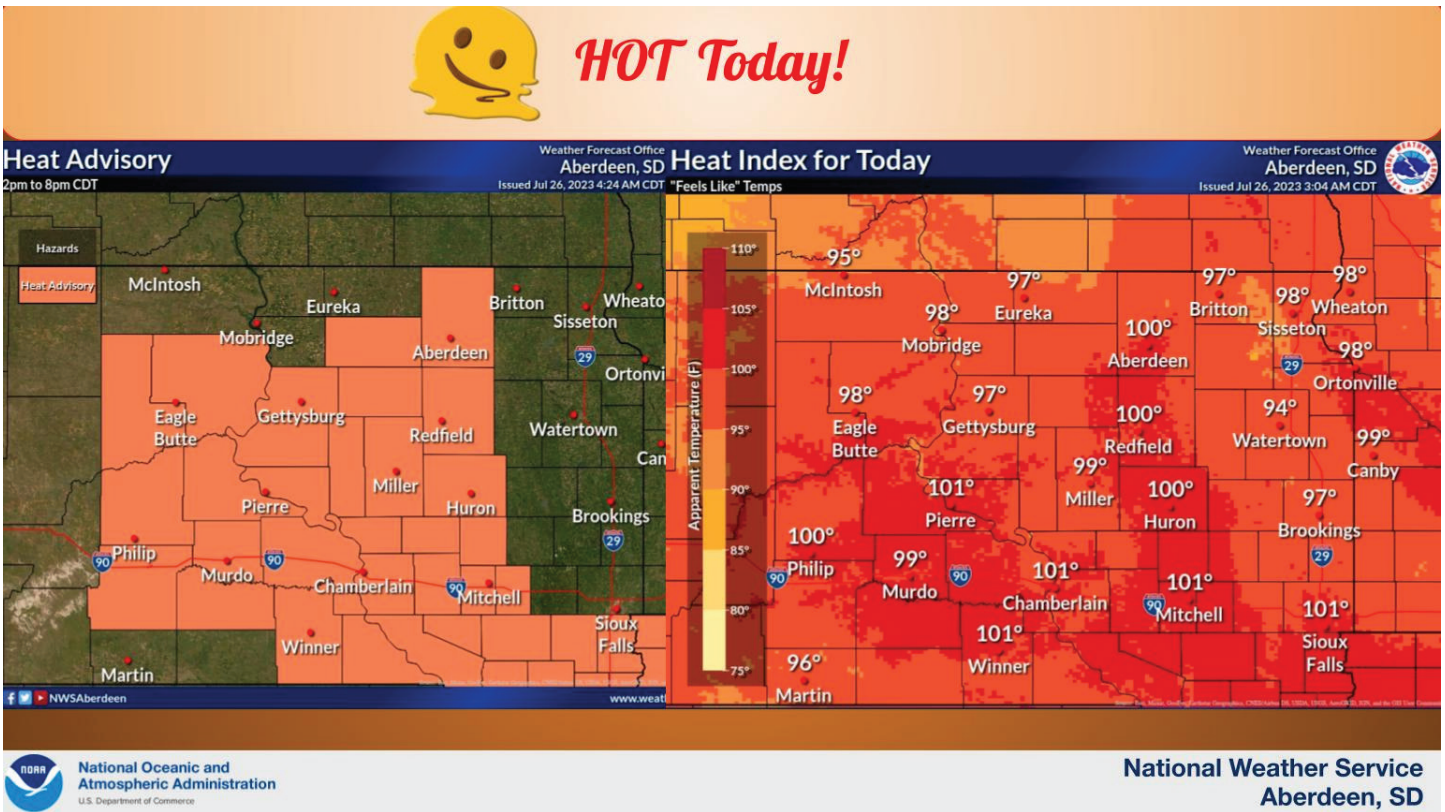
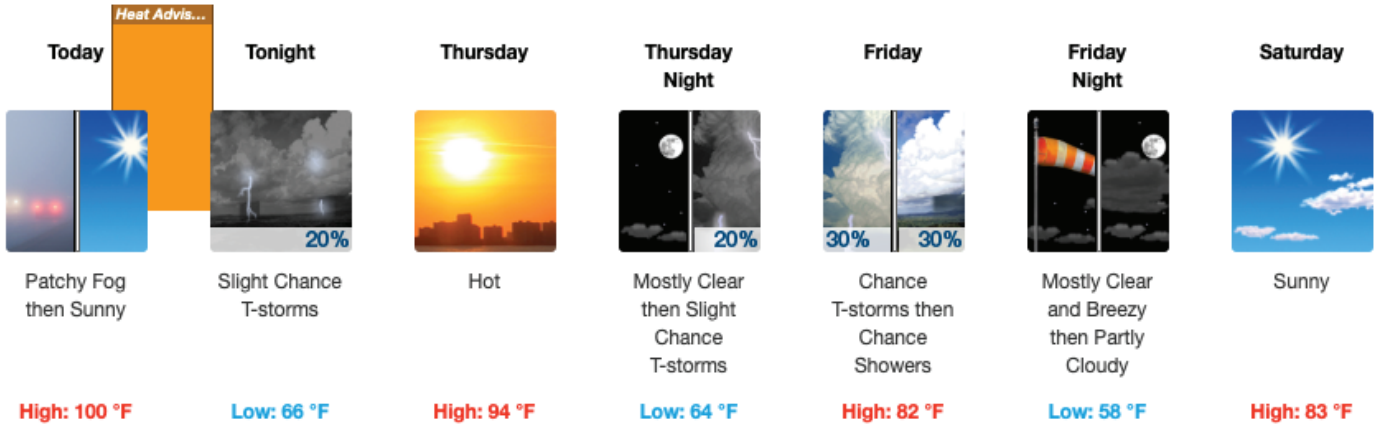
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Yesterday's Groton Weather Graphs



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Heat advisory for parts of the forecast area today that starts at 2pm CDT and continues until 8pm CDT. Heat values will be well into the 90s into the lower 100s this afternoon.

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What to Expect

- Isolated to scattered storms with a marginal risk of becoming strong to severe.

Late this afternoon into the evening

- Hail and strong winds will be the main threat. Frequent lightning and brief heavy downpours are also possible.



HAIL UP TO
Quarter Size



WIND GUSTS
UP TO 60 MPH

What to Do

Stay up on the latest weather updates



KNOW WHERE
YOU WOULD
GO



OUTDOOR PLANS?
STAY WEATHER
AWARE

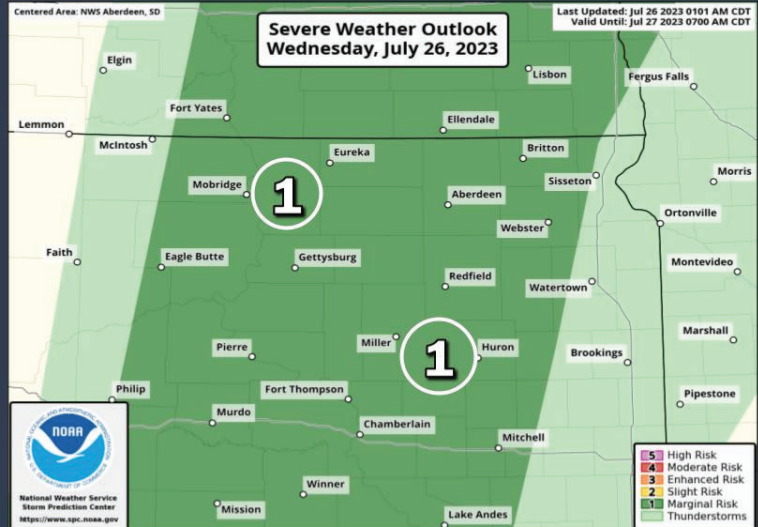


HAVE MULTIPLE
WAYS TO RECEIVE
WARNINGS

weather.gov/aberndeen



STRONG to SEVERE STORMS Possible



SEVERE THUNDERSTORM RISK



There is a marginal risk for some storms to become strong to severe this afternoon/evening timeframe. Main threats include quarter size hail and wind gusts up to 60mph.

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Yesterday's Groton Weather

High Temp: 91 °F at 6:41 PM

Low Temp: 65 °F at 5:30 AM

Wind: 21 mph at 9:23 AM

Precip: : 0.00

Day length: 15 hours, 01 minutes

Today's Info

Record High: 112 in 1931

Record Low: 42 in 1962

Average High: 85

Average Low: 60

Average Precip in July.: 2.68

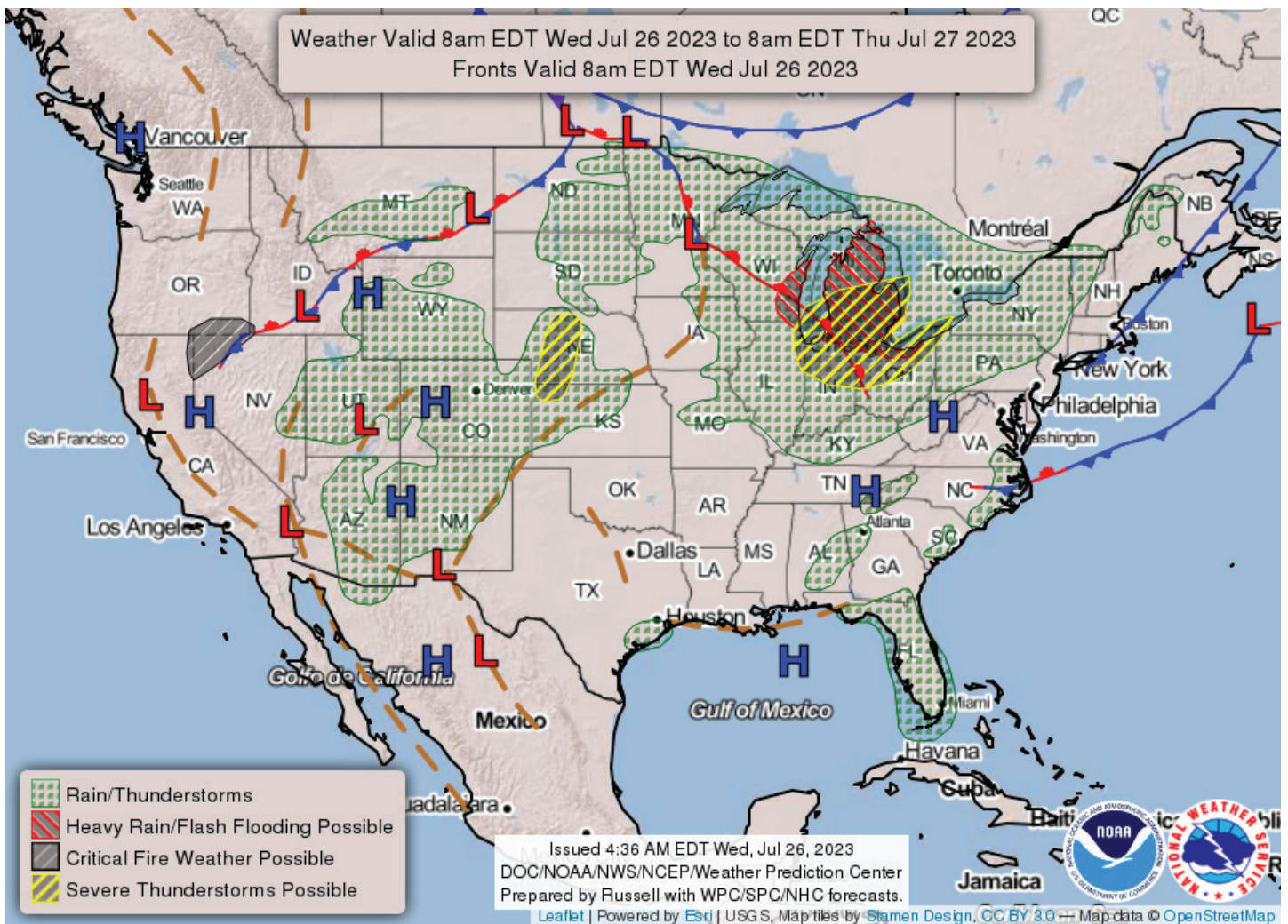
Precip to date in July.: 1.32

Average Precip to date: 13.69

Precip Year to Date: 12.67

Sunset Tonight: 9:09:44 PM

Sunrise Tomorrow: 6:09:17 AM



Today in Weather History

1874: Torrential rainfall brought flash flooding to Pittsburg, Pennsylvania. Click [HERE](#) for more information from the Pittsburg Post-Gazette.

1819 - Twin cloudbursts of fifteen inches struck almost simultaneously at Catskill, NY, and Westfield, MA. Flash flooding resulted in enormous erosion. (David Ludlum)

1890: During the morning hours, an estimated F3 tornado went through the southern part of Lawrence, Massachusetts. The tornado left 500 people homeless as the tornado destroyed 35 homes and damaged 60 others.

1897: Jewel, Maryland received 14.75 inches of rain in a 24 hour period. This record is currently the oldest, state rainfall record in the United States. All other state rainfall records are in the 1900s and 2000s.

1890: During the morning hours, an estimated F3 tornado went through the southern part of Lawrence, Massachusetts. The tornado left 500 people homeless as the tornado destroyed 35 homes and damaged 60 others. Click [HERE](#) for more information from [ForgottenNewEngland.com](#).

1897: Jewel, Maryland received 14.75 inches of rain in a 24 hour period. This record is currently the oldest, state rainfall record in the United States. All other state rainfall records are in the 1900s and 2000s.

1921: On the summit of Mt. Wellenkuppe, in Switzerland, the temperature reached 100 degrees by 10 am. The summit had an elevation of 12,830 feet and was covered in snow.

1931: A swarm of grasshoppers descends on crops throughout the American heartland, devastating millions of acres. Iowa, Nebraska, and South Dakota, already in the midst of a bad drought, suffered tremendously from this disaster. Click [HERE](#) for more information from the History Channel.

1943 - Tishomingo, OK, baked in the heat as the mercury soared to 121 degrees, a state record. (The Weather Channel)

1960 - The temperature at Salt Lake City, UT, hit 107 degrees, an all-time record high for that location. (The Weather Channel)

1979: Tropical Storm Claudette stalled over Alvin, Texas, inundating the town with 45 inches of rain in 42 hours. The total included 43 inches in 24 hours, which is the maximum 24-hour rainfall in American history.

1987 - Thunderstorms developing along a cold front produced hail two inches in diameter in McHenry County, IL, and wind gusts to 70 mph at Auburn, ME. A wind gust of 90 mph was recorded at Blairstown, NJ, before the anemometer broke. The high winds were associated with a small tornado. The record high of 88 degrees at Beckley, WV, was their sixth in a row. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1988 - Thunderstorms produced large hail and damaging winds in the Middle Atlantic Coast Region, and in the south central U.S. Eight cities in the northwestern and north central U.S. reported record high temperatures for the date. Salem, OR, hit 103 degrees. (The National Weather Summary)

1989 - Morning thunderstorms produced heavy rain in southeastern Texas, with more than three inches reported at the Wildlife Refuge in southwestern Chambers County. Evening thunderstorms produced severe weather in Montana, with wind gusts to 62 mph reported at Helena. Eight cities from Maine to Minnesota reported record high temperatures for the date, including Newark, NJ, with a reading of 99 degrees. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

Daily Devotionals

Seeds of Hope

"I KNOW I'M NOT LOST"

While driving through a rural area on dirt roads, a gentleman from the city became confused. He stopped at a farmhouse to ask directions. When the farmer came to the door, he asked, "Can you tell me how to get to Interstate 16?"

Shaking his head from side to side, the farmer replied, "Nope."

"Well, then," continued the lost tourist, "do you know where U.S. 301 is?"

Thinking for a moment, the farmer said, "Don't know that either."

Frustrated and confused, the driver blurted out, "You're stupid. You don't know anything!"

"Well," responded the farmer, "At least I'm not lost."

There are many things we may not know or understand about the Bible, but there is one thing we can know with certainty: whether or not we are lost and separated from God. Jesus said, "I am the way, the truth, and the life." Even though there are many roads that take us to many places, there is only One Way that will lead us to God - Jesus Christ. In Him, we find God's truth and the road to eternal life.

Prayer: Thank You, Father, for providing a simple, certain and sure way that will lead us to eternal life. Thank You for Your salvation and eternal life. In Jesus' Name, Amen.

Scripture For Today: Jesus told him, "I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one can come to the Father except through me." John 14:6



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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WINNING NUMBERS

MEGA MILLIONS

WINNING NUMBERS:
07.25.23

3 5 6 44 61 25

MegaPlier: 4x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:
\$910,000,000

NEXT 2 Days 16 Hrs 27
DRAW: Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

LOTTO AMERICA

WINNING NUMBERS:
07.24.23

6 13 20 29 51 7

All Star Bonus: 2x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:
\$6,360,000

NEXT 15 Hrs 15 Mins 27
DRAW: Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

LUCKY FOR LIFE

WINNING NUMBERS:
07.25.23

2 3 6 7 33 10

TOP PRIZE:
\$7,000/week

NEXT 15 Hrs 30 Mins 27
DRAW: Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

DAKOTA CASH

WINNING NUMBERS:
07.22.23

4 5 12 23 34

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:
\$20,000

NEXT 15 Hrs 30 Mins 27
DRAW: Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

POWERBALL

DOUBLE PLAY

WINNING NUMBERS:
07.24.23

3 6 32 58 68 25

TOP PRIZE:
\$10,000,000

NEXT 15 Hrs 59 Mins 28
DRAW: Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

POWERBALL

WINNING NUMBERS:
07.24.23

3 4 12 28 49 25

Power Play: 2x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:
\$41,000,000

NEXT 15 Hrs 59 Mins 28
DRAW: Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

News from the Associated Press

School on South Dakota reservation that was founded in 1888 renamed in Lakota language

PINE RIDGE RESERVATION, S.D. (AP) — A parochial school on the Pine Ridge Reservation in South Dakota has been around for 135 years and is being renamed in the Lakota language.

Red Cloud Indian School will be renamed Mahpiya Luta — a translation of Chief Red Cloud's name, South Dakota Public Broadcasting reported Tuesday. The school was founded by Jesuits in 1888. It now has about 600 students.

Jennifer Irving, vice president of communications and marketing, said the idea for the name change came from the school's athletes, who wanted the Lakota language name on their team jerseys.

"It inspired the rest of us to catch up with our young leadership here," Irving said. "That's really where that change happened."

Irving said the name change is about more than rebranding and "really about honoring Chief Red Cloud and really committing further to Lakota language revitalization."

The process of changing the name has begun and will continue through the 2023-24 school year.

Man who killed three people in small South Dakota town sentenced to life in prison

SCOTLAND, S.D. (AP) — A South Dakota man who killed three people and wounded two others, including a 5-year-old girl, will spend the rest of his life in prison.

A judge on Monday sentenced 43-year-old Francis Lange to three consecutive terms of life in prison without parole, KELO-TV reported.

In May, Lange pleaded guilty but mentally ill to three counts of murder and two counts of aggravated assault. Lange admitted in court that he went into a home in the small town of Scotland, South Dakota, on Nov. 9, 2021, and shot everyone inside.

Those killed included Lange's former girlfriend, Angela Monclova, along with her father, Librado Monclova, and Diane Akins. The 5-year-old girl and another adult were shot but survived.

South Dakota Attorney General Marty Jackley has said that Lange will receive mental health evaluation and treatment.

Psychiatrist Josette Lindahl testified prior to the guilty plea that she met three times with Lange and diagnosed him with schizoaffective disorder. She added that alcohol and other substances made his symptoms worse.

Cambodia's Hun Sen, Asia's longest serving leader, says he'll step down and his son will take over

By SOPHENG CHEANG and DAVID RISING Associated Press

PHNOM PENH, Cambodia (AP) — Cambodian Prime Minister Hun Sen said Wednesday he will step down in August and hand the position to his oldest son, though Asia's longest-serving leader is expected to continue to wield significant power.

The widely anticipated move comes after the autocratic Hun Sen's Cambodian People's Party secured a landslide victory on Sunday in elections that Western countries and rights organizations criticized as neither free nor fair, partially because the country's main opposition was barred from competing.

The rise to power of Hun Sen's son — 45-year-old Hun Manet, who won his first seat in Parliament just days ago and is chief of the country's army — is part of a larger generational shift: Many younger lawmakers are expected to take up ministerial positions, including Hun Sen's youngest son and others related to

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other older party members.

Many were educated in the West, like Hun Manet, who has a bachelor's degree from the U.S. Military Academy West Point, a master's from New York University and a doctorate from Bristol University in Britain, all in economics.

That could herald a change in tone from Cambodia's leaders, said Ou Virak, president of Phnom Penh's Future Forum think tank, but he does not expect any major policy shifts.

"There will be an obvious change in style of leadership," he said in a telephone interview. "The shift to the younger generation just makes the conversations on policy potentially a little more vibrant."

Still, he said it represented a critical moment. "He won't let go, he can't let go," he said of Hun Sen. "But I think once you go into semi-retirement, there's no turning back."

Hun Sen — who has progressively tightened his grip on power over 38 years in office while also ushering in a free-market economy that has raised the standards of living of many Cambodians — is expected to retain a large amount of control, as his party's president and president of the senate.

He suggested as much himself in his televised address to the nation announcing when he would be stepping down.

"I will still have the ability to serve the interests of the people and help the government oversee the country's security and public order, as well as joining them on guiding the development of the country," he said.

Hun Sen was a middle-ranking commander in the radical communist Khmer Rouge regime, which was blamed for the deaths of an estimated 1.7 million Cambodians from starvation, illness and killing in the 1970s, before defecting to Vietnam.

When Vietnam ousted the Khmer Rouge from power in 1979, Hun Sen quickly became a senior member of the new Cambodian government installed by Hanoi and eventually helped bring an end to three decades of civil war.

Over the decades, Hun Sen has used strongarm tactics to stifle opposition and has also steadily moved Cambodia closer to China. That is unlikely to change radically, Ou Virak said, though the new generation may be "wary of overdependence on China."

Under Hun Sen, Cambodia was elevated from a low-income country to lower middle-income status in 2015, and expects to attain middle-income status by 2030, according to the World Bank.

But at the same time the gap between the rich and poor has greatly widened, deforestation has spread at an alarming rate, and there has been widespread land grabbing by Hun Sen's Cambodian allies and foreign investors.

After a challenge from the opposition Cambodian National Rescue Party in 2013 that the CPP barely overcame at the polls, Hun Sen responded by going after leaders of the opposition, and eventually the country's sympathetic courts dissolved the party.

Ahead of Sunday's election, the unofficial successor to the CNRP, known as the Candlelight Party, was barred on a technicality from running in the election by the National Election Committee.

Following the election, the European Union criticized the vote as having been "conducted in a restricted political and civic space where the opposition, civil society and the media were unable to function effectively without hindrance."

The United States went a step further, saying that it had taken steps to impose visa restrictions "on individuals who undermined democracy and implemented a pause of foreign assistance programs" after determining the elections were "neither free nor fair."

Cambodians in general, however, seem to think Hun Manet is qualified to take over from his father, Ou Virak said.

"The Cambodian people, while some of them might be upset that this is basically a dynastic kind of succession, most have not known any other way," he said.

Rising reported from Bangkok.

Biden's son Hunter heads to a Delaware court where he's expected to plead guilty to tax crimes

By CLAUDIA LAUER, RANDALL CHASE and COLLEEN LONG Associated Press

WILMINGTON, Del. (AP) — President Joe Biden's son Hunter is expected to appear before a federal judge on Wednesday to plead guilty to two tax crimes and admit possessing a gun as a drug user in a deal with the Justice Department that's likely to spare him time behind bars.

U.S. District Court Judge Maryellen Noreika, who was appointed by then-President Donald Trump, will preside over the hearing and must sign off on the deal, in which prosecutors are recommending two years of probation. Hunter Biden is not expected to be sentenced on Wednesday.

The deal, announced last month, comes after a yearslong Justice Department investigation into the taxes and foreign business dealings of the Democratic president's second son, who has acknowledged struggling with addiction following the 2015 death of his brother, Beau Biden.

While legally this will clear the air for Hunter Biden and avert a trial that would have generated weeks or months of distracting headlines, the politics remain as messy as ever, with Republicans insisting he got a sweetheart deal and the Justice Department pressing ahead on investigations into Trump, the GOP's 2024 presidential primary front-runner.

Trump is already facing a state criminal case in New York and a federal indictment in Florida. But last week, a target letter was sent to Trump from special counsel Jack Smith that suggests the former president may soon be indicted on new federal charges, this time involving his struggle to cling to power after his 2020 election loss to Joe Biden.

Republicans claim a double standard, in which the president's son got off easy while the president's rival has been unfairly castigated. Congressional Republicans are pursuing their own investigations into nearly every facet of Hunter Biden's dealings, including foreign payments.

On Tuesday, a dustup arose after Republicans on the House Ways and Means Committee filed court documents urging Noreika to consider testimony from IRS whistleblowers who alleged Justice Department interference in the investigation.

Shortly after their motion was filed, a court clerk received a call requesting that "sensitive grand jury, taxpayer and Social Security information" be kept under seal, according to an oral order from the judge. The clerk said the lawyer gave her name and said she worked with an attorney from the Ways and Means Committee but was in fact a lawyer with the defense team.

Noreika demanded the defense team show why she should not consider sanctioning them for "misrepresentations to the court." Defense attorneys responded that their lawyer had represented herself truthfully from the start and called the matter a misunderstanding.

President Biden, meanwhile, has said very little publicly, except to note, "I'm very proud of my son."

Under the terms announced last month, Hunter Biden will plead guilty to two misdemeanor tax charges of failure to pay more than \$100,000 in taxes from over \$1.5 million in income in both 2017 and 2018. The back taxes have since been paid, according to a person familiar with the investigation who spoke to The Associated Press on the condition of anonymity. The maximum penalty for the charges would be a year in prison.

Hunter Biden also was charged with possession of a firearm by a person who is a known drug user: He had a Colt Cobra .38 Special for 11 days in October 2018. According to the pre-trial agreement, he agreed to enter into a diversion agreement, which means that he won't technically plead guilty to the crime, but if he adheres to the terms of his agreement the case will be wiped from his record. If not, the deal is withdrawn. This type of agreement is an option usually for nonviolent offenders with substance abuse issues. Otherwise, the charge carries a maximum sentence of 10 years in prison.

Christopher Clark, a lawyer for Hunter Biden, said in a statement last month when the deal was announced that it was his understanding that the five-year investigation had now been resolved.

"I know Hunter believes it is important to take responsibility for these mistakes he made during a period of turmoil and addiction in his life," Clark said then. "He looks forward to continuing his recovery and

moving forward.”

___ Long reported from Washington. Associated Press writer Lindsay Whitehurst contributed to this report.

A guide to how Paris will welcome fans and stage 32 sports at the first post-pandemic Olympics

By GRAHAM DUNBAR and JOHN LEICESTER Associated Press

PARIS (AP) — The Olympics is on track to be back in business with millions of visitors coming to Paris for the 2024 Games.

The French capital has the expert experience to stage the event and welcome guests for the first Olympics of the post-pandemic era.

That should be a relief after a chaotic lead-in to the 2016 Rio de Janeiro Olympics and uncertainty from postponing the Tokyo Olympics in 2020 with no guarantee it would eventually happen one year later. It did, but in almost entirely empty venues.

Organizers, athletes and fans preparing for competitions in Paris — and regional French cities like Lille and Marseille, plus the far-away surfing venue of Tahiti in the South Pacific — can be confident the show will go on.

Here's a look at what we can expect from the 2024 Paris Olympics:

WHAT ABOUT TICKETS?

About 10 million tickets were made available for the Paris Olympics with 329 medal events in 32 different sports spread across 18 different days of competition.

Close to 7 million have already been sold with one year to go before the opening ceremony on July 26.

The system for selling tickets has been streamlined through the organizing committee's own online sales point and a new hospitality program run by American company On Location.

Organizers are directly selling about 8 million tickets with the promise that 1 million will be available for all sports priced at 24 euros (\$26), and many more costing 50 euros (\$55) or less.

Would-be buyers had to register for the chance to be allocated tickets in the first two sales phases but the current wave is first-come, first-served for events in cities outside Paris.

That could mean seeing arguably France's two biggest stars: top NBA draft pick Victor Wembanyama in Lille and soccer great Kylian Mbappé in Marseille and Nice.

Lille, about three hours northeast of Paris, will stage all the group games in basketball at its soccer stadium. The cheapest seats at 50 euros (\$55) remain for women's games but expect now to pay 120-200 euros (\$133-\$221) to see a men's game.

Mbappé wants to play for France as one of its three overage players in what is an under-23 tournament for men, and seats for 30 euros (\$33) were available this week for its two scheduled group games in Marseille. The first is on July 24 when Olympic events start two days ahead of the opening ceremony. Expect to pay at least 50 euros (\$55) to see France in Nice on July 27.

Soccer games will also be played in Bordeaux, Lyon, Nantes and Saint-Etienne as well as in Paris, at the Parc des Princes.

Those city authorities have an allocation of tickets among the remaining 2 million of the 10 million that also includes the hospitality program, plus the "Olympic Family" — national sponsors of Paris and global sponsors of the IOC, broadcast rights holders and sports bodies.

Hospitality prices start at 85 euros (\$94) and run to 11,000 euros (\$12,200) for a prime spot by the River Seine to see the athletes sail by in the opening ceremony.

With general tickets to that riverside ceremony already sold out, "the only way to attend these events will be through the official hospitality program," On Location said this week. That's also the case for sailing races in Marseille.

Also sold out are hospitality tickets at iconic venues for judo — staged next to the Eiffel Tower in a temporary venue and featuring one of France's greatest modern athletes, Teddy Riner — and equestrian in the gardens of the Palace of Versailles.

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IS THERE ROOM FOR EVERYONE?

Paris touted its large and diverse accommodation options — everything from campsites along the River Seine to some of the world's most famous luxury hotels — when it was bidding for the Olympics, boasting that it has “more than sufficient accommodation” to host France's first Summer Games in a century and millions of visitors.

The Paris region has France's greatest concentration of hotel accommodation, its 160,000 rooms making up one-quarter of the country's total of 640,000. Nearly 90% of Paris region hotels are classed two stars or above. Adding rented accommodation, campsites and other options, the Paris tourism office says the region has a total of 261,800 rooms for the Olympics, which is considerably more than it had in 2019 before the COVID-19 pandemic.

When the pandemic ebbed, Paris once again became a top tourist destination. Visitor numbers so far this year are now very close to their pre-pandemic levels.

The city's tourism office predicts that up to 15.9 million people could visit the Paris region during the July-September period that includes the Olympics and Paralympic Games.

That would be busier than Paris has been used to since the pandemic but not ridiculously so. The tourism office expects the region will still have rooms available, predicting occupancy rates of between 56% and 76%. That would be either a little bit less or somewhat more than the 61% occupancy at the same period in 2019.

“There is not going to be an accommodation crisis. There shouldn't be people arriving and saying, ‘My God, we can't find a place to stay in Paris,’” said Pierre Rabadan, City Hall's vice mayor for Olympic planning.

Many Parisians leave for summer vacations in July or August and officials expect the same to happen next year, further helping to make space.

Some Parisians are hoping to make a mint by renting out their homes. On Airbnb, many hundreds of dollars per night are being asked for apartments. In the 11th district of Paris, a 1-bedroom apartment with two beds that was asking for 99 euros (\$110) per night for four people this summer from July 26 to Aug. 2 is asking 877 euros (\$972) per night for the same period during the Olympics.

HOW WILL OLYMPIC VISITORS GET AROUND?

The Olympics and Paris' transport network upon which the 2024 Games are relying have an intertwined history dating back over a century. The city's first Metro service, Line 1 from Porte Maillot in the west to Porte de Vincennes in the east, was opened during the 1900 Paris Olympics as part of the World Exhibition that the French capital hosted that year.

Next year, public transport is again expected to play a starring role. Organizers are counting on spectators to rely overwhelmingly on the Paris region's dense network of Metro lines, suburban trains, buses and other transport to help the Olympics reach its target of halving its carbon footprint compared to previous editions.

Some of the transport promises that organizers made have fallen by the wayside.

They shelved a pledge that ticketed spectators would travel on public transport for free to competition sites in Paris and beyond, opting instead to save themselves an estimated 44.7 million euros (\$50 million).

An express train they said would whisk visitors from Paris' main international airport, Charles de Gaulle, to the center of the city in 20 minutes is not now slated to open before 2027.

Another line under construction, Metro 17, that organizers said would transport athletes in 30 minutes from the airport to their accommodation in Paris' northern outskirts also won't be ready, with a first stretch not now scheduled to open before 2026.

But a newly extended Metro service, Line 14, from Paris' second major airport, Orly, to an Olympic hub in the northern outskirts that includes the athletes village, main stadium and an aquatics center remains on schedule to open a month before the Olympics.

Transport operators are gearing up to carry between 600,000 to 800,000 Olympic visitors per day, “it's like being in a permanent rush hour,” said Transport Minister Clement Beaune.

Paris' regional transport operator is promising extra trains as well as shuttle buses where needed, in-

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cluding for people with disabilities, for the 31 competition venues in the French capital and its surrounds.

"It's a major challenge. We've never had an operation like this," Beaune said. "We will be ready."

Paris is also using the Olympics to further its progress as an increasingly bike-friendly city, adding more lanes to its cycle network. City Hall says there will be at least 3,000 more bikes for hire and spaces to park 10,000 bikes close to venues.

WHAT WEATHER TO EXPECT?

World record heat has been a global theme in July 2023 and the European summer does not figure to cool down next year.

Measures to control extreme heat were not much on the minds of Paris officials when bidding for the Olympics in 2017. They are now.

"Obviously since the candidacy, we have worked a lot on these subjects," organizing committee CEO Etienne Thobois said this month, "because we now realize that it's becoming a near certainty that we will have high temperatures in the summer of 2024 in Paris."

Thobois said organizers must be "very, very vigilant" to find a balance between compensating for the heat felt by athletes and workers against the need to control the games' carbon footprint.

Air-conditioning was not planned in the design of the \$1.1 billion athletes village being built in Saint-Denis, though that is not unusual for a city in central or northern Europe.

Paris temperatures have peaked at 34 degrees Celsius (93 degrees Fahrenheit) this July and often rose to 30 degrees C (86 degrees F).

When similar temperatures hit the first week of the Tokyo Olympics two years ago, the actual heat index on the field of play was higher.

On the tennis court in Tokyo, the temperatures felt like 37 degrees C (99 degrees F) and heatstroke forced Paula Badosa to retire from her women's singles quarterfinal match and leave the arena in a wheelchair.

Asked last week about a Parisian heatwave, International Olympic Committee president Thomas Bach noted "we have some very good experience with our heat mitigation measures in Tokyo where we were already facing these problems."

For Tokyo, the IOC pressed World Athletics to move the marathons out of the city and seek cooler early mornings in coastal Sapporo.

The Paris marathons will start and finish in the city and take runners on uphill sections toward historic Versailles.

HISTORIC VENUES

Students of the history of France, Paris and sports itself can feast on the places the Olympics will take them.

While the marathons will head to Versailles, equestrian events will actually be held in the grand grounds of the royal palace where Louis XVI and Marie Antoinette lived and the victors of World War I led by U.S. president Woodrow Wilson gathered in 1919 and redrew many borders on the global map.

Place de la Concorde, where both Louis and Marie Antoinette were beheaded, will stage the Olympic debut of breakdancing, and other urban youth sports skateboarding, BMX freestyle and 3-on-3 basketball.

One hundred years after hosting track and field plus other sports at the 1924 Paris Olympics, Colombes Stadium in the northwest suburbs will this time stage field hockey.

Colombes is one of two 2024 Olympic venues to have staged soccer's biggest game, the men's World Cup final. Its turn was in 1938, while Stade de France saw the host nation triumph in 1998. Stade de France will stage track and field, rugby sevens and the Aug. 11 closing ceremony.

The Eiffel Tower will dominate the opening ceremony on July 26 as thousands of athletes are carried on fleets of boats along the Seine river toward the city's defining landmark.

Dunbar reported from Geneva.

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

Volunteers working to save nearly 100 beached whales in Australia, but more than half have died

PERTH, Australia (AP) — Volunteers worked frantically on a second day Wednesday to save dozens of pilot whales that have stranded themselves on a beach in Western Australia, but more than 50 have already died.

Nearly 100 long-finned pilot whales, stranded themselves Tuesday on the beach by the city of Albany, on the southern tip of Western Australia, south of Perth.

They were first spotted swimming Tuesday morning near Cheynes Beach east of Albany. As the day progressed, the pod began moving closer to the beach, sparking the concern of conservation officers. By 4 p.m., a large stretch of the shoreline was covered in beached whales.

Reece Whitby, Western Australia's environment minister, said it was particularly frustrating because it's not known why the phenomenon occurs.

"What we're seeing is utterly heartbreaking and distressing," he told reporters. "It's just a terrible, terrible tragedy to see these dead pilot whales on the beach."

Fifty-two whales had perished, and volunteers are doing what they can to try and save 45 still alive, he said.

"People are committed to doing what they can to save as many whales as they can," Whitby said.

Western Australia state's Department of Biodiversity, Conservation and Attractions set up an overnight camp to monitor the whales.

Peter Hartley, a manager from the department, told the Australian Broadcasting Corp. that the volunteers were trying to get the living whales back into the water and encourage them to swim away.

"We are optimistic that we will save as many as we can," Hartley said.

The team tasked with helping the whales includes Perth Zoo veterinarians and marine fauna experts. They have been using specialized equipment, including vessels and slings.

Hundreds of volunteers also offered to help — so many that officials said they had enough registered volunteers and urged other members of the public to stay away from the beach.

Drone footage released by the department showed the whales clustering and forming into a heart shape before stranding themselves on the beach.

"This is just an amazing event," Joanne Marsh, the owner the Cheynes Beach Caravan Park told the ABC. "We've never seen anything quite like this."

Wildlife experts said the unusual behavior of the whales could be an indicator of stress or illness within the pod. Pilot whales are highly social animals and often maintain close relationships with their pods throughout their lives.

Macquarie University wildlife scientist Vanessa Pirotta said the drone footage could suggest the whales had become disoriented, although she said the exact reasons for mass strandings remain unclear.

"The fact that they were in one area very huddled, and doing really interesting behaviors, and looking around at times, suggests that something else is going on that we just don't know," she said.

She said she thought it unlikely the whales were trying to avoid a predator.

"They often have a follow-the-leader type mentality, and that can very much be one of the reasons why we see stranding of not just one but many," Pirotta added.

The incident is reminiscent of one in September, in which some 200 pilot whales died after a pod stranded itself on the remote west coast of Tasmania, off Australia's southeastern coast.

The following month, nearly 500 pilot whales died after stranding themselves on two remote beaches in New Zealand.

'Our own front line': Ukrainian surgeons see wave of wounded soldiers since counteroffensive began

By SAMYA KULLAB Associated Press

DNIPRO, Ukraine (AP) — The horrors of war arrive through the night at a hospital in eastern Ukraine, a procession of stretchers bearing limp bodies whisked from the front line.

The soldiers come with bandaged limbs soaked in blood, faces blackened with shrapnel fragments and stunned eyes fixed on the ceiling, frozen in shock. Lately, they've been coming with ever-greater frequency.

"Pain!" shrieks a serviceman with a gaping thigh wound as medical workers move him to a surgical gurney.

Evacuated from trenches in the east, forests in the north and the open fields of the south, wounded soldiers begin showing up at the Mechnikov Hospital in late afternoon, and dozens more in desperate need of surgery are wheeled in before the sun rises the next day.

The surge of wounded soldiers coincides with the major counteroffensive Ukraine launched in June to try to recapture its land, nearly one-fifth of which is now under Russian control. Surgeons at Mechnikov are busier now than perhaps at any other time since Russia began its full-scale invasion 17 months ago, according to doctors at the hospital, who declined to be more specific.

In a war where casualty counts are treated as state secrets, the hospital — one of Ukraine's biggest — serves as a measurement of distant battles. When they intensify, so does the doctors' workload, which these days consists of 50 to 100 surgeries per night.

"Here, we see the worst of the front line," Dr. Serhii Ryzhenko, the hospital's 59-year-old chief doctor, says with a weary smile. "We have 50 operating rooms, and it's not enough."

The Associated Press was given rare access last week to the hospital, a 12-hour visit to witness doctors and nurses care for soldiers rushed from the battlefield to the operating room.

During the day, Mechnikov functions as a normal hospital, treating patients with cancer and other chronic diseases. But every night ushers in the same macabre routine: Wounded soldiers arrive — many unconscious — and surgeons operate. The soldiers are then sent off to recover elsewhere to create space for the next nightly deluge.

"We hold our own front line here, we understand that we must do this, we must hold on," said Dr. Tetyana Teshyna, a soft-spoken anesthesiologist wearing pink scrubs.

"It's very hard," said Teshyna, who remains calm amid the bustle in this clean, orderly hospital. She wants to say more but is summoned by a nurse. Another urgent surgery is about to start.

Ukrainian soldiers are fighting in multiple combat zones along the 1,500-kilometer (932-mile) front line, but the counteroffensive — focused in the Russian-occupied east and south of the country — has been slow going. Small units are being deployed to probe a Russian army that is deeply dug in, and minefields must be cleared before Ukrainian soldiers can attempt to root them out.

Any initial momentum from the opening phase of the counteroffensive has given way to sluggish advances. Territorial gains have been minimal, despite highly publicized Western donations of military hardware that heightened expectations of a quick Ukrainian breakthrough.

For its part, Russia has stepped up operations in the north of Ukraine, near Lyman, in the forests of Kreminna, in a possible attempt to corner Ukrainian troops there.

Ukrainian soldiers fighting along the front say the ferocity of Moscow's artillery barrages has surprised them the most, especially in the southern Zaporizhzhia region, where mine-clearing operations leave them badly exposed to enemy fire.

Oleh Halah, 22, was hit by artillery from a Russian tank near Lyman this month, injuring his stomach and legs. Straining to speak in the hospital's intensive care unit, Halah said his platoon saw the tank coming, but the artillery hit them before they could reach their grenade launcher.

"Twenty-four hours a day, constant shooting, all the time ... if not (Russian) infantry, then artillery," he said. "It doesn't stop."

Other soldiers being cared for by Mechnikov's doctors were injured while clearing mines from Russian trenches. A Belarusian fighting alongside Ukrainian soldiers who uses the call sign "Gold" was injured this

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way. He had been walking slowly with his unit, 5 meters (yards) per minute, when he was ambushed by a Russian soldier hiding behind a dugout.

As evening comes, the pace of activity in the trauma room picks up, with new soldiers arriving nearly every 15 minutes.

Discordant voices of doctors and other hospital staff echo in the halls, describing blood loss and case histories. Diagnoses are called out: shrapnel in the brain, a burned respiratory tract, shrapnel in the legs, a bullet in the arm; and, again, shrapnel in the brain.

Shrapnel accounts for the majority of injuries treated at Mechnikov, doctors said. Bullet wounds, less so. Wounded soldiers are typically cared for in hospitals closer to the front line and then, once stabilized, they are brought to Mechnikov, a journey that can sometimes take half a day.

Dr. Simon Sechen brings in a soldier with a wide gash in his shin. A tourniquet was applied for roughly half a day, he explained, because the soldier was trapped in a faraway trench, and it took hours to evacuate him. Sechen had tried to encourage blood flow, but it may be too late. "We did all we could to fight for his leg," he says.

The soldier is taken to the operating room, where Dr. Yakov Albayuk takes one look and determines that the leg must be amputated to save the soldier's life. "After 12 hours without blood circulation, the limb will die," Albayuk said, explaining that a tourniquet must be taken off after two hours and, if necessary, reapplied. "Because of tiny mistakes we're losing people's limbs."

For Albayuk, every wound inspected on the operating table is a raw and unvarnished account of the brutality of the fight Ukrainian soldiers face in combat: constant bombardment, hidden mines, and cunning snipers.

In this soldier's case, his wounds tell a story of bravery; he was advancing toward fire, not running away.

The amputation takes 20 minutes. Albayuk uses a surgical saw to cut through the bone. A nurse wraps up the severed limb, and it is taken away.

Nearby, a soldier lying on a stretcher in the hallway calls out for his girlfriend, Anna. He has been brought to Mechnikov so that doctors can treat complications from a leg that was amputated a few days ago at a hospital closer to the front line.

Anna rushes to his side and tells him to be strong. When he's gone, she collapses into tears.

Later, a soldier named Maksym, who was injured while fighting in the Donetsk region, awakens in the intensive care unit to the sight of his wife, and then a relieved kiss from her. She traveled with his sister when they learned Maksym had been admitted for surgery.

"I am so happy I got to see them one more time," Maksym said.

Like Ukraine itself, the Mechnikov Hospital — which is more than 200 years old — has been transformed by war over the past decade.

The hospital did not begin treating wounded soldiers until Russia's invasion in 2014, when it was not prepared for the task, said Ryzhenko. Soldiers would be admitted with guts spilling out and massive amounts of blood loss. Back then, Ryzhenko saw cases he had only read about in textbooks. Today, Mechnikov is lauded for its state-of-the-art facilities and expertise — roughly 400 doctors spread across six buildings.

On Dr. Mykyta Lombrozov's operating table is a soldier who sustained a shrapnel injury on the left part of the brain. The 28-year-old neurosurgeon's elegant hands work methodically. Crushed skull pieces are removed, one by one, until he can extract the small metal fragments lodged in the soldier's brain.

It's a complicated surgery that would normally take up to four hours. The war has taught Lombrozov to finish it in 55 minutes. He does it every day, he says, sometimes up to eight times in a single 24-hour shift.

"It is very important to me, that's why I am here. That's why we all work here," Lombrozov said as he looked down at the soldier. "He is our hero."

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

Rival Koreas mark armistice anniversary in two different ways that highlight rising tensions

By KIM TONG-HYUNG Associated Press

SEOUL, South Korea (AP) — The truce that stopped the bloodshed in the Korean War turns 70 years old on Thursday and the two Koreas are marking the anniversary in starkly different ways, underscoring their deepening nuclear tensions.

North Korea has invited delegations from China and Russia as it prepares to stage huge celebrations with thousands of citizens who have rehearsed for months to commemorate the armistice it sees as a victory in the "Grand Fatherland Liberation War." The festivities are likely to be capped by a giant military parade in the capital, Pyongyang, where leader Kim Jong Un could showcase his most powerful, nuclear-capable missiles designed to target neighboring rivals and the U.S. mainland.

The mood is more somber in South Korea, where President Yoon Suk Yeol has invited dozens of foreign war veterans to honor the fallen soldiers of the 1950-53 conflict, which killed and injured millions and set the stage for decades of animosity among the Koreas and the United States.

Yoon, a conservative condemned by Pyongyang as a "traitor," will likely use this week's events to highlight the North's growing threat and double down on his goals of strengthening the South's defense and its alliance with the U.S.

Tensions between the rivals are at their highest point in years, as the pace of North Korean missile tests and U.S.-South Korean joint military exercises has intensified in a tit-for-tat cycle. The dueling military activities have been punctuated by verbal threats, including North Korean talk of preemptive nuclear strikes and U.S. vows to "end" Kim's regime in the event of such an attack.

The frictions provide a renewed reminder that the armistice has left the Korean Peninsula in a technical state of war. Through their 70 years of diplomatic ups and downs, the Koreas have consistently seen each other as existential threats, which is essentially why the armistice was never replaced by a peace treaty as originally intended.

Managing tensions is now more complicated than ever as Kim continues to reject dialogue with the U.S. while aggressively expanding a nuclear arsenal he sees as his strongest guarantee of survival.

Kim is also pushing for deeper cooperation with authoritarian allies China and Russia, which are locked in their own confrontations with Washington over regional influence and the war in Ukraine, as he aims to counter U.S. efforts to tighten trilateral security cooperation with Seoul and Tokyo.

North Korean state media on Wednesday highlighted the arrival of a Russian delegation led by Defense Minister Sergei Shoigu, who was greeted at Pyongyang's airport by senior North Korean officials including Defense Minister Kang Sun Nam. China's ruling Communist Party is also sending a mid-level official, Li Hongzhong, in hopes of further facilitating bilateral exchanges.

For Kim, bringing Shoigu and Li to his balcony at Pyongyang's main square to watch a massive parade featuring goose-stepping soldiers, tanks and missiles would be the biggest accomplishment he could show to his domestic audience for the anniversary, said Park Won Gon, a professor at Seoul's Ewha University.

Kim already displayed his most powerful missiles during a previous parade in February and there might not be meaningful new hardware to show after the North failed in its first attempt to launch a military spy satellite into orbit in May. Economic achievements have been scarce after pandemic-related border closures decimated an economy already crippled by decades of mismanagement and U.S.-led sanctions over Kim's nuclear ambitions.

Park said the invitations of the Chinese and Russian delegations could also reflect Kim's unease about the strengthening security cooperation between the U.S. and South Korea, which have included larger joint military exercises, increased deployments of strategic U.S. military assets and new rounds of nuclear contingency planning meetings.

Thursday's anniversary comes after North Korea conducted three separate rounds of ballistic and cruise missile firings since last week, apparently to protest the U.S. sending major naval assets to the South in a show of force. They include the USS Kentucky, which last week became the first U.S. nuclear-armed

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submarine to dock in South Korea since the 1980s.

"The strengthening of nuclear deterrence strategies between South Korea, the United States and Japan and military moves like the docking of the ballistic-missile submarine (in South Korea) are a huge burden and threat for North Korea," Park said. "Since North Korea has limited ability to deal with these moves on its own, emphasizing cooperation with Moscow and Beijing for a combined response would be important (for Kim)."

Moscow and Beijing have already thwarted U.S.-led efforts since last year to strengthen U.N. Security Council sanctions on Pyongyang over its intensified missile testing activity, underscoring a divide between the council's permanent members deepened over Russia's war on Ukraine.

When asked about the visits, U.S. State Department deputy spokesperson Vedant Patel urged Beijing and Moscow to play a more constructive role in defusing tensions and to bring Pyongyang back to dialogue.

The Korean War was triggered by a North Korean sneak attack on the South. The North was backed by forces from the newly created People's Republic of China, which was aided by the then-Soviet air force. South Korea, the U.S. and troops from various countries under the direction of the United Nations fought to push back the invasion.

For South Koreans, the major outcome of the 1953 armistice was the subsequent signing of the U.S.-South Korea Mutual Defense Treaty, which was mainly aimed at calming South Korean security jitters about the truce and continues to serve as the foundation for the countries' military alliance. Facing growing nuclear threats, Yoon is now seeking stronger U.S. assurances that it would swiftly and decisively use its nuclear weapons to defend the South in the event of a North Korean nuclear attack.

Thousands of people are expected to attend an armistice ceremony Thursday in South Korea's southern port city of Busan, which is the location of a cemetery honoring the U.N. soldiers killed during the war.

While there have been several skirmishes between the Koreans along their border in past years, the armistice has prevented a return to large-scale hostilities. A recent border incident involving an American soldier who bolted into the North through the truce village of Panmunjom — named after a town where the armistice was signed — has highlighted how the agreement could serve as a safety valve when relations are strained.

The U.S.-led U.N. Command, which was created to fight the war and then remained in the South to supervise the armistice's implementation, says it is using the armistice's communications mechanisms to negotiate the release of Pvt. Travis King. It's likely referring to the so-called pink phone, a telephone line between the command and the North Korean People's Army at Panmunjom.

"Despite innumerable provocations, challenges, misunderstandings and even deaths that resulted since the signing of the armistice agreement, it has in general withstood the test of 70 years," Andrew Harrison, a British lieutenant general who is the deputy commander at the U.N. Command, said during a news conference Monday.

Typhoon blows off roofs, floods villages and displaces thousands in northern Philippines

By JIM GOMEZ Associated Press

MANILA, Philippines (AP) — Typhoon Doksuri slammed an island and lashed northern Philippine provinces with ferocious wind and rain Wednesday, displacing nearly 16,000 villagers as it blew tin roofs off rural houses, flooded low-lying villages and knocked out power, officials said.

There were no immediate reports of casualties after the typhoon slammed into Fuga Island off Aparri town in Cagayan province, where 15,843 people were evacuated from high-risk coastal villages. Schools and workplaces were shut down as a precaution as Doksuri approached. Thousands of people in other northern provinces were also displaced by the typhoon, which has a 700-kilometer-wide (435-mile-wide) band of wind and rain.

Doksuri weakened slightly but remained dangerous and lethal with sustained winds of 175 kph (109 mph)

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Vargas is among farmers in Mexico who've been holding on to heirloom strains for generations, against a flood of industrially produced white corn. They're finding a niche but increasing market among consumers seeking organic produce from small-scale growers and chefs worldwide who want to elevate or simply provide an authentic take on tortillas, tostadas and other corn-based pillars of Mexican food.

Corn is the most fundamental ingredient of Mexican cuisine, and it's never far from the national conversation. Amid President Andrés Manuel López Obrador's move to ban the importation of genetically modified corn and his imposition of a 50% tariff on imported white corn, some scientists, chefs and others are advocating for the value of the old varieties in an increasingly drought-stricken world.

Heirloom varieties make up far less than 1% of total domestic corn production in Mexico. But for the first time in years, Vargas and others are hopeful about the crop. Some in the academic and public sectors hope to increase its production.

Vargas' heirloom corn sells for around \$1.17 per kilogram abroad, more than three times the price for his white. If demand keeps growing, he'll plant more. He boasts about his colorful "little corn" that travels the globe.

"People abroad validated us," he said.

In Brooklyn, Mexican chef Zack Wangeman and his wife, Diana, have been running their tortilla shop and restaurant, *Sobre Masa*, since 2021. Their dishes and corn masa, which they sell to other New York restaurants, are made with heirloom Mexican corn from small farms.

Wangeman, 31, believes tortillas made from that corn have gained a foothold because for many they evoke a "country flavor ... that taste of toasted corn" that is uniquely Mexican.

"When you use hybrid corn, genetically modified corn or whatever other option there is, it doesn't give you that nostalgic flavor," said Wangeman, who was born in the southern state of Oaxaca.

He was drawn to the corn by a chef friend who returned from a food fair raving about it. Wangeman got in touch with Tamoia, a company that since 2016 has promoted the heirloom corn grown by about 100 families in central and southern Mexico to foreign markets.

Across Mexico, about 60,000 tons of heirloom corn is produced annually. It's a tiny fraction of the 23 million tons of white corn grown on an industrial scale to meet domestic demand for human consumption and the 16.5 million tons of yellow corn that Mexico imported last year – mostly from the U.S. – for industrial and animal feed use.

It's unclear how much of the heirloom corn goes abroad — Mexico doesn't keep export data for the crop. But Rafael Mier, director of the Mexican Corn Tortilla foundation, said it's clear exports of heirloom corn are growing based on the increasing number of tortillerias and restaurants buying it, especially in the U.S.

In Las Vegas, chef Mariana Alvarado said she began getting native corn through Tamoia and Los Angeles-based Masienda for tortillas, tostadas, tamales and the masa she sells in markets and online about four years ago.

At the time, she said, maybe 20 chefs in the U.S. used native corn — she estimates that's now doubled.

Little by little, Alvarado said, she built a client list of Latinos and fans of Mexican cuisine looking for "organic, clean, healthy food." She doesn't believe this is a passing fad — in fact, she expects the distinction between Mexican food that uses modified corn and more authentic fare made with heirloom strains to grow.

"Smelling them, trying them — they realized that the taste is totally different from the tortillas they were used to here in a supermarket," Alvarado said of U.S. customers.

This year, Alvarado pointed out, a Kansas City, Mo., tortilleria that uses native Mexican corn won the Outstanding Bakery prize at the James Beard awards – the Oscars of the food world.

"We're making noise as tortilla-makers here in the United States, bringing native corn," Alvarado said.

Under a blazing sun and large sombrero, agronomist Gerardo Noriega gave final instructions to a group of technicians and researchers as they sowed hundreds of native corn seeds in a recently plowed field in Apizaco, Tlaxcala. Noriega, of Chapingo Autonomous University, uses the field as a large, open-air labora-

tory to study the benefits of native versus hybrid – crossbred — corn varieties.

Noriega's project is one of several efforts nationwide to promote organic agriculture among small producers. The hope is to get more growers into crops that draw higher prices and help ensure the survival of Mexico's 59 native corn varieties. At least 12 are grown in Tlaxcala, where some 232,000 acres of the 355,000 planted with corn are growing heirloom varieties.

Noriega told the group that by taking up the genetic material – seeds, plants, tissue – naturally selected over centuries in Mexico, "you can start to produce those corn varieties on a massive scale, the yellows, multicolored, reds, blues, pinks and even whites, and we would not need to mess with genetically-modified."

The native varieties have exceptional yield and can stand 50 days of drought, he said: "There isn't a hybrid that can tolerate those conditions."

But most Mexican farmers are accustomed to planting crossbred corn and using fertilizer and other chemicals to improve its yield.

Heirloom corn won't be an easy sell for farmers like Isidro Caporal. He entered the Chapingo University program last year but still has crossbred corn fed with chemical fertilizers planted on most of his 25 acres.

"This corn is way ahead," said the 79-year-old Caporal as he walked down a row of hybrid corn, already 5 feet tall. He said his crop yields more than double that of native varieties and requires less of his time.

He conceded that this year's drought hit his hybrid corn hard. "I know that I won't be able to sell those cobs because they were really small, but it doesn't matter," he said. "I can hold onto them to eat at home."

For others, President López Obrador's argument about potential health risks of genetically modified corn rings true. His move to ban the importation of GMO corn — modified in the lab to resist pests and herbicides — prompted a trade tiff with the United States and Canada.

The World Health Organization has said generally that genetically modified foods "on the international market have passed safety assessments and are not likely to present risks for human health."

But Berenice Pérez, 35, believes the heirloom corn varieties she grows are healthier, as well as tastier. She left Mexico's capital three years ago and moved to rural Las Mesas in Tlaxcala. Her mother had died of cancer, and she sought a healthier lifestyle.

"A lot of people say we're crazy," Pérez said. "We're not going to become millionaires, but I think that wealth isn't so much found in the economic as in nutrition and in what we leave for those who come after us."

Water at tip of Florida hits hot tub level, may have set world record for warmest seawater

By SETH BORENSTEIN AP Science Writer

The water temperature on the tip of Florida hit hot tub levels, exceeding 100 degrees (37.8 degrees Celsius) two days in a row. And meteorologists say that could potentially be the hottest seawater ever measured, although there are some issues with the reading.

Just 26 miles (40 kilometers) away, scientists saw devastating effects from prolonged hot water surrounding Florida — devastating coral bleaching and even some death in what had been one of the Florida Keys' most resilient reefs. Climate change has been setting temperature records across the globe this month.

Weather records for sea water temperature are unofficial, and there are certain conditions in this reading that could disqualify it for a top mark, meteorologists said. But the initial reading on a buoy at Manatee Bay hit 101.1 degrees (38.4 Celsius) Monday evening, according to National Weather Service meteorologist George Rizzuto. On Sunday night the same buoy showed an online reading of 100.2 (37.9 Celsius) degrees.

"It seems plausible," Rizzuto said. "That is a potential record."

While there aren't official water temperature records, a 2020 study listed a 99.7 degree (37.6 Celsius) mark in Kuwait Bay in July 2020 as the world's highest recorded sea surface temperature. Rizzuto said a new record from Florida is plausible because nearby buoys measured in the 98 and 99 (36.7 and 37.2 Celsius) degree range.

"This is a hot tub. I like my hot tub around 100, 101, (37.8, 38.3 Celsius). That's what was recorded

yesterday," said Yale Climate Connections meteorologist Jeff Masters. Hot tub maker Jacuzzi recommends water between 100 and 102 degrees (37.8 and 38.9 Celsius).

"We've never seen a record-breaking event like this before," Masters said.

But he and University of Miami tropical meteorologist Brian McNoldy said while the hot temperatures fit with what's happening around Florida, it may not be accepted as a record because the area is shallow, has sea grasses in it and may be influenced by warm land in the nearby Everglades National Park.

Still, McNoldy said, "it's amazing."

The fact that two 100 degree measurements were taken in consecutive days gives credence to the readings, McNoldy said. Water temperatures have been in the upper 90s in the area for more than two weeks.

There aren't many coral reefs in Manatee Bay, but elsewhere in the Florida Keys, scientists diving at Cheeca Rocks found bleaching and even death in some of the Keys most resilient corals, said Ian Enochs, lead of the coral program at the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration Atlantic Oceanographic and Meteorological Laboratory.

NOAA researcher Andrew Ibarra, who took his kayak to the area because of the hot water, said, "I found that the entire reef was bleached out. Every single coral colony was exhibiting some form of paling, partial bleaching or full out bleaching."

Some coral even had died, he said. This is on top of bleaching seen last week by the University of Miami as NOAA increased the level of alert for coral problems earlier this month.

Until the 1980s coral bleaching was mostly unheard of around the globe yet "now we've reached the point where it's become routine," Enochs said. Bleaching, which doesn't kill coral but weakens it and could lead to death, occurs when water temperatures pass the upper 80s (low 30s Celsius), Enochs said.

"This is more, earlier than we have ever seen," Enochs said. "I'm nervous by how early this is occurring."

This all comes as sea surface temperatures worldwide have broken monthly records for heat in April, May and June, according to NOAA. And temperatures in the North Atlantic are off the charts — as much as 9 to 11 degrees (5 to 6 degrees Celsius) warmer than normal in some spots near Newfoundland, McNoldy said.

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An alliance of Indian opposition parties — called INDIA — joins forces to take on Modi

By SHEIKH SAALIQ Associated Press

NEW DELHI (AP) — India's popular but polarizing prime minister, Narendra Modi, has a fondness for abbreviations that create buzz around his government schemes and dress down his rivals. Last week, Modi's political opponents did exactly that.

They announced a new alliance — called INDIA — to unseat Modi and defeat his ruling party's electoral juggernaut.

The acronym, which stands for Indian National Developmental Inclusive Alliance, comprises India's previously fractured opposition parties that are aiming to keep the Modi government's increasingly powerful sway at bay. At stake, the alliance says, is the future of India's multiparty democracy and secular foundations that critics say have seen assaults from Modi's Hindu nationalist Bhartiya Janata Party.

The opposition alliance is playing on its acronym, saying it will be Modi versus the country in 2024 polls.

Modi will seek reelection to a third consecutive term in a national vote next year at a time when India's global diplomatic reach is rising. However, his rule at home has coincided with a struggling economy, rising

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unemployment, attacks by Hindu nationalists against the country's minorities, particularly Muslims, and a shrinking space for dissent and free media.

The 26-party alliance is likely to attack Modi's BJP on exactly these issues — plus a host of other domestic problems, including a deadly ethnic conflict in the northeastern state of Manipur.

But analysts say its effort to oust Modi will be a Herculean task. He is by far India's most popular leader, and his party directly controls 10 of the 28 states, is in coalition in four other states and has more than 55% of Parliament's lower house seats.

"The opposition must pitch this alliance as an alliance for the ordinary people and not just a front against Modi and his party. They must offer a realistic policy narrative and vision for the country that will resonate with the voters," said political scientist Suhas Palshikar.

The INDIA alliance, led by the Indian National Congress party that once dominated the country's politics, includes powerful regional parties that are direct rivals to each other in some states. The parties are also beset with ideological differences and personality clashes, and seem undecided on whether to cede space to other groups in regions where they hold sway.

What binds them together on a national front are their concerns that Modi's BJP has tightened its grip across India's democratic institutions and the Parliament, where it has passed crucial bills, including on controversial farm laws.

They also complain they have been the targets of raids and investigations by federal agencies controlled by the Modi government. Over a dozen of these instances have led to defections of opposition leaders to the BJP, which is sometimes followed by dropped charges or pressure otherwise being eased. The BJP denies its involvement in the cases.

The Congress party has been particularly hit. Its former president, Rahul Gandhi, who lost the last two elections to Modi, was disqualified in March from Parliament. Gandhi risks losing his eligibility to run in elections for the next eight years if a court doesn't overturn his conviction in a defamation case that critics say is politically motivated.

"The main aim is to stand together to safeguard democracy and the constitution," Mallikarjun Kharge, president of the Congress party, said last week at the end of a two-day conclave of the alliance.

Modi's party has dismissed the alliance as a grouping of "self-serving, corrupt, dynastic parties." On the same day the INDIA grouping was announced, BJP held a convention of its own National Democratic Alliance, along with 37 other parties. Two of the NDA's leading allies are breakaway factions from regional parties that are with the INDIA alliance.

"Modi's party is known to not share power. That it has shown a more conciliatory side toward allies ahead of elections means it's worried and would like the support of as many allies as possible," said Gilles Verniers, a senior fellow at the New Delhi-based Centre for Policy Research think tank. "But it won't be an alliance of equals. Modi's party will still campaign using Modi as a brand. He alone will be on the posters."

During his nine years in power, Modi has consolidated his party's reach in north and central India. His party has, however, faced tough challenges in state polls, particularly in the south, where regional parties hold influence.

In recent polls, Congress toppled local BJP governments in state elections in southern Karnataka and northern Himachal Pradesh, denting the ruling party's image of invincibility. Gandhi's 136-day march on foot across the length of the country also appears to have shot India's grand old party back into political prominence.

The election battle is between "Narendra Modi and INDIA, his ideology and INDIA. India always wins all fights," Gandhi said July 18 at the opposition gathering.

Verniers said the alliance's name rattled Modi's party, "but the opposition parties will have to set aside their differences and make some compromises."

"They have to decide how they will take on the BJP electorally. Their best bet is to file one candidate against the BJP across most of the parliamentary seats in India," he said.

India has a history of coalition governments, and opposition parties successfully banded together to

defeat then-Prime Minister Indira Gandhi in 1977 elections held after she imposed emergency rule in 1975. However, past efforts by the opposition to unite against the Modi government have failed because of infighting among the parties and ideological differences.

Recent moves by oppositions elsewhere in the world haven't been as successful as INDIA hopes to be. Fragmented oppositions in Turkey and Hungary also failed to oust their populist leaders.

But India has Westminster-style parliamentary system, and a large opposition bloc has a significant chance to emerge victorious by winning more seats, even if its vote share is less than that of the ruling party. In 2019 general elections, Modi's BJP-led alliance only won 37% of the votes cast, but was still rewarded with over 303 of 543 seats.

Palshikar, the political scientist, said if the opposition alliance was to succeed it must transform the movement of unity into a "political force that can offer an alternative to the voters."

"Mere critique of Modi won't work," he said.

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House Speaker Kevin McCarthy floats an impeachment inquiry into President Joe Biden

By LISA MASCARO AP Congressional Correspondent

WASHINGTON (AP) — House Speaker Kevin McCarthy says Republican lawmakers may consider an impeachment inquiry of President Joe Biden over unproven claims of financial misconduct, responding to enormous GOP pressure to demonstrate support for Donald Trump ahead of the 2024 presidential election.

In remarks Tuesday at the Capitol, McCarthy said the questions House Republicans are raising about the Biden family finances need to be investigated. So far, he acknowledged, the House's probes have not proven any wrongdoing, but an impeachment inquiry "allows Congress to get the information to be able to know the truth."

An impeachment inquiry by the House would be a first step toward bringing articles of impeachment. Such a probe could be as lengthy or swift as the House determines, potentially stretching into campaign season.

"We will follow this to the end," he said, first floating the idea late Monday on Fox News.

It's the strongest comment yet from McCarthy on a potential Biden impeachment after the Republican leader sidelined earlier efforts by House conservatives to launch such an inquiry.

With a slim majority in the House, McCarthy faces demands from Trump allies to elevate their priorities. Trump himself questioned at a Fox News town hall last week why Biden has not yet been impeached.

McCarthy has not yet endorsed Trump, who is the GOP's early frontrunner for president, or any other Republican candidates. He denied a report that he is considering House votes to expunge Trump's two impeachments as another way of showing support.

McCarthy on Tuesday gave no timeline for launching an impeachment inquiry into Biden and said he hadn't spoken to Trump about it. He declined to say if he would be making a presidential endorsement.

Asked if he felt pressure from Trump, he scoffed, "Do I look like I'm under pressure?"

White House spokesman Ian Sams said the House GOP's "eagerness to go after POTUS regardless of the truth is seemingly bottomless," using shorthand for the President of the United States.

"Instead of focusing on the real issues Americans want us to address like continuing to lower inflation or create jobs, this is what the House GOP wants to prioritize," Sams said on Twitter.

Republicans in Congress have ramped up investigations of Biden and his son Hunter Biden. House Republicans are digging into the family finances, particularly payments the younger Biden received from Burisma, a Ukrainian energy company that became tangled in the first impeachment of Trump.

Hunter Biden has since reached an agreement with prosecutors to plead guilty to misdemeanor charges of having failed to pay income taxes for several years. He is set to appear in court this week in that case.

But Republicans continue to pursue a largely debunked theory stemming from the first Trump impeach-

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and gusts of up to 240 kph (149 mph). It was blowing over the coastal waters of the Babuyan Islands in Luzon Strait off Aparri town Wednesday morning, forecasters said.

"Our northern coastal towns are being battered," Cagayan Gov. Manuel Mamba told The Associated Press by telephone. "I'm receiving reports of tin roofs being blown away and flooding that could not drain out probably because of tidal surges coming in from the sea."

A damage assessment would be done after the typhoon passes, but Mamba said he feared there could be extensive damage to Cagayan valley's corn and rice farms, which have already been battered by a monthslong dry spell before Doksuri hit. At least four entire towns lost power due to the onslaught and six bridges were impassable due to flooding, Cagayan officials said in an initial damage report.

"Violent, life-threatening conditions are expected to continue" on Wednesday over northwestern Cagayan and the outlying Babuyan Islands as well as the northern mountainous regions of Apayao and Ilocos Norte provinces, according to an advisory from the country's weather bureau.

Coast guard personnel used rubber boats and ropes to evacuate villagers, who were trapped by brownish, waist-level floodwaters in their houses in a village in Bacarra town in Ilocos Norte, said the coast guard.

More than 3,700 inter-island ferry passengers and cargo truck drivers, along with nearly 100 passenger and cargo vessels and motor bancas, were stranded in several ports where a no-sail order was imposed, the Philippine coast guard said.

Disaster-response officials said they were verifying reports of a woman drowning in a swollen creek amid heavy rains Monday in Cardona town southeast of Manila as the typhoon approached from the Pacific.

The typhoon has been enhancing seasonal monsoon rains in central and northern provinces, including in the densely populated capital region of metropolitan Manila. It was forecast to move away from the northern Philippines on Thursday and barrel northwestward to graze past Taiwan's southwestern coast before hitting southeastern China later this week.

Although it is not poised for a direct hit, Doksuri's outer bands brought heavy rain and strong winds to Taiwan's eastern coast Wednesday. Trains were canceled between Kaohsiung and Taitung cities in the south, while ferries to outlying islands have also been put on pause.

Taiwan's Central Weather Bureau reported gusts up to 198 kph (123 mph).

Meanwhile, Taiwan has continued to hold its annual Han Kuang military exercises. The military carried out its first-ever drill at the civilian Taoyuan International Airport on Wednesday morning, according to local media. The drill stopped air traffic for an hour while the military simulated stopping an invasion targeted at the airport.

AP reporter Huizhong Wu contributed from Taipei, Taiwan.

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Heirloom corn in a rainbow of colors makes a comeback in Mexico, where white corn has long been king

By FABIOLA SÁNCHEZ Associated Press

IXTENCO, Mexico (AP) — On the slopes of the Malinche volcano, Juan Vargas starts the dawn routine he's had since childhood, carefully checking stalks of colorful native corn. For years, Vargas worried that these heirloom varieties — running from deep red to pale pink, from golden yellow to dark blue — passed down from his parents and grandparents would disappear. White corn long ago came to dominate the market and became the foundation of Mexicans' diet.

But now, the heirloom corn Vargas grows is in vogue. It accounts for 20 of the 50 acres on his farm in Ixtenco, in the central state of Tlaxcala. Vargas, 53, remembers just one acre reserved for it 2010, when demand was virtually zero and prices low. Fueled largely by foreign demand, the corn in its rainbow of colors has become more profitable for him than the white variety.

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ment about Burisma, with newer information. An unnamed confidential FBI informant claimed that Burisma company officials in 2015 and 2016 sought to pay the Bidens \$5 million each in return for their help ousting a Ukrainian prosecutor who was purportedly investigating the company.

The Justice Department launched a review of the informant's claims in 2020 under Trump's Attorney General William Barr. The probe was closed eight months later with insufficient evidence of wrongdoing.

Still, last week, Sen. Chuck Grassley, R-Iowa, released the FBI's so-called FD-1023 form — with unverified claims from the informant — providing a full, public look at the allegations.

Grassley is working with House Oversight Chairman James Comer, R-Ky., who had subpoenaed the FBI for the document.

Democrats on the Oversight panel countered Monday with a four-page memo rebutting the allegations. They point to other documents, including from Lev Parnas, a former associate of Trump attorney Rudy Giuliani who claimed to have first-hand knowledge of some of the conversations and disputed the allegations. Parnas said one of the Burisma officials told him the claims are not true.

The Democrats also note that it wasn't just Biden who wanted Ukrainian prosecutor Viktor Shokin ousted, but other Western allies were also raising concerns that Shokin was failing to investigate corruption in Ukraine.

Biden has repeatedly said he never speaks to his son about his overseas business dealings.

White House Press Secretary Karine Jean-Pierre declined Tuesday to entertain questions about potential impeachment proceedings, reflecting the administration's thinking that it is a political diversion that doesn't have support of the public or even the entirety of McCarthy's GOP majority.

McCarthy's brief comments late Monday on Fox appeared intentional rather than simple banter with the show's host, Sean Hannity. He said that Biden's actions are "rising to the level of impeachment inquiry."

The speaker's appearance came as Trump was meeting at his Bedminster, N.J., club with Ohioans including Rep. Jim Jordan, the Republican chairman of the Judiciary Committee, who would presumably lead an impeachment inquiry. A spokesman for Jordan said the visit was about unrelated Ohio matters.

McCarthy said Tuesday that the committees will continue their investigations. The Oversight Committee is expected to hold a closed-door interview Monday with Devon Archer, a former business partner of Hunter Biden, who was convicted of securities fraud in a separate case.

Republicans have complained about the administration's slow response to some committee queries. McCarthy said that if the administration "denies us the ability to get the information we're asking for, that would rise to an impeachment inquiry."

Jaime Harrison, chairman of the Democratic National Committee, said Tuesday in a statement that McCarthy "has made sure the House majority is little more than an arm" of Trump's 2024 campaign.

"It's clear that Donald Trump is the real Speaker of the House," Harrison said. "This is another political stunt intended to help Trump."

A Biden impeachment may divide the ranks of McCarthy's House GOP majority, as moderate Republicans span the effort. Senate Republicans also appeared wary of the idea.

"I'll say what I've said before, and that is I think the best way to change the presidency is win the election. And that means looking forward, not backward," said South Dakota Sen. John Thune, the No. 2 Senate Republican.

But Trump backer Rep. Marjorie Taylor Greene, who is also a close McCarthy ally, quickly voiced support.

"We need to expunge," she said of Trump's two impeachments, and "we must impeach Joe Biden."

House Democratic Leader Hakeem Jeffries said Democrats would oppose Republican efforts to open a Biden impeachment inquiry "because it's not anchored in facts or reality. It's anchored in extremism."

Trump's first impeachment by the House, which resulted in charges that he pressured Ukraine to dig up dirt on the Bidens, all while threatening to withhold military aid President Volodymyr Zelenskyy sought to deter Russia, lasted several months in 2019. Trump was later acquitted by the Senate.

Trump's second impeachment in the aftermath of the Jan. 6, 2021, attack on the Capitol was swift — he was charged by the House a week later for inciting an insurrection. He was again acquitted by the Senate.

Associated Press writers Zeke Miller, Farnoush Amiri, Kevin Freking, Jill Colvin and Mary Clare Jalonick contributed to this story.

Israel's government has passed the first part of its legal overhaul. The law's ripples are dramatic

By JULIA FRANKEL, ISABEL DEBRE and ILAN BEN ZION Associated Press

The Israeli government has passed the first major piece of legislation in Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's plan to overhaul the country's legal system — part of a broader plan that has triggered nationwide protests, divided the country and rattled the powerful military and influential business community.

The plan seeks to weaken the country's Supreme Court and transfer more powers to the parliament. Supporters say Israel's unelected judges wield too much power. But opponents say the judges play an important oversight role, and that the plan will push Israel toward autocratic rule.

Despite the fraught atmosphere, Netanyahu's allies say they are moving forward on the overhaul.

Here's a look at how the overhaul could affect Israel in the coming months:

WHY IS THE COUNTRY SO DIVIDED?

Netanyahu, who is on trial for corruption charges, has long been a polarizing leader. His government took office in December, after narrowly winning the country's fifth election in under four years. All of those elections focused on Netanyahu's fitness to rule.

These divisions have been reflected in the debate about the overhaul — stretching across religious, class and ethnic lines.

The anti-government protesters come largely from Israel's urban middle class and include doctors, academics, military officers and business leaders. Netanyahu's supporters tend to be poorer, more religious and include residents of West Bank settlements and outlying areas. Many are working-class Jews of Mizrahi, or Middle Eastern, descent who see themselves marginalized by an Ashkenazi, or European, elite.

Following the Knesset vote that pushed the law through on Monday, Netanyahu appealed for unity and dialogue. But his opponents rejected the offer as insincere and vowed to continue the protests.

"The morning after, we emerge to an Israel with internal battle lines drawn, an Israel potentially at war with itself, a government certainly at war with much, perhaps most, of the people," wrote David Horowitz, founding editor of the Times of Israel news site.

Simcha Rothman, the Israeli lawmaker who has spearheaded the overhaul, said he hopes the opposition will be "responsible" and return to negotiations. But he made clear he is not done.

"We have the majority," he said, referring to the parliamentary coalition. "The majority of the people in Israel still support the reform."

WILL THE MILITARY'S READINESS BE AFFECTED?

Thousands of military reservists have threatened to stop reporting for duty now that the first law has been passed. The military depends heavily on these volunteer reservists, particularly air force pilots, intelligence officers and members of other specialized units.

Current and former military brass have warned that if the reservists follow through on their threats, the military's ability to function in a national emergency could be compromised.

"If we don't have a strong and united defense force, if Israel's best do not serve in the IDF, we will no longer be able to exist as a country in the region," warned Lt. Gen. Herzl Halevi, the chief of staff.

HOW DOES THIS AFFECT ISRAEL'S RELATIONSHIP WITH THE US?

By pushing through the new law without a broad political consensus, Netanyahu has defied the country's closest ally, the United States, which gives Israel nearly \$4 billion in annual military assistance and diplomatic backing in international forums.

In a rare public warning ahead of the vote, President Joe Biden called on the Israeli government to postpone the session and try to reach a compromise with the opposition. The White House lamented Monday's vote result as "unfortunate."

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Analysts say the contentious plan could undermine what both countries routinely describe as shared interests and values.

Alon Pinkas, a former Israeli consul-general in New York, said that Netanyahu's disregard for American concerns would further hurt the Israeli leader's troubled relationship with the U.S. president.

"No one will take Netanyahu at his word," he said.

The vote could also deepen a growing rift between the conservative Israeli government and the predominantly liberal American Jewish community. Two major groups, the American Jewish Committee and the Jewish Federations of North America, expressed deep "disappointment" over Monday's vote.

WHAT DOES THIS MEAN FOR THE PALESTINIANS?

Palestinians look at the unrest roiling Israel as proof of what they see as hypocrisy, saying that Israel's ongoing, 56-year occupation of the West Bank long ago undermined Israel's democracy.

"Palestinians see this as a contradiction, that Israelis are fighting for freedom and democracy through institutions that are inherently preventing an entire people from freedom and democracy," said Inès Abdel Razek, executive director of the Palestine Institute for Public Diplomacy, an advocacy group.

But some politicians and analysts warn that the potential consequences of the judicial changes have a deeper reach into the West Bank than the public might think, eroding the main check on a far-right coalition bent on expanding settlements and increasing Israel's control over the occupied territory.

"This is a dangerous development for us," said Mustafa Barghouti, a veteran Palestinian activist.

WILL THE PROTESTS CONTINUE?

After seven months of mass demonstrations against the plan, the grassroots protest movement says it has no plans on stopping. Monday's vote was met by fierce protests across Israel and unprecedented clashes between protesters and the police.

Yohanan Plesner, president of the Israel Democracy Institute, a Jerusalem think tank, said the "protests are not going anywhere, especially because the government has clearly stated that this is just phase one."

Josh Drill, a spokesperson for the protest movement, called for new measures, such as not paying taxes. He also called on the U.S. and the American Jewish community to reconsider financial support for the Israeli government and instead donate to advocacy groups aligned with the movement.

"How many statements can the U.S. administration put out that they're distraught or that they're worried? Come on, that's not actually doing anything," he said.

WILL THIS PUT ISRAEL'S ECONOMY AT RISK?

Monday's vote sent the Israeli currency and stock market tumbling and yielded warnings from the Moody's credit rating agency of "negative consequences" for the economy.

Netanyahu dismissed the negative reactions as a "momentary response" and insisted: "When the dust clears, it will be clear that the Israeli economy is very strong."

But many experts believe the damage to the economy could be long-lasting — with foreign investors potentially deterred by fears that a weak judiciary could open the door to corruption and hurt the business environment.

The threat is particularly acute in Israel's high-tech sector — a key portion of Israel's economy. On Tuesday, leading Israeli newspapers covered their front pages in black — an ominous image that was paid for by an alliance of high-tech companies.

"A black day for Israeli democracy," the ad read.

Yannay Spitzer, an economist at Israel's Hebrew University, said Israeli stock prices have lagged behind global indexes since the plan was unveiled. This trend, he said, "cannot be accounted for by ordinary market developments."

"Israel is headed to become an economically backward country with civil strife," Spitzer predicted.

For Emmett Till's family, national monument proclamation cements his inclusion in the American story

By AARON MORRISON and EMILY WAGSTER PETTUS AP National Writers

When President Joe Biden signed a proclamation Tuesday establishing a national monument honoring Emmett Till and his mother, Mamie Till-Mobley, it marked the fulfillment of a promise Till's relatives made after his death 68 years ago.

The Black teenager from Chicago, whose abduction, torture and killing in Mississippi in 1955 helped propel the Civil Rights Movement, is now an American story, not just a civil rights story, said Till's cousin the Rev. Wheeler Parker Jr.

"It has been quite a journey for me from the darkness to the light," Parker said during a proclamation signing ceremony at the White House attended by dozens, including other family members, members of Congress and civil rights leaders.

"Back then in the darkness, I could never imagine the moment like this, standing in the light of wisdom, grace and deliverance," he said.

With the stroke of Biden's pen, the Emmett Till and Mamie Till-Mobley National Monument, located across three sites in two states, became federally-protected places. Before signing the proclamation, the president said he marvels at the courage of the Till family to "find faith and purpose in pain."

"Today, on what would have been Emmett's 82nd birthday, we add another chapter in the story of remembrance and healing," Biden said.

It's the fourth such designation by the Democratic president's administration, reflecting its broader civil rights agenda, the White House said. The move comes as conservative leaders, mostly at the state and local levels, push legislation that limits the teaching of slavery and Black history in public schools.

"At a time when there are those who seek to ban books (and) bury history, we're making clear, crystal clear," Biden said. "We can't just choose to learn what we want to know. We should know everything — the good, the bad, the truth of who we are as a nation. That's what great nations do."

On Tuesday, reaction poured in from other elected officials and from the civil rights organizing community. The Rev. Al Sharpton said the Till national monument designation tells him "that out of pain comes power."

House Democratic Leader Hakeem Jeffries said the monument "places the life and legacy of Emmett Till among our nation's most treasured memorials."

"Black history is American history," he said in a written statement.

Till's family members, along with a national organization seeking to preserve Black cultural heritage sites, say their work protecting the Till legacy continues. They hope to raise money to restore the sites and develop educational programming to support their inclusion in the National Park System.

Brent Leggs, executive director of the African American Cultural Heritage Action Fund, a program of the National Trust for Historic Preservation, said the federal designation is a milestone in a yearslong effort to preserve and protect places tied to events that have shaped the nation and that symbolize national wounds.

"We believe that not until Black history matters will Black lives and Black bodies matter," he said. "Through reckoning with America's racist past, we have the opportunity to heal."

The African American Cultural Heritage Action Fund has provided \$750,000 in grant funding since 2017 to help rescue sites important to the Till legacy. A number of other philanthropic organizations have contributed several million dollars towards preservation of the Till sites.

Biden's proclamation protects places that are central to the story of Emmett Till's life and death at age 14, the acquittal of his white killers by an all-white jury and his late mother's activism.

In the summer of 1955, Mamie Till-Mobley put her son Emmett on a train to her native Mississippi, where he was to spend time with his uncle and his cousins. In the overnight hours of Aug. 28, 1955, Emmett was taken from his uncle's home at gunpoint by two vengeful white men.

Emmett's alleged crime? Flirting with the wife of one of his kidnappers.

Three days later, a fisherman on the Tallahatchie River discovered the teenager's bloated corpse — one of his eyes was detached, an ear was missing, his head was shot and bashed in.

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Till-Mobley demanded that Emmett's mutilated remains be taken back to Chicago for a public, open casket funeral that was attended by tens of thousands of people. Graphic images taken of Emmett's remains, sanctioned by his mother, were published by Jet magazine and fueled the Civil Rights Movement.

At the trial of his killers in Mississippi, Till-Mobley bravely took the witness stand to counter the perverse image of her son that defense attorneys had painted for jurors and trial watchers.

Altogether, the Till national monument will include 5.7 acres (2.3 hectares) of land and two historic buildings. The Mississippi sites are Graball Landing, the spot where Emmett's body was pulled from the Tallahatchie River just outside of Glendora, Mississippi, and the Tallahatchie County Second District Court-house in Sumner, Mississippi, where Emmett's killers were tried.

At Graball Landing, a memorial sign installed in 2008 had been repeatedly stolen and was riddled with bullets. An inch-thick bulletproof sign was erected at the site in October 2019.

The Illinois site is Roberts Temple Church of God in Christ in Chicago, where Emmett's funeral was held in September 1955.

Illinois Sen. Tammy Duckworth, who originally introduced the bipartisan legislation to federally recognize and protect Roberts Temple, noted the church's importance to the history of Chicago and the nation.

"It's past time we recognize how national monuments can not only teach us about our history — but provoke us to build a more just future," the Democratic senator said in a statement.

Mississippi state Sen. David Jordan, 90, was a freshman at Mississippi Valley State College in 1955 when he attended part of the trial of the two men charged with killing Emmett. As a state senator for the past 30 years, Jordan, who is Black, spearheaded fundraising for a statue of Emmett Till that was dedicated last year in Greenwood, Mississippi, a few miles from where the teenager was abducted.

On Tuesday, Jordan praised Biden for creating the Till national monument.

"It's one of the greatest honors that a president could pay to a person, 14, who lost his life in Mississippi that's created a movement that changed America," Jordan told the AP.

Daphne Chamberlain, a history professor at Tougaloo College in Jackson, Mississippi, said Emmett's brutal killing continues to resonate in racial justice issues of today.

"Over the past decade or so, we have seen as a nation the murder of young Black men like Trayvon Martin, Tamir Rice, Tyre Nichols in Memphis, (and) Ahmaud Arbery," she said. "In each of these instances, what we have also seen is the bravery of the mothers in coming to the forefront and speaking out against what happened to their sons, but also making sure that they stayed the course in pursuing justice."

The Till national monument joins dozens of federally recognized landmarks, buildings and other places in the Deep South, in the north and out west that represent historical events and tragedies from the Civil Rights Movement. For example, in Atlanta, sites representing the life and legacy of the Rev. Martin Luther King Jr., including his birth home and Ebenezer Baptist Church, are all part of the National Park Service.

The designation often requires public and private entities to work together on developing interpretation centers at each of the sites, so that anyone who visits can understand the site's significance. The hiring of park rangers is supported through partnerships with the National Park Foundation, the park service's official nonprofit, and the National Parks Conservation Association.

Increasingly, the park service includes sites "that are part of the arc of justice in this country, both telling where we've come from, how far we've come, and frankly, how far we have to still go," said Will Shafroth, the president and CEO of the National Park Foundation.

For Parker, who was 16 years old when he witnessed Emmett's abduction, the Till monument proclamation begins to lift the weight of trauma that he has carried for most of his life. In an interview with the AP ahead of Tuesday's White House event, Parker reflected on the decades-long fight to portray Emmett and his story in a proper light.

"I've been suffering for all these years of how they've portrayed him — I still deal with that," Parker, 84, said of his cousin Emmett.

"The truth should carry itself, but it doesn't have wings. You have to put some wings on it."

Associated Press writers Emily Wagster Pettus in Jackson, Mississippi, and Darlene Superville in Wash-

ington contributed to this report.

Aaron Morrison is a New York-based member of AP's Race and Ethnicity team. Follow him on social media.

A judge blocks limits on asylum at US-Mexico border but gives Biden administration time to appeal

By REBECCA SANTANA Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — A federal judge on Tuesday blocked a rule that allows immigration authorities to deny asylum to migrants who arrive at the U.S.-Mexico border without first applying online or seeking protection in a country they passed through. But the judge delayed his ruling from taking effect immediately to give President Joe Biden's administration time to appeal.

The order from U.S. District Judge Jon Tigar of the Northern District of California takes away a key enforcement tool set in place by the Biden administration as coronavirus-based restrictions on asylum expired in May. The new rule imposes severe limitations on migrants seeking asylum but includes room for exceptions and does not apply to children traveling alone.

"The Rule — which has been in effect for two months — cannot remain in place," Tigar wrote in an order that will not take effect for two weeks.

The Justice Department immediately appealed the order and asked for it to be put on hold while the case is heard. The agency said it's confident the rule is lawful.

Immigrant rights groups that sued over the rule applauded the judge's decision.

"The promise of America is to serve as a beacon of freedom and hope, and the administration can and should do better to fulfill this promise, rather than perpetuate cruel and ineffective policies that betray it," American Civil Liberties Union attorney Katrina Eiland, who argued the case, said in a statement.

The ACLU and other groups had argued the rule violates a U.S. law that protects the right to asylum regardless of how a person enters the country. The groups said it forces migrants to seek protection in countries that don't have the same robust asylum system and human rights protections as the United States. They also argued that the CBP One app the government wants migrants to use doesn't have enough appointments and isn't available in enough languages.

The administration had argued that protection systems in other countries that migrants travel through have improved. But Tigar said it's not feasible for some migrants to seek protection in a transit country and noted the violence that many face in Mexico in particular.

"While they wait for an adjudication, applicants for asylum must remain in Mexico, where migrants are generally at heightened risk of violence by both state and non-state actors," the judge, an appointee of President Barack Obama, wrote.

He also wrote that the rule is illegal because it presumes that people are ineligible for asylum if they enter the country between legal border crossings. But, Tigar wrote, Congress expressly said that should not affect whether someone is eligible for asylum.

The judge also rejected the administration's arguments that it had provided other avenues for people to come to the U.S. and that should be taken into account. The administration has pointed to a program that allows in as many as 30,000 migrants a month from Cuba, Haiti, Nicaragua and Venezuela if they have a sponsor and fly into the U.S. The judge noted that such pathways are not available to all migrants.

The Biden administration also argued that it was allowing potentially hundreds of thousands of people into the U.S. through the CBP One app. Migrants use the app to schedule an appointment to present themselves at the border to seek entry to the U.S. and request asylum.

Tigar noted that demand outstrips the 1,450 appointments currently available daily, leaving asylum seekers waiting in Mexico where they're at "serious risk of violence."

The Biden administration said the asylum rule was a key part of its strategy to strike a balance between strict border enforcement and ensuring several avenues for migrants to pursue valid asylum claims. According to Customs and Border Protection, total encounters along the southern border — meaning migrants

who either came to one of the ports of entry or tried to cross between them — were down 30% in June compared with the previous month. The agency said it was the lowest monthly total since February 2021.

Critics have argued that the rule is essentially a newer version of efforts by President Donald Trump to limit asylum at the southern border.

Trump derided Tigar as an “Obama judge” after Tigar rejected a Trump administration policy barring people from applying for asylum except at an official border entry point. That effort got caught up in litigation and never took effect.

Tigar also ruled against the Trump administration’s efforts to limit asylum to people who don’t apply for protection in a country they travel through before coming to the U.S. The Supreme Court eventually allowed that.

Education Department opens investigation into Harvard’s legacy admissions

By MICHAEL CASEY Associated Press

BOSTON (AP) — Opening a new front in legal battles over college admissions, the U.S. Department of Education has launched a civil rights investigation into Harvard University’s policies on legacy admissions.

Top colleges’ preferential treatment of children of alumni, who are often white, has faced mounting scrutiny since the Supreme Court last month struck down the use of affirmative action as a tool to boost the presence of students of color.

The department notified Lawyers for Civil Rights, a nonprofit based in Boston, on Monday that it was investigating the group’s claim that the university “discriminates on the basis of race by using donor and legacy preferences in its undergraduate admissions process.”

An Education Department spokesperson confirmed its Office for Civil Rights opened an investigation at Harvard. The agency declined further comment.

But White House press secretary Karine Jean-Pierre said President Joe Biden has “made clear that legacy admissions hold back our ability to build diverse student bodies.”

The complaint was filed earlier this month on behalf of Black and Latino community groups in New England. The group argued that students with legacy ties are up to seven times more likely to be admitted to Harvard, can make up nearly a third of a class and that about 70% are white. For the Class of 2019, about 28% of the class were legacies with a parent or other relative who went to Harvard.

“We are gratified that the Department of Education has acted swiftly to open this investigation,” the group said in an email statement. “Harvard should follow the lead of a growing number of colleges and universities — including Amherst, MIT, Johns Hopkins, the University of California, and most recently Wesleyan — and voluntarily abandon these unfair and undeserved preferences.”

A spokesperson for Harvard on Tuesday said the university has been reviewing its admissions policies to ensure compliance with the law since the Supreme Court ruling on affirmative action.

“As this work continues, and moving forward, Harvard remains dedicated to opening doors to opportunity and to redoubling our efforts to encourage students from many different backgrounds to apply for admission,” the spokesperson said.

Ending legacy preferences is “one of many steps that Harvard and other universities can take to increase access, diversity, and equity in admissions,” said Jane Sujen Bock, a board member of the Coalition for a Diverse Harvard, which includes alumni, student and staff.

Last week, Wesleyan University in Connecticut announced that it would end its policy of giving preferential treatment in admissions to those whose families have historical ties to the school. Wesleyan President Michael Roth said a student’s “legacy status” has played a negligible role in admissions, but would now be eliminated entirely.

In recent years, other schools — including Amherst College in Massachusetts, Carnegie Mellon University in Pennsylvania and Johns Hopkins University in Maryland — also have eliminated legacy admissions.

Legacy policies have been called into question after last month’s Supreme Court ruling banning affirmative

action and any consideration of race in college admissions. The court's conservative majority effectively overturned cases reaching back 45 years, forcing institutions of higher education to seek new ways to achieve student diversity.

NAACP President and CEO Derrick Johnson said he commended the Education Department for taking steps to ensure the higher education system "works for every American, not just a privileged few."

"Every talented and qualified student deserves an opportunity to attend the college of their choice. Affirmative Action existed to support that notion. Legacy admissions exists to undermine it," he said.

Sarah Hinger, senior staff attorney for the ACLU's Racial Justice Program, said she did not know the specifics of the Harvard program but "as a general matter, legacy admissions tend to benefit disproportionately, white people and wealthy people."

"Systemic racism and inequality has allowed some people to build legacies across generations of their family in the same way that systemic racism has left many families of color out of opportunities in the educational hierarchy. In a way they're two sides of the same coin," she added.

A study led by Harvard and Brown researchers, published Monday, found that wealthy students were twice as likely to be admitted to elite schools compared to their lower- or middle-income counterparts who have similar standardized test scores.

The study looked at family income and admissions data at Ivy League schools as well as Stanford, MIT, Duke and the University of Chicago. It found that legacy admissions policies were a contributing factor to the advantage high-income students have at these schools. Athletic recruitment and extracurricular credentials, which are stronger when students attend affluent private high schools, were the other two factors.

Associated Press reporters Annie Ma and Gary Fields contributed from Washington, D.C.

Bronny James, son of LeBron, in stable condition after cardiac arrest at USC basketball practice

By GREG BEACHAM AP Sports Writer

Bronny James, the oldest son of NBA superstar LeBron James, was hospitalized in stable condition on Tuesday, a day after going into cardiac arrest while participating in a practice at the University of Southern California, a family spokesman said.

The spokesman said medical staff treated the 18-year-old James on site at USC's Galen Center after he went into cardiac arrest on Monday morning. He was transported to a hospital, where he was in stable condition Tuesday after leaving the intensive care unit.

"We ask for respect and privacy for the James family and we will update media when there is more information," the spokesman said. "LeBron and (his wife) Savannah wish to publicly send their deepest thanks and appreciation to the USC medical and athletic staff for their incredible work and dedication to the safety of their athletes."

USC spokesman Jeremy Pepper declined a request from The Associated Press for comment or additional details, citing student privacy concerns. The AP also left a message seeking comment from the Los Angeles County Fire Department.

A representative for USC outside the Galen Center on Tuesday said the school would not have a briefing or issue a statement about James' health scare.

Bronny James announced in May that he would play college basketball for the Trojans, whose campus is less than two miles from the downtown arena of his father's Los Angeles Lakers. USC's basketball team is holding offseason practices in preparation for a two-week European tour next month.

His father is the leading scorer in NBA history and a four-time champion, but Bronny James is an elite talent in his own right, establishing himself as one of the nation's top point guard recruits before he chose the Trojans late in the commitment cycle.

Buffalo Bills safety Damar Hamlin, who suffered cardiac arrest during an NFL game last season, tweeted his support: "Prayers to Bronny & The James Family as well (prayer emoji) here for you guys just like you

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have been for me my entire process.”

Sports figures across the world also sent messages of support. Jayson Tatum, Trae Young and Donovan Mitchell were among many NBA stars tweeting prayers for James, while former Lakers forward Metta Sandiford-Artest wrote: “Prayers for Bronny. What a great kid. Come back stronger young fella. Get better and feel better.”

Bronny James was stricken just over a year after USC freshman 7-footer Vincent Iwuchukwu collapsed during a practice. Iwuchukwu not only survived but returned to play for the Trojans in the second half of the season.

Dr. Sameer Amin, a cardiologist and the chief medical officer at L.A. Care Health Plan, is not treating Bronny James, but he says the teenager’s move out of intensive care is encouraging.

“It’s a really positive sign that they didn’t sustain too much brain damage or any brain damage, or any major heart damage in the setting of their heart stopping,” Amin said. “Usually we see that when somebody’s heart gets restarted very quickly after it stops. Also, in young people, you tend to get these bounce-backs a lot faster. It’s a really positive outcome that he’s already out of the ICU.”

Amin said it’s too soon to speculate on whether Bronny James can return to basketball, or how quickly it could happen.

“If (the cardiac event) is happening because of a unusual blow to the chest like in the Damar Hamlin case, oftentimes those people can have a positive outcome because it’s a rare and unusual event that led to the heart stopping,” Amin said. “In those where there’s an underlying genetic problem or an underlying electrical issue, it can be a little bit more tricky to get somebody back on the playing field.”

With his family fame and huge social media following, Bronny James has the top name, image and likeness valuation in sports at \$6.3 million, On3.com estimates.

LeBron James has spoken frequently about his desire to play a season in the NBA with Bronny, the first of his three children with his wife. The elder James recently confirmed he will play his 21st NBA season in the fall with the Lakers, his home since 2018.

Bronny’s decision to stay close to home was a coup for USC, which is expected to have one of college basketball’s most compelling teams next season after making its third straight NCAA Tournament appearance last March.

Bronny, whose name is LeBron James Jr., was one of the top college prospects in the country last season as a star two-way guard at Sierra Canyon School in suburban Chatsworth. His younger brother, 16-year-old Bryce, played at Sierra Canyon last season before transferring to Campbell Hall School in Studio City for the upcoming high school season.

Iwuchukwu, one of the nation’s top college basketball prospects a year ago, went into cardiac arrest on July 1, 2022, with athletic trainers using an automated external defibrillator to revive him. Iwuchukwu had a battery-powered pulse generator known as an implantable cardioverter-defibrillator implanted in his chest, the Los Angeles Times reported.

Iwuchukwu made his Trojans debut Jan. 12 and eventually appeared in 14 games, including five starts. He will return this season to USC, which is expected to have a powerhouse team.

AP Sports Writers Eric Olson and Tom Withers and AP video journalist Eugene Garcia contributed to this report.

AP college basketball: <https://apnews.com/hub/college-basketball> and <https://apnews.com/hub/ap-top-25-college-basketball-poll> and <https://apnews.com/hub/lebron-james>

Taliban orders beauty salons in Afghanistan to close despite UN concern and rare public protest

By RAHIM FAIEZ Associated Press

ISLAMABAD (AP) — The Taliban announced Tuesday that all beauty salons in Afghanistan must now close as a one-month deadline ended, despite rare public opposition to the edict.

Sadiq Akif Mahjer, spokesman for the Taliban-run Virtue and Vice Ministry, did not say whether it would use force against salons that do not comply.

The ruling is the latest curb on the rights and freedoms of Afghan women and girls following edicts barring them from education, public spaces and most forms of employment.

The Taliban said it decided to ban beauty salons because they offered services forbidden by Islam and caused economic hardship for the families of grooms during wedding festivities.

Its earlier announcement of a one-month deadline for salons to wind down their businesses led to a rare public protest in which dozens of beauticians and makeup artists gathered in Kabul, the capital. Security forces used fire hoses and tasers and shot their guns into the air to break up the protest.

The ban also drew concern from international groups worried about its impact on female entrepreneurs.

The United Nations said it was engaged with Afghanistan authorities to get the prohibition reversed.

U.N. Secretary-General Antonio Guterres "supports the efforts by the U.N. Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA), which has called on the de facto authorities to halt the edict closing beauty salons.

"UNAMA has said that this restriction on women's rights will impact negatively on the economy and contradicts support for women's entrepreneurship, and we're seeking a reversal of the bans," U.N. deputy spokesman Farhan Haq said Monday.

The Taliban listed a series of services offered by beauty salons that it said violated Islam. They included eyebrow shaping, the use of other people's hair to augment a woman's natural hair and the application of makeup, which it said interferes with the ablutions required before offering prayers.

Grooms' families have been required by custom to pay for pre-wedding salon visits by brides and their close female relatives.

"This isn't about getting your hair and nails done. This is about 60,000 women losing their jobs. This is about women losing one of the only places they could go for community and support after the Taliban systematically destroyed the whole system put in place to respond to domestic violence," said Heather Barr, associate women's rights director for the New York-based group Human Rights Watch.

Despite initial promises of a more moderate rule than during their previous time in power in the 1990s, the Taliban have imposed harsh measures since seizing control of Afghanistan in August 2021 as U.S. and NATO forces pulled out.

They have barred women from public spaces such as parks and gyms and cracked down on media freedoms. The measures have triggered fierce international criticism, increasing the country's isolation at a time when its economy has collapsed, and worsening a humanitarian crisis.

Unexplained outage at Chase Bank leads to interruptions at Zelle payment network

By The Associated Press undefined

An unexplained outage at Chase Bank led to interruptions for users of the Zelle payment network, who took to social media to complain.

Zelle said on Twitter that its network is functioning normally and pointed a finger at Chase, saying the bank was experiencing trouble with payment processing.

"The rest of the Zelle network is up and running," it tweeted. "Chase is one of our partner banks, and as such, is in full control of the Zelle feature in their app."

Chase issued a statement noting that it was "working to restore full service to account transfers, Zelle payments and bill payments," but offered no details regarding the cause of the service outage or its

expected duration. According to DownDetector, a site that collects user outage reports, both services experienced service problems starting around 10 a.m. EDT on Tuesday.

The problem remained unresolved 12 hours later, although DownDetector data suggested that its severity had tapered off significantly.

"Our customers can continue to use all other digital banking features as normal," Chase said in its statement.

UPS reaches tentative contract with 340,000 unionized workers, potentially dodging calamitous strike

By HALELUYA HADERO AP Business Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — UPS has reached a tentative contract with its 340,000-person union, potentially averting a strike that threatened to disrupt package deliveries for millions of businesses and households nationwide.

The agreement was announced Tuesday, the first day that UPS and the Teamsters returned to the table after contentious negotiations broke down earlier this month.

Negotiators had already reached tentative agreements on several issues but continued to clash over pay for part-time workers, who make up more than half of the UPS employees represented by the union.

The Teamsters hailed the agreement as "historic."

Under the tentative agreement, which still needs union members' approval, full- and part-time union workers will get \$2.75 more per hour in 2023, and \$7.50 more by the end of the five-year contract. The agreement also includes a provision to increase starting pay for part-time workers — whom the union says are the most at risk of exploitation — from \$16.20 per hour to \$21 per hour. The average pay for part-timers had been \$20.

Teamsters General President Sean M. O'Brien said in a statement that UPS put \$30 billion more on the table due to the negotiations, saying the deal "sets a new standard in the labor movement."

The two sides had already tentatively agreed to make Martin Luther King Jr. Day a full holiday and to end forced overtime on drivers' days off. Tentative agreements on safety issues were also reached, including equipping more trucks with air conditioning.

UPS had also agreed to eliminate a lower-paid category of drivers who work shifts that include weekends, and convert them into regular full-time drivers. Under the agreement, the company will create 7,500 full-time jobs and fill 22,500 open positions, allowing more part-timers to transition to full-time.

"Together we reached a win-win-win agreement on the issues that are important to Teamsters leadership, our employees and to UPS and our customers," Carol Tomé, UPS CEO, said in a written statement.

Voting on the new contract begins Aug. 3 and concludes Aug. 22.

Industry groups, the U.S. Chamber of Commerce, labor leaders and President Joe Biden applauded the deal.

The White House said Biden spoke via phone with Tomé and O'Brien and pointed to their agreement as evidence that collective bargaining works and offered his best wishes for a smooth ratification.

Union members, angered by a contract they say union leadership forced on them five years ago, argued that they have shouldered the more than 140% profit growth at UPS as the pandemic increased delivery demand. Unionized workers said they wanted to right what they saw as a bad contract.

Union leadership was upended two years ago with the election of O'Brien, a vocal critic of union president James Hoffa — son of the famed Teamsters firebrand — who signed off on that contract.

The 24 million packages UPS ships daily amount to about a quarter of all U.S. parcel volume, according to the global shipping and logistics firm Pitney Bowes. According to UPS, that's equivalent to about 6% of the nation's gross domestic product.

During the last breakdown in labor talks a quarter of a century ago, 185,000 UPS workers walked out for 15 days, crippling the company. A walkout this time would have had much further-reaching implications, with millions of Americans now accustomed to online shopping and speedy delivery.

The consulting firm Anderson Economic Group estimated a 10-day UPS strike could have cost the U.S. economy more than \$7 billion and triggered "significant and lasting harm" to the business and workers.

Logistics experts warned that the other U.S. shipping companies do not have the combined capacity to handle all the packages that would come their way during a UPS work stoppage, and that prices of shipping and goods would inevitably increase. Meanwhile, customers who shop online could have faced higher shipping fees and longer waits.

In recent weeks, large and small businesses worked to create contingency plans in the event of a strike.

Joseph Debicella, a small business owner who sells bridesmaids' gifts online, said his company ships roughly 50% of its orders through UPS. He hasn't used FedEx, but he created an account with the company two weeks ago as chatter over a strike picked up. He was also hearing about the negotiations from his UPS driver, who told him his deliveries were getting lighter as the July 31 deadline for a new contract neared.

Macy's CEO Jeff Gennette told The Associated Press that the department store chain was considering its options and that its supply chain team was mapping out what a strike would look like and how it would affect shipping.

If ratified, the deal could prevent major disruption just as retailers are in the throes of the back-to-school shopping season — the second largest sales period behind the winter holidays.

The Retail Industry Leaders Association, a national retail trade group that counts retailers including Best Buy, CVS Health and Kohl's as members, called the tentative pact "an enormous relief to retailers, who have been navigating the possibility of a strike and the associated uncertainty for weeks."

"We're grateful that this challenge, which would have had a price tag in the billions of dollars and a long runway for recovery, was avoided," the group said in a statement.

Labor experts see the showdown as a demonstration of labor power at a time of low U.S. union membership. Unions have grown more active this summer thanks to several organized-labor pushes at major companies.

Hollywood actors and screenwriters are picketing over pay issues. United Auto Workers are considering a potential strike.

"This is how it's done!" Association of Flight Attendants-CWA President Sara Nelson said in a statement after the UPS deal was announced. "And this labor solidarity summer just got stronger."

Associated Press writers Matt Ott in Washington, D.C., and Anne D'Innocenzio in New York City contributed to this report.

Gynecologist accused of sexually abusing over 200 patients is sentenced to 20 years in prison

By LARRY NEUMEISTER Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — A gynecologist who sexually abused vulnerable and trusting patients for over two decades at prestigious New York hospitals cried before he was sentenced Tuesday to 20 years in prison by a federal judge who called his crimes unprecedented.

The sentence for Robert Hadden, 64, was a measure of vindication for hundreds of former patients who accused the doctor of molesting them during examinations but saw an earlier prosecution end with a plea bargain that spared him from jail.

Given his chance to speak Tuesday, Hadden stood, his hands folded before him, as he said there was "much I'd like to say" but that he had been advised by lawyers to keep his statement brief.

"I'm very sorry for all the pain that I have caused," the sobbing Hadden said before dropping his head down as he sat again. He then took off his glasses and wiped tears from his eyes.

In statements over the past two days, Judge Richard M. Berman said the case was like none he'd seen before and involved "outrageous, horrific, beyond extraordinary, depraved sexual abuse." He noted that at least 245 women Hadden treated said they were abused.

The federal trial involved a smaller number of victims. Hadden was convicted of four counts of enticing

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women to cross state lines so he could sexually abuse them.

Nine victims testified at the trial, describing how Hadden molested them during gynecology treatments, starting in the late 1980s, at prominent hospitals, including Columbia University Irving Medical Center and NewYork-Presbyterian Hospital. The Associated Press does not typically name victims of sexual assault unless they come forward publicly.

Allegations of misconduct during examinations first surfaced in 2012. Hadden was indicted on state charges in 2014 as women — 19 and counting — kept coming forward. But in 2016, the office of the Manhattan district attorney at the time, Cyrus Vance Jr., allowed Hadden to plead guilty to two low-level felonies and a misdemeanor in a deal that required him to give up his medical license but didn't require jail time and kept him out of the state's sex offender registry.

Some of the women who had gone to state prosecutors were outraged, but their stories didn't start receiving public attention until the #MeToo movement began gaining steam in 2017.

Federal prosecutors in Manhattan got a grand jury indictment against Hadden in 2020, charges based on the fact that some patients at his New York offices had come into the city from other states. He was convicted in January.

Several dozen of Hadden's accusers were in the courtroom for his sentencing and some of them spoke outside the courthouse afterward, sharing their emotions with reporters and one another. Among them was Liz Hall, who said she found Hadden's expression of regret hollow.

"That was not an apology. He has shown zero remorse or empathy. I think he's incapable," she said.

Hall said she hoped the sentence would give other victims of sexual abuse courage to speak out.

Some of the women abused by Hadden later pushed for a change to New York law that made it easier for survivors of sexual abuse to sue over allegations normally barred by the statute of limitations. Hospitals where Hadden worked have agreed to pay more than \$236 million to settle civil claims by more than 200 former patients.

According to trial testimony, Hadden benefited from the prestige of the hospitals where he worked as he groomed his patients in a private office decorated with pictures of his children as he conversed with them about their personal lives.

But once he had isolated them after a chaperone or nurse left the treatment room, he fondled and probed them with gloveless fingers and sometimes orally.

The judge noted that many patients were particularly vulnerable because they were pregnant, had physical problems, or had never been to another gynecologist and trusted that Hadden was behaving properly. Assistant U.S. Attorney Jane Kim said Tuesday that Hadden still had not accepted responsibility for his crimes.

Outside the court, Dian Monson described writing a long letter to Columbia in early 1994 detailing abuse she suffered during an appointment with Hadden the previous year. She said Columbia responded with a letter and an official promised to ask Hadden about it and get back to her, but never did.

Over two decades later, Monson saw a television report in which abuse similar to what she endured was described by Evelyn Yang, whose husband Andrew Yang ran for president in 2020 and New York City mayor in 2022. Yang said Hadden sexually assaulted her years ago when she was seven months pregnant. She also said Columbia had denied knowing about Hadden's abuse until 2012.

Monson said she recalled her 1994 complaint to Columbia and the hospital's response, and thought: "That's a total lie and I have the evidence that will prove that's a total lie."

Hall praised her, saying: "I honestly think you are the only reason ... Columbia was forced to take accountability."

Monson smiled but only agreed to an extent, saying: "I kind of caught him. We all kind of caught him."

Judge vacates desertion conviction for former US soldier captured in Afghanistan

By MATTHEW BARAKAT Associated Press

FALLS CHURCH, Va. (AP) — A federal judge on Tuesday vacated the military conviction of Bowe Bergdahl, a former U.S. Army soldier who pleaded guilty to desertion after he left his post and was captured in Afghanistan and tortured by the Taliban.

The ruling from U.S. District Judge Reggie Walton in Washington says that military judge Jeffrey Nance, who presided over the court-martial, failed to disclose that he had applied to the executive branch for a job as an immigration judge, creating a potential conflict of interest.

Walton noted that former President Donald Trump had strongly criticized Bergdahl during the 2016 presidential campaign. Bergdahl's lawyers argued that Trump's comments placed undue command influence on Nance.

Walton rejected the specific argument surrounding undue command influence, but he said a reasonable person could question the judge's impartiality under the circumstances.

Bergdahl was charged with desertion and misbehavior before the enemy after the then-23-year-old from Hailey, Idaho, left his post in Afghanistan in 2009. He said he was trying to get outside his post so he could report what he saw as poor leadership within his unit, but he was abducted by the Taliban and held captive for nearly five years.

During that time, Bergdahl was repeatedly tortured and beaten with copper wires, rubber hoses and rifle butts. After several escape attempts, he was imprisoned in a small cage for four years, according to court documents.

Several U.S. servicemembers were wounded searching for Bergdahl. In 2014, he was returned to the U.S. in a prisoner swap for five Taliban leaders who were being held at Guantanamo Bay.

The swap faced criticism from Trump, then-Sen. John McCain and others. Both Trump and McCain called for Bergdahl to face severe punishment.

In 2017, he pleaded guilty to both charges. Prosecutors at his court-martial sought 14 years in prison, but he was given no time after he submitted evidence of the torture he suffered while in Taliban custody. He was dishonorably discharged and ordered to forfeit \$10,000 in pay.

His conviction and sentence had been narrowly upheld by military appeals courts before his lawyers took the case to U.S. District Court, resulting in Tuesday's ruling.

The Justice Department declined comment on the ruling Tuesday.

Eugene Fidell, one of Bergdahl's lawyers, said he was gratified by the ruling and said Walton's 63-page opinion shows how meticulous he was in rendering the ruling.

Calls and emails to the immigration court in Charlotte, North Carolina, where Nance now serves as an immigration judge, were not returned Tuesday evening.

Putting a floating barrier in the Rio Grande to stop migrants is new. The idea isn't.

By PAUL J. WEBER Associated Press

AUSTIN, Texas (AP) — In the final months of the Trump administration, a new plan to seal off the United States' southern border started gaining steam: a floating water barrier to discourage migrants from trying to cross from Mexico.

The idea never materialized. But three years later, Texas Republican Gov. Greg Abbott has put it into action.

The state installed a floating barrier of bright orange, wrecking ball-sized buoys on the Rio Grande this month, stretching roughly the length of three soccer fields.

It is an untested strategy of deterring migrants along the U.S. border that is already fortified in wide sections by high steel fencing and razor wire. The rollout of the buoys on the Rio Grande has thrust Texas

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into a new standoff with the Biden administration over immigration on the state's 1,200-mile (1,930-kilometer) border with Mexico.

The Justice Department has asked a federal court to order Texas to remove the buoys, saying the water barrier poses humanitarian and environmental concerns along the international boundary. Abbott has waved off the lawsuit as he is cheered on by conservative allies who are eager for cases that would empower states to take on more aggressive immigration measures.

That legal battle comes as President Joe Biden's administration defends a new asylum rule in court. A federal judge Tuesday blocked the policy that the administration sees as a way of controlling the southern border while maintaining avenues for migrants to pursue valid asylum claims. The judge's order won't take effect for at least two weeks.

Here's what to know about the river barrier:

'The Water Wall'

Like other pieces of Abbott's multibillion-dollar border mission known as Operation Lone Star, the buoys pick up where former President Donald Trump left off.

In 2020, Mark Morgan was the acting commissioner of U.S. Customs and Border Protection. He told The Associated Press on Tuesday that he approved plans to deploy the same water barrier on the Rio Grande that Texas is now using.

That August, the Army Corps of Engineers posted a solicitation for a "buoy barrier system" that would "mitigate the ability of swimmers to climb" over or under it.

Morgan called it the "water wall."

"It was really designed to be a stopgap to utilize in high-flow areas where we didn't have a physical structure in place," Morgan said.

Spokespersons for CBP did not immediately address questions Tuesday about the 2020 plans. The federal International Boundary and Water Commission, whose jurisdiction includes boundary demarcation and overseeing U.S.-Mexico treaties, said it didn't get a heads-up from Texas about the state's floating barrier.

Experts have raised concerns of the buoys changing the river's flow or of objects getting caught in them. Morgan, who is now a visiting fellow with the conservative Heritage Foundation, said environmental reviews under Trump raised issues with the barrier but said he could not recall specifics.

"Just like the physical wall itself, right, there are a variety of things you can do to accommodate that," he said.

'Flouted Federal Law'

It is unclear how quickly a federal judge in Texas will rule on the Biden administration's lawsuit.

Until then, roughly 1,000-foot (305-meter) of barrier will remain on a portion of the Rio Grande that separates Eagle Pass, Texas and Piedras Negras, Mexico. The Mexican government has also raised concerns about the barrier, saying it may violate 1944 and 1970 treaties on boundaries and water.

The Biden administration's lawsuit accuses Texas of violating the federal Rivers and Harbor Act. Vanita Gupta, associate attorney general, said Texas "flouted federal law" and risks damaging U.S. foreign policy.

The buoys are the latest escalation in Texas' border mission that also includes National Guard patrols, jails that house migrants arrested on trespassing charges and busloads of asylum-seekers sent to Democratic-led cities across the U.S.

'See You in Court, Mr. President'

Abbott has tried to position America's biggest red state as the foremost antagonist to the Biden administration's border policies. Last year, Abbott easily won a third term in a campaign that focused on border policies.

In a letter to Biden this week, Abbott said the state was acting within its rights to protect its borders

"Texas will see you in court, Mr. President," he wrote.

He said it was the Biden administration that was putting migrants at risk by not doing more to dissuade them from making the journey to the U.S.

Far-right activist Ammon Bundy loses Idaho hospital defamation case, must pay millions in fines

By ANDREW SELSKY Associated Press

Far-right activist Ammon Bundy, who led the takeover of a federal wildlife refuge in Oregon, an associate and three of their groups must pay over \$50 million in damages for accusing a hospital of child trafficking and harassing medical staff, a jury has decided.

The defamation lawsuit by St. Luke's Regional Health accused Bundy and Diego Rodriguez of making defamatory statements against the hospital and its employees after Rodriguez's infant grandson was removed from his family for several days and taken to St. Luke's amid concerns for his health.

The emergency room physician, Dr. Rachel Thomas, testified that the 10-month-old baby's stomach was distended, his eyes were hollow and he was unable to sit up, reminding her of severely malnourished babies she had treated in Haiti, according to the Idaho Statesman newspaper. Police said at the time that medical personnel determined the child was malnourished and had lost weight.

Bundy responded by urging his followers to protest at the hospital and at the homes of child protection service workers, law enforcement officers and others involved in the child protection case. Rodriguez wrote on his website that the baby was "kidnapped," and suggested that the state and people involved in the case were engaged in "child trafficking" for profit.

Bundy — who didn't attend the trial nor hire a lawyer, saying it would be too costly — denied in a video he posted Monday on YouTube that the baby was mistreated and said law enforcement and hospital staff put him at risk by removing him from his mother. The baby was healthy except for suffering from cyclic vomiting syndrome, Bundy said, unable to keep anything except his mother's breast milk down.

The hospital claimed Bundy and Rodriguez orchestrated a smear campaign against it.

Late Monday, a jury at the Ada County Courthouse in Boise agreed, awarding damages exceeding \$50 million, the hospital announced.

A statement on behalf of the law firm representing the plaintiffs said Bundy, Rodriguez and their supporters had surrounded St. Luke's hospital campuses in Meridian and Boise, forcing lockdowns and causing diversion of emergency patients, disruption of planned procedures and cancelation of hundreds of appointments.

"The jury's decision imposes accountability for the ongoing campaign of intimidation, harassment and disinformation these defendants have conducted," St. Luke's said in a statement. "It also affirms the importance of protecting health care providers and other public servants from attacks intended to prevent them from carrying out their responsibilities."

Bundy did not immediately respond to a request for comment on the jury's decision. But in an interview Tuesday with KBOI News Talk radio, Bundy said he was innocent and called the civil trial "illegitimate."

"I've been a thorn in the side of the establishment here in Idaho for quite a while and this is their mechanism to try to destroy me," Bundy said, adding that he didn't have funds to pay the damages.

Lindsay Schubiner, programs director at Western States Center, an organization monitoring right-wing extremist groups, said the verdict "is a moment of real accountability for Ammon Bundy and his reckless campaign against St. Luke's."

The jury's verdict requires Bundy to pay the plaintiffs \$6.2 million in compensatory damages and \$6.15 million in punitive damages and Rodriguez to pay \$7 million in compensatory damages and \$6.5 million in punitive damages, according to Holland & Hart, the law firm, representing St. Luke's. The remainder of the total \$52.5 million in damages was assessed to the People's Rights Network, Freedom Man Press and the Bundy campaign for governor.

Bundy and his People's Rights Network had earlier carried out protests at the Idaho Statehouse over coronavirus-related measures. He was temporarily banned from the government building in 2020.

In 2016, Bundy led a 41-day armed occupation of the Malheur National Wildlife Refuge near Burns, Oregon, to protest the arson convictions of two ranchers who set fires on federal land where they had been grazing their cattle. Bundy was acquitted of criminal charges in the matter.

The hospital's lawsuit was filed more than a year ago. Since then, Bundy ignored court orders related

to the lawsuit, filed trespassing complaints against people hired to deliver legal paperwork and called on scores of his followers to camp at his home for protection when he learned he might be arrested on a warrant for a misdemeanor charge of contempt of court.

In 2014, Bundy's father, rancher Cliven Bundy, rallied supporters to stop officers from impounding Bundy Ranch cattle over more than \$1 million in unpaid fees and penalties for grazing livestock on government land. The Nevada criminal case ended in a mistrial.

Ohio voters will decide on abortion access in November ballot

By JULIE CARR SMYTH Associated Press

COLUMBUS, Ohio (AP) — Ohio voters will decide this fall whether the right to an abortion should be added to the state constitution, after officials said Tuesday that enough signatures were gathered to get the proposal on the ballot.

However, it's an open question how much support the amendment will need to pass, as Republican lawmakers have set a special election next month on whether to raise the threshold from a simple majority to 60%. AP VoteCast polling last year found 59% of Ohio voters say abortion should generally be legal.

The measure would establish "a fundamental right to reproductive freedom" with "reasonable limits." In language similar to a constitutional amendment that Michigan voters approved last November, it would require restrictions imposed past a fetus' viability outside the womb — which is typically around the 24th week of pregnancy and was the standard under *Roe v. Wade* — to be based on evidence of patient health and safety benefits.

"Every person deserves respect, dignity, and the right to make reproductive health care decisions, including those related to their own pregnancy, miscarriage care, and abortion free from government interference," Lauren Blauvelt and Dr. Lauren Beene, executive committee members for Ohioans United for Reproductive Rights, said in a statement.

Secretary of State Frank LaRose determined Tuesday that Ohioans United for Reproductive Rights submitted nearly 496,000 valid signatures, comfortably enough to put the amendment before voters on Nov. 7. The coalition had submitted more than 700,000 signatures.

The Aug. 8 special election called by Statehouse Republicans would also would eliminate the 10-day curing period when citizen-led campaigns may submit additional signatures if they fall short the first time, and increase the number of counties where signatures must be collected from 44 to all 88. But those provisions would come too late to impact the abortion issue, which has already faced both legal and administrative hurdles to now be poised for a vote.

Abortion remains legal in the state up to 20 weeks' gestation, under a judge's order issued in a lawsuit challenging a ban once cardiac activity can be detected, or around six weeks into pregnancy, which is before many women know they are pregnant. The Republican attorney general has asked the Ohio Supreme Court to overturn the stay.

Ohio's anti-abortion network has signaled it is ready to fight the November proposal, vowing a vehement and well-funded opposition campaign.

Opponents of the measure have advanced an argument that, because the amendment protects "individuals," it has the potential to trump Ohio's parental consent laws around abortion. The amendment's authors reject the theory. Ads against the abortion amendment suggest it would open the door to gender transitioning surgeries for all ages, matching national political messaging that experts deem misleading.

Amy Natoce, press secretary for Protect Ohio Women, the opposition campaign, said the group will "continue to shine a light on the ACLU's disastrous agenda until it is defeated in November." The American Civil Liberties Union of Ohio is on the November campaign's executive committee and serves as part of Ohioans United For Reproductive Rights' legal team.

"Ohioans are waking up to the dangers of the ACLU's anti-parent amendment and they are terrified — and rightfully so," she said in a statement.

The proposal joins others around the nation that have been motivated by last summer's U.S. Supreme

Court decision to overturn Roe v. Wade and the nationwide right to abortion it once protected, leaving abortion policy to individual states.

In the first statewide test following that decision, Kansas voters resoundingly protected abortion rights last August. In November, five other states — California, Kentucky, Michigan, Montana and Vermont — either enshrined abortion rights in their constitutions or rejected constitutional restrictions on the procedure.

Anger grows in Ukraine's port city of Odesa after Russian bombardment hits beloved historic sites

By HANNA ARHIROVA and LORI HINNANT Associated Press

ODESA, Ukraine (AP) — Tetiana Khlapova's hand trembled as she recorded the wreckage of Odesa's devastated Transfiguration Cathedral on her cellphone and cursed Russia, her native land.

Khlapova was raised in Ukraine and had always dreamed of living in the seaside city. But not as the war refugee that she has become.

In only a week, Russia has fired dozens of missiles and drones at the Odesa region. None struck quite as deeply as the one that destroyed the cathedral, which stands at the heart of the city's romantic, notorious past and its deep roots in both Ukrainian and Russian culture.

"I am a refugee from Kharkiv. I endured that hell and came to sunny Odesa, the pearl, the heart of our Ukraine," said Khlapova, who has lived in the country for 40 of her 50 years.

Her neck still has a shrapnel scar from the third day of the war, when her apartment was hit. On Day 4, she fled to Odesa.

Now, she's making a quick trip back to her place in Kharkiv to grab winter clothes so she can wait out the war in Ireland, "because here we are not protected for a single second, in any city."

"At any moment, you can just be hit and your whole body will be torn apart," she said. "After the war ends — and I believe that Ukraine will defeat this filth, these vampires — I will come back home. I will return, no matter what."

Ever since Ukraine gained independence from Moscow in 1991, Odesa viewed itself differently than the country's other major cities because of its long, conflicted history and an outlook that stretched far beyond its borders.

Odesa's past is intertwined with some of Russia's most revered figures, including Catherine the Great, author Leo Tolstoy and poet Anna Akhmatova.

Its ports were key to last year's international agreement that let Ukraine and Russia ship their grain to the rest of the world. Its Orthodox cathedral belongs to Moscow's patriarchate. Its residents largely speak Russian. And — at least until the Kremlin illegally annexed the nearby Crimean Peninsula in 2014 — its beaches were beloved by Russian tourists.

In the war's early weeks, rumors seeded by Kremlin propaganda flew around the city: Moscow would never hit the historic center, the mayor had loaded a boat filled with roses to greet Russian soldiers, a silent majority of residents were waiting for a Russian "liberation."

They were false.

"To this day, if you read and monitor Russian channels, all of them are absolutely convinced that we are waiting for them here," said Hanna Shelest, a political and security researcher raised in Odesa whose father is a harbormaster.

Odesa's regional infrastructure was hit repeatedly by Russia over the winter, unlike its port, which was key to the Black Sea Grain Initiative that allowed agricultural products to be shipped safely from both countries to feed people around the world.

The region's silos were full when Russia pulled out of the agreement in mid-July. Missiles and drones struck the next day, taking aim at storage sites, transportation infrastructure and random buildings. Ukraine's air defenses deflected most of the hits, but every day a handful made it through.

Last week's attacks marked the first time Odesa's historic city center was hit since the war started.

Mayor Hennadii Trukhanov was unequivocal in a furious video message directed to Russians after Sun-

day's strike on the cathedral, showing rescue workers carefully removing a damaged icon from the ruins.

"If you only knew how much Odesa hates you. Not only hates you. Despises you. You're fighting small children, the Orthodox church. Your rockets even fall on cemeteries," he said. "You must hardly know us Odessans. You will not break us, just make us angrier."

Another missile crashed into the House of Scientists, a mansion that once belonged to the Tolstoy family and was transformed into an institution to unite scholars and researchers. A third hit administrative and apartment buildings.

The targets were within 200 meters (yards) of the port. Shelest believes the cathedral was hit by accident, but that's little consolation amid the destruction.

Since Catherine the Great transformed Odesa into an international seaport in 1794, the city's identity has as its foundations the sea, cosmopolitan tolerance and an innate sense of humor. It had one of Europe's largest concentrations of Jews, who before a series of pogroms made up about a quarter of the population, and large communities of Greek and Italian sailors whose descendants remain to this day.

A week of attacks shook those foundations for Iryna Grets, who counts at least three generations of family in the city.

"Every morning, I go to the sea, to witness the sunrise. But today, I didn't have the strength to go to the sea because we didn't sleep all night. You see, we haven't been sleeping all week," said Grets, who decided instead to visit each site bombarded on Sunday.

She started at the cathedral, at the center of life in Odesa. The original structure was destroyed under Josef Stalin in 1936 as part of his campaign against religion. When Ukraine gained independence, residents took up a fund to restore it to its original condition. In 2010, the new building was consecrated by Patriarch Kirill, leader of the Russian Orthodox Church.

Kirill, whose church has aligned itself with Russian President Vladimir Putin, has since repeatedly justified the war in Ukraine.

"Each rocket that today arrives on the territory of Ukraine is perceived by its inhabitants as your 'blessing' on their children," Archbishop Viktor Bykov, the vicar of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church's Odesa Diocese, wrote in an open letter to Kirill.

The bitter pilgrimage by Grets had less to do with religion than with mourning, and many others made the same trip on Sunday. Some attended a service outside the damaged cathedral. Even more came to clear debris, instead of enjoying the famed beaches despite the beckoning summer sun.

"This is my city, it's a part of me, it's my soul, it's my heart," Grets said.

Then, fury overcoming her, she abruptly switched to Ukrainian: "Odesa will never be part of Russia."

Hinnant reported from Paris.

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

Trevor Reed, Marine veteran freed from Russia in 2022, is injured while fighting in Ukraine, US says

By ERIC TUCKER and MATTHEW LEE Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — A former U.S. Marine who was released from Russia in a prisoner swap last year has been injured while fighting in Ukraine, the State Department said Tuesday.

Trevor Reed was wounded several weeks ago, according to a person familiar with the situation who was not authorized to discuss the matter by name and spoke to The Associated Press on condition of anonymity. He has been taken to Germany for medical care, said State Department spokesman Vedant Patel.

U.S. officials said little about Reed's injury or presence in Ukraine beyond noting that his activities weren't on behalf of the U.S. government. But Reed's decision to take up arms during Russia's war with Ukraine potentially complicates U.S. efforts to win the release of two other Americans still detained by Moscow, Wall Street Journal reporter Evan Gershkovich and corporate security executive Paul Whelan. His fighting

also risked a potentially dire scenario if he'd been captured and returned to Russian custody after the U.S. had worked to get him home.

"As I indicated, we have been incredibly clear warning American citizens, American nationals, not to travel to Ukraine, let alone participate in fighting," Patel said. "As you know, we are not in a place to provide assistance to evacuate private U.S. citizens from Ukraine, including those Americans who may decide to travel to Ukraine to participate in fighting."

The severity of Reed's injury was not immediately clear, but Patel said he was transported out of Ukraine by a non-governmental organization. He was taken to Landstuhl Regional Medical Center, a level II trauma care center located near Ramstein Air Base, according to two U.S. officials who spoke on the condition of anonymity to discuss sensitive matters.

It's unclear how many Americans have volunteered to fight in Ukraine. But the conflict has attracted fighters from around the world, with Ukrainian authorities saying thousands of volunteers from dozens of countries have joined their cause. Ukraine established an international fighting force just days after Russia's February 2022 invasion.

Reed was released from Russian custody in an April 2022 prisoner swap in exchange for a Russian pilot, Konstantin Yaroshenko, who'd been serving a 20-year federal sentence for conspiring to smuggle cocaine into the U.S.

Reed was arrested in the summer of 2019 after Russian authorities said he assaulted an officer while being driven by police to a police station following a night of heavy drinking. He was later sentenced to nine years in prison.

The U.S. government later designated him as unjustly detained and pressed for his release while his family has asserted his innocence. Relatives also were concerned about his deteriorating health. At one point he said he was coughing up blood while in custody. He also staged a hunger strike to protest the conditions under which he was held.

The Messenger was first to report Reed's injury.

Associated Press writer Tara Copp in Washington and Yuras Karmanau in Tallinn, Estonia, contributed to this report.

China removes its outspoken foreign minister during a bumpy time in relations with the US

BEIJING (AP) — China removed its sometimes outspoken foreign minister on Tuesday and replaced him with his predecessor at an unusually scheduled meeting, a move that has fueled rumors about what might be going on with the nation's Communist Party elite.

The step to remove Qin Gang after less than a year and replace him with Wang Yi doesn't appear to signal any significant change in the hard-edged foreign policy adopted in recent years by leader Xi Jinping, who oversees the world's second-largest economy — and a nation that is the primary U.S. rival for international influence. U.S. officials said as much about Qin's departure after learning of the move.

In its announcement on the national evening news, state broadcaster CCTV gave no reason for Qin's removal. Within minutes, all mentions and photos of him had been removed from the Foreign Ministry's website. However, he was still referred to on the central government's main site as a Cabinet-level state councilor, a possible sign that his political career wasn't entirely over.

He had disappeared from public view almost a month ago, and the Foreign Ministry has provided no information about his status. That is in keeping with the ruling Communist Party's standard approach to personnel matters within a highly opaque political system where the media and free speech are severely restricted. The party rarely reveals its process or its way of thinking when it makes a move such as this.

The ministry made no comment at its daily briefing on Tuesday.

The move comes amid a foreign backlash against China's increasingly aggressive foreign policy, of which Qin was a chief proponent. That now includes Chinese political and economic support for Russia in its war on Ukraine, the signing of a secretive security pact with the Solomon Islands that could give it a military

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foothold in the South Pacific and the rejection of demands for more information about the origins of the COVID-19 pandemic that began in China in late 2019.

Adding to the mystery around Qin's removal: It was approved at an unusually scheduled meeting of the Standing Committee of China's rubber-stamp legislature, the National People's Congress, which normally gathers at the end of the month. That produced speculation about what might be going on behind the scenes — and whether it was related to Qin directly and rumors that have swirled on Chinese websites about his personal life, to policy overall or to both.

WHO IS QIN GANG?

Qin, who comes from a powerful family of party luminaries, last appeared on camera at a meeting with Sri Lanka's foreign minister in Beijing on June 25. The Foreign Ministry briefly chalked his absence up to bad health, but — in another tactic sometimes used by the party and government — scrubbed the reference from its official news conference transcript and has said since that it had no information.

Wang, Qin's predecessor and now replacement, had previously served as China's top diplomat in his capacity as head of the party's office of foreign affairs. Without other strong contenders, it appeared likely he would retain that position at least for the short term. He was in South Africa on Tuesday for diplomatic meetings and was due in Turkey on Wednesday.

The shakeup in China's diplomatic lineup does not necessarily indicate a changed foreign policy, including continued support for Russia's war against Ukraine. However, it follows U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken's trip to Beijing in a bid to revive a relationship riven over trade, human rights, technology, Taiwan and China's territorial claims in the South China Sea.

Earlier in his career, Qin had served as ministry spokesperson. During that time, he gained a reputation for criticism of the West and rejection of all accusations against China. That came to be known as "wolf warrior" diplomacy, after the name of a nationalistic movie franchise.

He later headed the ministry's protocol department, during which he reportedly came to the attention of Xi, the head of state and Communist Party chief. Qin was next appointed ambassador to Washington from July 2021 to January of this year, a relatively short term that presaged his rise to the head of the Chinese diplomatic service.

"Qin Gang's fall from grace was as unexpected and abrupt as his elevation over the heads of many experienced diplomats," said Danny Russel, who was the top U.S. diplomat for Asia during the Obama administration and is currently vice president of the Asia Society Policy Institute in New York. "Since both moves are attributed to China's leader, this episode will surely be seen as an embarrassing lapse in judgment at the top."

HOW THIS MIGHT AFFECT US-CHINA RELATIONS

The U.S. has launched a flurry of diplomacy with China over recent weeks in hopes of reviving relations that have sunk to a historic low. In Washington on Tuesday, a U.S. official who spoke on condition of anonymity to discuss the Biden administration's internal thinking said he does not believe Qin's ouster will have a significant impact. Later in the day, the administration said the move would not affect any U.S. intent to promote high-level dialogue with the Chinese.

"It is up to China to decide who their foreign minister is," Vedant Patel, State Department deputy spokesman said Tuesday. "We will continue to engage with Foreign Minister Wang Yi and other Chinese officials and continue to believe that keeping lines of communication open are incredibly important."

That has most recently been reflected in visits to Beijing by Blinken, Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen and climate envoy John Kerry, who met with officials, including Premier Li Qiang, last week. Centenarian former top diplomat Henry Kissinger, revered in China for helping break the ice in relations in the early 1970s, also made the trip and was granted a sit-down with Xi.

China has an opaque political system abetted by strict controls over the media and civil society, making it difficult to gauge how Chinese leaders see the relationship at this point.

Xi is the most authoritarian and nationalistic party head in decades and has taken a hard line on claims to sovereignty over the South China Sea and threatened to attack the self-governing island democracy

of Taiwan. He rejects foreign criticism of China's crackdown on political and cultural expression against Muslim and Buddhist minorities and in the former British colony of Hong Kong.

QIN'S RHETORIC WAS SOMETIMES UNRESTRAINED

During his time as spokesperson and minister, Qin defended those positions in terms that sometimes verged on the strident, saying in March that, "If the United States does not hit the brake, but continues to speed down the wrong path, no amount of guardrails can prevent derailing and there surely will be conflict and confrontation."

"Such competition is a reckless gamble, with the stakes being the fundamental interests of the two peoples and even the future of humanity," Qin said.

However, a window of opportunity remains open, particularly if Xi makes a state visit to the U.S. later this year, when he is expected to attend the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation forum summit in San Francisco, said Wang Yiwei, director of the Institute of International Affairs at Beijing's Renmin University.

"If the window of opportunity could be grasped to pull China-U.S. relations back on track, the relations might not spin out of control next year," when the U.S. will mainly focus on the election season, Wang said.

Conflicts have sometimes overshadowed the massive economic and trade relationship, but the sides can still work together on relatively politically neutral issues such as climate change, Wang said.

Both countries are seeking for a way to manage "the most important and complicated bilateral relations in the world," said Zhu Feng, dean of the School of International Studies at prestigious Nanjing University in eastern China.

AP Diplomatic Writer Matthew Lee and AP journalists Suzan Frazer in Turkey and Gerald Imray in South Africa contributed to this report.

Jill Biden marks US reentry into UNESCO with a flag-raising ceremony in Paris

By THOMAS ADAMSON Associated Press

PARIS (AP) — U.S. first lady Jill Biden attended a flag-raising ceremony at UNESCO in Paris on Tuesday, marking Washington's official reentry into the U.N. agency after a controversial five-year hiatus.

The Stars and Stripes was hoisted up outside UNESCO's headquarters with the Eiffel Tower on the skyline to rousing applause and a rendition of the national anthem. Before the flag-raising, Biden made remarks about the importance of American leadership in preserving cultural heritage and empowering education and science across the globe.

"I was honored to join you today as we raise the flag of the United States, the symbol of our commitment to global collaboration and peace," Biden said. She said that this move was an example of President Joe Biden's pledge about "restoring our leadership on the world stage."

"We are so proud to rejoin UNESCO," she proclaimed, acknowledging that "as a teacher I'm a little biased."

The United States had announced its intention to rejoin UNESCO in June, and the organization's 193 member states earlier this month voted to approve the U.S. reentry. Tuesday's ceremony, which also featured a speech by UNESCO Director-General Audrey Azoulay, formally signified the U.S. becoming the 194th member — and flag proprietor — at the agency.

We are putting "the Star Spangled banner back where it belongs," Azoulay said.

"In the time of divisions, rifts and existential threats, we reaffirm our union here today," Azoulay also said, referring to current global political instabilities. "Together we will be stronger."

"The return of the United States has a meaning that is bigger than UNESCO," she added.

Azoulay emphasized the significance of the move for multilateralism and "universality" as a whole — in a speech that name-checked the war in Ukraine. She said the momentum of UNESCO will grow with the reintegration of the U.S., thereby strengthening the organization's initiatives throughout the world.

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The U.N. agency's special envoy Forest Whitaker, the American actor, also gave a speech praising the spirit of peace through education that "could not have been possible without UNESCO."

The U.S. decision to return to Paris-based UNESCO was based mainly on concerns that China has filled a leadership gap since Washington withdrew during the Trump administration. This development underscores the broader geopolitical dynamics at play, particularly the growing influence of China in international institutions.

The U.S. exit from UNESCO in 2017 cited an alleged anti-Israel bias within the organization. The decision followed a 2011 move by UNESCO to include Palestine as a member state, which led the U.S. and Israel to cease financing the agency. The U.S. withdrawal became official a year later in 2018.

In preparation for its return, the Biden administration requested \$150 million for the 2024 budget to go toward UNESCO dues and arrears, with plans for similar requests in the ensuing years until the full debt of \$619 million is paid off. This represents a significant portion of UNESCO's annual operating budget of \$534 million, highlighting the substantial financial role the U.S. played in the agency before its departure.

Before its withdrawal, the U.S. was the single biggest funder of UNESCO, contributing 22% of the agency's overall funding.

This is the second time the U.S. has returned to UNESCO after a period of withdrawal. The country previously left the organization in 1984 under the Reagan administration, citing mismanagement, corruption and perceived advancement of Soviet interests. It rejoined in 2003 under George W. Bush's presidency.

Jill Biden, who teaches English and writing at a Virginia community college, brings with her a passion for education and personal experience in the field to represent the United States in Paris. In the following days, her visit will also serve to pay tribute to American history and cultural heritage in France.

On Wednesday, Biden will go to the Brittany American Cemetery to honor the U.S. soldiers who lost their lives during World War II. This tribute will serve as a solemn reminder of the shared history and sacrifices that bind the U.S. and France together.

She will conclude her trip to France at the renowned Mont-Saint-Michel, a UNESCO world heritage site, to underscore the importance of preserving heritage locations around the world. Her visit to the iconic site will serve to highlight the shared global responsibility in safeguarding global cultural treasures, according to her program.

DeSantis cuts a third of his presidential campaign staff as he mounts urgent reset

By STEVE PEOPLES and MICHELLE L. PRICE Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Republican presidential contender Ron DeSantis is cutting far more campaign staff than previously thought as he works to reset his stumbling campaign amid unexpected financial trouble.

DeSantis, long considered former President Donald Trump's chief rival in the GOP's 2024 primary contest, has cut a third of his campaign staff — or 38 people, according to campaign aides who spoke on the condition of anonymity to discuss internal campaign strategy.

The dramatic staffing cuts include the "less than 10" employees that the DeSantis team revealed letting go earlier in the month just as federal filings showed that his campaign was burning through cash at an unsustainable rate, even before launching a substantial paid advertising campaign.

"Following a top-to-bottom review of our organization, we have taken additional, aggressive steps to streamline operations and put Ron DeSantis in the strongest position to win this primary and defeat Joe Biden," DeSantis campaign manager Generra Peck said in a statement. "DeSantis is going to lead the Great American Comeback and we're ready to hit the ground running as we head into an important month of the campaign."

Revelations about the staffing cuts came on the same day DeSantis was involved in a multi-car accident on a Tennessee highway in the midst of a fundraising tour. The Florida governor was not hurt, according to his campaign and law enforcement. A female staff member was treated for a minor injury.

The latest revelations mark a new low for a presidential candidate who entered the Republican primary

this spring with sky-high expectations as Republican primary voters signaled a willingness to move on from Trump. Yet two months later, the 44-year-old DeSantis stands a distant second in most polls as GOP operatives and donors alike question his readiness for the national stage.

Trump's allies immediately celebrated the news of DeSantis' latest campaign struggles on social media. "TURMOIL IN TALLAHASSEE," the Trump campaign tweeted.

Still, with the first votes of the primary season still six months away, DeSantis has time to recover as Trump's allies brace for the possibility of a third criminal indictment.

DeSantis' team has quietly expressed confidence for months that voters would eventually tire of Trump's escalating legal troubles and personal baggage. But that same baggage, playing out in the U.S. legal system just as the GOP primary intensifies, is leaving precious little oxygen for him and his rivals to break through. And Trump's standing with Republican primary voters seems to be growing stronger with every new legal challenge.

Still, DeSantis' team has raised a stunning \$150 million for his presidential ambitions so far. The vast majority, \$130 million, has gone to a super PAC run by allies who cannot legally coordinate with the campaign.

The DeSantis campaign itself raised more than \$20 million in the first six weeks he was in the race, though federal filings released over the weekend revealed that he and his team had burned through more than \$8 million in a spending spree that included more than 100 paid staffers, a large security detail and luxury travel.

The latest staffing cuts were first reported by Politico.

Peoples reported from New York.

Takeaways from AP's report on financial hurdles in state crime victim compensation programs

By MIKE CATALINI and CLAUDIA LAUER Associated Press

Thousands of crime victims each year are confronted with the difficult financial reality of state compensation programs that are billed as safety nets to offset costs like funerals, medical care, relocation and other needs.

Many programs require victims to pay for those expenses first and exhaust all means of payment before they reimburse costs, often at rates that don't fully cover expenses. The programs also struggle under often unstable funding mechanisms that leave their budgets vulnerable to shortages and the changing priorities of lawmakers, especially those that rely on court fees and fines as their main source or only source of funding.

Pamela White turned to Louisiana's victim compensation board for help when her son, Dararius Evans, was killed in a shooting a few days after Christmas in 2019. She was met with administrative hurdles, a denial that blamed her son for his own death, a lengthy appeal — all while paying up front through a personal loan that gathered interest as she waited.

In the end, White won her appeal and was awarded \$5,000 — the maximum amount available at the time, but it didn't cover her full loan or the interest.

As part of a series examining crime victim compensation programs, The Associated Press found racial inequities and other barriers in how many states deny claims. The AP also found victims in a dozen states were the driving force in legislative reforms to address some of those barriers.

Here is a look at key takeaways from the third installment in that series.

PROGRAMS OFTEN PUT THE UPFRONT FINANCIAL BURDEN ON VICTIMS

Advocates say most states' requirements that victims pay upfront can leave out people living on the edge of financial disaster who are often most vulnerable to a crime.

"So many families often can't rely solely on that reimbursement model. ... Those funds take months to arrive to families," said Aswad Thomas, vice president of the Alliance for Safety and Justice, a nonprofit

working to reform victim compensation and other aspects of the criminal justice system.

Some programs offer to directly pay funeral homes or medical providers. And many states offer emergency awards to help victims through the immediate aftermath of crime, but advocates say those awards are restrictive, capped as low as \$500, and are deducted from any later award. About a dozen states don't offer emergency awards at all.

Programs also require victims to exhaust other payment options first, like insurance, lawsuit awards or even crowdfunding. If a family member or friend starts a GoFundMe drive, it could cause some programs to reduce an award or claw back already granted money.

MANY STATES HAVEN'T INCREASED AWARD AMOUNTS IN DECADES

The Associated Press found that the maximum awards states provide ranged from \$10,000 to \$190,000, though two states did not have overall caps on awards. Some of those amounts haven't been increased since the 1970s.

Programs have lagged less in raising limits on individual expenses like funerals. But many states don't offer enough money to cover the actual cost of burying a loved one. The National Funeral Directors Association estimated the median cost of a funeral with burial vault was more than \$9,400 in 2021. Only a dozen states offer enough to cover that median cost.

FUNDING FOR STATE PROGRAMS IS OFTEN UNSTABLE

About a dozen states get most or all of their funding from recurring state budget dollars. But many states have put the onus of paying for the programs on people in the criminal justice system – court fines, taking a percentage of prisoner wages or prison commissary fees.

Those funding streams can fluctuate greatly. Temporary court closures early in the COVID-19 pandemic, and well-intentioned prison and criminal justice reforms aimed at reducing incarceration have caused shortfalls in some states that rely heavily on court or prison fines and fees for funding.

A handful of state legislatures have used one-time general fund infusions to plug budget holes created by the downstream effects of those reforms. In Hawaii, shortfalls nearly caused the compensation program to close in 2022 until an influx of general funds "saved" the program, according to an annual report.

Catalini reported from Trenton, New Jersey. Lauer reported from Philadelphia.

The Associated Press receives support from the Public Welfare Foundation for reporting focused on criminal justice. The AP is solely responsible for all content.

DeSantis is unhurt in a car accident in Tennessee while traveling to presidential campaign events

By KIMBERLEE KRUESI and MICHELLE L. PRICE Associated Press

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (AP) — Florida Gov. Ron DeSantis was involved in a multi-car accident on Tuesday in Tennessee but was uninjured as he traveled in a motorcade to a campaign stop for his 2024 presidential bid.

The chain reaction crash happened before 8:15 a.m. when traffic slowed on Interstate 75 in Chattanooga, causing four cars in the motorcade to hit one another, police said. All the vehicles involved in the crash were government vehicles taking DeSantis and his team to his scheduled event, police said.

The Republican White House hopeful was not hurt, according to Chattanooga police, Florida law enforcement protecting the governor and DeSantis campaign spokesperson Bryan Griffin. DeSantis continued on to the campaign event. A female staff member who suffered a minor injury in the crash was treated at the event, police said.

The governor's staff and the Florida Department of Law Enforcement's agents, who are required by Florida law to provide security for the governor and his immediate family, "all have been cleared with no significant injuries," department spokeswoman Gretl Plessinger said. One of the department's agents was driving the governor's vehicle, she said.

Representatives for DeSantis' campaign did not offer more details about the accident. A spokesperson

for the Florida governor's office deferred questions about the accident to the campaign.

DeSantis was scheduled to hold events throughout central and eastern Tennessee as he prioritizes Super Tuesday states in his campaigning. Super Tuesday, held on March 5 next year, is when the largest number of delegates are up for grabs of any day in the primary cycle.

Earlier this month, DeSantis addressed more than 1,800 attendees at a state GOP dinner in Nashville.

The Florida governor, who has trailed front-runner Donald Trump in the GOP presidential contest, was expected to be at a fundraiser at a private home in Chattanooga on Tuesday. Hosts for the fundraiser were to pay \$10,000 per couple for the event, while co-hosts were paying \$5,000 and other attendees were paying \$2,000 each, according to the Chattanooga Times Free Press.

DeSantis was expected to attend additional fundraisers on Tuesday in Knoxville and Franklin.

The Republican candidate has been attending a string of fundraisers lately as his campaign has faced some surprising financial pressures. He was in Utah over the weekend holding fundraisers and in New York last week for an event in the Hamptons.

Just two months after entering the race, DeSantis already has been cutting staff while facing new questions about his aggressive spending, his media strategy and his apparent willingness to brawl with any and all foes except for Trump, the one person he must defeat to claim the GOP's 2024 presidential nomination.

"The DeSantis campaign is recalibrating. It's clear it needs to," said Republican strategist Terry Sullivan, who managed Marco Rubio's 2016 presidential campaign. "But at the end of the day, they're still better positioned than any other challenger to Donald Trump, times 10."

DeSantis' team has quietly expressed confidence for months that voters would eventually tire of Trump's escalating legal troubles and personal baggage. But that baggage, playing out in the U.S. legal system just as the GOP primary intensifies, is leaving precious little oxygen for his rivals to break through. And Trump's standing with Republican primary voters seems to be growing stronger with every new legal challenge.

Still, DeSantis' team has raised a stunning \$150 million for his presidential ambitions so far. The vast majority, \$130 million, has gone to a super PAC run by allies who cannot legally coordinate with the campaign.

The DeSantis campaign itself raised more than \$20 million in the first six weeks he was in the race, though recently released federal filings revealed that he and his team had burned through more than \$8 million in a spending spree that included more than 100 paid staffers, a large security detail and luxury travel.

This story has been corrected to show DeSantis was in Nashville earlier this month, not last week.

Price reported from Washington. Associated Press writers Meg Kinnard in Houston, Brendan Farrington in Tallahassee, Fla., and Adriana Gomez Licon in Miami contributed to this report.

Follow the AP's coverage of Florida Gov. Ron DeSantis at <https://apnews.com/hub/ron-desantis>.

Land mines are in place around a Russian-occupied nuclear plant in Ukraine, UN watchdog warns

By FELIPE DANA Associated Press

KYIV, Ukraine (AP) — The U.N. atomic watchdog says its monitors at the Russian-occupied Zaporizhzhia Nuclear Power Plant reported seeing anti-personnel mines around the site as Ukraine's military pursues a counteroffensive against the Kremlin's entrenched forces after 17 months of war.

The International Atomic Energy Agency said its team observed the mines Sunday in a restricted area that is off-limits to the plant's Ukrainian staff. The agency did not directly attribute the placement of the mines to the Russians but said its experts were told "it is a military decision, and in an area controlled by military."

"Having such explosives on the site is inconsistent with the IAEA safety standards and nuclear security guidance and creates additional psychological pressure on plant staff," Rafael Mariano Grossi, the agency's director general, said in a statement late Monday.

However, any detonation of the mines, which were facing away from the plant and located between its internal and external perimeter barriers, "should not affect the site's nuclear safety and security systems," the statement said.

The IAEA has repeatedly expressed concern that the war could cause a potential radiation leak from the facility, which is one of world's 10 biggest nuclear power stations. The plant's six reactors have been shut down for months, but it still needs power and qualified staff to operate crucial cooling systems and other safety features.

Ukraine's military intelligence said last month without providing evidence that Russia is planning a "large-scale provocation" at the nuclear power plant in the southeast of the country and had placed suspected explosives on the roof. Russia, in turn, has alleged without offering evidence that Ukraine was planning a false flag attack involving radioactive materials.

The IAEA statement said that the Russian occupiers still haven't granted it access to the roofs of the reactors and their turbine halls.

Meanwhile, Ukrainian authorities said Tuesday that air defenses intercepted Iranian-made Shahed drones that Russia fired at Kyiv overnight, in what was the sixth drone attack on the capital this month. No casualties or damage were reported, according to Serhii Popko, head of the Kyiv regional military administration head.

The Russian Defense Ministry said a Russian patrol ship destroyed two Ukrainian sea drones that attacked it in the Black Sea early Tuesday. It said the crew of the Sergey Kotov patrol ship of the Russian Black Sea Fleet wasn't hurt in the attack 370 kilometers (200 nautical miles) southwest of the Crimean port of Sevastopol.

Ukrainian officials, in turn, said that Russians used cluster munitions in an attack on Kostiantynivka, in the eastern Donetsk region, late Monday.

Rockets hit a recreational pond, killing a 10-year-old boy and wounding four other children ranging in age from 5 to 12, according to Pavlo Kyrylenko, head of the Donetsk regional military administration.

Russia and Ukraine have both used cluster munitions throughout the war, and the U.S. has recently provided them to Ukraine.

Western analysts said Tuesday that Russia's recent attacks on Odesa and other parts of southern Ukraine have employed missiles that were originally developed to destroy aircraft carriers.

Each missile weighs 5.5 metric tons, the U.K. Ministry of Defense said in an assessment.

In only a week, Russia has fired dozens of missiles and drones at the Odesa region, on Monday hitting a cathedral. The strikes have come since Moscow broke off from a landmark grain deal a week ago. Odesa is a key Ukrainian hub for exporting grain.

The attacks have damaged several grain silos at Chornomorsk Port, south of Odesa, and Russian drones have hit docks on the Danube River, approximately 200 meters (650 feet) from the Romanian border, according to the assessment.

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

Extremist attacks wounded Paris. Here's why the city turned to the 2024 Olympics to heal

By JOHN LEICESTER Associated Press

PARIS (AP) — For the mayor of Paris, the city's journey to next year's Olympic Games included an epiphany born of brutality: the slaughter of 17 people by gunmen acting in the names of al-Qaida and the Islamic State group.

Anne Hidalgo says the 2015 attacks at a provocative satirical newspaper and a kosher Parisian supermarket were "truly fundamental" in steering her to the idea of bringing the Games back to the French capital for the first time since 1924. With the country outraged and hurting from the bloodshed, she saw the Olympics as an opportunity for France to rebound and heal.

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"What really scared me at that moment was to hear young people, even children, explain that the terrorists were heroes and that Charlie was guilty of having pushed freedom of expression too far," Hidalgo says, referring to Charlie Hebdo, the newspaper that repeatedly caricatured the Muslim Prophet Muhammad.

"I said to myself that things were really, really, really bad, and that we absolutely had to find something that also provides perspective, momentum, to young people, to the country. And the Games can be this unifying moment."

Rarely has that need been more pressing for France, a country that has lurched from crisis to crisis since 2017, when Paris was chosen to host the Games. And seldom have the Olympics been as eagerly anticipated, coming after the global losses and separations caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, and against the backdrop of war in Ukraine.

The picture-postcard city aims to use its charms to wow audiences, starting with an unprecedented waterborne opening extravaganza on July 26, 2024.

But the context, in France and beyond, is tricky.

Rioting across France last month, triggered by the fatal police shooting of a teenager in the Paris suburbs, laid bare social, racial and political divides that undercut the image of a confident, can-do France that Games organizers want to project.

Before those six nights of violence, there were also sustained protests this year against President Emmanuel Macron's pension reforms. Taken together, the unrest raised fears of more turbulence during the Games. Also concerning are investigations by French anti-corruption police into the awarding of a small number of Olympic contracts.

Organizers insist they remain on track to deliver safe and inclusive Games that also aim to be greener than ever, in part by using existing or temporary venues instead of building new ones.

With projected spending of 8.8 billion euros (\$9.7 billion), the Games should cost considerably less than Tokyo's \$15.4 billion splurge on the pandemic-delayed 2021 Olympics.

Paris also needs dice to roll its way.

Its Games will be reliant on crowded public transport networks and on transport workers not seizing the golden opportunity to strike for better conditions.

Using Paris monuments as outdoor venues will offer striking visuals. But athletes and spectators could suffer if France endures another of its worsening heat waves.

And the planned opening ceremony for half a million spectators, most watching for free, along the River Seine has eye-popping security needs.

"The image of France is at stake," chief Games organizer Tony Estanguet acknowledged in an exclusive Associated Press interview.

The Olympics have a lot riding on Paris, too.

With Ukrainian athletes saying they would rather stay away than face competitors from aggressor Russia and its military ally Belarus, the International Olympic Committee's ideal of sport as a vector for human togetherness is under duress.

Hidalgo is among Ukraine's international supporters pushing for a ban on Russian athletes. But that would go against the grain for Thomas Bach, the IOC president whose fencing career was hurt by a boycott of the 1980 Moscow Games after the Soviet Union's invasion of Afghanistan. Bach could not defend his Olympic team title with West Germany.

The IOC president has sought to tiptoe through the geopolitical minefield with a pathway that could see Russians and Belarusians qualify as neutral competitors.

But that could sour the mood in Paris.

"Were Paris to pretend that nothing is happening, lots of countries, lots of Europeans, have said they will boycott," Hidalgo warns. "There is still one year to go. I really hope that Ukraine wins. I really hope the war will be behind us."

For global TV audiences, the marriage of sports and Parisian landmarks promises compelling viewing: Beach volleyball played by the Eiffel Tower. Skateboarding, breakdancing, BMX freestyle and three-on-three basketball unfolding at Place de la Concorde, where France's last king, Louis XVI, was beheaded in

1793. Horse riding at the former royal palace in Versailles. The list goes on.

"They will not be Games that we're used to seeing," Estanguet promised.

The first post-pandemic Olympics also mark the return of full-size crowds. Nearly 70% of the 10 million tickets flew off shelves in the two first rounds of sales.

"Knowing that everyone from around the world is flocking to one place to watch sport, it will be so cool to have that back," says British rower Helen Glover, a two-time Olympic champion aiming for her fourth Summer Games.

Paris is also the test bed for a new IOC model of Olympic hosting.

After decades of excess in other host cities, which sank billions into venues that quickly outlived their usefulness, the Games now aim to adapt better to their hosts, and less the other way around. The only competition venues that Paris has purpose-built are an aquatics center and a climbing facility. Both are in disadvantaged northern outskirts that lack sports facilities.

The IOC hopes Paris' experience will revive appetites in other cities to bid for future Olympics. Rome, Hamburg, Germany, and Budapest, Hungary, all dropped out when Paris was bidding, leaving the committee embarrassingly short of suitors. Paris only wanted 2024. The other remaining bidder, Los Angeles, agreed to host in 2028.

The 10,500 Olympians — for the first time evenly split between men and women — now have one year left to ready themselves for 18 days of competition.

And France has a year to conjure up a celebration that would complete its journey since 2015 and emphatically respond to the extremism that sought to silence Charlie Hebdo. Paris was also attacked again later that year with follow-up assaults on the Bataclan concert hall and other sites that killed another 130 people.

"For us, the Games have been a way of looking ahead and also of sending a message, I think, to the whole world that, 'Yes, we were attacked. Yes, we suffered perhaps some of the cruelest things,'" says Deputy Mayor Pierre Rabadan, in charge of Olympic planning at City Hall.

"But voilà," he adds. "We're not giving up — not in our way of thinking, nor in the way that we are and nor in welcoming the world."

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

911 workers say centers are understaffed, struggling to hire and plagued by burnout

By CLAUDIA LAUER Associated Press

Emergency call center workers say their centers are understaffed, struggling to fill vacancies and plagued by worker burnout, according to a national survey released Tuesday.

The survey conducted by the National Emergency Number Association in conjunction with Carbyne, a cloud technology company focused on emergency services, polled about 850 workers from 911 call centers across the country. It found that many were experiencing burnout, handling more frequent call surges and felt undertrained. The findings show the widespread nature of staffing problems that have been laid bare in some communities in recent years.

In St Louis this month, callers tried desperately to report that a woman was trapped in her car under a fallen tree but said they couldn't get through for nearly half an hour. During the same storm in the suburbs, it took a woman 45 minutes to report that her 5-year-old son had been badly hurt by a tree falling on their home. He died, but he was alive when his mother started calling 911, according to a family spokeswoman. Meanwhile, in New York City, panicked callers this month tried to report a Department of Transportation truck that had caught fire and exploded, but said they received busy signals or were sent to voicemail.

Nationwide staffing shortages that in many cases mirror the shortages in police departments and law enforcement agencies have led to longer wait times or trouble reaching operators at centers around the

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country, according to experts.

"The numbers we're seeing right now are really alarming. It was a major impetus of why we did this study. I knew it was going to be high, but 82% of respondents said their centers were understaffed," said Karima Holmes, vice president and head of public safety at Carbyne and former director of the Office of Unified Communications in Washington, D.C.

Holmes said staffing issues in many centers worsened during the COVID-19 pandemic, and like many jobs in public safety, it suffered from image problems after the 2020 police killing of George Floyd in Minneapolis.

"People are not coming to the job because of people turning away from wanting to have public safety careers," Holmes said. "But you add to that issues with lower pay, dealing with increased call volumes and people feeling burned out, and it becomes difficult to get people into the profession."

The survey was released at an online national conference of 911 leaders to discuss possible solutions to the staffing crisis and other issues faced by emergency response centers.

Brian Fontes, CEO of NENA, said the group has been advocating for national legislation to change the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics' classification of 911 workers from office or clerical workers to protected service workers like other emergency responders. The change would boost morale by more accurately describing the role of 911 workers and open doors locally to include those workers in benefits programs offered to police and others, he said.

"Iowa has been trying to incorporate them into their state retirement system for public safety personnel, but the legal review came back and said they couldn't do that because of how these employees are classified," Fontes said.

The group has also been advocating for a bill that would spend \$15 billion equipping centers across the country with newer technology that Fontes and others said would address some of the other issues 911 workers noted in the survey.

The technology, called Next Generation 911, would convert the hard-wired centers to digital internet protocol-based technology. Advocates say the technology would mean more precise location tracking, better access to immediate language translation, the ability to text with callers or take video calls to help see what's going on in the case of a medical emergency.

It could also mean fewer outages to phone or computer systems, which 60% of survey respondents said happen regularly. Earlier this month, the 911 center in Oakland, California, experienced two outages that forced operators to manually handle 911 calls and delayed response times.

Holmes said she also thinks the technology upgrade could draw more young people to the industry.

Some other findings in the survey include:

1. About 38% of those surveyed said they were not well prepared to handle active shooter calls. About 25% said they needed more training around mental health calls.

2. About 75% of respondents said the high-stress nature of the job was the major factor in staffing shortages, while about 65% said low pay was a significant deterrent. Fontes said that although pay varies widely, he had heard from workers at a center where new hires had left to work at a fast food restaurant for higher pay.

3. About 53% of workers said they experience high volumes of misdials at their center.

NENA officials said many of those misdials come from programs or features on phones, tablets and other smart devices that are meant to do things like detect crashes or falls, or allow easy connection to emergency services.

For example, some 911 call centers experienced a 30% increase in misdials between May and June after a new feature was added to Android phones that connected users to emergency services if a button on the side of phones was pushed five times in rapid succession. Phones and devices rattling around in bags or dropped to the ground were calling 911 many times without users even knowing, which can take up a line and valuable time from operators who have to figure out whether the calls are legitimate.

Heat wave returns as Greece grapples with more wildfire evacuations

RHODES, Greece (AP) — A third successive heat wave in Greece pushed temperatures back above 40 C (104 F) across parts of the country Tuesday following more nighttime evacuations from fires that have raged out of control for days.

The latest evacuations orders were issued on the islands of Corfu and Evia, while a blaze on the island of Rhodes continued to move inland, torching mountainous forest areas, including part of a nature reserve.

Desperate residents, many with wet towels around their necks to stave off the scorching heat, used shovels to beat back flames approaching their homes, while firefighting planes and helicopters resumed water drops at first light.

Authorities said that more than 20,000 people has been involved in successive evacuations on the island, mostly tourists over the weekend, when fire swept through two coastal areas on the southeast of Rhodes.

The European Union has sent 500 firefighters, 100 vehicles and seven planes from 10 member states, while Turkey, Israel, Egypt and other countries have also sent help.

"For the 12th day, under extreme conditions of heat and strong winds, we are fighting nonstop on dozens of forest fire fronts ... The Greek Fire Service has battled more than 500 fires — more than 50 a day," said Vassilis Kikilias, the minister for climate crisis and civil protection.

In Athens, authorities resumed afternoon closing hours at the ancient Acropolis, as part of broader measures to cope with the high heat.

EU officials have blamed climate change for the increasing frequency and intensity of wildfires across the European continent, noting that 2022 was the second-worst year for wildfire damage on record after 2017.

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Safety net with holes? Programs to help crime victims can leave them fronting bills

By MIKE CATALINI and CLAUDIA LAUER Associated Press

Pamela White stared at the silver tree with twinkling lights while she cleaned out her son's apartment, wondering how in a matter of days she went from celebrating Christmas to having to think about headstones and burial plots.

Her son, Dararius Evans, was an Army reservist and veteran who had survived a deployment in Iraq. A few days after Christmas 2019, the 28-year-old was killed in a shooting outside of Baton Rouge, Louisiana. The shooter was sentenced to life in prison last year.

White and her family, who live outside of New Orleans, turned to Louisiana's victim compensation board for help paying for the unexpected funeral. She was met with administrative hurdles, a denial that blamed her son for his own death, a lengthy appeal — all while paying up front through a personal loan that gathered interest as she waited.

Thousands of crime victims each year are confronted with the difficult financial reality of state compensation programs that are billed as safety nets to offset costs like funerals, medical care, relocation and other needs. Many programs require victims to pay for those expenses first and exhaust all means of payment before they reimburse costs, often at rates that don't fully cover expenses.

The programs also struggle under often unstable funding mechanisms that leave their budgets vulnerable to shortages and the changing priorities of lawmakers. Well-intentioned prison and criminal justice reforms aimed at reducing incarceration have caused shortfalls in some states that rely heavily on court or prison fines and fees for funding.

Advocates say most states' requirement that victims pay upfront can leave out people living on the edge of financial disaster who are often most vulnerable to a crime.

"So many families often can't rely solely on that reimbursement model. ... Those funds take months to

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arrive to families," said Aswad Thomas, vice president of the Alliance for Safety and Justice, a nonprofit working to reform victim compensation and other aspects of the criminal justice system.

Some programs do offer to directly pay funeral homes or medical providers. But for victims in places that don't, the expense can mean not being able to pay rent or having to decline services like counseling because the grocery bill is more pressing.

Programs also require victims to exhaust other payment options first, like insurance, lawsuit awards or even crowdfunding. If a family member or friend starts a GoFundMe drive, it could cause some programs to reduce an award or claw back already granted money.

The wait for help also causes financial strain. While some states report claims are processed within days, others take months or even years. The average processing time in 2022 was three months, according to federal data collected from states.

Andrew LeFevre, the executive director of the Arizona Criminal Justice Commission, which oversees victim compensation and other state programs, said more stable funding sources would mean faster payments and more victims having access to help.

About a dozen states get most or all of their funding from recurring state budget dollars. But many states have put the onus of paying for the programs on people in the criminal justice system – court fines, taking a percentage of prisoner wages or prison commissary fees.

Those funding streams can fluctuate greatly. Temporary court closures early in the pandemic, sentencing reforms and changes to how some prosecutors charge misdemeanor crimes have all meant fewer dollars for many state programs.

LeFevre has been talking to Arizona lawmakers for years about the need for stable funding. Over the last decade, revenue dropped 38% in the state's Criminal Justice Enhancement fund, largely gathered through surcharges on criminal and civil penalties, that pays for compensation and other programs.

Last year, Arizona lawmakers bolstered the program with \$10 million in one-time American Rescue Plan money and supplemented its budget with a recurring \$2 million in general funds. But even that is considerably less than the about \$14 million annually LeFevre estimates the program needs to serve all victims in the state without using criminal justice funds.

"We didn't advertise the program (to victims) ourselves," LeFevre said. "Because the last thing we wanted was to have twice as many victims coming forward and not be able to help them."

Hawaii's program has relied primarily on fines and fees since 1998. But chronic shortfalls nearly forced the program to close in 2022. An influx of general funds from the legislature to pay staff "saved" the program, according to an annual report.

A handful of state legislatures have used one-time general fund infusions to plug budget holes created by the downstream effects of criminal justice reforms.

California's restitution fund fell by about 27% from fiscal year 2021 to 2022. State lawmakers boosted general fund dollars to cover the gap and for the following budget year. But the program still relies partly on the unstable restitution fund, which advocates say makes lawmakers hesitant to expand the program or remove hurdles.

Many states rely heavily on matching dollars they get from the U.S. Justice Department's Office for Victims of Crime. But even its Crime Victims Fund depends on fluctuating criminal fines, penalties, forfeited bail and other special assessments, which has also meant financial uncertainty.

Less money was going to the federal fund after a shift in legal strategy led to more deferred federal prosecutions, usually in white-collar crime cases, which means those cases don't go to court if fines or other conditions are met. Congress addressed that in 2021 by redirecting fines from those pre-prosecution agreements into the fund. Lawmakers also increased the percentage of matching funds states receive annually.

In Louisiana, past funding shortages had left victims approved for compensation waiting sometimes more than a year to receive help. The state started clearing the backlog in 2017 by transferring money saved by lower incarceration costs created through prison reform, which also increased its federal reimbursement.

White's application filed in 2020 wasn't part of the backlog, but it still took close to two years for her

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case to be settled. Each Christmas, she put up the silver tree from Dararius' apartment. And she waited. During her appeal hearing, White pleaded with the board, saying that even if a fight had led to her son's killing, he was still a person who didn't deserve to die.

"I made them think about it. That was a life taken — that wasn't an animal," she said. "It doesn't matter if they were arguing. It doesn't matter if they got in a fistfight. ... It doesn't warrant a person losing their life."

The board reversed its decision and gave White \$5,000 — the most offered for funeral assistance at the time. But the loan White had taken out was for \$6,000 and gained interest as she made the monthly payments.

White was able to weather those payments, but she knows many people can't.

Elizabeth Ruebman, a New Jersey-based victims advocate and former adviser on compensation to the state attorney general, said compensation programs currently are not designed for emergency needs.

"It's slow, it's bureaucratic. We're talking about people who have a crisis right now," she said.

Many states do offer emergency awards to help victims through the immediate aftermath of crime, but advocates say those awards are flawed. They often are restrictive, capped as low as \$500, and are deducted from any later award. About a dozen states don't offer emergency awards at all.

The AP found the maximum awards programs offer ranged from \$10,000 to \$190,000 in individual states. Many programs haven't increased those amounts for decades: North Dakota, Montana and Rhode Island last raised their caps in the 1970s.

Programs have lagged less in raising limits on individual expenses like funerals. But many states don't offer enough money to cover the actual cost of burying a loved one. The National Funeral Directors Association estimated the median cost of a funeral with burial vault was more than \$9,400 in 2021. Only a dozen states offer enough to cover that median cost.

Over the years, some states have increased the amount available for medical bills for people who suffer catastrophic injuries due to a crime. But in some states even those catastrophic amounts only add up to an extra \$10,000, which doesn't cover the lifelong costs of injuries like losing the ability to walk.

New York's program is unique because it doesn't cap reimbursements for medical expenses. That includes lifelong help with replacement prosthetics, extended physical therapy needs or equipment not always covered by medical insurance. Some payouts have reached millions of dollars, administrators said.

Kingsley Joseph was 20 years old and living in New York City when he was shot in the back and paralyzed from the waist down in 2007. His college career was put on hold. He couldn't continue to live with his parents in their walk-up apartment. He couldn't keep his job as a ramp agent at John F. Kennedy International Airport.

Joseph's best option was a nursing facility where many of the other patients were decades older than him. A staff member there told Joseph about New York's victim compensation program.

Joseph applied and was approved for lost wages — money that helped him get an accessible apartment. The program has paid for medical equipment like a therapy bike that helps maintain leg muscle.

New York's program also includes sometimes overlooked expenses, like training for a new career after a catastrophic injury. Joseph received an occupational therapy award that helped him get his advanced medical physics degree.

The 36-year-old now works in cancer care.

"They invested in me as a person," he said. "And I am incredibly grateful for that."

Catalini reported from Trenton, New Jersey. Lauer reported from Philadelphia.

This is the third in an occasional Associated Press series examining crime victim compensation programs. Send confidential tips to ap.org/tips. The Associated Press receives support from the Public Welfare Foundation for reporting focused on criminal justice. The AP is solely responsible for all content.

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Today in History: July 26, Hillary Clinton is nominated

By The Associated Press undefined

Today in History

Today is Wednesday, July 26, the 207th day of 2023. There are 158 days left in the year.

Today's Highlight in History:

On July 26, 2016, Hillary Clinton became the first woman to be nominated for president by a major political party at the Democratic National Convention in Philadelphia.

On this date:

In 1775, the Continental Congress established a Post Office and appointed Benjamin Franklin its Postmaster-General.

In 1847, the western African country of Liberia, founded by freed American slaves, declared its independence.

In 1863, Sam Houston, former president of the Republic of Texas, died in Huntsville at age 70.

In 1945, Winston Churchill resigned as Britain's prime minister after his Conservatives were soundly defeated by the Labour Party. Clement Attlee succeeded him.

In 1947, President Harry S. Truman signed the National Security Act, which reorganized America's armed forces as the National Military Establishment and created the Central Intelligence Agency.

In 1953, Fidel Castro began his revolt against Fulgencio Batista (fool-HEN'-see-oh bah-TEES'-tah) with an unsuccessful attack on an army barracks in eastern Cuba. (Castro ousted Batista in 1959.)

In 1956, the Italian liner Andrea Doria sank off New England, some 11 hours after colliding with the Swedish liner Stockholm. At least 51 people died, from both vessels.

In 1971, Apollo 15 was launched from Cape Kennedy on America's fourth successful manned mission to the moon.

In 1990, President George H.W. Bush signed the Americans with Disabilities Act.

In 2002, the Republican-led House voted to create an enormous Homeland Security Department in the biggest government reorganization in decades.

In 2020, a procession with the casket of the late U.S. Rep. John Lewis crossed the Edmund Pettus Bridge in Alabama, where Lewis and other civil rights marchers were beaten 55 years earlier.

Ten years ago: Ariel Castro, the man who'd imprisoned three women in his Cleveland home, subjecting them to a decade of rapes and beatings, pleaded guilty to 937 counts in a deal to avoid the death penalty. (Castro later committed suicide in prison.) A gunman went on a rampage at a Hialeah, Florida, apartment complex, killing six people before being shot dead by police. Billionaire Texas oilman George P. Mitchell, considered the father of fracking, died at his home in Galveston; he was 94. JJ Cale, whose best songs like "After Midnight" and "Cocaine" were towering hits for other artists, died in La Jolla, California at age 74.

Five years ago: As a deadline set by a federal judge arrived, the Trump administration said more than 1,800 children who were separated from their families at the U.S-Mexico border had been reunited with parents and sponsors; hundreds more remained apart. Shares in Facebook plunged 19 percent, wiping out \$119 billion of the company's Wall Street value; the plunge followed Facebook's warning that its revenue growth would slow significantly. The last six members of a Japanese doomsday cult who remained on death row were executed for a series of crimes in the 1990s, including a gas attack on Tokyo subways that killed 13 people.

One year ago: Former President Donald Trump returned to Washington for the first time since leaving office, vigorously repeating his false election claims that sparked the Jan. 6 insurrection at the nearby Capitol. Russia said it would pull out of the International Space Station after 2024 and focus on building its own orbiting outpost, amid high tensions between Moscow and the West over the fighting in Ukraine. The announcement, which was expected, threw into question the future of the 24-year-old space station. Klondike announced it would be discontinuing the Choco Taco.

Today's Birthdays: Actor Robert Colbert is 92. Actor-singer Darlene Love is 82. Singer Brenton Wood is 82. Rock star Mick Jagger is 80. Movie director Peter Hyams is 80. Actor Helen Mirren is 78. Rock musician

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Roger Taylor (Queen) is 74. Actor Susan George is 73. Olympic gold medal figure skater Dorothy Hamill is 67. Actor Nana Visitor is 66. Actor Kevin Spacey is 64. Rock singer Gary Cherone is 62. Actor Sandra Bullock is 59. Actor-comedian Danny Woodburn is 59. Rock singer Jim Lindberg (Pennywise) is 58. Actor Jeremy Piven is 58. Rapper-reggae singer Wayne Wonder is 57. Actor Jason Statham is 56. Actor Cress Williams is 53. TV host Chris Harrison is 52. Actor Kate Beckinsale is 50. Actor Gary Owen is 50. Rock musician Dan Konopka (OK Go) is 49. Gospel/Contemporary Christian singer Rebecca St. James is 46. Actor Eve Myles is 45. Actor Juliet Rylance is 44. Actor Monica Raymund is 37. Actor Caitlin Gerard is 35. Actor Francia Raisa is 35. Actor Bianca Santos is 33. Actor-singer Taylor Momsen is 30. Actor Elizabeth Gillies is 30.