

Groton Daily Independent

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Saturday, July 29

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

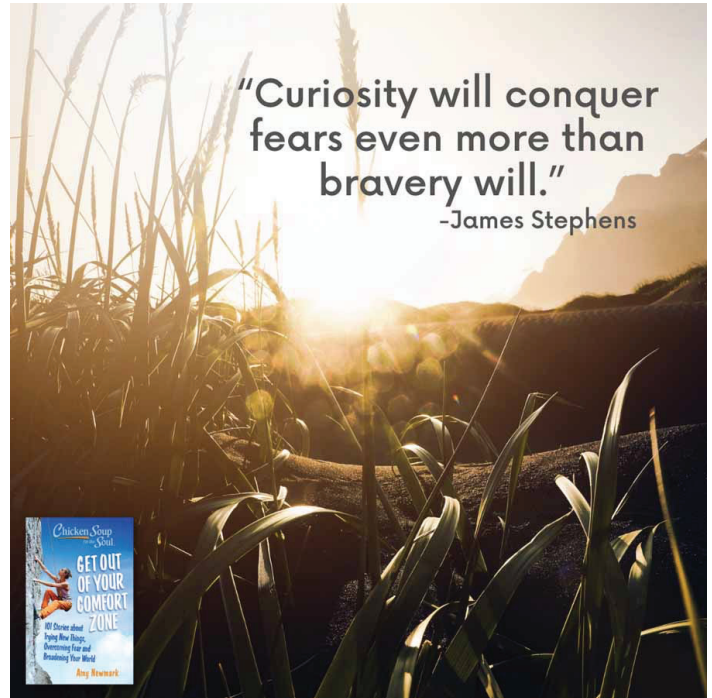
Common Cents Community Thrift Store, 10 a.m. ago 1 p.m.

State Legion Tournament in Redfield

Sunday, July 30

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

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



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

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

St. John's worship, 9 a.m.; Zion Lutheran worship, 11 a.m.

State Legion Tournament in Redfield

Monday, July 31

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

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

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

State Legion Tournament in Redfield

First allowable day for soccer practice

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

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

JULY 24, 2023

World in Brief

senator's actions at a Wednesday press conference raised concerns about his health.

The State Department is ordering U.S. non-emergency government officials and their family members to avoid traveling to Haiti, citing risks of kidnapping, violent crime, civil unrest and a cholera outbreak.

The judge overseeing Hunter Biden's case has ordered the attorneys to bring issues of concern directly to her instead of to the Clerk's Office following allegations that a member of Biden's legal team misrepresented their identity while calling the court.

Ford is recalling about 870,700 F-150s from 2021-2023 over safety concerns surrounding their electric parking brakes, which can activate unexpectedly while the truck is in motion.

General Abdourahmane Tchiani, the head of Niger's presidential guard, has been unveiled as the head of a new transitional government in the wake of a coup which ousted President Mohamed Bazoum.

Wagner Group leader Yevgeny Prigozhin's return to Russia for a summit with African leaders in St. Petersburg was likely approved by President Vladimir Putin because of Wagner's extensive operations in Africa, experts told Newsweek.

In the ongoing war in Ukraine, Kyiv's forces on the counteroffensive are hunting for Russian weak spots all along the 800-mile front line, Ukraine's Defense Ministry adviser said, amid reports of significant Ukrainian breakthroughs in the south and east of the country.

TALKING POINTS

Do you have a troublesome dilemma in your relationship or family? Is your neighbor a nightmare? Are your colleagues stifling your career?

Newsweek's "What Should I Do?" is here to help and we want to hear from you.

"What Should I Do?" is a free advice column to help readers get opinions from experts who can help you find the best way forward.

WHAT TO WATCH IN THE DAY AHEAD

Vice President Kamala Harris is expected to speak at the NAACP's annual convention happening today in Boston.

Former President Donald Trump will be hosting a campaign rally today in Erie, Pennsylvania. Guest speakers will begin addressing the crowd at 4 p.m. ET, and Trump is scheduled to speak at 6 p.m.

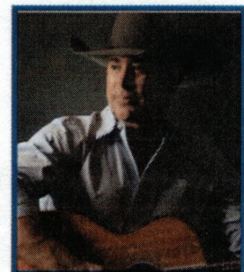
2ND ANNUAL **COLUMBIA FEST** & PARKS DEDICATION “A BLAST FROM THE PAST” **JULY 29, 2023**



COME FOR A FULL DAY OF FUN!

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

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



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2023 South Dakota American Legion State Class "B" Jr. Baseball Tournament

South Dakota American Legion
State Class "B" Jr. Baseball Tournament
Lennox Baseball Park, Lennox, SD
August 4 - August 6, 2023



Elk Point-Jefferson Post 134

SE Runner Up

8/4 Game 1
10:00 AM

Winner/Colome Post 169

West Champion

Belle Fourche Post 32

West Runner Up

8/4 Game 2
30 Min After G1

W.I.N. Post 137

NE Champion

Groton Post 39

NE Runner Up

8/4 Game 3
30 Min After G2

Sioux Falls Christian Post 911

SE Champion

Martin Post 240

West 2nd Runner Up

8/4 Game 4
6:00 PM

Lennox Post 174

Host

8/5 Game 7
30 Min After G6

8/6 Game 11
30 Min After Game 10

Champion

8/5 Game 8
30 Min After G7

Loser Game 7

8/6 Game 10
30 Min After G9

3rd Place

Loser Game 8

Loser Game 1

8/5 Game 5
10:00 AM

Loser Game 2

8/6 Game 9
12:30 PM

5th Place

Loser Game 3

8/5 Game 6
30 Min After G5

Tournament MVP:

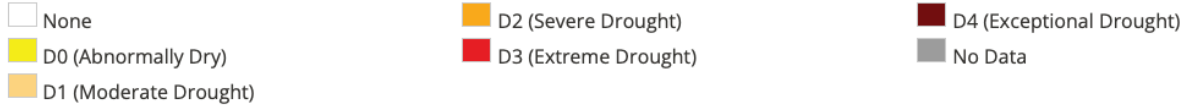
Porter T. Talcott Sportsmanship Award:

Big Stick Award:

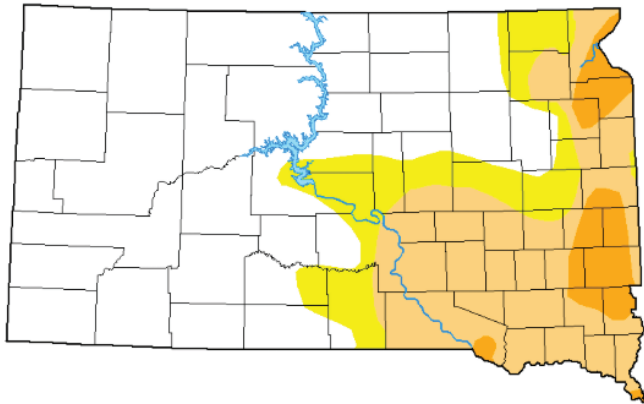
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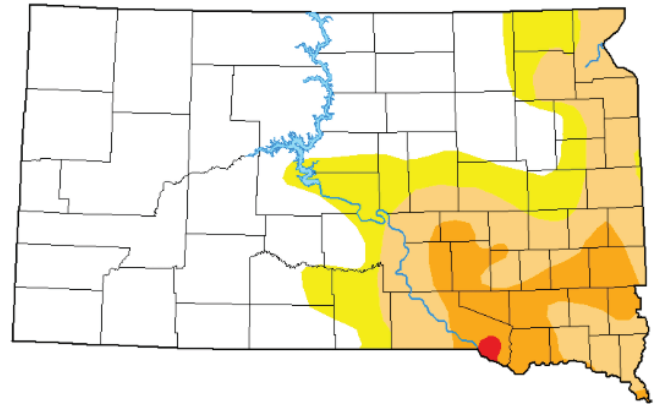
Drought Classification



Drought Monitor



July 25



July 18

It was a mostly dry week across the region with the most significant rains falling over eastern Wyoming, western Nebraska, eastern Colorado and western Kansas, with some pockets of above-normal precipitation over southern South Dakota and eastern Nebraska as well. Temperatures were cooler than normal over much of the region with departures of 1-3 degrees below normal. Abnormally dry and moderate drought conditions were expanded in northern North Dakota and all of western Kansas saw a full categorical improvement this week. Improvements to severe and extreme drought were made over southeast South Dakota and into northern Nebraska. Severe drought was expanded in eastern South Dakota along the border with Minnesota.

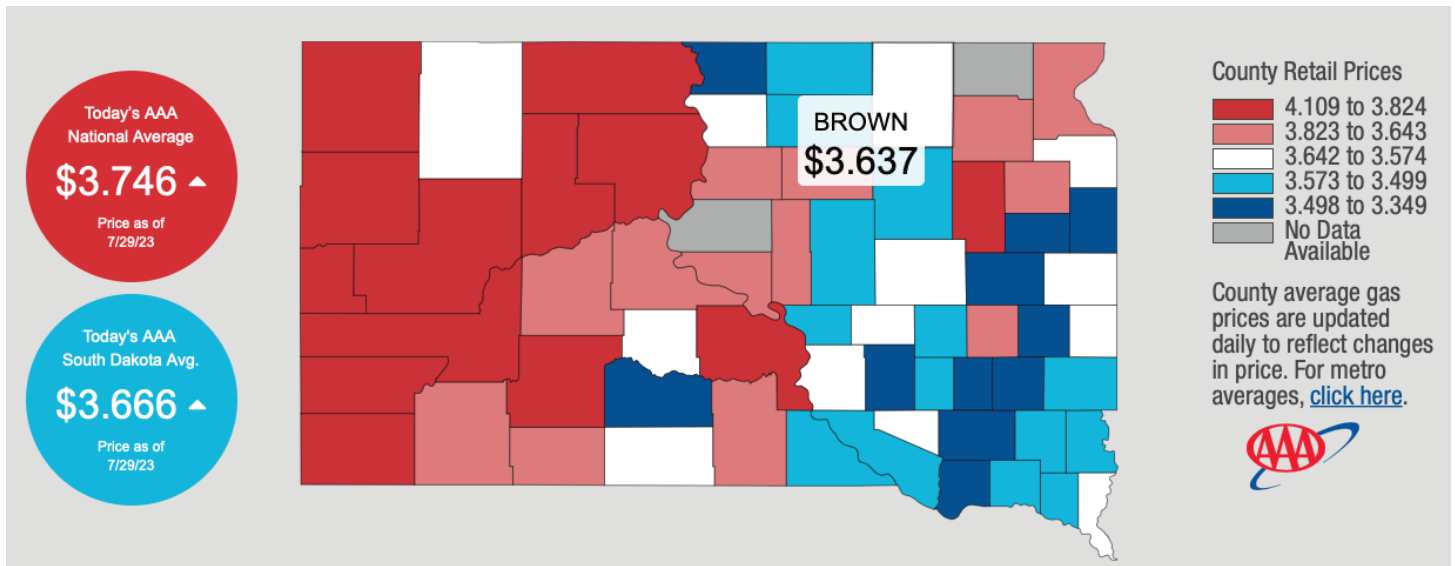
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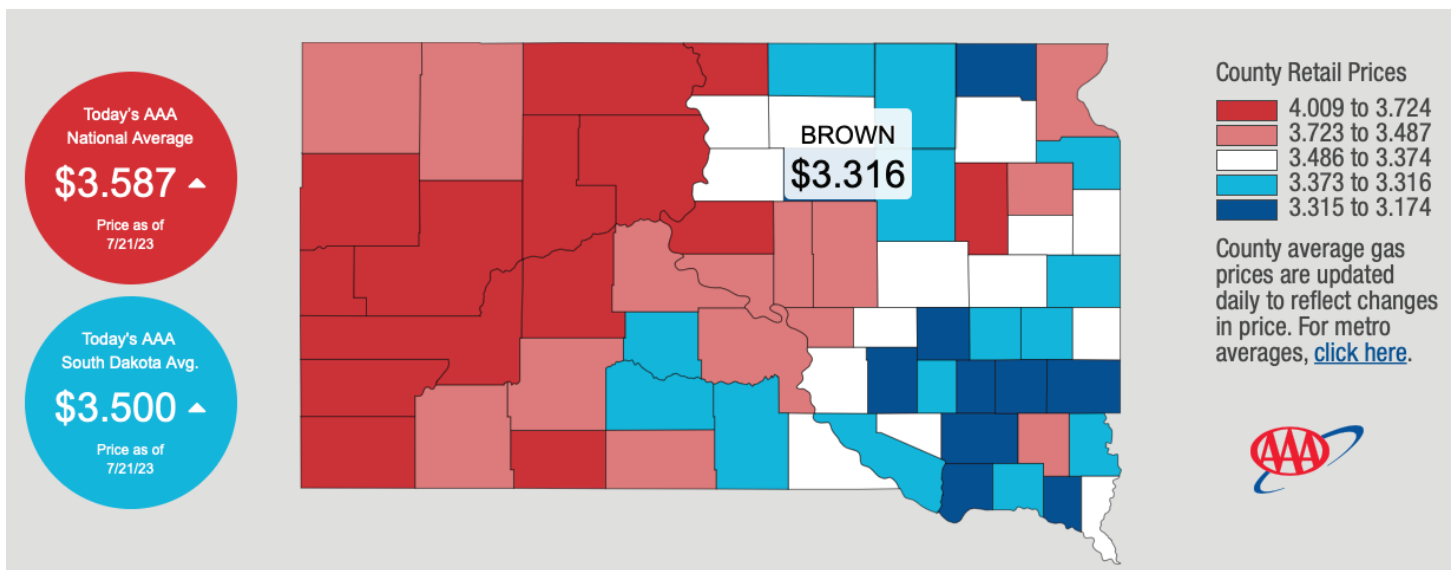
South Dakota Average Gas Prices

	Regular	Mid-Grade	Premium	Diesel
Current Avg.	\$3.666	\$3.829	\$4.290	\$3.818
Yesterday Avg.	\$3.652	\$3.792	\$4.235	\$3.780
Week Ago Avg.	\$3.507	\$3.668	\$4.135	\$3.696
Month Ago Avg.	\$3.507	\$3.647	\$4.130	\$3.704
Year Ago Avg.	\$4.232	\$4.439	\$4.905	\$5.095

This Week



Two Weeks Ago





The final run

This morning marked the final run for our family in delivering the Aberdeen American News. My wife, Tina was delivering the paper prior to me coming to Groton. Then I got into the mix of things and started delivering as well. Jeslyn and Tina took over a couple of routes for a while. I then took over the whole town. We've delivered in the rain, the storms and the blizzards. To say that I have seen so many changes in the production and delivery of the paper is an understatement. Will I sleep in - probably not, but if I want too, I can. No more trying to find substitutes. And thanks to those who have helped us out during the journey. One nice thing is that when we go somewhere, I no longer have to rush back to deliver the paper. Even with that all said, it is a bittersweet moment. The subscribers saw the development of our family over the years with our Christmas cards and so many of you showered us with gifts of money at Christmastime. To that, thank you so much. On that note - this chapter is closed. (but still Paper Paul!)

The Life of Leslie Dohman



Leslie Joseph Dohman, ninety-one, Groton, passed away on Wednesday, July 26, 2023, at Avantara Groton. Mass of Christian Burial was held at St. Elizabeth Ann Seton Catholic Church in Groton on Saturday, July 29, 2023, with Father Greg Tschakert officiating. Burial was at Groton Union Cemetery with military honors under the direction of Paetznick-Garness Funeral Chapel, Groton.

Leslie J. Dohman was born on April 16, 1932, in Webster, SD, to George and Agnes (Kriech) Dohman. He was the tenth of twelve children. Les left home at an early age and went to work for his older brother, Bill, in the Crandall Hills. Les graduated from Andover High School in 1950 and enjoyed playing baseball, basketball, and track. He was drafted and served in the U.S. Army during the Korean War. After serving in Korea, Les returned to South Dakota to work for Bell Telephone. Les began courting Carol Ann Rix and married his sweetheart on June 30th, 1958.

Les and Carol began their life together in Miller, SD, where Carol taught second grade and Les continued to work for Bell Telephone. Aberdeen, SD, was the next destination until they moved to a farm located a half mile east of Putney, a special place where they raised seven children.

Les retired in 1982 from Bell Telephone after thirty-four years of service. He continued farming and raising cattle until moving to Groton in 1994. Living across the street from the high school, they enjoyed making lunch for many of their grandchildren. During retirement, Les and Carol spent time traveling to see their kids across the country and relaxing most summer weekends at their Pickerel Lake cabin. Les was a member of St. Elizabeth Ann Seton Catholic Church, Groton American Legion Post 39, and the Telephone Pioneers.

Les could always be found driving his Chevy Avalanche around town. He loved going to his children's and grandchildren's activities, especially sporting events. He was a die-hard Green Bay Packers' fan. Les enjoyed going on hunting trips to the Hills and fishing off the dock at the lake. He loved playing cards with his buddies, but his favorite pastime was drinking coffee and eating donuts.

He was preceded in death by George and Agnes Dohman (parents), all eleven of his siblings, and three infant grandchildren, Christopher and Taylor Bohnenkamp, and Aaron Dohman.

Les is survived by his wife of sixty-five years, Carol Dohman, and his seven children, Anne Dohman, Arden (Vivian) Dohman, David (Tammy) Dohman, DeLynne (Andrew) Roloff, Susan (Jeff) Bohnenkamp, Steve (Tamra) Dohman, and Diane (Ryan) Kurtz.

Casket bearers will be his grandsons: Andrew Dohman, Matthew Dohman, Jacob Dohman, Kaden Kurtz, Kasey Kurtz, Gabriel Dohman, Zachary Bohnenkamp, Mitchell Bohnenkamp, Joey Roloff, Josh Roloff and Lucas Roloff.



SOUTH DAKOTA SEARCHLIGHT

<https://southdakotasearchlight.com>

Dewey County opens satellite office on reservation, staving off petition to move county seat

BY: MAKENZIE HUBER - JULY 28, 2023 4:01 PM

It's an afternoon off work — an 82-mile round trip — for residents of Eagle Butte to visit the Dewey County Courthouse.

But it'll now be a matter of minutes for Eagle Butte residents to visit Dewey County's first ever satellite office opened earlier this month — the third county satellite office in the state. It'll also serve as an early voting center during elections.

The decision, made by the county commission in February, was in response to a failed effort to move the county seat from Timber Lake (population 579) to Eagle Butte (pop. 3,152). Dewey County is one of a few South Dakota counties that is within a Native American reservation, in this case the Cheyenne River Reservation. The county's population is 74% Native American, according to the U.S. Census Bureau.

The South Dakota Legislature and governor passed a bill in February making it more difficult to move county seats, by raising the petition-signature threshold to force an election from 15% of registered voters in the county to 20%.

Petition organizer Carl Petersen's drive to move the county seat was mostly focused on historic inequities affecting Native Americans in South Dakota — especially around access to government and voting rights.

"This is the best we can hope for at this point," said Petersen, a Parade resident, member of the Oohe-numpa band of Lakota, and Cheyenne River Sioux Tribe member.

More: Civil rights committee finds Native voting rights impeded, finalizes recommendations

Petersen said he does not plan to bring another petition forward in the future.

The other county satellite offices in South Dakota, in Faith and Wall, were established to improve accessibility to county services in rural areas, where it would take hours to drive to the courthouse and back.

Sen. Ryan Maher, R-Isabel, who introduced the bill tightening county seat restrictions last session, said it "just makes sense" to open satellite offices in some parts of the state. He added such offices can save taxpayer money — especially compared to moving entire county seats to a new town.

"For rural counties like this, it's just a good move," Maher said.

Mahe suggested satellite offices could be beneficial for Perkins County, where the county seat of Bison (pop. 384) is 44 miles away from its largest city of Lemmon (pop. 1,252), and Buffalo County, where the county seat of Gann Valley (pop. 12) is 26 miles away from Fort Thompson (pop. 1,266), which is located on the Crow Creek Reservation.

Oglala Lakota County and Todd County, located on the Pine Ridge and Rosebud Reservations, do not have their own county seats. Instead, the counties' administrative duties are handled at the Fall River County Courthouse in Hot Springs, which is 64 miles from Pine Ridge, and the Tripp County Courthouse in Winner, which is 55 miles from Rosebud. However, both Pine Ridge and Rosebud have South Dakota vehicle registration kiosks.

Colleen Meier, treasurer for Dewey County and an enrolled member of the Cheyenne River Sioux Tribe, first suggested an Eagle Butte satellite office or kiosk to county commissioners nearly two years ago.

Meier grew up north of Timber Lake, just a half mile into Corson County, and her family would drive nearly 120 miles round-trip to McIntosh.

"I understand that we live in a high poverty area and that it's hard for people to make that long of a

trip," Meier said. "I wanted it to be more convenient and accessible."

Meier did not know the cost to establish the Eagle Butte satellite office. Maher said the "threat of a multimillion dollar expenditure" to move the county seat is what convinced commissioners to fund it.

Satellite office distances from SD county seats

Wall to Rapid City (Pennington County):110 miles (round trip)

Faith to Sturgis (Meade County): 202 miles (round trip)

Eagle Butte to Timber Lake (Dewey County):82 miles (round trip)

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

Supreme Court: Lie detector tests too faulty to influence criminal sentencing

BY: JOHN HULT - JULY 28, 2023 12:57 PM

A Sioux Falls judge was right to bar the use of polygraph test results in a sentencing for a 2020 robbery and shooting death.

That was the conclusion of the South Dakota Supreme Court this week in the case of Raymond Banks. The 22-year-old is serving a 60-year prison sentence for manslaughter in the death of 30-year-old Casey Bonhorst. Banks has claimed his co-defendant was the culpable perpetrator.

Banks argued that the lack of his "lie detector" test results unfairly influenced his sentence. The court disagreed in a 5-0 decision penned by Justice Patricia Devaney.

Banks, the court ruled, had not offered any proof that his test results were reliable enough to become part of the record in his case.

"Given this Court's clearly expressed concerns regarding the reliability of polygraph evidence, Banks has failed to show how the circuit court's ruling would be 'clearly against reason and evidence,'" Devaney wrote.

Banks and his co-defendant, Jahennessy Bryant, saw Bonhorst's vehicle parked outside a Sioux Falls duplex on Feb. 26, 2020. One of the men suggested a robbery, with each later claiming it was the other's idea.

Banks said Bryant pulled a gun and fired when Bonhorst threw change at Bryant. Banks claims he merely acted as a lookout.

Bryant claimed that Banks instigated the robbery, pulled the gun and fired. He only tried to hold Bonhorst by the arms, he said.

Bryant struck a plea deal that capped his prison time at 25 years. On the day Banks pleaded guilty, prosecutors read a factual basis statement based on Bryant's version of events.

Before his sentencing, Banks asked Judge Robin Houwman to allow testimony from a polygraph examiner who'd purportedly concluded that Banks had the accurate story.

Houwman rejected the request. The judge sided with prosecutors, who said polygraph results have no place in sentencing, in part because of their spotty reliability.

The Supreme Court heard oral arguments in the case in March. Banks' attorneys argued that while polygraph results aren't admissible at trial under the rules of evidence, they ought to be admissible at a sentencing hearing.

Hearsay evidence, which is testimony from a person without first-hand knowledge of the facts, is sometimes permissible in a sentence hearing. Also fair game are mentions of a defendant's criminal history often barred from trials to avoid letting past misbehavior taint jurors' view of a current criminal allegation.

The Supreme Court concluded, as it had in a previous case, that a lack of evidentiary rules at sentencing doesn't create a "free-for-all" that forces the consideration of any shred of potentially meaningful information. Devaney mentioned that there are restrictions on hearsay evidence, for example.

"This rule requiring a base level of reliability before hearsay evidence can be considered at sentencing is generally applicable to other types of evidence as well," she wrote.

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.

Secret maps and toxic plumes dominate third day of pipeline testimony

BY: JOSHUA HAIAR - JULY 27, 2023 8:28 PM

FORT PIERRE – The “sensitive sites” potentially impacted by a carbon capture pipeline will remain confidential, for now. Meanwhile, modeling used to assess the impacts of a leak or rupture came under scrutiny Thursday during the third day of a permit hearing before state regulators at the Casey Tibbs Rodeo Center.

Stephen Lee is the executive vice president of engineering and construction for Navigator CO₂, the company proposing the Heartland Greenway pipeline. Lee introduced maps marked as confidential for their focus on vital infrastructure. One “map overlay” includes the environmentally sensitive areas – including wetlands and waterways – that could be impacted during pipeline construction or in the case of an accident, Lee said.

Lee said the maps should remain confidential because they could be dangerous “in the hands of the wrong individuals” like “terrorists.”

Brian Jorde, an attorney representing landowners, failed to convince the three elected members of the Public Utilities Commission to make the map overlay public.

“I don’t think this is the time or place to solve that specific issue,” Commissioner Chris Nelson said, adding that there’s too little time to debate the issue during the permit hearing.

Jorde was not satisfied.

“This is the appropriate time to deal with that,” Jorde said. “This witness hasn’t identified anything that would make this confidential.”

Commission staff attorney Kristen Edwards said knowing where the environmentally sensitive sites are located would be informative.

“I would like to dig into that,” Edwards said.

James Moore, an attorney for the company, said the document was submitted on time and Jorde should have raised concerns prior to the permit hearing. Adam de Hueck, the commission attorney who is conducting the hearing, agreed.

“Mr. Jorde, I agree with Mr. Moore,” de Hueck said. “This was the whole point of pretrial conference.”

Nelson agreed with de Hueck, and acknowledged Edwards’ opinion that the information would be useful. “For the purposes of today, for this hearing, whether it’s public or not doesn’t make any difference,” Nelson said.

Jorde continued to press Lee, asking, “Is it best practice to be transparent and provide the counties with the best information you have now?”

“I can’t answer that yes or no,” Lee replied. “I disagree with the premise of the question.”

“Do you think that attitude is something the commission should take into consideration?” Jorde said.

“I would say that’s up to the commission,” Lee responded.

The proposed 1,300-mile, approximately \$3 billion Heartland Greenway pipeline would link 21 ethanol plants (including three in South Dakota) and several fertilizer plants across five states. The project would include 111.9 miles of pipeline in eastern South Dakota, crossing through Brookings, Moody, Minnehaha, Lincoln and Turner counties. The estimated cost of the South Dakota portion of the project is \$142 million. An additional \$37 million would be spent on capture facilities.

The pipeline would capture carbon dioxide emitted by the plants and transport it in liquefied form for underground storage in Illinois, or 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 project would create about 430 jobs in South Dakota during the construction phase, 20 jobs dur-

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ing operation, and \$1.3 million in sales and gross receipts taxes during initial construction, according to a study commissioned by the company.

Lee testified that the company has offered landowners an average of \$24,000 per acre in easement negotiations. Navigator has easements with about 30% of the owners of land the pipeline would cross. The company has not yet used eminent domain, a legal process to gain access to land when an agreement can't be reached with a landowner.

The Heartland Greenway is one of two proposed carbon pipelines that would pass through South Dakota. A pipeline proposed by Summit Carbon Solutions is scheduled for a permit hearing in September.

Plume modeling debated

Knowing where sensitive sites are is an important part of modeling the impacts of a potential rupture, according to John Abraham, a University of St. Thomas professor and expert in thermal fluid sciences. He testified that, compared to alternative modeling methods, the software Navigator CO2 used to model the impacts of potential ruptures or leaks is "less accurate and often underpredicts how far a plume would go."

"The Commission should not rely upon Navigator's Phast modeling or the data and buffers that such flawed modeling provides," Abraham said in written testimony. "Furthermore, newer, more accurate methods are available that can provide more accurate concentration calculations."

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.

Moore said the models Abraham prefers are more time consuming and difficult. Abraham disputed that. "In some instances, they can be," Abraham said. "But they are far more accurate, and in many cases, they are not time consuming."

Abraham said unreliable modeling was a reason the Mississippi incident was as severe as it was, saying the model used for that pipeline underestimated the plume.

"If you are using a tool that's been shown not to work, and better tools exist, then it's either bad science or it's not science," Abraham told Moore when asked if the modeling submitted was scientific.

Private session

The hearing went into a private session during a line of questioning about materials the commission deemed confidential. Reporters and the public were required to leave the room.

Following that, Edwards asked Abraham if a setback of about 400 feet would be adequate. Setbacks are minimum distances between pipelines and areas such as property lines, buildings and infrastructure.

"It's my opinion, that would be inadequate," Abraham said.

Commissioner Kristie Fiegen asked Abraham how he would have conducted the modeling.

"I would contract with a university here in South Dakota," Abraham said. "Why would you hire a guy in Minneapolis?"

Abraham later said, "If I knew a pipeline was in a certain area, that would impact my decision to move into that area."

The company acknowledged the pipeline comes with potential hazards, such as ruptures.

"Could such an explosion be fatal to those nearby?" Jorde asked Lee.

"Any release of energy in a nearby vicinity could be dangerous," Lee replied. He said the plumes would be "mildly toxic," and "we have 24/7, 365 monitoring of our system."

Federal safety review

Lee later said the company has already run more than 225 models, and the company will begin to incorporate the model Abraham suggested. However, the company has not yet selected who it will contract with to run the new software.

"We're still early in the process," Lee said, alluding to permit hearings that haven't yet occurred in other states.

Federal regulators are reviewing the safety standards for carbon capture pipelines. The current rules for the pipelines are inadequate, said Carolyn Raffensperger, executive director of the Science and Environmental Health Network, at a separate, recent meeting about the regulations.

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Jorde referenced the federal review and asked Lee, "Wouldn't it be reasonable to wait for the federal regulators to weigh in on those standards?"

Lee said federal regulators are aware of the project and have not reached out with concerns. He said the company found the likelihood of an incident to be 0.0011 percent per mile, per year, based on federal data over the last 20 years.

Hearing recesses until Monday

In addition to Thursday's testimony, commissioners determined when they'll consider preempting recently adopted Minnehaha County and Moody County setback ordinances. The commission will take up that issue Aug. 24-25.

Navigator CO2 thinks the distances the counties have settled on are too far, and is requesting the commission overrule those distances.

Attorney Alex Hagen represented Minnehaha County during Thursday's hearing. He said the company could have chosen a route that would have met Minnehaha County's setbacks for the pipeline. And he suggested the only reason it didn't is because it would be expensive.

"Cost is just one of several things we assess," Navigator's Stephen Lee replied.

At the end of Thursday's proceedings, the hearing recessed until Monday.

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.

Defense bill passes Senate with Thune & Rounds support, but deep divide with House looms

BY: ASHLEY MURRAY - JULY 28, 2023 1:22 PM

WASHINGTON — U.S. senators avoided a heated partisan split as they passed the massive annual defense policy package late Thursday — in stark contrast to the GOP-led House version, in which far-right members included language to restrict abortion access and transgender care for service members.

Senators passed the National Defense Authorization Act, 86-11, but lawmakers are expected to hit a rocky road as both chambers will now have to reconcile their respective versions. Congress has reliably enacted the defense bill for over 60 years but the deep partisan differences this year raise the prospect the legislation could falter.

Members in the upper chamber spent the week voting on just over a dozen standalone amendments to the roughly 1,100-page bill, as well as a bipartisan manager's package of nearly 50 bipartisan measures.

"The NDAA is a prime example of how Congress can work together for the American people," Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer said in a Thursday night press conference. "We have a very divided country, a divided Congress, but nonetheless we were able to come together and pass a bill overwhelmingly on one of the most important issues facing America, the defense bill, and this is not alone."

The House "ought to look to the bipartisan Senate as to how to get things done instead of just throwing out partisan bills that have no chance, no chance, of passing," Schumer continued. Many of the policy riders in the House bill would not be accepted in the Democratic-led Senate.

The \$886 billion authorization package does not directly allocate the funds to the Department of Defense. Rather, it sets out a guide for how they should be spent. Congressional appropriators are slowly working through a separate annual process to green-light all government funds through 12 spending bills.

Ukraine aid, radioactive waste, Pride flags

Several amendments received broad backing, though senators rejected a rider from top Foreign Affairs Republican Jim Risch of Idaho and Senate Armed Services Ranking Member Roger Wicker of Mississippi to designate an inspector general to oversee Ukraine aid.

Amendments from Sen. John Barrasso of Wyoming on investing in domestic uranium production and

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from Sen. Bob Menendez of New Jersey to reenact the firefighter cancer registry were among those voted into the final version with strong support from both sides of the aisle.

A proposal from Sen. Josh Hawley of Missouri to compensate those suffering illnesses from the government's radioactive waste just made it over the 60-vote threshold to be added to the NDAA.

Meanwhile, senators rejected a bid from Republican Sen. Roger Marshall of Kansas aimed at restricting flags that can fly over military installations — a measure that made it into the GOP-led House military spending bill

Democrat Sen. Tammy Baldwin of Wisconsin, the first woman in Congress to come out as an openly LGBTQ person, spoke on the floor before the vote in opposition to Marshall's offering, calling it a "thinly veiled" attempt to ban the Pride flag.

Earlier this week, a bipartisan measure to ban China, Iran, North Korea and Russia from purchasing U.S. farmland, co-sponsored by GOP Sen. Mike Rounds of South Dakota and Democrat Jon Tester of Montana, received overwhelming support. An amendment to screen outbound private U.S. investment in those nations, co-sponsored by Democratic Sen. Bob Casey of Pennsylvania and GOP Sen. John Cornyn of Texas, was also approved in a near unanimous vote Tuesday.

Thune, Rounds highlight SD provisions

Sens. John Thune and Mike Rounds, Republicans from South Dakota, each issued press releases supporting the Senate's version of the National Defense Authorization Act.

Thune highlighted South Dakota priorities in the bill, including:

\$396 million for construction projects to accommodate future B-21 bombers at Ellsworth Air Force Base near Rapid City.

\$5.25 million to complete a National Guard Readiness Center in Sioux Falls.

A provision for the Department of Defense to create a University Affiliated Research Center for critical minerals to focus on applied research, commercialization and workforce development with schools such as South Dakota Mines in Rapid City.

Rounds also highlighted those South Dakota-specifics and the following:

The inclusion of his provision to create a congressional charter for the National American Indian Veterans, headquartered on the Cheyenne River Reservation.

His amendment intended to prevent China, Russia, Iran and North Korea from purchasing U.S. agricultural land and businesses.

Language promoting the use and funding of "cold spray" technology for maintenance, repair and overhaul to increase the service life of aging defense systems, provided exclusively by a South Dakota company using a technology developed at South Dakota Mines.

— By South Dakota Searchlight staff

Alabama v. Colorado over Space Command

Among the priorities negotiated into the final Senate version was Alabama U.S. Sen. Tommy Tuberville's bid to tie the construction budget of the U.S. Air Force as well as the Air Force secretary's travel account to a final decision on the location of U.S. Space Command.

The command center, which largely oversees the nation's satellites, has been provisionally located in Colorado Springs, Colorado since 2019.

However, prior to leaving office former President Donald Trump announced the headquarters would move to Huntsville, Alabama.

Democratic Sens. Michael Bennet and John Hickenlooper of Colorado strongly opposed Tuberville's language in the NDAA, but ultimately their amendment to strike it never came up for a vote.

"It's unacceptable that Senator Tuberville continues to put politics above our military readiness and national security by holding critical funding hostage," Bennet said in an emailed statement. "The Biden Administration must work swiftly to make a final basing decision for the U.S. Space Command headquarters based on our national security, not politics."

The Pentagon referred all questions to the U.S. Air Force. The Air Force, as a general policy, does not

comment on pending legislation, a spokesperson said.

"What we want to do is try to force the Air Force secretary to make a decision," Tuberville said Thursday, speaking to reporters near the Senate subway. "No matter where it goes, we need to get Space Command going. I mean we're three years into this and we're not even closer than we were three years ago."

Hickenlooper said he's reached out to the Biden administration "only about 1,000 times" regarding the Space Command location decision, and while "they don't hang up on me, and they listen very patiently," he still hasn't received a definitive answer.

The White House did not respond to a request for comment.

"It's all about our national security and that obviously I have a state self-interest in that it's already in Colorado. But if it was already in New Hampshire, and for political purposes President Trump was moving it to Mississippi, I'd still be against it," Hickenlooper told States Newsroom while walking from the floor to his office Thursday.

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

New federal rules could smooth the path for renewable power

BY: ROBERT ZULLO - JULY 28, 2023 10:30 AM

The Federal Energy Regulatory Commission on Thursday finalized long-awaited new rules intended to reform how power generation projects get connected to the electric grid, seen as a major step in smoothing the path for thousands of mostly renewable power projects currently waiting to plug in.

"This rule will ensure that our country's vast generation resources are able to interconnect to the transmission system in a reliable, efficient, transparent and timely manner," FERC Chairman Willie Phillips said, adding that there are 2,000 gigawatts of power projects stuck in interconnection queues across the nation. "We have as much generation waiting to be connected to the grid as double the amount of generation currently on the grid."

Those projects, mostly wind, solar and battery storage plants, have been stuck in massive backlogs while grid managers conduct interconnection studies needed to gauge how bringing them online would affect the broader system and determine whether any upgrades are needed.

"We have wait times of over five years. The average project needed today won't even begin construction until 2028," Phillips said.

Existing processes were set up at a time when there were relatively few new power plants (generally gas fired) coming online and there was plenty of excess transmission line capacity, said Ari Peskoe, director of the Electricity Law Initiative at Harvard Law School. Now, the vast majority of the projects in the queue are renewables that are generally more numerous and diffuse and smaller in output. And there are many areas where transmission is constrained.

The resulting delays are imperiling states' renewable power goals, causing projects to wither on the vine as developers confront rising costs and supply chain problems and depriving local economies of jobs, not to mention the carbon-free electricity they promise to deliver, critics contend.

FERC's new rule requires transmission providers to use "cluster" studies that allow for studying numerous proposed projects at once rather than individually in a "first-come, first-served" fashion. A cluster approach that is redone each year also is better able to adapt when interconnection customers who are higher up in the queue drop out, reducing the need for "cascading restudies," FERC staff said. At the same time, the rule requires increased financial commitments for interconnection customers to enter and remain in the queue, meet more stringent site control requirements and imposes penalties on customers who withdraw from the queue.

"These reforms will discourage speculative, commercially non-viable interconnection requests and allow transmission providers to focus on processing interconnection requests that have a greater chance of reaching commercial operation," FERC staff wrote.

For transmission providers, which can be big, regional entities called regional transmission organizations

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or independent system operators, or individual utilities depending on the part of the country, there are also firm study deadlines and penalties if they are not met, and uniform modeling standards.

And, among other components, another major piece pushes more adoption of technological advances into the interconnection process, such as allowing more than one generation facility to co-locate on a shared site behind an single interconnection point and share an interconnection request. There's also a requirement that transmission providers model battery storage resources in the way they are actually used rather than unlikely worst-case scenarios and require evaluation of a suite of options called "grid-enhancing technologies" that can save money and time.

"It's fair," said Commissioner Allison Clements. "The final rule requires everyone to do their part to address the cause of interconnection backlogs."

Though renewable energy industry representatives and clean power proponents called the reforms a good start, they say the rule, first proposed last summer, will leave many problems the energy transition has presented for grid managers and regulators unresolved.

"The bigger picture issues of why we don't have enough transmission in this country are not going to be solved through this rule," Peskoe said.

John Moore, director of the Sustainable FERC Project at the Natural Resources Defense Council, said the rule "will raise the floor on action, but the ceiling will depend on grid operators taking leadership and increasing the capability and capacity of the grid. The devil will be in the details."

Roughly two-thirds of American electric customers live in an area where electric flow is managed by a regional transmission organization (RTO) or an independent system operator (ISO), who also run power markets. In the rest of the country, the grid is run by utilities that are typically vertically integrated (meaning they're responsible for generating, transmitting and distributing electricity to their customers) who do their own transmission planning. The new rule will apply to both types of regimes, which will have to submit filings to FERC explaining how they'll comply, Peskoe said. Several RTOs have already been implementing their own queue reform, however.

"We need to fashion this in a way that moves the ball but doesn't get in the way of what they're already doing," Commissioner Mark Christie said.

The Midcontinent Independent System Operator, or MISO, which coordinates electric flow for a region of the central U.S. and Gulf Coast that includes all or part of 15 states, proposed a series of reforms that includes increased interconnection payments and penalties for withdrawal.

"Changes are needed to better manage the number of speculative requests in future queue cycles, which will reduce processing time and ensure more certain and timely study results," a MISO spokesman said.

PJM, the largest U.S. regional transmission organization, also began a transition to a new interconnection process this month.

In a report released last month that looked just at PJM, the American Council on Renewable Energy, a nonprofit working to accelerate the transition to renewable energy, found that if PJM was approving projects at the same pace as it did from 2011 to 2016, the 34 gigawatts of renewable power in its queue would be operating within the next four years. That would mean thousands of jobs and about \$33 billion in investment for the PJM region, which includes 65 million people in all or parts of 13 states and the District of Columbia. Virginia, Illinois, Ohio and Indiana were the biggest potential beneficiaries.

In interviews, several grid experts said fixing transmission planning and making upgrades is equally, if not more, important than interconnection reforms for getting large amounts of new resources connected to the grid quickly.

"If a transmission provider says 'Congratulations, you've got your agreement, this is going to take six plus years before you can interconnect,' that's going to be fatal to a lot of projects," said Jason Burwen, vice president of policy and strategy at GridStor, an Oregon company that has 2 gigawatts of battery storage projects under development.

Peskoe noted that much of the nation's transmission planning is being driven by individual projects' interconnection process, which he called a "piecemeal, inefficient way to go about building an interstate

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transmission system.”

Several other experts compared it to building a highway system one lane at a time.

FERC is working on another proposed rule on regional transmission planning and cost allocation that it will finalize “in the months ahead,” Phillips said.

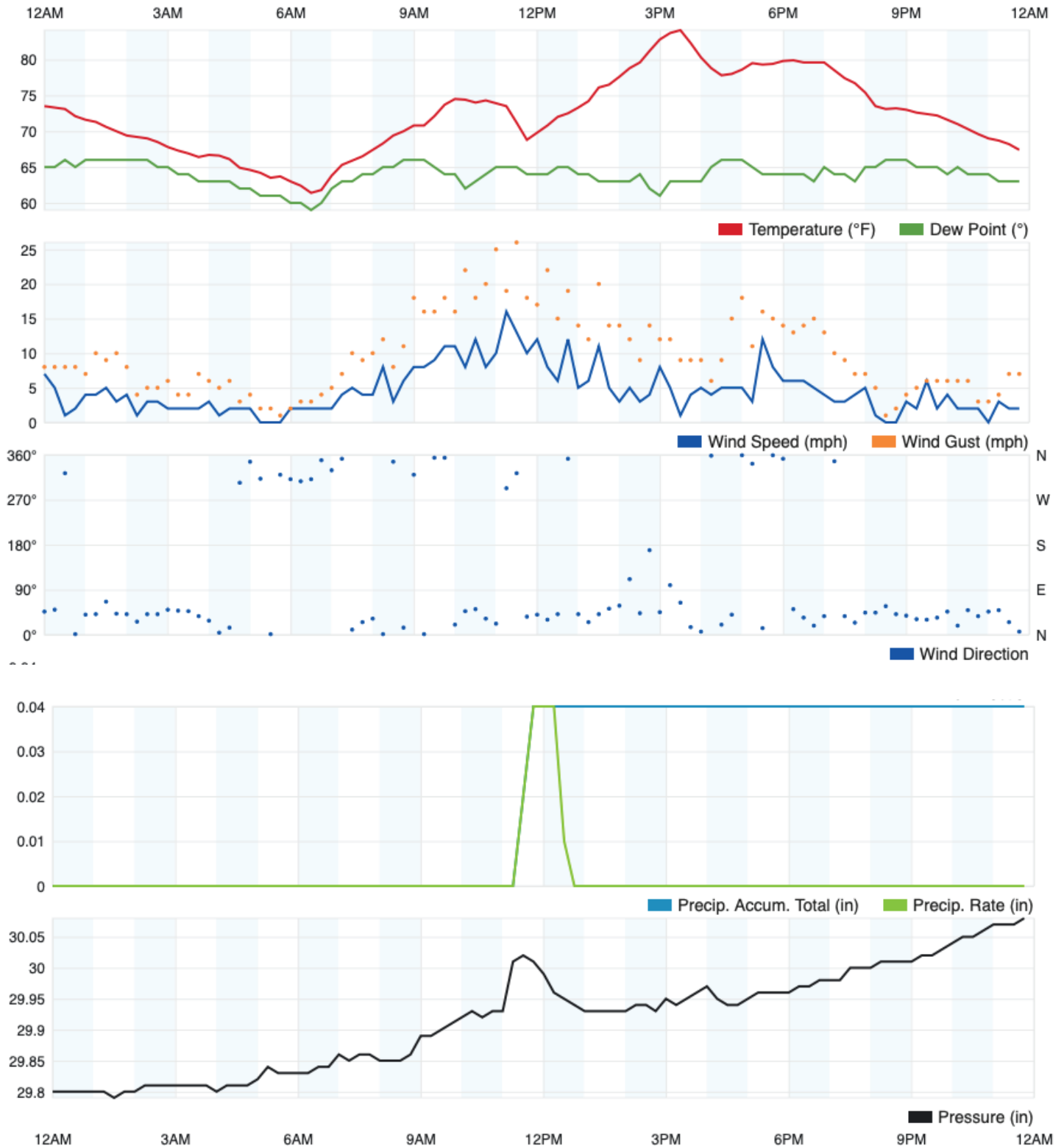
“Together, this interconnection queue reform, with long term and regional planning — we will have the greatest transmission reforms in a generation to come out of FERC,” he added. “This is a good day.”

Robert Zullo is a national energy reporter based in southern Illinois focusing on renewable power and the electric grid. Robert joined States Newsroom in 2018 as the founding editor of the Virginia Mercury. Before that, he spent 13 years as a reporter and editor at newspapers in Virginia, New Jersey, Pennsylvania and Louisiana. He has a bachelor’s degree from the College of William and Mary in Williamsburg, Va. He grew up in Miami, Fla., and central New Jersey.

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Yesterday's Groton Weather Graphs



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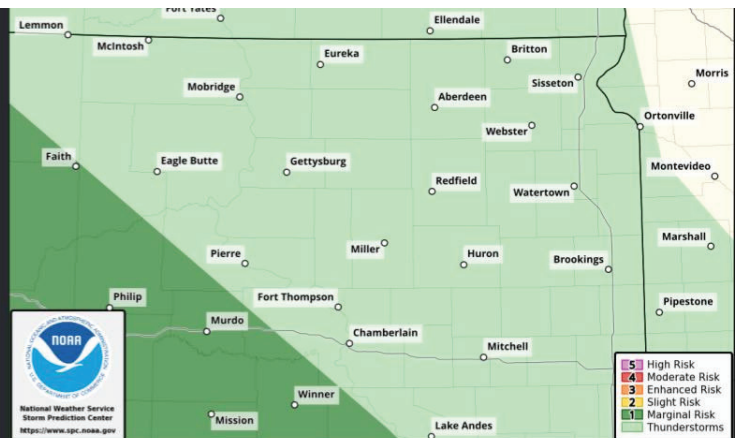
Today	Tonight	Sunday	Sunday Night	Monday	Monday Night	Tuesday
						
Mostly Sunny	Mostly Clear then Slight Chance T-storms	Mostly Sunny	Mostly Clear then Slight Chance T-storms	Slight Chance T-storms	Chance T-storms	Partly Sunny
High: 80 °F	Low: 57 °F	High: 85 °F	Low: 61 °F	High: 87 °F	Low: 65 °F	High: 89 °F

Today & Tonight

July 29, 2023 4:06 AM

Expect morning and early afternoon storms mainly along and west of the Missouri River.

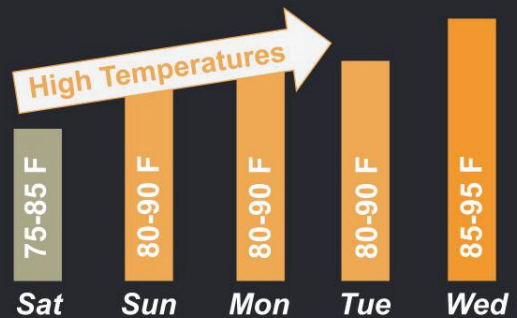
There might be additional development over central and northeast SD later in the evening. The severe threat is generally low, but a few storms could produce quarter-sized hail and wind gusts over 60 mph, especially in the dark green (marginal risk) area on the map to the right.



Next 5 Days

Warmer temperatures and an increase in humidity will occur through Wednesday, along with on-and-off chances for showers and thunderstorms.

www.weather.gov/abr



Today, expect morning and early afternoon storms mainly along and west of the Missouri River. There might be additional development over central and northeast SD later in the evening. The severe threat is generally low, but a few storms could become strong to severe. Warmer temperatures and an increase in humidity will occur through mid-week.

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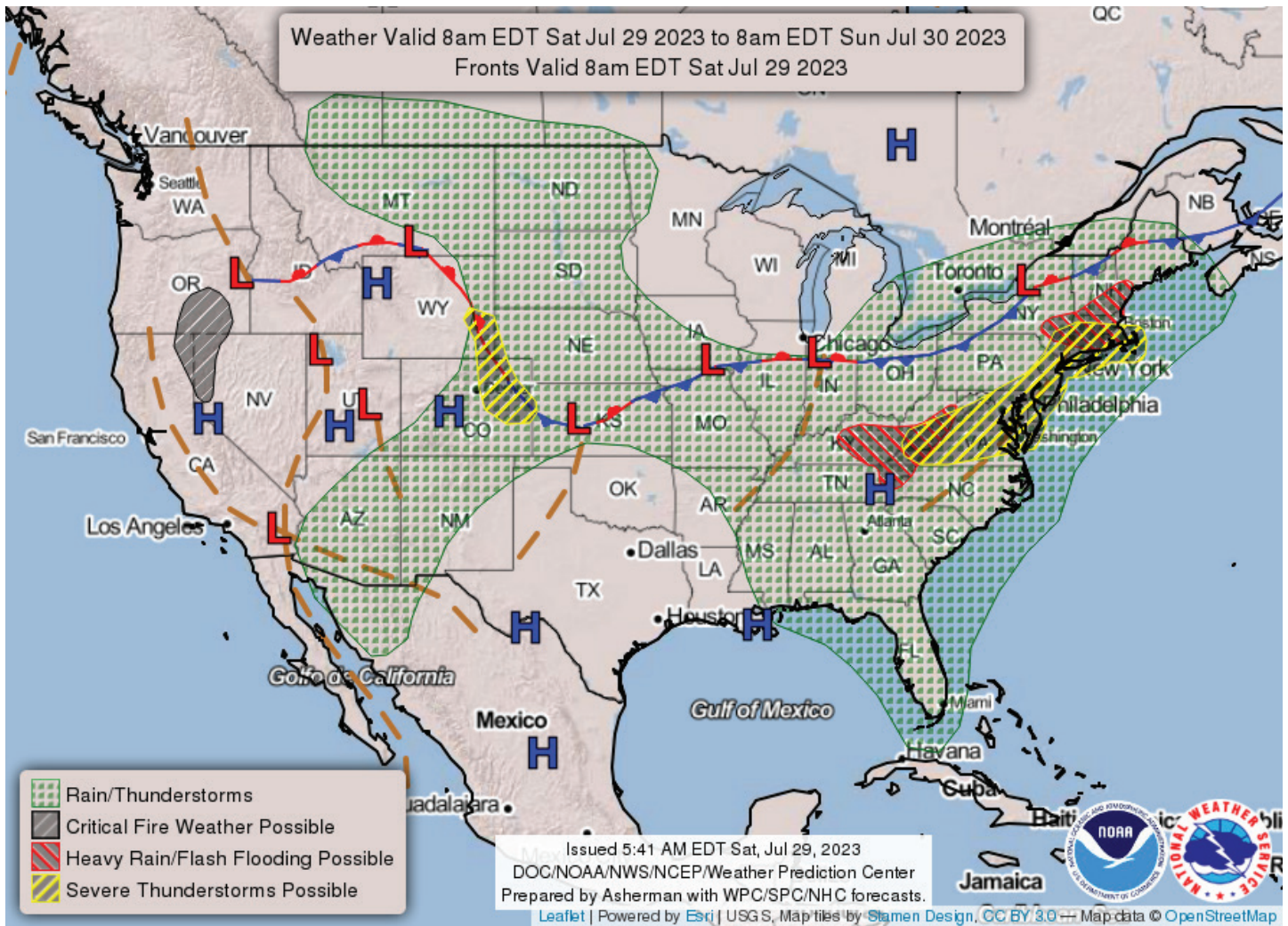
Yesterday's Groton Weather

High Temp: 84 °F at 3:27 PM
Low Temp: 61 °F at 6:33 AM
Wind: 26 mph at 11:24 AM
Precip: : 0.00

Day length: 14 hours, 54 minutes

Today's Info

Record High: 109 in 1933
Record Low: 42 in 2014
Average High: 85
Average Low: 60
Average Precip in July.: 2.93
Precip to date in July.: 1.32
Average Precip to date: 13.94
Precip Year to Date: 12.67
Sunset Tonight: 9:06:15 PM
Sunrise Tomorrow: 6:12:40 AM



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Today in Weather History

July 29, 1896: A destructive hailstorm originated in the central part of Edmunds County near Ipswich, passing southeast. This storm destroyed crops and broke glass in many windows along a path to the eastern portions of Spink County.

July 29, 2003: Winds of 70 mph, to over 100 mph caused damage in and around Redfield east to Frankfort and south to Tulare. The winds and hail damaged many roofs, crops, outbuildings, downed power lines, and poles, and also downed many branches and trees. In Redfield, a trailer home with two occupants was rolled three to four times over 75 feet. The trailer home rolled over a pickup truck and damaged it. Much of the contents in the trailer home were damaged, and the trailer home itself was a total loss. The people inside the home received minor injuries. A garage was also blown apart in Redfield with the car damaged inside. At the grain elevator in Redfield, several vehicle windows were broke out by airborne sand and rocks. A street light was ripped from the concrete in Redfield. East of Redfield, a 70-foot silo of over 70 tons was crumbled to the ground, and a large tractor shed was blown apart with damage to the contents. Wind equipment by Redfield measured winds at 106 mph before the power went out.

July 29, 2006: Record heat and high humidity affected central, north central, and northeast South Dakota for the end of July. Heat indices rose to 105 to 115 degrees across the area. Record high temperatures were set at Pierre, Mobridge, Kennebec, Timber Lake, and Aberdeen. Pierre rose to 111 degrees on each of the three days. Mobridge rose to 111 degrees on the 28th and 112 degrees on the 30th. Several record highs of 108 and 109 degrees were set at Timber Lake and Kennebec in the three-day period. Aberdeen set a record high of 106 on the 30th.

1898 - The temperature at Prineville, OR, soared to 119 degrees to establish a state record, which was tied on the 10th of August at Pendleton. (The Weather Channel)

1958: The U.S. Congress passes legislation establishing the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA), a civilian agency responsible for coordinating America's activities in space.

1905 - Heavy rain in southwestern Connecticut caused a dam break, and the resulting flood caused a quarter of a million dollars damage at Bridgeport. As much as eleven inches of rain fell prior to the flood. (David Ludlum)

1960: Severe thunderstorms brought damaging winds, possibly as high as 100 mph to central Oklahoma. Eight planes and several hangars were damaged at Wiley Post Airfield, while two aircraft and additional hangars were damaged at Will Rogers World Airport. The winds caused seven injuries in the area, including two youths who were injured by flying debris.

1981 - Fifty cattle, each weighing 800 pounds, were killed by lightning near Vance, AL. The lightning struck a tree and then spread along the ground killing the cattle. (The Weather Channel)

1987 - Thunderstorms produced severe weather from Minnesota to Indiana and Illinois. A thunderstorm at Janesville, WI, produced wind gusts to 104 mph which flipped over two airplanes, and blew another plane 300 feet down the runway. The northeastern U.S. experienced some relief from the heat. Nine cities reported record low temperatures for the date, including Saint Johnsbury, VT, with a reading of 42 degrees. Barnet, VT, reported a morning low of 33 degrees, with frost reported on vegetation. (Storm Data) (The National Weather Summary)

1988 - Afternoon and evening thunderstorms produced severe weather in Minnesota and Wisconsin. Hail three inches in diameter was reported south of Saint Cloud, MN. Hot weather prevailed in the western U.S. Fresno, CA reported a record thirteen straight days of 100 degree heat. (Storm Data) (The National Weather Summary)

1989 - Morning thunderstorms in the Upper Midwest produced more than five inches of rain west of Virgil, SD. Afternoon and evening thunderstorms deluged the foothills and adjacent plains of Colorado with heavy rain. Rains of six to seven and a half inches fell in eight hours north of Greeley. Hail and heavy rain caused several million dollars damage in Weld County. (Storm Data) (The National Weather Summary)

2004: A record-setting flash flood occurred over part of the Greenville, South Carolina, during the morning hours. Six to eight inches of rain fell just east of Berea, a northwestern suburb, which caused the Reedy River through downtown Greenville crested 9 feet above flood stage. This crest was the highest level since 1908.

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Daily Devotionals

Seeds of Hope

KEEP ON KEEPING ON!

Once, during a live performance, a string on the violin of Itzak Perlman, one of the world's greatest violinists broke, making a loud noise. The "snap" of the string echoed throughout the auditorium, stunning the conductor, the orchestra, and the audience. The conductor stopped the performance immediately. Everyone waited in silence, wondering what would happen. It seemed as though they were expecting Perlman to leave the stage and replace the broken string.

Quickly, and without hesitation, he motioned to the conductor and requested that they continue playing the concerto at the precise point where they had stopped. Perlman then joined them using only three strings.

At the conclusion of the concert, the audience gave him a long, standing ovation for his brilliant performance. Finally, when they paused he said, "Sometimes it is the artist's responsibility to find out how much music he can make with what he has left after a tragedy."

Often we are tempted to focus on how little we may have after experiencing a loss in our lives. We sometimes pout and ponder, grumble and gripe, questioning God's wisdom rather than focusing on how much God has given us. We emphasize our fears and failures rather than God's grace and goodness. We look into the mirror and say, "If I had one more string, I could play brilliantly and finish the concert." Or, "God, why didn't you break someone else's string?" Or, "God, why did you do this to me when things were going so well?" Or...or...or...

God gives us opportunities and options, skills and talents, strength and power to meet every situation in life. Too often we willingly give up or give in and look for ways out of a situation where God has placed us, rather than to meet the challenge by calling on Him for His strength and power to overcome difficult times!.

Prayer: Lord, may we choose to rely on Your strength and power to stand fast and face life's obstacles. Help us to rely on You and Your Word, and the gifts You have given us to succeed. In Jesus' Name, Amen.

Scripture For Today: And so, dear brothers and sisters, I plead with you to give your bodies to God because of all he has done for you. Let them be a living and holy sacrifice-the kind he will find acceptable. This is truly the way to worship him. Romans 12:1



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:
07.28.23

5 10 28 52 63 18

MegaPlier: 5x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:
\$1,050,000,000

NEXT DRAW:

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

LOTTO AMERICA

WINNING NUMBERS:
07.26.23

4 8 25 36 42 8

All Star Bonus: 3x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:
\$6,490,000

NEXT DRAW: 13 Hrs 41 Mins 26 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

LUCKY FOR LIFE

WINNING NUMBERS:
07.28.23

2 3 7 21 42 1

TOP PRIZE:

\$7,000/week

NEXT DRAW: 13 Hrs 56 Mins 25 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

DAKOTA CASH

WINNING NUMBERS:
07.26.23

1 6 15 30 33

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:
\$20,000

NEXT DRAW: 13 Hrs 56 Mins 25 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

POWERBALL

DOUBLE PLAY

WINNING NUMBERS:
07.26.23

31 43 51 60 69 13

TOP PRIZE:
\$10,000,000

NEXT DRAW: 14 Hrs 25 Mins 26 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

POWERBALL

WINNING NUMBERS:
07.26.23

3 16 40 48 60 14

Power Play: 2x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:
\$60,000,000

NEXT DRAW: 14 Hrs 25 Mins 26 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

News from the Associated Press

Automaker Tesla is opening more showrooms on tribal lands to avoid state laws barring direct sales

By SUSAN HAIGH Associated Press

Tesla is ramping up efforts to open showrooms on tribal lands where it can sell directly to consumers, circumventing laws in states that bar vehicle manufacturers from also being retailers in favor of the dealership model.

Mohegan Sun, a casino and entertainment complex in Connecticut owned by the federally recognized Mohegan Tribe, announced this week that the California-based electric automaker will open a showroom with a sales and delivery center this fall on its sovereign property where the state's law doesn't apply.

The news comes after another new Tesla showroom was announced in June, set to open in 2025 on lands of the Oneida Indian Nation in upstate New York.

"I think it was a move that made complete sense," said Lori Brown, executive director of the Connecticut League of Conservation Voters, which has lobbied for years to change Connecticut's law.

"It is just surprising that it took this long, because Tesla had really tried, along with Lucid and Rivian," she said, referring to two other electric carmakers. "Anything that puts more electric vehicles on the road is a good thing for the public."

Brown noted that lawmakers with car dealerships that are active in their districts, no matter their political affiliation, have traditionally opposed bills allowing direct-to-consumer sales.

The Connecticut Automotive Retail Association, which has opposed such bills for years, says there needs to be a balance between respecting tribal sovereignty and "maintaining a level playing field" for all car dealerships in the state.

"We respect the Mohegan Tribe's sovereignty and the unique circumstance in which they operate their businesses on Tribal land but we strongly believe that this does not change the discussion about Tesla and other EV manufacturers with direct-to-consumer sales, and we continue to oppose that model," Hayden Reynolds, the association's chairperson, said in a statement. "Connecticut's dealer franchise laws benefit consumers and provide a competitive marketplace."

Over the years in numerous states, Tesla has sought and been denied dealership licenses, pushed for law changes and challenged decisions in courts. The company scored a victory earlier this year when Delaware's Supreme Court overturned a ruling upholding a decision by state officials to prohibit Tesla from selling its cars to directly customers.

At least 16 states have effectively changed their laws to allow Tesla and other direct-to-consumer manufacturers to sell there, said Jeff Aiosa, executive director of the Connecticut dealers association. He doesn't foresee Connecticut changing its law, noting that 32 "original equipment manufacturers," a list that includes major car companies like Toyota and Ford, currently abide by it.

"It's not fair to have an unlevel playing field when all the other manufacturers abide by the state franchise laws and Tesla wants this exception to go around the law," he said. "I would suggest their pivoting to the sovereign nation is representative of them not wanting to abide by the law."

Tesla opened its first store as well as a repair shop on Native American land in 2021 in New Mexico. The facility, built in Nambé Pueblo, north of Santa Fe, marked the first time the company partnered with a tribe to get around state laws, though the idea had been in the works for years.

Brian Dear, president of the Tesla Owners Club of New Mexico, predicted at the time that states that are home to tribal nations and also have laws banning direct car sales by manufacturers would likely follow New Mexico's lead.

"I don't believe at all that this will be the last," he said.

Tesla's facility at Mohegan Sun, dubbed the Tesla Sales & Delivery Center, will be located at a shopping and dining pavilion within the sprawling casino complex. Customers will be able to test drive models around

the resort. and gamblers will be able to use their loyalty rewards toward Tesla purchases. Tesla also plans to exhibit its solar and storage products at the location.

Merger talks end between large health care systems in Minnesota, South Dakota

MINNEAPOLIS (AP) — A merger that would have created one of the largest health service companies in the Upper Midwest has been scrapped.

Minneapolis-based Fairview Health Services and Sioux Falls, South Dakota-based Sanford Health announced Thursday that they would not proceed with the merger they had been discussing since late last year. It would have created a system with more than 50 hospitals and about 78,000 employees.

This is the second time in a decade that the two companies considered a merger but failed to complete it, the Minneapolis Star Tribune reported.

The latest attempt drew fierce opposition at the University of Minnesota, which has a partnership with Fairview. The university sold its teaching hospital to Fairview in 1997 and opposed the idea of an out-of-state entity owning the University of Minnesota Medical Center in Minneapolis. The merged system would have been based in Sioux Falls, South Dakota's largest city.

Statements from the two companies' CEOs stated that without support from stakeholders, it was determined that the merger couldn't move forward.

The companies first considered merging in 2013 but met with strong political opposition.

Minnesota lawmakers this spring gave the state attorney general additional power to scrutinize health care mergers, including the Sanford-Fairview proposal.

The affiliation between Fairview and the University of Minnesota includes financial support from Fairview for the school's academic medicine mission. This agreement continues through 2026, but both parties have an option to signal by the end of this year if they want to end the partnership. Fairview has said the current agreements are not financially sustainable.

What to know as recreational marijuana becomes legal in Minnesota on Aug. 1

By STEVE KARNOWSKI Associated Press

MINNEAPOLIS (AP) — Minnesotans can legally possess and grow their own marijuana for recreational purposes starting Tuesday, Aug. 1, subject to limits meant to keep a lid on things while the state sets up a full-blown legal cannabis industry.

The Democratic-controlled Minnesota Legislature approved a massive legalization bill and Democrat Gov. Tim Walz signed it in May.

At least one Minnesota tribe plans to take advantage of its sovereignty and allow sales right away. But the state projects most legal retail sales won't begin until early 2025, while it creates a licensing and regulatory system for the new industry.

Legalization followed a debate between critics who fear for the impacts on public safety and young people, and supporters who argue that prohibition of the drug had failed. Backers of the law framed legalization noted that people of color were more likely than whites to be arrested for minor offenses, and to suffer lasting consequences in employment and housing.

Minnesota is the 23rd state to legalize recreational marijuana, more than a decade after Colorado and Washington did so.

It comes as New York struggles to end the illicit trade while failing to quickly license legal shops with a focus on "social equity" and New Mexico punishes retailers for illegally selling weed sourced from California — amid wider gluts and plummeting prices for pot farmers.

Farmers, like members of the public, can't legally move cannabis across state lines amid the ongoing federal ban.

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Here's a look at what will and won't change in Minnesota as of Aug. 1:

WHAT'S LEGAL

Adults 21 and older can possess and travel in the state with 2 ounces of cannabis flower, 8 grams of concentrate and 800 milligrams worth of THC-containing edible products such as gummies and seltzers. They can have up to 2 pounds of cannabis flower at home.

Low-potency edibles made with THC from industrial hemp were legalized last year. They've been subject to a 10% marijuana tax since July 1.

That tax will apply to other marijuana products as they become licensed for sales, but not on sovereign tribal lands.

It remains illegal under federal law to bring marijuana in from out of state.

RETAIL WEED

The Red Lake Nation plans to sell recreational marijuana at its existing medical cannabis dispensary starting Aug. 1. But that's on its remote reservation in northwestern Minnesota. It's not clear yet if other tribes will follow.

While states like New Mexico managed to legalize and regulate marijuana within a year of legalization, Minnesota will take a bit longer.

Like New York, the Minnesota law gives priority to social equity considerations for awarding licenses. That can mean applicants from low-income areas that have felt disproportionate effects from marijuana being illegal, people whose convictions have been expunged, and military veterans who lost their honorable status due to a marijuana-related offense, to name a few.

That includes a long list of license categories for cannabis-related businesses, with application fees ranging from \$250 for delivery services to \$10,000 for growers and product manufacturers.

Local governments can't ban cannabis sales, but they can limit the number of retailers to one per 12,500 residents.

MINNESOTA GROWN

Adults can grow up to eight plants at home, with no more than four flowering at a time. The plants must be grown in an enclosed, locked space that's not open to public view, whether that's indoors or in a garden.

Retailers can start selling marijuana seeds if they comply with labeling and other requirements set by the Minnesota Department of Agriculture.

WHERE AND WHERE NOT TO TOKE

Cannabis can be legally consumed on private property, including private homes. Eventually it will be allowed at special events where organizers have permits.

But it's still illegal to smoke or vape cannabis anywhere that tobacco smoking is prohibited, including most businesses, apartment buildings and college campuses. Nothing in the state law prohibits smoking it on a public sidewalk, but local ordinances might.

Cannabis use remains illegal in all forms while driving, in public schools, on school buses, in state prisons, and on federal property. It can't be smoked or vaped where a minor could inhale it.

GUNS AND GANJA

Federal law still bars cannabis consumers from owning firearms or ammunition.

That's despite Second Amendment-friendly provisions in the Minnesota law. The federal Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives has said that regardless of Minnesota's new law, a "current user" of marijuana is defined as an "unlawful user" for federal purposes. That means people following state law are still prohibited from having guns and ganja.

Gun purchasers must fill out an ATF form saying whether or not they use marijuana. Lying on the form is a felony under federal law.

CLEANING SLATES

Minor marijuana convictions, like possession of small amounts, will begin to be automatically expunged starting in August. More than 60,000 Minnesotans could benefit, but the Bureau of Criminal Apprehension says the process could take up to a year to clear everyone's record.

A special Cannabis Expungement Board will be formed to review felony convictions to determine eligibility case by case.

REGULATING IT

The Office of Cannabis Management will oversee the cannabis industry in Minnesota. It's starting to list job positions, with applications for the office's first executive director open through July 31.

The office will also take over the running of Minnesota's medical marijuana program, which won't be taxed. Tribal governments will set their own rules.

Do you believe in angels? About 7 in 10 U.S. adults do, a new AP-NORC poll shows

By HOLLY MEYER Associated Press

Compared with the devil, angels carry more credence in America.

Angels even get more credence than, well, hell. More than astrology, reincarnation, and the belief that physical things can have spiritual energies.

In fact, about 7 in 10 U.S. adults say they believe in angels, according to a new poll by The Associated Press-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research.

"People are yearning for something greater than themselves — beyond their own understanding," said Jack Grogger, a chaplain for the Los Angeles Angels and a longtime Southern California fire captain who has aided many people in their gravest moments.

That search for something bigger, he said, can take on many forms, from following a religion to crafting a self-driven purpose to believing in, of course, angels.

"For a lot of people, angels are a lot safer to worship," said Grogger, who also pastors a nondenominational church in Orange, California, and is a chaplain for the NHL's Anaheim Ducks.

People turn to angels for comfort, he said. They are familiar, regularly showing up in pop culture as well as in the Bible. Comparably, worshipping Jesus is far more involved; when Grogger preaches about angels it is with the context that they are part of God's kingdom.

American's belief in angels (69%) is about on par with belief in heaven and the power of prayer, but bested by belief in God or a higher power (79%). Fewer U.S. adults believe in the devil or Satan (56%), astrology (34%), reincarnation (34%), and that physical things can have spiritual energies, such as plants, rivers or crystals (42%).

The widespread acceptance of angels shown in the AP-NORC poll makes sense to Susan Garrett, an angel expert and New Testament professor at Louisville Presbyterian Theological Seminary in Kentucky. It tracks with historical surveys, she said, adding that the U.S. remains a faith-filled country even as more Americans reject organized religion.

But if the devil is in the details, so are people's understandings of angels.

"They're very malleable," Garrett said of angels. "You can have any one of a number of quite different worldviews in terms of your understanding of how the cosmos is arranged, whether there's spirit beings, whether there's life after death, whether there's a God ... and still find a place for angels in that worldview."

Talk of angels, Garrett said, is often also about something else, like the ways God interacts with the world and other hard-to-articulate ideas.

The large number of U.S. adults who say they believe in angels includes 84% of those with a religious affiliation — 94% of evangelical Protestants, 81% of mainline Protestants and 82% of Catholics — and 33% of those without one. And of those angel-believing religiously unaffiliated, that includes 2% of atheists, 25% of agnostics and 50% of those identified as "nothing in particular."

The broad acceptance is what fascinates San Francisco-based witch and author Devin Hunter: Angels show up independently in different religions and traditions, making them part of the fabric that unites humanity.

"We're all getting to the same conclusion," said Hunter, who spent 16 years as a professional medium, and started communicating as a child with what he believed were angels.

Hunter estimates that a belief in angels applies to about half of those practicing modern witchcraft today,

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and for some who don't believe, their rejection is often rooted in the religious trauma they experienced growing up.

"Angels become a very big deal" for long-time practitioners who've made occultism their primary focus, said Hunter, an angel-loving occultist. "We cannot escape them in any way, shape or form."

Jennifer Goodwin of Oviedo, Florida, also is among the roughly seven in 10 U.S. adults who say they believe in angels. She isn't sure if God exists and rejects the afterlife dichotomy of heaven and hell, but the recent deaths of her parents solidified her views on these celestial beings.

Goodwin believes her parents are still keeping an eye on the family — not in any physical way or as a supernatural apparition, but that they manifest in those moments when she feels a general sense of comfort.

"I think that they are around us, but it's in a way that we can't understand," Goodwin said. "I don't know what else to call it except an angel."

Angels mean different things to different people, and the idea of loved ones becoming heavenly angels after death is neither an unusual belief nor a universally held one.

In his reading of Scripture as an evangelical Protestant, Grogger said he believes angels are something else entirely — they have never been human and are on another level in heaven's hierarchy. "We are higher than angels," he said. "We do not become an angel."

Angels do interact with humans though, said Grogger, but what "that looks like we're not 100% sure." They worship God who created this angelic legion of unknown numbers, he said, adding that evangelicals often attribute the demonic forces in the world to the angels who fell from heaven when the devil rebelled.

The Western ideas about angels can be traced through the Bible — and to the worldviews of its monotheistic authors, Garrett said. Those beliefs have changed and developed for millennia, influenced by cultures, theologians and even the ancient polytheistic beliefs that came before the Hebrew Bible and the New Testament, she said.

"There are sort of lines of continuity from the Bible that you can trace all the way up to the New Age movement," said Susan Garrett, who wrote "No Ordinary Angel: Celestial Spirits and Christian Claims about Jesus."

The angels in the Bible do God's bidding, and angelic violence is one part of their job description, said Esther Hamori, author of the upcoming book, "God's Monsters: Vengeful Spirits, Deadly Angels, Hybrid Creatures, and Divine Hitmen of the Bible."

"The angels of the Bible are just as likely to assassinate individuals and slaughter entire populations as they are to offer help and protect and deliver," said Hamori. She doesn't believe in these angels, but studies them as a Hebrew Bible professor at Union Theological Seminary in New York where she teaches a popular "Monster Heaven" class.

"They're just God's obedient soldiers doing the task at hand, and sometimes that task is in human beings' best interests, and sometimes it's not," she said.

The perception that angels act angelic and look like the idyllic, winged figurines atop Christmas trees could be attributed to an early centuries belief that people are assigned one good angel and one bad — or have a good and bad spirit to guide them, Garrett said.

This idea shows up on the shoulders of cartoon characters and is likely what Abraham Lincoln was alluding to in his famous appeal for unity when he referenced "the better angels of our nature" in his first inaugural address, she said.

"It's also tied in with ideas about guardian angels, which again, very ancient views that got developed over the centuries," Garrett said.

For Sheila Avery of Chicago, angels are protectors, capable of keeping someone from harm. Avery, who belongs to a nondenominational church, credits them with those moments like when a person's plans fall through, but ultimately it saves them from being in the thick of an unexpected disaster.

"They turn on the news and a terrible tragedy happened at that particular place," Avery said, suggesting it was an "angel that was probably watching over them."

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Water is refreshing in the heat, right? In parts of Florida this past week, not so much

By MICHAEL PHILLIS, BEATRICE DUPUY and REBECCA BLACKWELL Associated Press

KEY BISCAYNE, Fla. (AP) — In the sweltering summer heat, nobody tries to cool off by jumping into a hot tub. In parts of Florida, however, that's what the ocean has felt like.

Earlier this week, sea surface temperatures reached as high as 101.2 degrees Fahrenheit (38.4 degrees Celsius) around the state's southern tip in Manatee Bay, according to the National Weather Service — although scientists said the context for Monday's reading is complicated.

"It was like there was no difference between humidity of the air and going into the water," said Chelsea Ward of Fort Myers, Florida.

Triple-digit ocean temperatures are stunning even in Florida, where residents are used to the heat and where many retirees find refuge from cold, northern winters. Several other nearby spots reached the mid-90s (about 35 Celsius). A storm finally came through on Wednesday, helping water temperatures drop back down in to the more temperate 80s (about 29 Celsius).

Humans naturally look to water for a chance to refresh. Every summer, millions grab their swimsuits for a day on the beach and a chance to cool off in the water — a break from everyday work and worry. Pools offer the same relief and a place for friends to gather. But when water temperatures get too high, some of the appeal is lost.

Ward, 47, doesn't keep her beach bag in her car anymore even though she lives minutes away from the beach in Fort Myers. Lately, the water is just too hot. On Sunday, when her friend asked if she wanted to go to the beach, the two decided against it after discovering the water temperature was around 90 degrees (32 degrees Celsius).

When it's hot, the body cools down by sweating, which evaporates and releases heat. Dipping into the ocean is typically so refreshing because heat efficiently transfers from your body into the water. But as water temperatures climb, that effect diminishes and you lose less heat less quickly, according to Michael Mullins, a Washington University toxicologist and emergency medicine physician at Barnes-Jewish Hospital in St. Louis.

A hot tub — or a stretch of ocean water hotter than body temperature — reverses the transfer of heat into your body. That's not a pleasant experience on a sizzling, humid, Florida day.

"It would feel," Mullins said, "like you are swimming in soup."

ICE BLOCKS FOR YOUR POOL? WHY NOT

People already tend not to swim that much in the Florida waters that were so extremely hot earlier this week. The water can get muddy and there are alligators and crocodiles in the area, too.

But high temperatures anywhere can make swimming less pleasant. Through Friday, Phoenix endured highs above 110 degrees Fahrenheit (43 degrees Celsius) every day this month. Pools are warm. About 150 miles (240 kilometers) to the northwest in Lake Havasu City, Arizona, Stefanee Lynn Thompson, 50, wanted to keep guests cool for a pool party she hosted Sunday. The heat had raised the pool's temperature to 96 degrees (36 Celsius).

Her friend recommended she go buy ice blocks. She ran to the grocery store, picked up 40 of them and dumped them in the pool. She set up fans, too. All that hard work dropped the pool's temperature a grand total of 4 degrees (7 degrees Celsius).

"When it's 120 out, anything helps," Thompson said.

Recently, ocean temperatures off the western coast of Florida have been a few degrees above normal, sitting around 88 to 90 degrees (31-32 degrees Celsius). It's not just humans that suffer when the oceans warm. Sea corals are bleaching. They can be hurt when water temperatures rise above the upper 80s (low 30 degrees Celsius).

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July has been so hot that scientists announced a global heat record even before the month ended. Climate change is creating a hotter world, warming oceans and making some storms more destructive. Sea surface temperatures are somewhat above average around Florida, but they are far higher in parts of the North Atlantic near Newfoundland where they are as much as 9 degrees Fahrenheit (5 degrees Celsius) hotter than usual.

The extremely high sea surface temperatures recorded earlier this week off Florida's southern tip were caused by lots of sun, little wind and no storms.

"I've never seen temperatures 100 degrees in Florida Bay in the 21 years I've been in the Keys," said Andy Devanas, science officer at the National Weather Service in Key West, Florida.

IS THE WATER THAT WARM EVERYWHERE?

And there are some questions about how representative Monday's 101.2-degree reading in Manatee Bay were. Water there is shallow and thus heats up quickly. If there's lots of sediment, that can raise temperatures, too, according to David Roth, a forecaster with the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration's Climate Prediction Center.

By contrast, stop by the YMCA pools on the North Shore of Massachusetts near Boston and you'll descend into water that's around 78 to 80 degrees (26 to 27 degrees Celsius). The ocean nearby is cooler, too. Sea surface temperatures off Cape Cod, for example, barely touched the mid-70s (about 24 degrees Celsius) this week.

When Maria Argueta, 38, has time off from her job at an open-air decorative plant nursery in Homestead, Florida, she'll go with her family to swim.

"This year, the heat is stronger," she said.

The hot ocean water doesn't bother her, but sometimes she takes her 2-year-old son and other members of the family to the Venetian Pool, a public facility in Coral Gables fed by water from an aquifer that's always in the 70s. The very cool water, she said, is refreshing.

Florida's humid weather makes it harder for sweat to evaporate and cool the body down. People in south Florida know the ocean doesn't tend to offer real relief from that suffocating heat.

"You aren't getting much cooling at all," Roth said. "Nobody goes into the water in South Florida in the summer really except to swim, because it is comfortable to swim, but it is not refreshing."

AP journalist Seth Borenstein contributed reporting from Washington, Dupuy reported from New York and Phillis reported from St. Louis. The Associated Press receives support from the Walton Family Foundation for coverage of water and environmental policy. The AP is solely responsible for all content. For all of AP's environmental coverage, visit <https://apnews.com/hub/climate-and-environment>

LGBTQ+ community proud and visible at Women's World Cup

By MAX RALPH Associated Press

AUCKLAND, New Zealand (AP) — New Zealand striker Hannah Wilkinson has helped create two milestones at the Women's World Cup.

With her 48th-minute goal in the tournament opener against Norway, she led the co-host Football Ferns to their first win in six trips to the Women's World Cup. She's also one of at least 95 out members of the LGBTQ+ community competing in this year's tournament, according to a count being kept by Outsports, a website that covers the LGBTQ+ sports.

The Ferns were greeted with a fan-made sign at their next match in Wellington: "Gay for soccer, gay for Wilkie," it read.

The 95 out participants make up roughly 13% of the 736 total players at the Women's World Cup, more than doubling the 40 players and coaches Outsports counted in 2019.

The 2023 tournament also is hosting the first openly trans and non-binary player in either a men's or Women's World Cup, Quinn of Canada.

"Last World Cup was so big, especially with the visibility of the U.S. women's national team winning and

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(Megan Rapinoe) fighting with (Donald) Trump. So I think that was a huge year for LGBTQ+ visibility," said Lindsey Freeman, a professor of sociology and anthropology at Simon Fraser University in British Columbia.

"It's just the ad hoc, fun culture of women's soccer that you're seeing in this World Cup," said Freeman, who is in New Zealand conducting research on the topic.

Jim Buzinski, co-founder of Outsports, agreed. "In the Western world, it's such a non-issue that it really just doesn't get talked about," he said. "And I think that's in a good way."

VISIBILITY

Prior to the start of the tournament, FIFA designated eight socially conscious armbands team captains could wear throughout the Women's World Cup. The decision came after "One Love" armbands were denied to men's teams in Qatar in 2022.

The armbands being used this year include anti-discriminatory sayings and multiple colors, but the rainbow version Germany wanted to use is not allowed. None of the available options explicitly mention LGBTQ+ rights.

The decision has led many players to express their support in more creative ways across Australia and New Zealand.

New Zealand midfielder Ali Riley was interviewed on the official Women's World Cup broadcast after her team's upset of Norway. Her painted fingernails, left hand in the colors of the pride flag and right hand as the trans flag, were clearly visible as she held her head and fought back tears.

"She's such an advocate and she's definitely someone who uses her platform in such a positive way. We are all so proud of her and the way she represents the LGBTQ+ community," teammate CJ Bott said. "Good on her. We're all backing her, and we all back the community as well."

The Philippines, making its Women's World Cup debut, took home its own historic win over New Zealand 1-0 thanks to the foot of Sarina Bolden. Bolden's Instagram bio reads, "i just wanna have fun n b gay."

Irish star Katie McCabe wowed fans with a goal directly from a corner kick. She's also made tabloid news for her relationships with other players.

Thembi Kgatlana, who has scored in the tournament for South Africa, has a patch of her hair dyed rainbow colors.

"My personality is very big for me, and my hair has become a part of my personality," Kgatlana said. "And I did this rainbow because I want to represent all the people that are part of the LGBTQ and cannot talk while in countries where they're oppressed."

FAN EXPERIENCE

Kristen Pariseau and her wife started a U.S. women's national team supporters group on Facebook ahead of traveling to this year's Women's World Cup. Aside from some hateful users she blocked, it's been "super LGBT friendly."

She and her wife did not go to Qatar for the 2022 men's World Cup to avoid referencing each other as friends and receiving questions on their sexuality. In New Zealand, she said she's met many same-sex couples at games and while traveling around the country.

"Everywhere you turn, it's like, 'Oh, my wife, my girlfriend.' It's been so welcoming and open," Pariseau said. "In a way, it is kind of cool to be where there's a lot of other people like you."

Kelsie Bozart took her own pride flag armband to the United States' second match in Wellington, along with a pride scarf.

"If you look back a couple years, I feel like it just wasn't really talked about or there just wasn't much of a presence," Bozart said. "But moving forward I feel like, especially for the U.S., they've done an amazing job of just incorporating pride and LGBTQ."

NOT UNIVERSAL

Though this year's tournament has highlighted vast gains for the LGBTQ+ community in women's soccer, advocates feel there is still work to be done.

According to Buzinski and Outsports, there were at least 186 LGBTQ+ athletes at the Tokyo Olympics. Women outnumbered men by a 9:1 ratio. There also were no confirmed out players at the 2022 men's World Cup.

"I think women's sports have always been open," Denmark striker Pernille Harder said, adding that there are many role models for women who want to come out.

Freeman said it would be good to see men feel the same level of comfort.

"What can happen in the women's game, I would love to spill over to the men's game," she said. "Because obviously, there's way more queer players in the men's game and it's just not safe for them to come out.

"If you want to say that you're in an inclusive space, you really have to be an inclusive space," Freeman added. "And I think that that includes also holding the World Cup in places where it's fine to be a queer person."

Max Ralph is a student in John Curley Center for Sports Journalism at Penn State.

Contributing reporters included Joe Lister in Wellington and Rafaela Pontes in Auckland, students in the John Curley Center for Sports Journalism at Penn State, and Clay Witt in Sydney, Australia, a student at the University of Georgia's Carnical Sports Media Institute.

AP World Cup coverage: <https://apnews.com/hub/fifa-womens-world-cup> and https://twitter.com/AP_Sports

Blinken says US economic support for Niger is at risk as military takeover threatens stability

By BRIAN P. D. HANNON and ROD MCGUIRK Associated Press

CANBERRA, Australia (AP) — Political instability in Niger resulting from a military takeover that deposed the president this week threatens the economic support provided by Washington to the African nation, U.S. Secretary of State Anthony Blinken said Saturday.

Members of the Niger military announced on Wednesday they had deposed democratically elected President Mohamed Bazoum and on Friday named Gen. Abdourahmane Tchiani as the country's new leader, adding Niger to a growing list of military regimes in West Africa's Sahel region.

Blinken, who is in Australia as part of a Pacific tour, said the continued security and economic arrangements that Niger has with the U.S. hinged on the release of Bazoum and "the immediate restoration of the democratic order in Niger."

"Our economic and security partnership with Niger — which is significant, hundreds of millions of dollars — depends on the continuation of the democratic governance and constitutional order that has been disrupted by the actions in the last few days," Blinken said. "So that assistance, that support, is in clear jeopardy as a result of these actions, which is another reason why they need to be immediately reversed."

Blinken stopped short of calling the military actions in Niger a coup, a designation that could result in the African country losing millions of dollars of military aid and assistance.

Speaking in Brisbane, Blinken said he had spoken with President Bazoum on Saturday but did not provide details. He cited the support of the African Union, the Economic Community of West African States and other regional entities in trying to bring an end to the unrest.

"The very significant assistance that we have in place that's making a material difference in the lives of the people of Niger is clearly in jeopardy and we've communicated that as clearly as we possibly can to those responsible for disrupting the constitutional order and Niger's democracy," Blinken said.

Blinken said the U.S. Embassy in Niger had accounted for the safety of all staff members and their families, while issuing a security alert advising U.S. citizens in the country to limit unnecessary movements and avoid areas impacted by the coup.

The military group that conducted the coup, calling itself the National Council for the Safeguarding of the Country, said its members remained committed to engaging with the international and national community.

"This is as a result of the continuing degradation of the security situation, the bad economic and social

governance," air force Col. Major Amadou Abdramane said in the video released by the coup leaders Wednesday. He said aerial and land borders were closed and a curfew was in place until the situation stabilized.

Bazoum was elected two years ago in Niger's first peaceful, democratic transfer of power since independence from France.

Niger is seen as the last reliable partner for the West in efforts to battle jihadis linked to al-Qaida and the Islamic State group in Africa's Sahel region, where Russia and Western countries have vied for influence in the fight against extremism.

France has 1,500 soldiers in the country who conduct joint operations with Niger's military, while the U.S. and other European countries have helped train the nation's troops.

Hannon reported from Bangkok.

'God willing, we will meet again in Libya.' A migrant family's tale shows chaos at Tunisian border

By RENATA BRITO, ELAINE GANLEY and SAMY MAGDY Associated Press

When Mbengue Nyimbilo Crepin regained consciousness after collapsing in the desert, the sun had already set. Tunisian authorities had violently forced him, his wife and their 6-year-old daughter across the border to Libya by foot without water, in the blazing heat, he said. Nyimbilo crumpled to the ground, exhausted and dehydrated, but urged his wife to carry on with little Marie and catch up to dozens of other migrants ahead.

"God willing, we will meet again in Libya," he told them.

Nyimbilo eventually made it there — only to find out days later that his wife and daughter almost certainly did not.

A graphic photo widely shared on social media shows the lifeless body of a Black woman with braided hair next to a little girl, their faces down in the sand. The child is curled up next to the woman, her bare feet red and swollen, likely from walking on blistering hot sand.

Nyimbilo said he immediately recognized his wife's yellow dress, pulled up on her body, and his daughter's black sandals, sitting beside them. He shared recent photographs with The Associated Press showing them in the same clothing. He said he hasn't heard from his wife, Matyla Dosso, who also went by Fatima, or their daughter since that day in the desert, July 16.

Nyimbilo believes Matyla and Marie are among more than a dozen Black migrants Libyan border guards say they've found dead in the desert border area of the North African nations since Tunisian authorities began conducting mass expulsions in early July. Nyimbilo is from Cameroon; his wife, Ivory Coast. They lived for years in Libya but hoped to finally make it to Europe via the Mediterranean Sea from Tunisia.

The Libyan police border guard in al-Assa, near the Tunisian border, found the woman and child in the July 19 photo dead, spokesperson Maj. Shawky al-Masry said. He declined to provide further details or say where the bodies are now.

Different border units have found at least 10 bodies on the Libyan side since last week, including that of another small child.

Black Africans in Tunisia have faced increasing discrimination and violence since President Kais Saied's February remarks that sub-Saharan migrants are part of a plot to alter the country's identity and demographics. He said "hordes of irregular migrants" bring "violence, crime and unacceptable practices." The speech to his security council inflamed longstanding tensions throughout the region and country, but particularly between Tunisians and migrants in the port city of Sfax and other eastern coastal towns.

Tunisia has replaced Libya as the main point of departure for people attempting the deadly Mediterranean crossing to Italy, according to United Nations and other figures. Through July 20, more than 15,000 foreign migrants were intercepted by Tunisian authorities — more than double that period last year, Interior Minister Kamel Fekih told Parliament this week. He blasted the influx of sub-Saharan migrants and said

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Tunisia can't accept becoming "a transit country."

Tunisian authorities have responded to rising tensions with a crackdown on Black migrants and refugees, and some have been rounded up from coastal cities and sent to Libya or Algeria — countries with their own long track records of grave human rights violations, abuses against migrants and collective deportations.

Human rights organizations, Libyan authorities and migrants themselves have accused Tunisia of violating international law with the mass expulsions across its borders. Tunisian authorities long skirted a direct response to those accusations, but on Thursday, the Interior Ministry rejected any responsibility about "Africans outside its borders," a clear reference to those in the desert. The ministry stressed Tunisia's right to protect borders and insisted it carries out its "humanitarian duty."

Officials also issued a warning against publication of content from social networks and in news outlets, and made a veiled reference in a recent statement to prison sentences of up to 10 years for anyone circulating information it deems incorrect.

This week, hundreds of people — including pregnant women and children — remain trapped in the border area between Tunisia, Libya and the Mediterranean Sea, while others are stranded on the Algeria side, U.N. agencies said, urging their immediate rescue.

Libyan authorities have stepped up security near Tunisia and found hundreds of migrants stranded in temperatures that surpassed 50 degrees Celsius (122 degrees Fahrenheit). They've shared dramatic photos and videos on social media of their desert encounters with exhausted migrants desperate for water, as well as graphic images of the deceased.

Libyan guard Ali Wali said his team has seen through binoculars Tunisian security forcing migrants toward Libya. He said his unit finds more than 100 daily: "Some migrants spent up to three days with no food and water in the desert."

Without elaborating, Wali said those found are handed to relevant authorities. U.N. agencies and the Libyan Red Crescent say they've provided food, water and other assistance.

But according to another security official, migrants were taken to detention centers run by Libya's Directorate for Combatting Illegal Migration, notorious for abuse. The official spoke on condition of anonymity because he was not authorized to speak to reporters.

Despite the growing evidence of abuse against some migrants in Tunisia and issues at the border, European leaders have doubled up their show of support for Saied, offering hundreds of millions of euros to stabilize the country with hopes it will also reduce migration.

That didn't deter Nyimbilo and his family.

Nyimbilo and his wife had already tried to get to Europe. Their previous five attempts to cross the Mediterranean, from Libya to Italy, all failed. Each time, they were intercepted by EU-equipped Libyan forces and imprisoned. Nyimbilo told AP his wife was raped twice in front of their child in detention.

"We had no more hope," Nyimbilo said of their time in Libya, where Marie couldn't even attend school because she's the child of immigrants. "This country has traumatized us so much."

So, on July 13, they left the coastal city of Zuwara and trekked through the desert with other migrants, making it to the border in the early hours of July 15. They continued to the town of Ben Guerdane, about 30 kilometers (18 miles) into Tunisia.

The group split up to avoid attracting attention. But they grew desperate for water. Nyimbilo and his family walked to a main road in search of help. That's when a police car stopped and detained them, he said, and officers found their registration papers.

"When they saw it and realized we had left Libya, they beat us," Nyimbilo said. The next day, he said, they were loaded onto a truck with other migrants and dropped at the border, without water.

Today, he said, he struggles to cope with his loss and to realize he'll never see his wife or daughter again. They'd survived so much — failed voyages to Europe, assaults, even the 2019 bombing of the Tajoura detention center. He can hardly accept that Matyla and Marie died in the desert.

"A bottle of water could have saved my family," he said.

Brito reported from Barcelona, Spain; Ganley from Paris; and Magdy from Cairo. Sarah El Deeb contributed from Beirut.

4 air crew members are missing after an Australian army helicopter ditched off the Queensland coast

By ROD McGUIRK Associated Press

CANBERRA, Australia (AP) — Four air crew members were missing after an Australian army helicopter ditched into waters off the Queensland state coast during joint military exercises with the United States, officials said Saturday.

The MRH-90 Taipan helicopter went down near Lindeman Island, a Great Barrier Reef tourist resort, at about 11 p.m. Friday, exercise director Australian Army Brigadier Damian Hill said.

A search involving U.S., Canadian and Australian personnel was underway to find the crew who are all Australian men, officials said.

Debris that appeared to be from a helicopter had been recovered, Queensland Police Assistant Commissioner Douglas McDonald said.

The Taipan was taking part in Talisman Sabre, a biennial joint U.S.-Australian military exercise that is largely based in Queensland. This year's exercise involves 13 nations and more than 30,000 military personnel.

Defense Minister Richard Marles said the helicopter ditched, which refers to an emergency landing on water.

"Defense exercises, which are so necessary for the readiness of our defense force, are serious. They carry risk," Marles told reporters in Brisbane. "As we desperately hope for better news during the course of this day we are reminded about the gravity of the act which comes with wearing our nation's uniform."

Hill said the exercise was postponed on Saturday morning but had restarted limited activity later in the day. Australia had grounded its Taipan fleet as a precaution, Hill said.

It was the second emergency involving an Australian Taipan this year, after one ditched into the sea off the New South Wales state coast in March. That helicopter was taking part in a nighttime counterterrorism training exercise when it ran into trouble. All 10 passengers and crew members were rescued.

U.S. Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin was in Brisbane for a meeting on Saturday and is due to travel with Marles to north Queensland on Sunday to see the exercise.

Austin and U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken paid tribute to the missing air crew at the outset of a meeting with their Australian counterparts, Marles and Foreign Minister Penny Wong.

"It's always tough when you have accidents in training, but ... the reason that we train to such high standards is so that we can be successful and we can protect lives when we are called to answer any kind of crisis," Austin said.

"Our guys tend to make this look easy and they make it look easy because they're so well exercised and rehearsed and trained, and this is unfortunately a part of that, what it takes to get them to where we need them to be," Austin added.

Blinken said, "We're so grateful to them for their dedication, for their service, for everything they've been doing to stand up for the freedom that we share and that is what unites us more than anything else."

Marles thanked the United States for their contribution to the search and rescue effort.

The missing helicopter had just dropped off two Australian commandos before it hit the water, Australian Broadcasting Corp. reported.

Australia announced in January that its army and navy would stop flying the European-built Taipans by December 2024, 13 years earlier than originally planned, because they had proven unreliable. They will be replaced by 40 U.S. Black Hawks. Marles said at the time the Lockheed Martin-designed Black Hawks "have a really good proven track record in terms of their reliability."

Australia's Taipans had been plagued by problems since the first helicopter arrived in the country in 2007.

Australia's entire fleet of 47 Taipans was grounded in 2019 to fix a problem with their tail rotor blades.

A year later, 27 Taipans were grounded because of a problem with doors.

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Mega Millions jackpot climbs to \$1.05 billion after another drawing without a big winner

By The Associated Press undefined

The Mega Millions jackpot climbed to an estimated \$1.05 billion Friday night, only the fifth time in the history of the game that the grand prize has reached into the billions.

No one managed to beat the massive odds and match all six numbers for Friday's estimated \$940 million jackpot. The numbers drawn were: 5, 10, 28, 52, 63 and the gold ball 18.

There have been 29 straight draws without a Mega Millions jackpot winner since the last grand prize ticket on April 18.

The \$1.05 billion prize up for grabs in the next drawing Tuesday night would be for a sole winner choosing to be paid through an annuity, with annual payments over 30 years. Jackpot winners almost always opt for a lump sum payment, which for Tuesday's drawing would be an estimated \$527.9 million.

The potential jackpot is the fourth-largest in the game and the fifth over \$1 billion, Mega Millions said in a statement early Saturday.

Although there were no jackpot winners, one ticket in Pennsylvania was worth \$5 million and another in the state connected for \$1 million. There also were \$1 million winners in Arizona, California and New York, Mega Millions said.

It has been less than two weeks since someone in Los Angeles won a \$1.08 billion Powerball prize that ranked as the sixth-largest in U.S. history. The winner of the prize is still a mystery.

Lottery jackpots grow so large because the odds of winning are so small. For Mega Millions, the odds of winning the jackpot are about 1 in 302.6 million.

Winners also would be subject to federal taxes, and many states also tax lottery winnings.

Mega Millions is played in 45 states, Washington, D.C., and the U.S. Virgin Islands.

Opera for the public: Spain's Teatro Real opera house offers free broadcast to towns and cities

By BERNAT ARMANGUE Associated Press

MADRID (AP) — On a night in the middle of July, tenors, sopranos and a choir delighted the crowd in Madrid's luxurious Teatro Real opera house with Giacomo Puccini's masterpiece, "Turandot."

After the curtain came down, the audience filed from their plush seats and left the theater's state-of-the-art air conditioning for the summer swelter outside — only to be met again by the voices of Calaf and Princess Turandot.

The performance they had just seen was being replayed on a giant television screen in the big square at the back of the theater.

Here, the spectators sat on hundreds of plastic chairs. Many wore shorts and sandals. Others, tourists included, sat on the low walls and benches in the square or leaned on the barriers and the nearby subway station's railings.

Some chewed on rolls of Spanish jam, others played cards. But most were absorbed with the show on the 9- by 5-meter (30- by 16-foot) screen.

The night was part of Teatro Real's "opera week," which for eight years has been providing a free broadcast of an opera in the theater to towns and cities across Spain.

More than 100 towns displayed the broadcast of the July 14 "Turandot" performance. All the towns need is a computer, a good Wi-Fi connection and somewhere to project the video.

During the week, the crowds outside the theater in Madrid also got to see other Teatro Real shows,

including a ballet and flamenco act. The week cost the theater 107,000 euros (\$118,000).

The chief aim is to spread interest in opera.

Opera "is popular music, it was always the total art where literature, music and dance met, (when) there was no television, there was no radio," said Spanish tenor Jorge de León, who played Calaf.

"We have to remove that label of elitism that opera has, because they (operas) talk about stories, about very understandable things," he said, sitting on one of the plastic chairs among the spectators in the square.

In Mino de San Esteban, a village of 44 inhabitants about 160 kilometers (100 miles) north of Madrid, 94-year-old Nemesia Olmos soaked up the projection of "Turandot" on the wall of the town's Romanesque church.

Cultural life in the village has changed greatly. Gone is the crowded ballroom and visits from traveling theater groups. No longer do residents listen to songs from what was the only radio in the village. For the villagers, the Teatro Real's offering is a delight.

"We've never had it so close. It seemed like we saw it right there, although it is a bit long," Olmos said, as she left a little before the end.

This story has been corrected to say Jorge de León is a tenor, not a soprano.

To wrap, or not to wrap? Hungarian bookstores face fines over closed packaging for LGBTQ+ books

By BELA SZANDELSZKY Associated Press

BUDAPEST, Hungary (AP) — In a snug, wood-paneled Jewish bookstore in Hungary's capital, Eva Redai carefully climbed the rungs of a ladder to arrange titles on the shelves. Among the books were volumes bound in plastic wrapping — titles containing LGBTQ+ content that the country's right-wing government has deemed unsuitable for minors under 18.

The 76-year-old has run the Láng Téka bookstore in central Budapest for nearly 35 years, since just before Hungary's democratic transition from state socialism. But never, until now, has she needed to segregate the books she sells to avoid violating a government ban.

"I consider this such a level of discrimination. This law is an act of force that can hardly be made sense of," Redai said. "As someone who's been in this business for such a long time, even I cannot decide which books fall under the ban."

Hungary's government under populist Prime Minister Viktor Orban has in recent years taken a hard line on LGBTQ+ issues, passing legislation that rights groups and European politicians have decried as repressive against sexual minorities.

A "child protection" law, passed in 2021, bans the "depiction or promotion" of homosexuality in content available to minors, including in television, films, advertisements and literature. It also prohibits the mention of LGBTQ+ issues in school education programs, and forbids the public depiction of "gender deviating from sex at birth."

Hungary's government insists that the law, part of a broader statute that also increases criminal penalties for pedophilia and creates a searchable database of sex offenders, is necessary to protect children. But it is seen by Orban's critics as an attempt to stigmatize lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people, and conflate homosexuality with pedophilia.

Earlier this month, a government office levied a hefty fine against Hungary's second-largest bookstore chain for violating the contentious law. Lira Könyv was ordered to pay 12 million forints (around \$35,000) for placing a popular LGBTQ+ graphic novel in its youth literature section, and for failing to place it in closed packaging.

The fine, the second issued by the government in a single month, sent booksellers rushing to determine whether selling certain titles without closed packaging could result in financial penalties for their own stores. Along with outlawing LGBTQ+ content for minors, the law also prohibits depicting "sexuality for

its own sake" to audiences under 18 — a rule that could potentially apply to countless works of literature.

Krisztian Nyary, an author and the creative director for Lira Könyv, said that the language of the law contains many ambiguities, which places a burden on booksellers to determine which of the thousands of titles they offer may contain proscribed content.

"The practical problem is that the sellers are supposed to decide what the law applies to and what it does not," Nyary said, adding that the Bible, too, depicts homosexuality. "In a small bookstore of four to five thousand titles, or a large one with sixty to seventy thousand titles, a bookseller does not know in much detail what the books contain."

Nyary said Lira Könyv plans to challenge the fine in court, and does not intend to begin placing books in closed packaging. The requirement to do so is "anti-culture," he said, and could carry adverse financial effects as well.

"The ability to sell a packaged book is one-tenth of what it is when it's unpackaged. It's like putting a painting in a dark basement: Everyone knows it's there, but you can't look at it," he said.

The Láng Téka bookstore, a much smaller business, has opted to comply with the law. On Wednesday, an employee packaged titles that depict homosexuality in household cellophane wrap, and slid them onto the packed shelves. Eva Redai, the shop owner, posted a sign on the front window reading, "In this bookshop, we also sell books with 'non-traditional content'."

"This is completely against my own principles and thoughts," Redai said. "But obviously, I'm a law-abiding person, and I also don't want to pay a fine of several million forints for my non-existent crime. So we, too, are trying to obey the laws which they have recently forced on us."

Mark Mezei, a novelist in Budapest, has published a book which contains a lesbian relationship — making his work subject to the restrictions. But he believes Hungary's legislation, which he described as "bad for democracy," will not have a chilling effect on authors.

"Whoever wants to write is going to write ... it doesn't matter what legislators think," he said. "That we live in times when such a thing can happen is not up to me. But as a writer, this doesn't influence me at all."

Others, too, are resisting the legislation. A group of university activists this week have given away over 100 free copies of what they call "banned books" — those subject to the closed packaging provision — in front of one of Budapest's largest bookstores.

One activist, 22-year-old Vince Sajosi, said on Wednesday that Hungary's law reduces the accessibility of important works and "restricts a process of social development."

"We want these books to appear in Hungarian literary public life and in everyday conversations, which is why we want to give them to people for free," he said.

Redai, the bookstore owner, said that in Hungary today, people that identify as non-heterosexual "are being stigmatized and ostracized, and they are not considered equal members of society, which I simply find outrageous."

"This feeds into an idea that, unfortunately, already happened in the 20th century, where people were judged and persecuted based on their appearance, skin color, religion or other affiliation, and many, many people fell victim to this idea," she said. "Quite simply, this could be the beginning of something terrible that so many of us have tried to forget."

A drought alert for receding Lake Titicaca has Indigenous communities worried for their future

By PAOLA FLORES Associated Press

HUARINA, Bolivia (AP) — A 70-year-old man's feet sink into the soil as he passes abandoned boats where there used to be the water of Lake Titicaca. The highest navigable lake in the world has receded to what Bolivian authorities say are critically low levels due to a persistent drought.

"It's completely dry," Jaime Mamani said in exasperation while walking along the new shoreline in Huarina, a farming town 70 kilometers (43 miles) west of La Paz where he is a community leader.

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The National Service of Naval Hydrography declared an alert this week for the iconic lake after its surface fell 2 centimeters (0.8 inches) below the drought warning stage, or 3,807.8 meters (12492.7 feet) above sea level. But the agency says this is just the beginning of a situation that is worrying Indigenous Aymara communities that rely on the lake for their livelihoods and fear the dry spell could permanently impact the region's flora and fauna.

The hydrology unit of Bolivia's navy warned that water levels could reach historically low levels in the coming months. By December, there is a "high probability" Lake Titicaca will be 64 centimeters (more than 25 inches) below the drought alert level, breaking a low water record set in 1998 by 33 centimeters (almost 13 inches).

"In three months, the water has decreased by 30 centimeters (11.8 inches), and considering that radiation is much stronger during this time of the year ... we expect it to keep decreasing," Carlos Carrasco, a hydraulic engineer for the hydrography service said.

The drought is the result of a combination of factors, including natural phenomena like La Niña and El Niño, which arrived unusually early this year and have been particularly strong due in part to climate change, according to Lucía Walper, who heads up the Hydrological Forecasting Unit at Bolivia's National Meteorology and Hydrology Service.

But the vast lake is vital for this region of the Bolivian highlands, where hundreds of Aymara rural communities have relied on the blue body of water for millennia to practice subsistence farming and raise livestock.

Authorities in the Peruvian city of Puno also issued a warning about the declining water levels and expressed concern about the potential impact on tourism.

"We're reaching a critical point. There will be a significant loss of water," said Juan José Ocola, president of the Binational Authority of Lake Titicaca. The lake serves as the border between Bolivia and Peru.

Mateo Vargas, 56, a fisherman who has lived off the Lake Titicaca for 28 years, said he used to catch "lots" of fish daily. Now he considers himself lucky if he can catch six.

Vargas' wife, Justina Condori, shares his concerns.

"The fish have vanished," Condori, 58, said, predicting there will be famine if the current conditions persist.

Condori makes a living by renting boats to tourists. She worries fewer people will come to visit the lake, which at an elevation of 3,810 meters above sea level, is the largest body of freshwater in the Andes mountain range.

Evidence of the receding lake is seemingly everywhere. Women who sell fried fish and other snacks by the lake face rising costs for ingredients. Those who make a living transporting people from one side of the lake to the other are altering their routes because their rafts and boats no longer reach their usual docks.

Livestock farmers who rely on the plants that grow on the shores of the Titicaca to feed their animals are also seeing their livelihoods threatened.

The economic hardship is causing many residents of Huarina to migrate to other areas of the country, leaving behind mostly older townspeople, Mamani said. The waters of the Titicaca have always been shallow around the town, so the drought is even more visible there.

"There is a detriment to the economy of the inhabitants of the region," he said.

Vargas, the fisherman, is also concerned about what the declining water levels will mean for the future.

"It looks like it will continue to decrease, day by day," he said. "We're worried because if we continue like this, what's going to happen to our children?"

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The UFO congressional hearing was 'insulting' to US employees, a top Pentagon official says

By NOMAAN MERCHANT and TARA COPP Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — A top Pentagon official has attacked this week's widely watched congressional hearing on UFOs, calling the claims "insulting" to employees who are investigating sightings and accusing a key witness of not cooperating with the official U.S. government investigation.

Dr. Sean Kirkpatrick's letter, published on his personal LinkedIn page and circulated Friday across social media, criticizes much of the testimony from a retired Air Force intelligence officer that energized believers in extraterrestrial life and produced headlines around the world.

Retired Air Force Maj. David Grusch testified Wednesday that the U.S. has concealed what he called a "multi-decade" program to collect and reverse-engineer "UAPs," or unidentified aerial phenomena, the official government term for UFOs.

Part of what the U.S. has recovered, Grusch testified, were non-human "biologics," which he said he had not seen but had learned about from "people with direct knowledge of the program."

A career intelligence officer, Kirkpatrick was named a year ago to lead the Pentagon's All-domain Anomaly Resolution Office, or AARO, which was intended to centralize investigations into UAPs. The Pentagon and U.S. intelligence agencies have been pushed by Congress in recent years to better investigate reports of devices flying at unusual speeds or trajectories as a national security concern.

Kirkpatrick wrote the letter Thursday and the Defense Department confirmed Friday that he posted it in a personal capacity. Kirkpatrick declined to comment on the letter Friday.

He writes in part, "I cannot let yesterday's hearing pass without sharing how insulting it was to the officers of the Department of Defense and Intelligence Community who chose to join AARO, many with not unreasonable anxieties about the career risks this would entail."

"They are truth-seekers, as am I," Kirkpatrick said. "But you certainly would not get that impression from yesterday's hearing."

In a separate statement, Pentagon spokeswoman Sue Gough denied other allegations made by Grusch before a House Oversight subcommittee.

The Pentagon "has no information that any individual has been harmed or killed as a result of providing information" about UFO objects, Gough said. Nor has the Pentagon discovered "any verifiable information to substantiate claims that any programs regarding the possession or reverse-engineering of extraterrestrial materials have existed in the past or exist currently."

Kirkpatrick wrote, "AARO has yet to find any credible evidence to support the allegations of any reverse engineering program for non-human technology."

He had briefed reporters in December that the Pentagon was investigating "several hundreds" of new reports following a push to have pilots and others come forward with any sightings.

Kirkpatrick wrote in his letter that allegations of "retaliation, to include physical assault and hints of murder, are extraordinarily serious, which is why law enforcement is a critical member of the AARO team, specifically to address and take swift action should anyone come forward with such claims."

"Yet, contrary to assertions made in the hearing, the central source of those allegations has refused to speak with AARO," Kirkpatrick said. He did not explicitly name Grusch, who alleged he faced retaliation and declined to answer when a congressman asked him if anyone had been murdered to hide information about UFOs.

Messages left at a phone number and email address for Grusch were not returned Friday.

Black Belt Eagle Scout's latest record inspired by return home to Swinomish tribe's ancestral lands

By MICHAEL CASEY Associated Press

CHICAGO (AP) — The beginning of the pandemic was devastating for the leader of the indie rock band Black Belt Eagle Scout, Katherine Paul. All her tours, including one headlining across North America, were canceled and she feared her ascending music career might be over.

She got a day job at a nonprofit and returned to the Swinomish Indian Tribal Community's homelands in Western Washington. But as Paul, or KP to her friends, spent time in the cedar forests and walked along the Skagit River, she turned to her guitar to deal with the isolation and stress. Those snippets, recorded on her phone, provided the foundation for what would become songs on her powerful, grunge-soaked new record "The Land, The Water, The Sky."

"I feel like if the pandemic hadn't happened, I probably wouldn't have made this record," said KP, who writes the songs, sings and plays guitar in the band that was the only Native American artist at the Pitchfork Music Festival in Chicago this month.

"I spent a lot of time outside. I spent a lot more time than normal going on hikes, being part of the land," she continued. "It's not like I never do that stuff but it brought me back to a place where this is who I am."

The new record, which came out in February, helped launch what has probably been the most successful year so far for Black Belt Eagle Scout. The band toured Europe and will go to Australia later this year. Two of her songs, "Soft Stud" from an earlier record and "Salmon Stinta" from her latest, appear this season on the television series "Reservation Dogs."

Reservation Dogs Music Supervisor Tiffany Anders said she was introduced to the band's music by the show's creator, Sterlin Harjo, when they started working on the second season.

"It's always been important for us on this show to include Native American artists, but beyond representation, Black Belt Eagle Scout's music is beautiful and emotional, and fits these characters, their world and landscape — and the vibe of the show," she said in a statement.

Then there was Pitchfork, a three-day festival that is a significant milestone for indie musicians. The festival is held every year in Chicago's Union Park and this year's headliners included Bon Iver, Big Thief and The Smile, which has members of Radiohead.

She admitted stepping on that stage last weekend was nerve-racking given her high hopes for the show, a feeling compounded by concerns that storms could scuttle their performance. But as she launched into the blistering set of mostly new songs in front of thousands of eager fans, KP found solace in her guitar. She launched several long jams that were punctuated by her twirling her jet-black hair around to the point it obscured her face.

"It was totally a moment," she said with a laugh.

"I kind of cried after we played because it felt so meaningful," she added. "Like, I've always wanted to play this music festival. I remember trying to play one of the years before the pandemic when I was touring and it didn't happen. This year, I was just so stoked to play."

Reaching Pitchfork has been a long journey for the 34-year-old artist, who is a member of the Swinomish Indian Tribal Community and left her home on the reservation in LaConner, Washington, when she was 17 to attend Lewis & Clark College in Oregon and play rock music.

Growing up on the reservation off the Washington coast on islands in the Salish Sea, she drummed and sang cultural songs. As a teenager, she discovered local Pacific Northwest bands like Mount Eerie and the sounds of the Riot Grrrl movement and played one of her first gigs at a small bar called Department of Safety. She moved to Portland, Oregon, due to its outsized role in the indie scene that featured bands like Sleater-Kinney and quickly immersed herself in the music scene playing drums and guitar.

She joined an all-female outfit whom she met at the Rock 'n' Roll Camp for Girls in Portland. She went on to play a lot of small, basement shows with bands like Genders — whose wolf tattoo she still has on her left arm.

But she wanted to write her own songs and formed Black Belt Eagle Scout in 2013. Her early music was

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defined by her ethereal singing about love, friendship and healing — often only accompanied by minimal guitar strumming. But she did rock out on songs like “Soft Stud,” which featured searing solos.

“She is a really an authentic musician and she carries a lot of power on stage with her presence and sound,” Claire Glass, who plays guitar in the band and first saw KP seven years ago.

KP has said her Native American identity has always been present on her records. But her latest music paints a more vivid picture of life on the Swinomish reservation. There are references to chinook salmon, which are traditionally fished, and a powwow dance.

“I started thinking of feeling grateful for the life that I have been given; this place that I’m from; how much the land, the water, the sky means to me — being surrounded by it,” KP said of writing the song “Don’t Give Up.” “It has so much more meaning because the land, that’s where my people are from.”

Her songs aren’t meant to directly confront issues like the crisis of missing and murdered Native American women or tribes’ forced relocation. It’s not the way she writes songs. Instead, she envisions them connecting with people, drawing more Native Americans to indie rock shows in places like Minneapolis, which has a vibrant Native American community, and inspiring young Native Americans to connect with her after shows.

“Isn’t me like being here existing with my music good enough? Can’t I just be who I am?” she asked, adding she doesn’t need to speak out from stage about these issues because being Native often means she is already wrestling with them. A judge, for example, ruled in March that BNSF Railway intentionally violated the terms of an easement agreement with the tribe by running 100-car trains carrying crude oil over the reservation.

“As a Native person, you know someone who is missing. Your tribe is trying to get your land back. Those are topics that are part of your every day life,” she said. “I care about those things deeply but there are certain ways in which my music is, maybe not as direct, but it can be healing.”

KP also doesn’t want to be seen just as a rock musician or as a Native artist. “I am a musician who happens to be Native, but I am also a Native musician ... I think I am always both,” she said.

Her latest record aims to show that.

“I kind of had in the back of mind, just kept thinking what would Built to Spill do,” KP said of the guitar-heavy, indie-rock band from the Pacific Northwest. “I’ve gone on tour with them and seen their three guitars at one point playing together and how they overlap and all these other things.”

It’s also a more collaborative effort with more musicians playing on the record— a departure for KP, who is accustomed to doing everything herself. A cellist who played with Nirvana, Lori Goldston, is featured on several songs, as are two violinists, as well as a saxophone and mellotron player.

Takiaya Reed, a first-time producer who is also in a doom metal band, described the experience of working on the record as “beautiful and amazing” and said the two bonded over their love of punk. Reid also brought her classical training and love of “heavier sounds” to the studio.

“We approached it fearlessly. It was wonderful to be expansive in terms of sonic possibilities,” she said.

KP also wanted to find a place for her parents, whom she had grown especially close to during the pandemic, to play on the record. She chose the song “Spaces,” which she described as having a “healing vibe.” Her dad, who is one of the main singers at the tribe’s cultural events, embraced the idea of lending his powerful powwow chant to the song. Her mom sang harmonies.

KP said: “It meant the world to me to have my parents sing because it felt like it was full circle in who I am.”

The extreme heat wave that blasted the Southwest is abating with late arriving monsoon rains

By ANITA SNOW Associated Press

PHOENIX (AP) — A historic heat wave that turned the U.S. Southwest into a blast furnace throughout July is beginning to abate with the late arrival of monsoon rains.

Forecasters expect that by Monday at the latest, people in metro Phoenix will begin seeing high temperatures under 110 degrees Fahrenheit (43.3 degrees Celsius) for the first time in a month. As of Friday, the high temperature in the desert city had been at or above that mark for 29 consecutive days.

Already this week, the overnight low at Phoenix Sky Harbor International Airport fell under 90 (32.2 C) for the first time in 16 days, finally allowing people some respite from the stifling heat once the sun goes down.

Temperatures are also expected to ease in Las Vegas, Albuquerque and Death Valley, California.

The downward trend started Wednesday night, when Phoenix saw its first major monsoon storm since the traditional start of the season on June 15. While more than half of the greater Phoenix area saw no rainfall from that storm, some eastern suburbs were pummeled by high winds, swirling dust and localized downfalls of up to an inch (2.5 centimeters) of precipitation.

Storms gradually increasing in strength are expected over the weekend.

Scientists calculate that July will prove to be the hottest globally on record and perhaps the warmest human civilization has seen. The extreme heat is now hitting the eastern part of the U.S., as soaring temperatures moved from the Midwest into the Northeast and Mid-Atlantic, where some places are seeing their warmest days so far this year.

The new heat records being set this summer are just some of the extreme weather being seen around the U.S. this month, such as flash floods in Pennsylvania and parts of the Northeast.

And while relief may be on the way for the Southwest, for now it's still dangerously hot. Phoenix's high temperature reached 116 (46.7 C) Friday afternoon, which is far above the average temperature of 106 (41.1 C).

"Anyone can be at risk outside in this record heat," the fire department in Goodyear, a Phoenix suburb, warned residents on social media while offering ideas to stay safe.

For many people such as older adults, those with health issues and those without access to air conditioning, the heat can be dangerous or even deadly.

Maricopa County, the most populous in Arizona and home to Phoenix, reported this week that its public health department had confirmed 25 heat-associated deaths this year as of July 21, with 249 more under investigation.

Results from toxicological tests that can take weeks or months after an autopsy is conducted could eventually result in many deaths listed as under investigation as heat associated being changed to confirmed.

Maricopa County confirmed 425 heat-associated deaths last year, and more than half of them occurred in July.

Elsewhere in Arizona next week, the agricultural desert community of Yuma is expecting highs ranging from 104 to 112 (40 C to 44.4 C) and Tucson is looking at highs ranging from 99 to 111 (37.2 C to 43.9 C).

The highs in Las Vegas are forecast to slip as low as 94 (34.4 C) next Tuesday after a long spell of highs above 110 (43.3 C). Death Valley, which hit 128 (53.3 C) in mid-July, will cool as well, though only to a still blistering hot 116 (46.7 C).

In New Mexico, the highs in Albuquerque next week are expected to be in the mid to high 90s (around 35 C), with partly cloudy skies.

After an attack on Salman Rushdie, the Chautauqua Institution says its mission won't change

By CAROLYN THOMPSON Associated Press

CHAUTAUQUA, N.Y. (AP) — For a single, unthinkable moment last summer, the Chautauqua Institution was a hostile place for the freedom of expression that has been its hallmark for 150 years: As Salman Rushdie was about to speak, an audience member leapt onto the stage and stabbed the celebrated author more than a dozen times.

By the next day, Chautauqua Institution President Michael Hill recently recounted, the decision had been made not only to resume programming, but to “double down on what Mr. Rushdie stands for, what our speakers and preachers and artists stand for — which is the free exchange of ideas and the belief that society is stronger when we do that.”

A year later, Rushdie, blinded in one eye by the assault, is recovering from the attack. The Chautauqua Institution is recovering, too.

Programming and revenue for the arts and intellectual retreat in the rural southwest corner of New York was disrupted for two seasons by COVID-19. Then the attack further shattered the return to normal that regular visitors had so craved.

With a new nine-week summer season now under way, well-tended gardens are in bloom and rocking chairs are back out on the porches of Victorian- and cottage-style homes.

Security has been strengthened, though the gated compound remains open to anyone who buys a pass to enter.

“We look at the work that we do under a different lens since” the stabbing, Hill said during an interview in his office, which overlooks Bestor Plaza, a lush expanse of greenery anchoring the 750-acre (303-hectare) grounds. “The attack was an attempt at silencing, which underscores the need for institutions like ours to not stay silent.”

As an institution, Chautauqua defies easy explanation.

“NPR camp for grown-ups” is the description preferred by Erica Higbie, who owns a house on the grounds.

Located on the shore of Chautauqua Lake, the institution is a self-contained community with lecture halls, houses of worship, cafes, shops, a library, post office and bookstore, along with private homes, rentals and the Athenaeum Hotel, which served as former President Bill Clinton’s executive mansion for a week in 1996 as he prepared for his debate with Republican challenger Bob Dole.

Aside from boating and golf, the 4,400-seat, open-air amphitheater is a main draw, with a summer entertainment lineup this year offering concerts by Diana Ross and Bonnie Raitt, ballet and theater productions and performances by the house Chautauqua Symphony Orchestra.

But for Higbie and many others, the primary appeal exists in the institution’s 19th Century beginnings as a summer educational experiment in which daily lectures are curated around weekly explorations of anything from politics to infrastructure and faith to friendship.

“I am a lecture junkie,” Higbie said from her porch as people navigated the grounds on foot, bikes and scooters. The speed limit for the rare vehicle traffic is 12 mph. The retired teacher takes in a daily morning lecture and may hear two more in the afternoon at the amphitheater and the Hall of Philosophy.

Through the decades, Susan B. Anthony advocated for women’s rights at the institution and President Franklin D. Roosevelt gave his 1936 “I Hate War” speech in the amphitheater. Former Vice President Al Gore spoke about the climate crisis and Supreme Court Judges Robert H. Jackson and Ruth Bader Ginsburg are among countless others who have offered insights.

Rushdie’s appearance came during a week last year exploring home as “a place for human thriving.”

Henry Reese, co-founder of the City of Asylum Pittsburgh, was about to interview “The Satanic Verses” author about violence against writers when Rushdie was attacked as the men sat in armchairs on the amphitheater’s sunken stage.

Rushdie, the target of a decades-old fatwa by the late Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini calling for his death, was stabbed in the neck, stomach, chest, hand and right eye. Reese suffered bruises

and a gash to his forehead.

With alleged assailant Hadi Matar awaiting trial in a nearby courthouse, Reese is scheduled to return to the institution on the anniversary of the attack, Aug. 12. His appearance is expected to kick off a week exploring freedom of expression, imagination and the resilience of democracy. Republican strategist Karl Rove and Democratic strategist David Axelrod are among other invited guests.

It would have been out of character for the institution to do anything but pick up where it left off after the assault, regular guest lecturer Eboo Patel said.

"Not a single artist or speaker canceled," Patel, founder of Interfaith America in Chicago, said by phone. "Chautauqua recognizes that it has a responsibility to its own community, honestly to American civilization and the human spirit, and it's back up in 24 to 48 hours. That's stunning," he said.

Property owners differed on how far the institution should go to ensure personal safety, said Higbie, the president of the Chautauqua Property Owners Association.

"Everybody was in shock for a long time," Higbie said.

Visitors say they notice more security and protocols at events. Amphitheater patrons can bring only clear bags inside, for example, and may be scanned or asked to walk through a weapons detector.

Even so, "I never hesitated for a minute" to return, said Michael Crawford of Washington, D.C., as he chatted with Mary Pat McFarland of Philadelphia. The two sat on one of the red benches placed around the grounds to invite discussion.

A handful of musicians with violins, guitars and a small harp played an impromptu jam session beneath a tree nearby.

Hill said he sees his role as "teeing up" issues for engagement, so shying away from difficult ones would be a disservice at a time when civic discourse is in short supply.

"It's about bringing divergent viewpoints for people to digest," Hill said. "For us to have made the decision to stop bringing speakers who may be controversial in any way would have been for us to stop doing our mission."

"It would have been," he said, "to literally stop the reason this place was created."

Trump and his top 2024 primary rivals mostly ignore the case against him during key Iowa GOP event

By MICHELLE L. PRICE, HANNAH FINGERHUT and WILL WEISSERT Associated Press

DES MOINES, Iowa (AP) — Donald Trump and his top rivals for the GOP presidential nomination took the stage one by one Friday night to address an influential gathering of Iowa Republicans, with none of the top-tier hopefuls mentioning that new federal charges had been filed against the former president just a day earlier.

Instead, Trump's competitors mostly reserved their sharpest criticism for President Joe Biden and a Democratic Party they argued had lost touch with mainstream America — failing to pounce on additional counts over Trump's retention of classified documents that might have otherwise been an opportunity to cut into his comfortable early lead in the polls.

"The time for excuses is over. We must get the job done," said Ron DeSantis. "I will get the job done."

The Florida governor also repeated his frequent promise to halt the "weaponization" of the Justice Department, an allusion to Trump's legal troubles. But he offered no specific thoughts on the cases against him — even though Trump is also bracing to be charged soon in Washington over his efforts to overturn the 2020 election.

The former president frequently avoids attending multicandidate events in person, questioning why he would share a stage with competitors who are badly trailing him in polls. Still, with Iowa's first-in-the-nation caucus less than six months away, Trump joined a dozen other GOP hopefuls in speaking to about 1,200 GOP members and activists at the Lincoln Day Dinner.

"If I weren't running, I would have nobody coming after me," Trump said in his only veiled reference to his legal issues. He also insisted the same would be true if he were trailing in the polls.

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While DeSantis didn't mention the former president by name, meanwhile, Trump didn't return the favor. He told the crowd, "I wouldn't take a chance on that one," and repeatedly branded him "DeSanctus."

Trump was even blunter before the dinner as he opened a campaign office in Urbandale, outside Des Moines.

"I understand the other candidates are falling very flat ... it's like death," Trump said.

More than 100 people packed the small office, many wearing "Make America Great Again" hats and shirts. They had waited in 100-degree weather to enter, and the poorly ventilated office quickly became sweltering. Staff handed out water bottles, and people fanned themselves with campaign handouts. Some used paper towels to wipe away sweat.

Similar strong support for the former president was evident during the dinner, when many attendees wore "Trump Country" stickers, including 72-year-old Diane Weaver of Ankeny, Iowa.

"I think he makes America great," said Weaver, a retiree who plans to caucus for Trump. "I think he did it once and I think he can do it again."

West Des Moines resident Jane Schrader chose to wear her "Trump Country" sticker on her pants instead of at eye level. "I'm not quite dyed-in-the-wool. I'm a supporter, but not that kind," said the retired physician, explaining her sticker placement.

DeSantis, who like most of Friday's speakers vowed to visit all of Iowa's 99 counties, is Trump's strongest primary competitor but has been trying to reset his stalled campaign for two weeks. He's increasingly focusing on Iowa in its efforts on trying to derail Trump, and spoke at the dinner in the midst of a two-day bus tour of the state.

The governor's stumbles have raised questions about whether another candidate might be able to emerge from the field and catch the former president. Some evangelicals, who can be determinative in Iowa's caucuses, have pointed to South Carolina Sen. Tim Scott's upbeat message and pulpit-style delivery as strengths that could help him rise there.

Scott, who also spoke Friday night and didn't mention Trump or the cases against him, took a swipe this week at DeSantis over the Florida governor's support for new standards that require the state's teachers to instruct middle school students that slaves developed skills that "could be applied for their personal benefit."

The only Black Republican in the U.S. Senate, Scott said all Americans should recognize how "devastating" slavery was. "There is no silver lining" to slavery, he added.

DeSantis has also faced criticism from teachers and civil rights leaders, as well as mounting pushback from some of his party's most prominent Black elected officials. Florida Rep. Byron Donalds said he hoped officials might "correct" parts of the curriculum addressing lessons on the developed skills of enslaved people. Texas Republican Rep. Wesley Hunt, Michigan Rep. John James and Will Hurd, a former Texas congressman now also running in the GOP presidential primary, have also criticized DeSantis.

Still, the governor continued to dig in on the issue, saying at a pre-dinner event in Oskaloosa on Friday, "D.C. Republicans all too often accept false narratives, accept lies that are perpetrated by the left."

John Niemeyer, 52, from Kalona, Iowa, attended DeSantis' event and was impressed. But, as a high school teacher, he's not a fan of some of the governor's positions on education policy.

"I don't want to make our classrooms a political battlefield," he said, adding that it would be a "mistake" to make the issue the forefront of his campaign.

Vice President Kamala Harris made her own Iowa stop on Friday, seeking to draw a contrast with the Republicans as she looked to lift President Joe Biden's reelection campaign. Harris met in Des Moines with activists and discussed abortion rights, after Reynolds recently signed a ban on most abortions after six weeks of pregnancy.

"I do believe that we are witnessing a national agenda that is about a full-on attack on hard won freedoms and hard won rights," the vice president said.

Trump, meanwhile, did face criticism Friday night from some Republican opponents, but only those considered long shots. Former Arkansas Gov. Asa Hutchison declared, "As a party, we need a new direction for America and for the GOP," drawing only muted reaction from the crowd.

Loud and sustained boos came, however, for Hurd, who said, "The reason Donald Trump lost the elec-

tion in 2020 is he failed to grow the GOP brand.”

The former congressman pressed on, saying: “Donald Trump is not running for president to make America great again. ... Donald Trump is running to stay out of prison.”

That was the only reference to locking Trump up on the night, except for a surprising — and potentially coincidental — snippet of walk-on music played as the former president took the stage. Like all the candidates, the event’s organizers played parts of Brooks & Dunn’s “Only in America” as Trump approached.

But his part included the lyrics: “One could end up going to prison. One just might be president.”

Weissert reported from Washington.

Fresh charges tie Trump even more closely to coverup effort. That could deepen his legal woes

By ERIC TUCKER and ALANNA DURKIN RICHER Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — It’s a stunning new allegation in an already serious case: Former President Donald Trump sought to delete Mar-a-Lago surveillance footage to obstruct the Justice Department’s investigation into his handling of classified documents.

The latest criminal charges unsealed Thursday deepen Trump’s legal jeopardy, alleging a more central role for the former president than previously known in a cover-up that prosecutors say was meant to prevent them from recovering top-secret documents he took with him after he left the White House. Coming as Trump braces for possible additional indictments related to efforts to overturn the 2020 election, the new allegations strengthen special counsel Jack Smith’s already powerful case against Trump while undercutting potential defenses floated by the former president, experts say.

“Before these new charges, you could maybe try some sort of defense that ‘this was all a mistake, it was my staff’ or confusion about what documents he actually had,” said former federal prosecutor Randall Eliason, a George Washington University law professor.

“But especially now, when you’re trying to destroy video footage,” he added, “that’s kind of the final nail in the coffin. I don’t see much in the way of a defense, not a real defense. All he can do is claim he’s being persecuted and hope for a holdout juror or something.”

Trump resorted to that familiar playbook on Friday, writing in a post on his Truth Social platform that “this is textbook Third World intimidation by rabid, lawless prosecutors.” He insisted during an interview with radio host John Fredericks that he did nothing wrong and accused prosecutors of trying to intimidate his staff into making up lies about him.

Later Friday, Trump posted on Truth Social that Mar-a-Lago security tapes were voluntarily handed over to prosecutors. Trump said he was told they were not “deleted in any way, shape or form.”

The new Florida charges came as a surprise given that Trump and his legal team have been focused on the prospect of an additional indictment in Washington — possibly within days — related to his efforts to cling to power after he lost to President Joe Biden. Trump received a letter this month informing him that he’s a target in that probe, and his lawyers met Thursday with special counsel Jack Smith’s office.

Hours after that meeting, Smith revealed the new classified documents case charges on top of a 38-count indictment issued last month against Trump and his valet, Walt Nauta. The updated indictment includes a detailed chronology of phone conversations and other interactions between Trump, Nauta and Mar-a-Lago property manager, Carlos De Oliveira, in the days after the Justice Department last June drafted a subpoena for security camera footage at Mar-a-Lago.

Video from the home would ultimately become vital to the government’s case because, prosecutors said, it shows Nauta moving boxes in and out of a storage room — an act alleged to have been done at Trump’s direction and in an effort to hide records not only from investigators but Trump’s own lawyers.

The day after a draft subpoena was sent to the Trump Organization, the indictment says, Trump called De Oliveira and spoke with him for about 24 minutes. Though the details of that conversation are not included in the indictment, De Oliveira is described by prosecutors as asking a Mar-a-Lago information

technology staffer several days later how long the server retained footage for and is quoted as telling the employee that “the boss” wanted it deleted.

Lawyers for Nauta, who has pleaded not guilty, and De Oliveira declined to comment on the allegations. De Oliveira is expected to make his first court appearance in Miami on Monday.

To the extent that evidence of Trump’s involvement in trying to delete video is circumstantial rather than direct, it might present a challenge for prosecutors, said David Aaron, a former Justice Department national security prosecutor who has worked on cases involving the mishandling of classified documents.

But if they can tie the effort to Trump, he added, “it’s devastating in its own right, because it doesn’t matter at that point what he thought he had the right to do, or whatever other defense he’s going to have about the classified documents. That’s in and of itself very bad.”

It could also help prosecutors establish that Trump knew what he was doing was wrong because “you only delete video of what you’ve done if you think it’s going to get you in trouble,” Aaron said. And Trump’s own accusations against others, like his claims against Hillary Clinton, his opponent in the 2016 presidential race, could boomerang against him.

Trump has claimed that Clinton deleted emails from her private server for the purpose of obstructing a criminal investigation into her own handling of classified information — something the FBI and Justice Department never alleged — but now stands himself accused of scheming to delete evidence he feared would be incriminating.

“He has specifically criticized other public figures for deleting data when he says they thought they were going to be in trouble,” Aaron said. “So if you needed to prove his consciousness of guilt, it’s not just an obvious thing that you would ask the jury to rely on common sense for — he’s actually made statements about what it means when someone does this.”

Trump and Nauta are set for trial next May, though it’s not clear if that date will hold.

Smith’s team also added a new count of willful retention of national defense information related to a classified document about a Pentagon plan of attack on a foreign country prosecutors say Trump showed off during a July 2021 meeting at his Bedminster, New Jersey resort.

That charge comes after Trump repeatedly claimed he didn’t have any secret documents when he spoke, only magazine and newspaper clippings, even though an audio recording captured him saying “this is secret information.” The document was returned to the government in January 2022, months before the subpoena for classified records.

It’s not clear why prosecutors moved now to indict another one of Trump’s underlings, though bringing charges against De Oliveira that could carry significant prison time adds serious pressure on him, potentially increasing the odds that he could decide to cut a plea deal and cooperate.

“But, you know, Trump seems to inspire a lot of loyalty, at least in some people,” Eliason said. “Maybe they are holding out for the idea that he is reelected and he can pardon them.”

Richer reported from Boston.

Members of Congress break for August with no clear path to avoiding a shutdown this fall

By KEVIN FREKING Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Lawmakers broke for their August recess this week with work on funding the government largely incomplete, fueling worries about whether Congress will be able to avoid a partial government shutdown this fall.

Congress has until Oct. 1, the start of the new fiscal year, to act on government funding. They could pass spending bills to fund government agencies into next year, or simply pass a stopgap measure that keeps agencies running until they strike a longer-term agreement. No matter which route they take, it won’t be easy.

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"We're going to scare the hell out of the American people before we get this done," said Sen. Chris Coons, D-Del.

Coons' assessment is widely shared in Congress, reflecting the gulf between the Republican-led House and the Democratic-led Senate, which are charting vastly different — and mostly incompatible — paths on spending.

The Senate is adhering mostly to the top-line spending levels that President Joe Biden negotiated with House Republicans in late May as part of the debt-ceiling deal that extended the government's borrowing authority and avoided an economically devastating default.

That agreement holds discretionary spending generally flat for the coming year while allowing increases for military and veterans accounts. On top of that, the Senate is looking to add \$13.7 billion in additional emergency appropriations, including \$8 billion for defense and \$5.7 billion for nondefense.

House Republicans, many of whom opposed the debt-ceiling deal and refused to vote for it, are going a different way.

GOP leaders have teed up bills with far less spending than the agreement allows in an effort to win over members who insist on rolling back spending to fiscal year 2022 levels. They are also adding scores of policy add-ons broadly opposed by Democrats. There are proposals to reduce access to abortion pills, bans on the funding of hormone therapy and certain surgeries for transgender veterans, and a prohibition on training programs promoting diversity in the federal workplace, among many others.

At a press conference at the Capitol this past week, some members of the House Freedom Caucus, a conservative faction within the House GOP, said that voters elected a Republican majority in that chamber to rein in government spending and it was time for House Republicans to use every tool available to get the spending cuts they want.

"We should not fear a government shutdown," said Rep. Bob Good, R-Va. "Most of the American people won't even miss if the government is shut down temporarily."

Many House Republicans disagree with that assessment. Rep. Mike Simpson, R-Idaho, called it an oversimplification to say most Americans wouldn't feel an impact. And he warned Republicans would take the blame for a shutdown.

"We always get blamed for it, no matter what," Simpson said. "So it's bad policy, it's bad politics."

But the slim five-seat majority Republicans hold amplifies the power that a small group can wield. Even though the debt ceiling agreement passed with a significant majority of both Republicans and Democrats, conservatives opponents were so unhappy in the aftermath that they shut down House votes for a few days, stalling the entire GOP agenda.

Shortly thereafter, McCarthy argued the numbers he negotiated with the White House amounted to a cap and "you can always do less." GOP Rep. Kay Granger of Texas, who chairs the House Appropriations Committee, followed that she would seek to limit nondefense spending at 2022 budget levels, saying the debt agreement "set a top-line spending cap — a ceiling, not a floor."

The decision to cut spending below levels in the the debt ceiling deal helped get the House moving again, but put them on a collision course with the Senate, where the spending bills hew much closer to the agreement.

"What the House has done is they essentially tore up that agreement as soon as it was signed," said Sen. Chris Van Hollen, D-Md. "And so we are in for a bumpy ride."

Even as House Republicans have been moving their spending bills out of committee on party-line votes, the key committee in the Senate has been operating in a bipartisan fashion, drafting spending bills with sometimes unanimous support.

"The way to make this work is do it in a bipartisan way like we are doing in the Senate. If you do it in a partisan way, you're heading to a shutdown. And I am really worried that that's where the House Republicans are headed," Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer, D-N.Y., told reporters this week.

McCarthy countered that people had the same doubts about whether House Republicans and the White House could reach an agreement to pass a debt ceiling extension and avoid a default.

"We've got 'til Sept. 30. I think we can get this all done," McCarthy said.

In a subsequent press conference, McCarthy said he had just met with Schumer to talk about the road ahead on an array of bills, including the spending bills.

"I don't want the government to shut down," McCarthy said. "I want to find that we can find common ground."

In all, there are 12 spending bills. The House has passed one so far, and moved others out of committee. The Senate has passed none, though it has advanced all 12 out of committee, something that hasn't happened since 2018.

Still, the difficulty ahead was evident on the House side, where Republicans gave up until after the recess on trying to pass a spending measure to fund federal agriculture and rural programs and the Food and Drug Administration, amid disagreements over its contents. They began their August recess a day early instead of holding votes Friday.

Simpson said some of his Republican colleagues don't want to take money approved already outside the appropriations process to cover some of this year's spending and avoid deeper cuts. For example, the House bills would take almost all of the money approved last year for the Internal Revenue Service in Biden's Inflation Reduction Act and use the savings to avoid deeper spending cuts elsewhere.

Simpson said that without such rescissions, as they are called in Washington, he couldn't vote for the agriculture spending bill because the cuts "would have just been devastating."

"That's the challenge we're going to have when we get back in September," he said.

Further complicating things in the House, a few Republicans are opposed to some of the policy riders being included in the spending bills. For example, the agriculture spending bill would reverse the FDA's decision to allow abortion pills to be dispensed in certified pharmacies, instead of only by prescribers in hospitals, clinics, and medical offices.

"I had a problem with abortion being put inside an ag bill," said Rep. Brian Fitzpatrick, R-Pa. "I think that's ridiculous."

It's a strong possibility that Congress will have to pass a stopgap spending bill before the new fiscal year begins Oct. 1. The Senate can vote first on the measure, which would put the onus on House Republicans to bring it up for a vote or allow for a shutdown.

Election disinformation campaigns targeted voters of color in 2020. Experts expect 2024 to be worse

By CHRISTINE FERNANDO Associated Press

CHICAGO (AP) — Leading up to the 2020 election, Facebook ads targeting Latino and Asian American voters described Joe Biden as a communist. A local station claimed a Black Lives Matter co-founder practiced witchcraft. Doctored images showed dogs urinating on Donald Trump campaign posters.

None of these claims was true, but they scorched through social media sites that advocates say have fueled election misinformation in communities of color.

As the 2024 election approaches, community organizations are preparing for what they expect to be a worsening onslaught of disinformation targeting communities of color and immigrant communities. They say the tailored campaigns challenge assumptions of what kinds of voters are susceptible to election conspiracies and distrust in voting systems.

"They're getting more complex, more sophisticated and spreading like wildfire," said Sarah Shah, director of policy and community engagement at the advocacy group Indian American Impact, which runs the fact-checking site Desifacts.org. "What we saw in 2020, unfortunately, will probably be fairly mild in comparison to what we will see in the months leading up to 2024."

A growing subset of communities of color, especially immigrants for whom English is not their first language, are questioning the integrity of U.S. voting processes and subscribing to Trump's lies of a stolen 2020 election, said Jenny Liu, mis/disinformation policy manager at the nonprofit Asian Americans Advancing Justice. Still, she said these communities are largely left out of conversations about misinformation.

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"When you think of the typical consumer of a conspiracy theory, you think of someone who's older, maybe from a rural area, maybe a white man," she said. "You don't think of Chinese Americans scrolling through WeChat. That's why this narrative glosses over and erases a lot of the disinformation harms that many communities of colors face."

Tailoring disinformation

In addition to general misinformation themes about voting machines and mail-in voting, groups are catering their messaging to communities of color, experts say.

For example, immigrants from authoritarian regimes in countries like Venezuela or who have lived through the Chinese Cultural Revolution may be "more vulnerable to misinformation claiming politicians are wanting to turn the U.S. into a Socialist state," said Inga Trauthig, head of research for the Propaganda Research Lab at the Center for Media Engagement at the University of Texas at Austin. People from countries that have not recently had free and fair elections may have a preexisting distrust of elections and authority that may make them vulnerable to misinformation as well, Trauthig said.

Disinformation efforts often hinge on topics most important to each community, whether that is public safety, immigration, abortion, education, inflation or alleged extramarital affairs, said Laura Zommer, co-founder of the Spanish-language fact-checking group Factchequeado.

"It takes advantage of their very real fear and trauma from their experiences in their home countries," Zommer said.

Other vulnerabilities include language barriers and a lack of knowledge of the U.S. media landscape and how to find credible U.S. news sources, several misinformation experts told The Associated Press. Many immigrants rely on translated content for voting information, leaving space for bad actors to inject misinformation.

"These tactics exploit information vacuums when there's a lot of uncertainty around how these processes work, especially because a lot of election materials may not be translated in the languages our communities speak or be available in forms they are likely to access," said Clara Jiménez Cruz, another co-founder of Factchequeado.

Misinformation can also arise from mistranslations. The Brookings Institute, a nonprofit think tank, found examples of mistranslations in Colombian, Cuban and Venezuelan WhatsApp groups, where "progressive" was translated to "progresista," which carries "far-left connotations that are closer to the Spanish words 'socialista' and 'comunista.'"

How disinformation spreads

Disinformation, often in languages like Spanish, Mandarin or Hindi, flows onto social media apps like WhatsApp and WeChat heavily used by communities of color.

Minority communities that believe their views and perspectives aren't represented by the mainstream are likely to "retreat into more private spaces" found on messaging apps or groups on social media sites like Facebook, Trauthig said.

"But disinformation also targets them on these platforms, even though it may feel to them to be that safer space," she said.

Messages on WhatsApp are also encrypted and can't be easily seen or traced by moderators or fact-checkers.

"As a result, messages on apps like WhatsApp often fly under the radar and are allowed to spread and spread, largely unchecked," said Randy Abreu, policy counsel for the National Hispanic Media Coalition, which leads the Spanish Language Disinformation Coalition.

Abreu also raised concerns about Spanish YouTube channels and radio shows that are growing in popularity. He said the coalition is tracking more and more YouTube and radio personalities who are spreading misinformation in Spanish.

A 2022 report by the left-leaning watchdog group Media Matters tracked 40 Spanish-language YouTube videos spreading misinformation about U.S. elections. Many of these videos remained on the platform, despite violating YouTube election misinformation policy, the report said.

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Disinformation and disenfranchising communities of color

Amid changes in voting policies at state and local levels, advocates are sounding the alarm on how disinformation about voting in 2024 may target communities of color. Many of these efforts have surged as Asian American, Black and Latino communities have grown in political power, said María Teresa Kumar, founding president of the nonprofit advocacy group Voto Latino.

"Disinformation is, at its core, meant to be a sort of voter suppression tactic for communities of color," she said. "It targets communities of color in a way that feeds into their already justifiable concerns that the system is stacked against them."

The tactics also feed into a history "as old as the Jim Crow era of attempting to disenfranchise people of color, going back to voter intimidation and suppression efforts after the Civil Rights Act of 1866," said Atiba Ellis, a professor of law at Case Western Reserve University School of Law.

While many of the same recycled claims around alleged fraud in the 2020 and 2022 elections are expected to resurface, experts say disinformation campaigns will likely be more sophisticated and granular in attempts to target specific groups of voters of color.

Trauthig also raised concerns about how layoffs and instability at social media platforms like Twitter may leave them less prepared to tackle misinformation in 2024. It also remains to be seen how new social media platforms like Threads will approach the threat of misinformation. Changes in policies like WhatsApp launching a "Communities" function connecting multiple groups and expanding group chat sizes may also "have big implications for how quickly misinformation will spread on the platform," she said.

In response to the mounting threat of misinformation, Indian American Impact is ramping up its fact-checking efforts through what the organization says is the first fact-checking website specifically for South Asian Americans. Shah said the group is drawing inspiration from 2022 projects, including a voting toolkit using memes with Bollywood characters and passing out Parle-G crackers with voting information stickers at Indian grocery stores.

Cruz of Factchequeado is paying close attention to misinformation in swing states with significant Latino populations like Nevada and Arizona. And Liu of Asian Americans Advancing Justice is reviewing misinformation trends from previous elections to strategize about how to inoculate Asian American voters against them.

Still, they say there is more work to be done.

Critics are urging social media companies to invest in content moderation and fact-checking in languages other than English. Government and election officials should also make voting information more accessible to non-English speakers, organize media literacy trainings in community spaces and identify "trusted messengers" in communities of color to help approach trends in misinformation narratives, experts said.

"These are not monolithic groups," Cruz said. "This disinformation is very specifically tailored to each of these communities and their fears. So we also need to be partnering with grassroots organizations in each of these communities to tailor our approaches. If we don't take the time to do this work, our democracy is at stake."

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

UN says it's forced to cut food aid to millions globally because of a funding crisis

By EDITH M. LEDERER Associated Press

UNITED NATIONS (AP) — The United Nations has been forced to cut food, cash payments and assistance to millions of people in many countries because of "a crippling funding crisis" that has seen its donations plummet by about half as acute hunger is hitting record levels, a top official said Friday.

Carl Skau, deputy executive director of the World Food Program, told a news conference that at least 38

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of the 86 countries where WFP operates have already seen cuts or plan to cut assistance soon — including Afghanistan, Syria, Yemen and West Africa.

He said WFP's operating requirement is \$20 billion to deliver aid to everyone in need, but it was aiming for between \$10 billion and \$14 billion, which was what the agency had received in the past few years.

"We're still aiming at that, but we have only so far this year gotten to about half of that, around \$5 billion," Skau said.

He said humanitarian needs were "going through the roof" in 2021 and 2022 because of the COVID-19 pandemic and the war in Ukraine and its global implications. "Those needs continue to grow, those drivers are still there," he said, "but the funding is drying up. So we're looking at 2024 (being) even more dire."

"The largest food and nutrition crisis in history today persists," Skau said. "This year, 345 million people continue to be acutely food insecure while hundreds of millions of people are at risk of worsening hunger."

Skau said conflict and insecurity remain the primary drivers of acute hunger around the world, along with climate change, unrelenting disasters, persistent food price inflation and mounting debt stress — all during a slowdown in the global economy.

WFP is looking to diversify its funding base, but he also urged the agency's traditional donors to "step up and support us through this very difficult time."

Asked why funding was drying up, Skau said to ask the donors.

"But it's clear that aid budgets, humanitarian budgets, both in Europe and the United States, (are) not where they were in 2021-2022," he said.

Skau said that in March, WFP was forced to cut rations from 75% to 50% for communities in Afghanistan facing emergency levels of hunger, and in May it was forced to cut food for 8 million people — 66% of the people it was assisting. Now, it is helping just 5 million people, he said. In Syria, 5.5 million people who relied on WFP for food were already on 50% rations, Skau said, and in July the agency cut all rations to 2.5 million of them. In the Palestinian territories, WFP cut its cash assistance by 20% in May and in June. It cut its caseload by 60%, or 200,000 people. And in Yemen, he said, a huge funding gap will force WFP to cut aid to 7 million people as early as August.

In West Africa, where acute hunger is on the rise, Skau said, most countries are facing extensive ration cuts, particularly WFP's seven largest crisis operations: Burkina Faso, Mali, Chad, Central African Republic, Nigeria, Niger and Cameroon.

He said cutting aid to people who are only at the hunger level of crisis to help save those literally starving or in the category of catastrophic hunger means that those dropped will rapidly fall into the emergency and catastrophe categories, "and so we will have an additional humanitarian emergency on our hands down the road."

"Ration cuts are clearly not the way to go forward," Skau said.

He urged world leaders to prioritize humanitarian funding and invest in long-term solutions to conflicts, poverty, development and other root causes of the current crisis.

Tourist hotspot Rhodes burns as successive deadly heat waves ravage Greece

By PETROS GIANNAKOURIS Associated Press

LINDOS, Greece (AP) — As tourists start to trickle back to the Greek island of Rhodes, some people are spending their vacation on empty beaches amongst charred trees and burnt land.

The fires, spurred by a sweltering heat wave that blanketed the country, triggered a huge evacuation of residents and tourists on the island last weekend as forests burned for a week.

As wildfires scorched the land, tourist and residents worked to extinguish fires by seaside resorts. By Friday, temperatures eased somewhat, and calmer winds helped firefighters contain the blazes.

But the damage was already done.

An inland nature reserve was damaged. The deserted island has been promised state support.

Fires have been raging across Greece, including outside the capital Athens and in Rhodes, fueled by three

consecutive heat waves. Five people have died in the fires, including two firefighter pilots. Temperatures pushed 40 degrees Celsius (104 degrees Fahrenheit).

Climate change is making the world hotter and is charged this year by the natural and cyclical El Nino event, which warms the Pacific. The Mediterranean – from Spain to Turkey to North Africa — has withered under record-breaking temperatures over the summer. July is the hottest month globally ever recorded, and it's likely 2023 will be the hottest year.

Associated Press climate and environmental coverage receives support from several private foundations. See more about AP's climate initiative here. The AP is solely responsible for all content.

'X' logo installed atop Twitter building, spurring San Francisco to investigate permit violation

By JANIE HAR and HAVEN DALEY Associated Press

SAN FRANCISCO (AP) — The city of San Francisco has opened a complaint and launched an investigation into a giant "X" sign that was installed Friday on top of the downtown building formerly known as Twitter headquarters as owner Elon Musk continues his rebrand of the social media platform.

City officials say replacing letters or symbols on buildings, or erecting a sign on top of one, requires a permit for design and safety reasons.

The X appeared after San Francisco police stopped workers on Monday from removing the brand's iconic bird and logo from the side of the building, saying they hadn't taped off the sidewalk to keep pedestrians safe if anything fell.

Any replacement letters or symbols would require a permit to ensure "consistency with the historic nature of the building" and to make sure additions are safely attached to the sign, Patrick Hannan, spokesperson for the Department of Building Inspection said earlier this week.

Erecting a sign on top of a building also requires a permit, Hannan said Friday.

"Planning review and approval is also necessary for the installation of this sign. The city is opening a complaint and initiating an investigation," he said in an email.

Musk unveiled a new "X" logo to replace Twitter's famous blue bird as he remakes the social media platform he bought for \$44 billion last year. The X started appearing at the top of the desktop version of Twitter on Monday.

Musk, who is also CEO of Tesla, has long been fascinated with the letter X and had already renamed Twitter's corporate name to X Corp. after he bought it in October. One of his children is called "X." The child's actual name is a collection of letters and symbols.

On Friday afternoon, a worker on a lift machine made adjustments to the sign and then left.

Aaron Hernandez's brother now facing federal charges over alleged threatening messages

HARTFORD, Conn. (AP) — The troubled brother of the late NFL player Aaron Hernandez was charged Friday, now in federal court, with new counts of threatening and stalking after authorities say he threatened to shoot up the University of Connecticut and kill three people in another state.

Dennis Hernandez was ordered to be held in custody after his appearance in the court in Hartford. A message seeking comment was sent Friday night to his attorney.

The new charges came days after it emerged that Hernandez was arrested July 18 on state charges after police said he threatened to kill officers and then urged them to shoot him at his home in Bristol. Officers had gone there after two people close to him raised concerns about his mental health, police said.

The arrest report said the 37-year-old had sent threatening messages, including ones about carrying out a shooting at UConn. He was a Huskies quarterback and wide receiver who went by DJ Hernandez in the mid-2000s.

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Court filings in the new federal case include the same messages. Some say the writer is struggling financially, is frustrated at seeing other people get hired as coaches, feels owed by UConn, is planning on "taking down everything" and doesn't care "who gets caught in the crossfire."

"I've died for years now and now its others peoples turn," read a July 7 message sent to a woman in Hernandez's life. It followed a message the day before that warned: "UConn's gonna see how accurate I am too with my targets."

Hernandez told another person that he drove July 7 to UConn's campus in Storrs and to Brown University, in Providence, Rhode Island, where he coached quarterbacks during the 2010-11 season, according to court papers.

He had been due in state court that day on another case stemming from allegations that he threw a bag containing a brick and a note over a fence and onto ESPN's property in Bristol.

UConn police confirmed that a vehicle linked to Hernandez was on campus that day. Brown has said that its investigation didn't indicate Hernandez had been on campus in recent weeks.

Hernandez is due back in state court Tuesday and in federal court Aug. 11.

His younger brother, former New England Patriots tight end Aaron Hernandez, killed himself in 2017 while serving a murder sentence.

Soldiers declare Niger general as head of state after he led a coup and detained the president

By SAM MEDNICK Associated Press

NIAMEY, Niger (AP) — Mutinous soldiers who staged a coup in Niger declared their leader the new head of state on Friday, hours after the general asked for national and international support despite rising concerns that the political crisis could hinder the nation's fight against jihadists and boost Russia's influence in West Africa.

Spokesman Col. Maj. Amadou Abdramane said on state television that the constitution was suspended and Gen. Abdourahmane Tchiani was in charge.

Various factions of Niger's military have reportedly wrangled for control since members of the presidential guard detained President Mohamed Bazoum, who was elected two years ago in Niger's first peaceful, democratic transfer of power since independence from France.

Niger is seen as the last reliable partner for the West in efforts to battle jihadists linked to al-Qaida and the Islamic State group in Africa's Sahel region, where Russia and Western countries have vied for influence in the fight against extremism. France has 1,500 soldiers in the country who conduct joint operations with the Nigeriens, and the United States and other European countries have helped train the nation's troops.

The coup sparked international condemnation and the West African regional group ECOWAS, which includes Niger and has taken the lead in trying to restore democratic rule in the country, scheduled an emergency summit in the Nigerian capital, Abuja, on Sunday.

The U.N. Security Council strongly condemned efforts "to unconstitutionally change the legitimate government." Its statement, agreed to by all 15 members including the U.S. and Russia, called for "the immediate and unconditional release" of Bazoum and expressed concern over the negative effect of coups in the region, the "increase in terrorist activities and the dire socio—economic situation."

Extremists in Niger have carried out attacks on civilians and military personnel, but the overall security situation is not as dire as in neighboring Mali and Burkina Faso — both of which have ousted the French military. Mali has turned to the Russian private military group Wagner, and it's believed that the mercenaries will soon be in Burkina Faso.

Now there are concerns that Niger could follow suit. Before the coup, Wagner, which has sent mercenaries around the world in support of Russia's interests, already had its sights set on Niger, in part because it's a large producer of uranium.

"We can no longer continue with the same approaches proposed so far, at the risk of witnessing the gradual and inevitable demise of our country," Tchiani, who also goes by Omar Tchiani, said in his address.

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"That is why we decided to intervene and take responsibility."

"I ask the technical and financial partners who are friends of Niger to understand the specific situation of our country in order to provide it with all the support necessary to enable it to meet the challenges," he said.

If the United States designates the takeover as a coup, Niger stands to lose millions of dollars of military aid and assistance.

The mutinous soldiers, who call themselves the National Council for the Safeguarding of the Country, accused some prominent dignitaries of collaborating with foreign embassies to "extract" the deposed leaders. They said it could lead to violence and warned against foreign military intervention.

Bazoum has not resigned and he defiantly tweeted from detention on Thursday that democracy would prevail.

It's not clear who enjoys majority support, but the streets of the capital of Niamey were calm Friday, with a slight celebratory air. Some cars honked in solidarity at security forces as they drove by — but it was not clear if that meant they backed the coup. Elsewhere, people rested after traditional midday prayers and others sold goods at their shops and hoped for calm.

"We should pray to God to help people come together so that peace comes back to the country. We don't want a lot of protests in the country, because it is not good ... I hope this administration does a good job," said Gerard Sassou, a Niamey shopkeeper.

A day earlier, several hundred people gathered in the city chanting support for Wagner while waving Russian flags. "We're fed up," said Omar Issaka, one of the protestors. "We are tired of being targeted by the men in the bush. ... We're going to collaborate with Russia now."

That's exactly what many in the West likely fear. Tchiani's criticism of Bazoum's approach and of how security partnerships have worked in the past will certainly make the U.S., France, and the EU uneasy, said Andrew Lebovich, a research fellow with the Clingendael Institute.

"So that could mark potentially some shifts moving forward in Niger security partnerships," he said.

Even as Tchiani sought to project control, the situation appeared to be in flux. A delegation from neighboring Nigeria, which holds the ECOWAS presidency and was hoping to mediate, left shortly after arriving, and the president of Benin, nominated as a mediator by ECOWAS, has not arrived.

Earlier, an analyst who had spoken with participants in the talks said the presidential guard was negotiating with the army about who should be in charge. The analyst spoke on condition they not to be named because of the sensitive situation.

A western military official in Niger who was not authorized to speak to the media also said the military factions were believed to be negotiating, but that the situation remained tense and violence could erupt.

Speaking in Papua New Guinea, French President Emmanuel Macron condemned the coup as "completely illegitimate and profoundly dangerous for the Nigeriens, Niger and the whole region."

The coup threatens to starkly reshape the international community's engagement with the Sahel region.

On Thursday, U.S. Vice President Kamala Harris said the country's "substantial cooperation with the Government of Niger is contingent on Niger's continued commitment to democratic standards."

The United States in early 2021 said it had provided Niger with more than \$500 million in military assistance and training programs since 2012, one of the largest such support programs in sub-Saharan Africa. The European Union earlier this year launched a 27 million-euro (\$30 million) military training mission in Niger.

The United States has more than 1,000 service personnel in the country.

Some military leaders who appear to be involved in the coup have worked closely with the United States for years. Gen. Moussa Salaou Barmou, the head of Niger's special forces, has an especially strong relationship with the U.S., the Western military official said.

While Russia has also condemned the coup, it remains unclear what the junta's position would be on Wagner.

The acting head of the United Nations in Niger said Friday that humanitarian aid deliveries were continuing, even though the military suspended flights carrying aid.

Nicole Kouassi, the acting U.N. resident and humanitarian coordinator, told reporters via video from

Niamey that 4.3 million people needed humanitarian aid before this week's military action and 3.3 million faced "acute food insecurity," the majority of them women and children.

Jean-Noel Gentile, the U.N. World Food Program director in Niger, said "the humanitarian response continues on the ground." He said the U.N. is providing cash assistance and food to people in accessible areas and that the agency is continuously assessing the situation to ensure security and access.

This is Niger's fifth coup and marks the fall of one of the last democratically elected governments in the Sahel.

Its army has always been very powerful and civilian-military relations fraught, though tensions had increased recently, especially with the growing jihadist insurgency, said Karim Manuel, an analyst for the Middle East and Africa with the Economist Intelligence Unit.

Associated Press reporters John Leicester in Paris; Chinedu Asadu in Abuja, Nigeria; and Edith M. Lederer at the United Nations in New York contributed to this report.

Churchill Downs to resume racing at fall meet with no changes after horse deaths

LOUISVILLE, Ky. (AP) — Racing will resume at Churchill Downs in September, with no changes being made after a review of surfaces and safety protocols in the wake of 12 horse deaths, including seven in the days leading up to the Kentucky Derby in May.

The Louisville track suspended racing operations on June 7 and moved the rest of its spring meet to Ellis Park in western Kentucky at the recommendation of the Horseracing Integrity and Safety Authority, the sport's national overseer.

Training continued at Churchill Downs during the track's investigation.

Churchill Downs Inc. CEO Bill Carstanjen called the deaths "a series of unfortunate circumstances" and said the review "didn't find anything fundamentally wrong or different about our track from previous years."

"That, in a sense, can sometimes be unsatisfying," he said. "But that's business, and that's sports."

Two of the horse deaths occurred in undercard races on Derby day. Another five died later.

"The takeaway is, the track is very safe," Carstanjen said Thursday on an earnings call with CDI investors.

"What we needed to do was spend some of this time in the interim, while we ran the rest of the (spring) meet at Ellis to just go soup to nuts through every single thing we do at the racetrack. There was nothing that jumped out as an apparent cause of the injuries, of the breakdowns; and, as we went through and rebuilt our processes from the ground up to check everything that we do to make extra sure, we didn't find anything material."

The track's fall meet begins Sept. 14 and runs through Oct. 1.

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

Montana train derailment report renews calls for automated systems to detect track problems

By JOSH FUNK and SAM METZ Associated Press

Federal investigators renewed their recommendation that major freight railroads equip every locomotive with the kind of autonomous sensors that could have caught the track flaws that caused a fatal 2021 Amtrak derailment in northern Montana.

But installing the sensors on the tens of thousands of locomotives in the fleet could be cost prohibitive, and it's not entirely clear if one would have caught the combination of rail flaws that the National Transportation Safety Board said caused the crash near Joplin, Montana, that killed three people and injured 49 others. And rail unions caution that no technology should be a substitute for human inspectors.

The NTSB report laid blame in part on BNSF railroad, which owns the tracks, and "a shortcoming in its

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safety culture." But it noted that even if track inspections had been more frequent, the severity of the problems may not have been noticed the day of the crash without devices and technology designed to enhance the inspections.

"It is unlikely that the track deviations would have been detected through the current track inspection process," the board concluded in the report released Thursday. But "autonomous monitoring systems ... have the ability to monitor track conditions and provide real-time condition monitoring that could be used for early identification and mitigation of unsafe track conditions."

BNSF defends its safety record and said it already employs a number of the sensors that the NTSB is recommending, but spokeswoman Lena Kent said the Fort Worth, Texas-based railroad will review the report for any additional lessons and ways to improve safety.

But track problems have long been a safety concern for the NTSB, which can recommend but not mandate changes. In a 2021 report on the Joplin derailment, it attributed 592 U.S. derailments over a decade-long timespan to "track geometry," which includes the distance between the rails and their horizontal and vertical alignment. Those issues were the second-leading cause of derailment in 2021.

Railroad safety expert Dave Clarke, the former director of University of Tennessee's Center for Transportation Research, said it is important to remember that the NTSB doesn't do any kind of cost-benefit analysis on its recommendations.

"If they think something is a good idea for safety they put it out there. In the real world there may be no way to economically or practically do everything NTSB recommends," Clarke said.

Clarke said it's also not clear that these sensors would have definitely caught the problems that caused the Montana derailment because none of the individual factors was severe enough to be considered a defect under Federal Railroad Administration rules. The NTSB said it was the combination of all those factors that caused the derailment.

The major freight railroads have more than 23,000 locomotives in their fleets, including thousands that have been put into storage in recent years as the railroads have overhauled their operations to rely more on longer trains that don't need as many locomotives.

It would require a major investment to add detectors to every locomotive, although the Association of American Railroads trade group couldn't immediately provide an estimate of how much each sensor costs. BNSF and the five other major U.S. freight railroads already spend roughly \$23 billion every year on improving and maintaining their networks and investing in new equipment.

But attorney Jeff Goodman, who represented family members of the three passengers who died in the derailment, said he believes his clients would have lived if trains that had passed through the area before the Amtrak train had been equipped with these sensors.

Tracks will always bend or get out of sync because they're exposed to the elements, but monitoring allows trains to know when to slow down and prevent accidents, he said.

"If the recommendations that the NTSB issued today were implemented prior to this tragedy, Zach Scheider and Don and Marjorie Varnadoe would all be alive today," he said, naming the deceased family members of his clients.

Railroads have long resisted new regulations, Although there aren't any rules requiring these automated inspection sensors or the thousands of trackside detectors they employ, railroads have spent millions developing the technology and installed them voluntarily to improve safety. But regulators are considering drafting rules for them in the wake of recent derailments.

An AAR trade group spokeswoman said that the type of sensors the NTSB singled out measure the force a locomotive exerts on the track and hasn't proven as useful as other kinds of sensors railroads have developed.

"This technology has been difficult to maintain in real-world operations and lacks a strong correlation to track geometry defects," Jessica Kahanek said.

Railroads are experimenting with a variety of technologies to find the best way to spot problems.

Another kind of autonomous sensor that can be installed on locomotives as well as the trucks inspectors use to ride along the rails can spot problems like misaligned track and wear on the rails by testing

the track continuously.

Vehicle track interaction systems, like the ones the NTSB singled out, must be mounted on locomotives because they measure the force a train puts on the tracks.

Both kinds of sensors can help identify areas of concern for a human inspector to follow up on after computers analyze the data they generate. But the VTI sensors tend to be so sensitive that they flag areas where there aren't true defects.

Kent said BNSF's use of both kinds of sensors allows the railroad to check its track network multiple times — more than 450,000 miles (720,000 kilometers) of track each year — and that the technology has helped the railroad reduce the rate of defects that it finds by 82% over the past five years.

In the past, BNSF and other railroads have even petitioned the Federal Railroad Administration to get a waiver releasing them from some inspection requirements because they believe the track geometry sensors provide enough information that the frequency of human inspections can be safely reduced.

Federal officials approved a waiver allowing BNSF to reduce inspections on a couple of areas of its more than 30,000-mile (48,000-kilometer) network after the railroad successfully tested the devices for several years, but later declined to let the railroad expand that practice, including its tracks that cross Montana. BNSF took the FRA to court over that decision and the dispute is still pending.

Rail unions have opposed the waivers. They argue that while the new technology is helpful, it shouldn't replace human inspections. Even with an interest in preserving jobs, they say safety is their primary concern.

Already, the unions say the widespread job cuts the major railroads have made — eliminating nearly one-third of all rail jobs over the past six years — have made it difficult for employees to keep up with inspection demands and meet all FRA requirements. The NTSB pointed out that the inspector responsible for the territory where the Montana derailment happened had worked an average of 13 hours a day in the four weeks prior to the crash.

Former NTSB director Bob Chipkevich, who spent years investigating rail crashes, said it often takes multiple derailments to force railroads to implement new safety technology.

One of the biggest recent advances in rail safety came after a commuter train collided head-on with a freight train near Los Angeles in 2008, killing 25 people and injuring more than 100. Congress mandated a \$15 billion automatic braking system that stops trains when they're in danger of colliding, derailing and other situations — but it took 12 years to complete.

"When there are safety issues that have been raised after multiple accidents that occurred again and again, the question is to the industry," Chipkevich said. "Why haven't you done it after all these years?"

Funk reported from Omaha, Nebraska, and Metz reported from Salt Lake City.

Follow Josh Funk on Twitter at www.twitter.com/funkwrite

Automaker Tesla is opening more showrooms on tribal lands to avoid state laws barring direct sales

By SUSAN HAIGH Associated Press

Tesla is ramping up efforts to open showrooms on tribal lands where it can sell directly to consumers, circumventing laws in states that bar vehicle manufacturers from also being retailers in favor of the dealership model.

Mohegan Sun, a casino and entertainment complex in Connecticut owned by the federally recognized Mohegan Tribe, announced this week that the California-based electric automaker will open a showroom with a sales and delivery center this fall on its sovereign property where the state's law doesn't apply.

The news comes after another new Tesla showroom was announced in June, set to open in 2025 on lands of the Oneida Indian Nation in upstate New York.

"I think it was a move that made complete sense," said Lori Brown, executive director of the Connecticut League of Conservation Voters, which has lobbied for years to change Connecticut's law.

"It is just surprising that it took this long, because Tesla had really tried, along with Lucid and Rivian,"

she said, referring to two other electric carmakers. "Anything that puts more electric vehicles on the road is a good thing for the public."

Brown noted that lawmakers with car dealerships that are active in their districts, no matter their political affiliation, have traditionally opposed bills allowing direct-to-consumer sales.

The Connecticut Automotive Retail Association, which has opposed such bills for years, says there needs to be a balance between respecting tribal sovereignty and "maintaining a level playing field" for all car dealerships in the state.

"We respect the Mohegan Tribe's sovereignty and the unique circumstance in which they operate their businesses on Tribal land but we strongly believe that this does not change the discussion about Tesla and other EV manufacturers with direct-to-consumer sales, and we continue to oppose that model," Hayden Reynolds, the association's chairperson, said in a statement. "Connecticut's dealer franchise laws benefit consumers and provide a competitive marketplace."

Over the years in numerous states, Tesla has sought and been denied dealership licenses, pushed for law changes and challenged decisions in courts. The company scored a victory earlier this year when Delaware's Supreme Court overturned a ruling upholding a decision by state officials to prohibit Tesla from selling its cars to directly customers.

At least 16 states have effectively changed their laws to allow Tesla and other direct-to-consumer manufacturers to sell there, said Jeff Aiosa, executive director of the Connecticut dealers association. He doesn't foresee Connecticut changing its law, noting that 32 "original equipment manufacturers," a list that includes major car companies like Toyota and Ford, currently abide by it.

"It's not fair to have an unlevel playing field when all the other manufacturers abide by the state franchise laws and Tesla wants this exception to go around the law," he said. "I would suggest their pivoting to the sovereign nation is representative of them not wanting to abide by the law."

Tesla opened its first store as well as a repair shop on Native American land in 2021 in New Mexico. The facility, built in Nambé Pueblo, north of Santa Fe, marked the first time the company partnered with a tribe to get around state laws, though the idea had been in the works for years.

Brian Dear, president of the Tesla Owners Club of New Mexico, predicted at the time that states that are home to tribal nations and also have laws banning direct car sales by manufacturers would likely follow New Mexico's lead.

"I don't believe at all that this will be the last," he said.

Tesla's facility at Mohegan Sun, dubbed the Tesla Sales & Delivery Center, will be located at a shopping and dining pavilion within the sprawling casino complex. Customers will be able to test drive models around the resort, and gamblers will be able to use their loyalty rewards toward Tesla purchases.

Tesla also plans to exhibit its solar and storage products at the location.

Count of ballots from Spaniards abroad gives edge to right-wing block and deepens the stalemate

By DAVID BRUNAT Associated Press

BARCELONA, Spain (AP) — Ballots from Spaniards living abroad were counted Friday, and they gave a new twist to the inconclusive results from the general election.

The conservative Popular Party gained an additional seat from Madrid's constituency late in the day at the expense of the Socialist Workers' Party. That change gives the right-wing coalition of the PP and the far-right Vox party 172 seats in the lower house of parliament and drops left-wing forces to 171.

Forming a stable governing coalition will require one of the blocks to have the support of 176 lawmakers in the 350-seat body, and it's not clear that either side will be able to obtain enough backing from smaller parties.

The country's main political parties had been waiting for the count in the hope they might win seats from opponents and recompose the final picture. Results coming in from different constituencies during

the day showed no changes across Spain — until Madrid added the last-gasp surprise.

The switch likely will make it even tougher to cobble together a government.

Socialist Prime Minister Pedro Sánchez is considered the only leader with a chance to form a coalition, since the Popular Party led by Alberto Núñez Feijóo is being shunned by other parties for allying with Vox.

But Sánchez does not have it easy. He needs help from secessionist parties in the Basque Country and Catalonia, and it could be politically risky to bid for support from the Catalan party Junts, which is headed by Carles Puigdemont, a leader of 2017's failed secession bid in Catalonia.

His party has seven seats, but its goal of forcing Spain to allow a secession referendum in Catalonia is highly unpopular, including in Sánchez's party.

The new parliament is to convene Aug. 17 and it will have three months to vote in a new prime minister. Otherwise, new elections would be called.

Trucking company Yellow Corp. is reportedly preparing for bankruptcy. Here's what you need to know

By WYATTE GRANTHAM-PHILIPS AP Business Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — The fate of U.S. trucking company Yellow Corp. isn't looking good.

After years of financial struggles, Yellow is reportedly preparing for bankruptcy and seeing customers leave in large numbers — heightening risk for future liquidation. While no official decision has been announced by the company, the prospect of bankruptcy has renewed attention around Yellow's ongoing negotiations with unionized workers, a \$700 million pandemic-era loan from the government and other bills the trucker has racked up over time.

Yellow, formerly known as YRC Worldwide Inc., is one of the nation's largest less-than-truckload carriers. The Nashville, Tennessee-based company has some 30,000 employees across the country.

Here's what you need to know.

IS YELLOW FILING FOR BANKRUPTCY?

Not yet. But industry experts suspect that a bankruptcy filing could come any day now.

People familiar with the matter told The Wall Street Journal that the company could seek bankruptcy protection as soon as this week — with some noting that a significant amount of customers have already started to leave the carrier.

Meanwhile, according to FreightWaves, employees were told to expect the filing Monday. Yellow laid off an unknown number of employees Friday, the outlet later reported, citing a memo that stated the company was "shutting down its regular operations."

According to Satish Jindel, president of transportation and logistics firm SJ Consulting, Yellow handled an average of 49,000 shipments per day in 2022. As of this week, he estimates that number is down to between 10,000 and 15,000 daily shipments.

With customers leaving — as well reports of Yellow stopping freight pickups earlier this week — bankruptcy would "be the end of Yellow," Jindel told The Associated Press, noting increased risk for liquidation.

"The likelihood of them surviving and remaining solvent diminishes really by the day," added Bruce Chan, a research director at investment banking firm Stifel.

Yellow media contacts did not immediately respond to the Associated Press' requests for comment on Friday. In a Wednesday statement to The Journal, the company said it was continuing "to prepare for a range of contingencies." On Thursday, Yellow said it was in talks with multiple parties about selling its third-party logistics organization.

Even if Yellow was able to sell its logistics firm, it would "not generate a sufficient amount of cash to keep them operational on any sort of permanent basis," Chan said. "Without a major equity injection, it would be very difficult for them to survive."

HOW MUCH DEBT DOES YELLOW HAVE?

As of late March, Yellow had an outstanding debt of about \$1.5 billion. Of that, \$729.2 million was owed

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to the federal government.

In 2020, under the Trump administration, the Treasury Department granted the company a \$700 million pandemic-era loan on national security grounds. Last month, a congressional probe concluded that the Treasury and Defense Departments “made missteps” in this decision — and noted that Yellow’s “precarious financial position at the time of the loan, and continued struggles, expose taxpayers to a significant risk of loss.”

The government loan is due in September 2024. As of March, Yellow had made \$54.8 million in interest payments and repaid just \$230 million of the principal owed, according to government documents.

Yellow’s current finances and prospect of bankruptcy “is probably two decades in the making,” Chan said, pointing to poor management and strategic decisions dating back to the early 2000s. “At this point, after each party has bailed them out so many times, there is a limited appetite to do that anymore.”

In May, Yellow reported a loss of \$54.6 million, a decline of \$1.06 per share, for its first quarter of 2023. Operating revenue was about \$1.16 billion in the period.

A Wednesday investors note from financial service firm Stephens estimated that Yellow could be burning between \$9 million and \$10 million each day. Using a liquidity disclosure from earlier this month, Yellow had roughly \$100 million in cash at the end of June, the note added — estimating that the company has been burning through increasing amounts of money through July.

“It is reasonable to believe that the Company could breach its \$35 mil. liquidity requirement at any moment,” Stephens analyst Jack Atkins and associate Grant Smith wrote.

DID THE COMPANY JUST AVERT A STRIKE?

The reports of bankruptcy preparations arrive just days after a strike from the Teamsters, which represents Yellow’s 22,000 unionized workers, was averted.

A series of heated exchanges have built up between the Teamsters and Yellow, who sued the union in June after alleging it was “unjustifiably blocking” restructuring plans needed for the company’s survival. The Teamsters called the litigation “baseless” — with general president Sean O’Brien pointing to Yellow’s “decades of gross mismanagement,” which included exhausting the \$700 million federal loan.

On Sunday, a pension fund agreed to extend health benefits for workers at two Yellow Corp. operating companies, averting a strike — and giving Yellow “30 days to pay its bills,” notably \$50 million that Yellow failed to pay the Central States Health and Welfare Fund on July 15, the union said. While the strike didn’t occur, talks of a walkout may have caused some Yellow customers to pull back, Chan said.

Talks between Yellow and the Teamsters, which also represents UPS’s unionized workers, are ongoing. The current contract expires in March 2024.

“The financial struggles of Yellow are not related to the union and the contracts,” Jindel said, pointing to management’s responsibility around its services and prices. He added the union wages from Yellow are “lower than any competitor.”

WHAT WOULD HAPPEN IF YELLOW WENT UNDER?

If Yellow files for bankruptcy and customers continue to take their shipments to other carriers, like FedEx or ABF Freight, prices will go up.

Yellow’s prices have historically been the cheapest compared to other carriers, Jindel said. “That’s why they obviously were not making money,” he added. “And while there is capacity with the other LTL carriers to handle the diversions from Yellow, it will come at a high price for (current shippers and customers) of Yellow.”

Chan adds that we’re in an interesting time for the LTL marketplace — noting that, if Yellow declares bankruptcy and liquidates, “the freight would find a home” with other carriers, which may not have been true in recent years.

“It may take time, but there’s room for it to be absorbed,” he said.

Worker warned organizer 'Someone's going to end up dead' before crowd surge at '21 Travis Scott show

By JUAN A. LOZANO and BEN FINLEY Associated Press

HOUSTON (AP) — Just moments before rap superstar Travis Scott took the stage at the deadly 2021 Astroworld festival, a contract worker had been so worried about what might happen after seeing people getting crushed that he texted an event organizer saying, "Someone's going to end up dead," according to a police report released Friday.

The texts by security contract worker Reece Wheeler were some of many examples in the nearly 1,300-page report in which festival workers highlighted problems and warned of possible deadly consequences. The report includes transcripts of concertgoers' 911 calls and summaries of police interviews, including one with Scott conducted just days after the event.

The crowd surge at the Nov. 5, 2021, outdoor festival in Houston killed 10 attendees who ranged in age from 9 to 27. The official cause of death was compression asphyxia, which an expert likened to being crushed by a car. About 50,000 people attended the festival.

"Pull tons over the rail unconscious. There's panic in people eyes. This could get worse quickly," Reece Wheeler texted Shawna Boardman, one of the private security directors, at 9 p.m. Wheeler then texted, "I know they'll try to fight through it but I would want it on the record that I didn't advise this to continue. Someone's going to end up dead."

Scott's concert began at 9:02 p.m. In their review of video from the concert's livestream, police investigators said that at 9:13 p.m., they heard the faint sound of someone saying, "Stop the show." The same request could also be heard at 9:16 p.m. and 9:22 p.m.

In an Aug. 19, 2022, police interview, Boardman's attorneys told investigators that Boardman "saw things were not as bad as Reece Wheeler stated" and decided not to pass along Wheeler's concerns to anyone else.

A grand jury declined to indict anyone who was investigated over the event, including Scott, Boardman and four other people.

During a police interview conducted two days after the concert, Scott told investigators that although he did see one person near the stage getting medical attention, overall the crowd seemed to be enjoying the show and he did not see any signs of serious problems.

"We asked if he at any point heard the crowd telling him to stop the show. He stated that if he had heard something like that he would have done something," police said in their summary of Scott's interview.

Hip-hop artist Drake, who performed with Scott at the concert, told police that it was difficult to see from the stage what was going on in the crowd and that he didn't hear concertgoers' pleas to stop the show.

Drake found out about the tragedy later that night from his manager, while learning more on social media, police said in their summary.

Marty Wallgren, who worked for a security consulting firm hired by the festival, told police that when he went backstage and tried to tell representatives for Scott and Drake that the concert needed to end because people had been hurt and might have died, he was told "Drake still has three more songs," according to an interview summary.

Daniel Johary, a college student who got trapped in the crush of concertgoers and later used his skills working as an EMT in Israel to help an injured woman, told investigators hundreds of people had chanted for Scott to stop the music and that the chants could be heard "from everywhere."

"He stated staff members in the area gave thumbs-up and did not care," according to the police report.

Richard Rickeada, a retired Houston police officer who was working for a private security company at the festival, told investigators that from 8 a.m. the day of the concert, things were "pretty much in chaos," according to a police summary of his interview. His concerns and questions about whether the concert should be held were "met with a lot of shrugged shoulders," he said.

About 23 minutes into the concert, cameraman Gregory Hoffman radioed into the show's production trailer to warn that "people were dying." Hoffman was operating a large crane that held a television camera

before it was overrun with concertgoers who needed medical help, police said.

The production team radioed Hoffman to ask when they could get the crane back in operation.

Salvatore Livia, who was hired to direct the live show, told police that following Hoffman's dire warning, people in the production trailer understood that something was not right, but "they were disconnected to the reality of (what) was happening out there," according to a police summary of Livia's interview.

Concertgoer Christopher Gates, then 22, told police that by the second or third song in Scott's performance, he came across about five people on the ground who he believed were already dead.

Their bodies were "lifeless, pale, and their lips were blue/purple," according to the police report. Random people in the crowd – not medics – provided CPR.

The police report was released about a month after the grand jury in Houston declined to indict Scott on any criminal charges in connection with the deadly concert. Police Chief Troy Finner had said the report was being made public so that people could "read the entire investigation" and come to their own conclusions about the case. During a news conference after the grand jury's decision, Finner declined to say what the overall conclusion of his agency's investigation was or whether police should have stopped the concert sooner.

The report's release also came the same day that Scott released his new album, "Utopia."

More than 500 lawsuits were filed over the deaths and injuries at the concert, including many against concert promoter Live Nation and Scott. Some have since been settled.

Finley reported from Norfolk, Virginia.

Follow Juan A. Lozano on Twitter: <https://twitter.com/juanlozano70>

Find more AP coverage of the Astroworld festival: <https://apnews.com/hub/astroworld-festival-deaths>

Alabama authorities charge Carlee Russell for fabricating story about kidnapping, finding toddler

By SUDHIN THANAWALA Associated Press

ATLANTA (AP) — Authorities in Alabama said Friday they filed criminal charges against a woman who confessed to fabricating a story that she was kidnapped after stopping to check on a toddler she saw walking on the side of an interstate highway.

Carlee Russell was charged with false reporting to law enforcement and falsely reporting an incident, both misdemeanors that carry up to a year in jail, Hoover Police Chief Nick Derzis said. Russell turned herself in to jail Friday and was released on bond, he said.

"Her decisions that night created panic and alarm for citizens of our city and even across the nation as concern grew that a kidnapper was on the loose using a small child as bait," he said. "Numerous law enforcement agencies, both local and federal, began working tirelessly not only to bring Carlee home to her family but locate a kidnapper that we know now never existed. Many private citizens volunteered their time and energy in looking for a potential kidnapping victim that we know now was never in any danger."

Derzis said he was frustrated that Russell was only being charged with two misdemeanors despite the panic and disruption she caused, but he said the law did not allow for enhanced charges.

Russell, 25, disappeared after calling 911 on July 13 to report a toddler wandering beside a stretch of interstate. She returned home two days later and told police she had been abducted and forced into a vehicle.

Her disappearance became a national news story. Images of the missing woman were shared broadly on social media.

"We don't see this as a victimless crime," Alabama Attorney General Steve Marshall said at a Friday news conference. "There are significant hours spent, resources expended as a result of this investigation."

Marshall's office was asked to handle the prosecution because of the attention the case received, Derzis

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said. Marshall said he intends to "fully prosecute" Russell and said his office will take into account the police investigation to see whether additional charges are warranted.

Russell, through her attorney, Emory Anthony, acknowledged earlier that she made the story up.

In a statement read by police on Monday, Anthony said Russell was not kidnapped, did not see a baby on the side of the road, did not leave the city and acted alone. He said Russell apologized and he asked for prayers and forgiveness as she "addresses her issues and attempts to move forward, understanding that she made a mistake in this matter."

A message left Friday at Anthony's office was not immediately returned.

Russell told detectives she was taken by a man who came out of the trees when she stopped to check on the child, put in a car and an 18-wheel truck, was blindfolded and was held at a home where a woman fed her cheese crackers, authorities said at a news conference last week. At some point, Russell said she was put in a vehicle again but managed to escape and run through the woods to her neighborhood.

"This story opened wounds for families whose loved ones really were victims of kidnappings," Derzis said.

He said police have not determined where Russell went during the 49 hours she was missing. They plan to talk to the attorney general's office about recovering some of the money spent on the investigation.

Extreme heat moves east where many will see their hottest days of the year

BY DREW COSTLEY, JOSEPH B. FREDERICK and TASSANEE VEJPONGSA Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — Carlos Reyes sought shade under a tree in the Bronx on a day that felt like it was over 100 degrees (38 degrees Celsius) because of the heat and humidity.

"It's not like when you were younger, you were playing around," said the 56-year-old who runs a daycare center. "Now it's like you got the humidity. It makes you kind of not breathe the same way. So when you walk, you get a little more tired, a little more exhausted."

Reyes was one of nearly 200 million people in the United States, or 60% of the U.S. population, under a heat advisory or flood warning or watch since Thursday, according to the National Weather Service.

Dangerous heat engulfed much of the eastern half of the United States Friday as extreme temperatures spread from the Midwest into the Northeast and mid-Atlantic where some residents saw their hottest temperatures of the year.

Although much of the country does not cool much on normal summer nights, night temperatures are forecast to stay hotter than usual, prompting excessive heat warnings from the Plains to the East Coast.

From Thursday to Friday, the number of people under a heat advisory rose from 180 to 184 million and the number of people under a flood warning or watch dropped from 17 to 10 million.

Moisture moved into the Southwest, cooling somewhat the southernmost counties of California and parts of southern Arizona, but excessive heat warnings remain for much of the region.

On top of the heat, severe thunderstorms are forecast for multiple regions of the country. There are forecasts with flash flood warnings for Great Lakes and Ohio Valley, west to the Middle Missouri Valley through Saturday morning. There are severe thunderstorm warnings with a chance of quarter-sized hail Friday night for the Washington, DC metropolitan area.

Tornado watches are posted in Wisconsin and New Hampshire, in addition to the heat advisories and potential for severe storms.

The prediction for continued excessive heat comes as the World Meteorological Organization and the European Union's Copernicus Climate Change Service declared July 2023 the hottest month on record this week.

Scientists have long warned that climate change, driven by the burning of fossil fuels, by deforestation and by certain agricultural practices, will lead to more and prolonged bouts of extreme weather.

On Thursday, heat and humidity in major cities along the East Coast, including Washington, D.C., Philadelphia and New York City, made it feel above 100 degrees Fahrenheit (37.8 degrees Celsius). Forecasters expect several records may break Friday with temperatures 10 to 15 degrees Fahrenheit (5.5 to 8 degrees

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Celsius) above average.

The "dangerous" heat wave, as the National Weather Service called it, may begin to subside on Saturday as thunderstorms and a cold front from Canada progress through the region. It seems the hottest temperatures happened on Friday.

"By Sunday, the high temperature is going to be 86," he said, "so that's more typical weather you would expect in July."

The Salvation Army in the Bronx was one of hundreds of cooling centers open in New York City to give people a respite from the scorching heat.

"It's very hot every year. This year, it started last week, becoming very hot," said Robert Ciriaco, a corps officer with The Salvation Army. "(It's) very dangerous for people. Some people die. So that's why we open to offer people (a place) to come to be comfortable."

Philadelphia declared a heat health emergency as temperatures soared into the 90s, and city authorities opened cooling centers.

But some residents took the heat in stride. Alexander Roman, who brought his children to play in the fountain at the city's iconic Love Park, said he is not worried about heat stroke as long as his family can cool down. "A lot of water with ice and it will be O.K.," he said.

In the Southwest and southern Plains, oppressive temperatures have been a blanket for weeks. One meteorologist based in New Mexico called the prolonged period of temperatures over 100 degrees (37.8 Celsius) unprecedented.

Due to the extreme heat, some of the nation's large power grids and utilities are under stress, which could affect Americans' ability to cool off.

In New York City, utility Con Edison sent out a text blast asking residents to be frugal with air conditioning to conserve electricity. Overtaxing an electrical grid can mean blackouts, which are not just an inconvenience, but can lead to equipment failures and major pollution as equipment restarts.

The country's largest power grid, PJM Interconnection, declared a level one energy emergency alert for its 13-state grid on Wednesday, meaning the company had concerns about ability to provide enough electricity.

"PJM currently has enough generation to meet forecast demand, but operators continue to monitor the grid conditions for any changes," said spokesperson Jeffrey Shields on Thursday.

PJM isn't the only electrical grid to issue such an alert. The Midcontinent Independent System Operator, which mostly covers states in the Midwest and Northern Plains, issued a similar one Thursday.

The California Independent System Operator also issued an energy emergency alert for the evening on Wednesday, in part due to excess heat in Southern California, but that expired the same day. Anne Gonzales, a CAISO spokesperson, said they expect to be able to meet demand the next few days.

A spokesperson for the Electric Reliability Council of Texas, which covers most of Texas, said they expect their grid will operate per usual during this latest blast of extreme weather across the country.

The dangerous heat peaks in the Northeast, mid-Atlantic, and Midwest Friday and Saturday before a cold front is expected to bring some relief Sunday and into next week.

Heat experts and environmental advocates said that these effects of the high temperatures will not be felt equally.

"The impacts of heat are highly inequitable," said Ladd Keith, an assistant professor at the University of Arizona who studies heat policy and governance. He explained that people experiencing homelessness feel heat effects more than the housed, and low-income and communities of color are often hotter than more affluent and whiter neighborhoods.

"When we're talking about how to keep people safe, we not only need to be thinking about the neighborhoods that are disproportionately warmer during these heat waves," said Jeremy Hoffman, director of climate justice and impact at Groundwork USA, an environmental justice nonprofit. "But (also) the folks that can't avoid being outside during these heat waves, people that rely on public transportation, people that work outside, and the extremely elderly that may be living in substandard housing without a lot of ventilation and air conditioning."

Follow Drew Costley on Twitter: @drewcostley.

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Sen. McConnell plans to serve his full term as Republican leader despite questions about his health

By MARY CLARE JALONICK Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Senate Republican Leader Mitch McConnell has repeatedly said he is “fine” since he froze up midsentence during a press conference on Wednesday. And now his office is trying to tamp down speculation that he might not fill out his term as leader because of his health.

In a statement, his office said McConnell appreciates the continued support of his colleagues and “plans to serve his full term in the job they overwhelmingly elected him to do.”

The statement, first reported by Politico, comes after McConnell, 81, has suffered health problems in recent months. At his weekly press conference this week, he froze and stared vacantly for about 20 seconds before his GOP colleagues standing behind him grabbed his elbows and asked if he wanted to go back to his office. He later returned to the news conference and answered questions as if nothing had happened.

When asked about the episode, he said he was “fine,” a statement he repeated in a hallway to reporters later that day. Neither McConnell nor his office would answer questions about whether he got medical help afterward.

Even as McConnell tried to brush off the concerns, the episode raised new questions among his colleagues about his health and also whether McConnell, who was first elected to the Senate in 1984 and has served as Republican leader since 2007, might soon step aside from his leadership post.

He was elected to a two-year term as leader in January by a large majority of his conference, despite an insurgent challenge from Florida Sen. Rick Scott. He would be up for re-election as leader again after the 2024 elections.

By then, he will have to decide also if he wants to run again for another Senate term. He is up for re-election in 2026.

In March, McConnell suffered a concussion and a broken rib after falling and hitting his head after a dinner event at a hotel. He didn't return to the Senate for almost six weeks. He has been using a wheelchair in the airport while commuting back and forth to Kentucky. And his speech has recently sounded more halting.

But McConnell, famously reticent and often private about his personal life and health, has said very little about what is going on.

Republican Sen. Kevin Cramer of North Dakota said after Wednesday's episode that McConnell's job as leader calls for more transparency than it would for others.

“We should find out, you know, fairly soon what happened and how serious it is,” Cramer said. “But I don't have to tell you, Mitch is also, as an individual, a pretty private guy. So we'll see.”

Sen. Ted Cruz, R-Texas, said he talked to McConnell on Wednesday night and he seemed “strong and alert.” But he said what happened at the news conference on Wednesday was disturbing to watch.

“Mitch is strong, he's stubborn as a mule,” Cruz said. “My prayers are with them. I hope that — we're going into the August recess — I hope he has time to fully recuperate.”

GOP senators who are seen as potential successors have been cautious in their reaction.

“He's fine, he's back to work,” said South Dakota Sen. John Thune, the No. 2 Senate Republican and one of the senators standing behind McConnell when he froze up.

“I support Senator McConnell as long as he wants to serve as leader,” said Texas Sen. John Cornyn, another potential replacement.

Wyoming Sen. John Barrasso, the No. 3 Senate Republican and a former orthopedic surgeon, guided McConnell back to his office to rest during the news conference. Afterwards, he told reporters that he has

been concerned since McConnell was injured earlier this year, "and I continue to be concerned."

Barrasso then added: "I said I was concerned when he fell and hit his head a number of months ago and was hospitalized. And I think he's made a remarkable recovery, he's doing a great job leading our conference and was able to answer every question the press asked him today."

Several other GOP senators projected confidence in the Republican leader.

"I do have confidence in his leadership," said Wyoming Sen. Cynthia Lummis. "At lunch yesterday, he spoke. He was completely on his game using numbers that were pulled out of his head and he was completely with it. So I don't know what precipitated the freeze, but he'll be careful to evaluate his own capabilities."

Kansas Sen. Roger Marshall said he was "a little concerned" after the news conference.

"He said that he got a little overheated, a little dehydrated," said Marshall, who is also a doctor. "That's what it looks like to me. I can tell you, he's got a strong, strong voice in our conference. He's providing steady leadership. And I think he's doing a great job as leader."

McConnell had polio in his early childhood and he has long acknowledged some difficulty as an adult in climbing stairs. In addition to his fall in March, he also tripped and fell four years ago at his home in Kentucky, causing a shoulder fracture that required surgery.

The Republican leader carried on with his full schedule after the episode on Wednesday. Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer said he spoke with his Republican counterpart at an event Wednesday evening for Major League Baseball owners.

"I said I'm so glad you're here," Schumer said. "And he made a very good speech."

The Republican leader is one of several senators who have been absent due to health issues this year. Democratic Sen. Dianne Feinstein of California, 90, was out of the Senate for more than two months as she recovered from a bout of shingles. And Sen. John Fetterman, D-Pa., 53, took leave for several weeks to get treatment for clinical depression.

Associated Press writer Lisa Mascaro and AP videojournalist Mike Pesoli contributed to this report.

Donald Trump appeals judge's decision to keep hush-money case in New York state court

By MICHAEL R. SISAK Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — Donald Trump asked a federal appeals court Friday to reverse a federal judge's decision to keep his hush-money criminal case in a New York state court that the former president claims is "very unfair" to him.

Trump's lawyers filed a notice of appeal with the 2nd U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals in Manhattan after U.S. District Judge Alvin K. Hellerstein last week rejected his bid to move the case to federal court, where his lawyers were primed to argue he was immune from prosecution.

U.S. law allows criminal prosecutions to be moved from state to federal court if they involve actions taken by federal government officials as part of their official duties, but Hellerstein ruled that the hush-money case involved a personal matter, not presidential duties.

Trump's appeal notice came at the end of another busy week of legal action for the twice-indicted Republican as he seeks a return to the White House in next year's election. On Thursday, he was indicted on new criminal charges in a separate case in federal court in Florida involving allegations that he illegally hoarded classified documents at his Mar-a-Lago estate.

The Manhattan district attorney's office, which is prosecuting the hush-money case and fought to keep it in state court, declined to comment on Trump's appeal.

Trump pleaded not guilty April 4 in state court to 34 felony counts of falsifying business records to hide reimbursements made to his longtime personal lawyer Michael Cohen for his role in paying \$130,000 to the porn actor Stormy Daniels, who claims she had an extramarital sexual encounter with Trump years earlier.

Cohen also arranged for the National Enquirer to pay Playboy model Karen McDougal \$150,000 for the

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rights to her story about an alleged affair, which the supermarket tabloid then squelched in a dubious journalism practice known as "catch-and-kill."

Trump denied having sexual encounters with either woman. His lawyers argue the payments to Cohen were legitimate legal expenses and not part of any cover-up.

He is scheduled to stand trial in state court on March 25, 2024. In the meantime, his lawyers have asked the state court judge presiding over the case, Juan Manuel Merchan, to step aside, arguing that he's biased in part because his daughter does political consulting work for some of Trump's Democratic rivals. Trump has referred to Merchan as "a Trump-hating judge" with a family full of "Trump haters." The judge has yet to rule on the request.

In seeking to try the hush-money case tried in federal court, Trump's lawyers have argued that some of his alleged conduct amounted to official presidential duties because it occurred in 2017 while he was president, including checks he purportedly wrote while sitting in the Oval Office.

Moving the case from state court to federal court would have significant legal and practical consequences for Trump. In federal court, for example, his lawyers could then try to get the charges dismissed on the grounds that federal officials have immunity from prosecution over actions taken as part of their official job duties.

A shift to federal court would also mean a more politically diverse jury pool — drawing not only from heavily Democratic Manhattan, where Trump is wildly unpopular, but also from suburban counties north of the city where he has more political support.

Mobile homes turn deadly when tornadoes hit. This year has been especially bad, AP analysis finds

BY SETH BORENSTEIN, CAMILLE FASSETT and MICHAEL GOLDBERG Associated Press

ROLLING FORK, Miss. (AP) — Many were not just killed at home. They were killed by their homes.

Angela Eason had visited Brenda Odoms' tidy mobile home before. It was a place where Odoms, who had many tragedies in her life, felt safe.

In March, a tornado ripped through this small Mississippi town and people in mobile or manufactured homes were hit the hardest. Inside a mobile morgue, Eason, the county coroner, examined Odoms' gaping fatal head wound. Odoms was found just outside of her collapsed mobile home that was tossed around by a tornado. Blunt force trauma killed her.

"The one place she felt safe she was not," Eason said. Fourteen people died in that Rolling Fork tornado, nine of them, including Odoms, were in uprooted manufactured or mobile homes.

Tornadoes in the United States are disproportionately killing more people in mobile or manufactured homes, especially in the South, often victimizing some of the most socially and economically vulnerable residents. Since 1996, tornadoes have killed 815 people in mobile or manufactured homes, representing 53% of all the people killed at home during a tornado, according to an Associated Press data analysis of National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration tornado deaths. Meanwhile, less than 6% of America's housing units are manufactured homes, according to the U.S. Census Bureau.

While the dangers of tornadoes to mobile homes have long been known, and there are ways to mitigate the risk, the percentage of total tornado deaths that happen in mobile homes has been increasing. Part of the problem is that federal housing rules that call for tougher manufactured home standards, including anchoring, only apply in hurricane zones, which is most of Florida and then several counties along the coast. Those are not the areas where tornadoes usually hit.

Auburn University engineering professor David Roueche called manufactured homes in non-coastal places "death traps compared to most permanent homes" when it comes to tornadoes.

A DEADLY YEAR

The first tornado deaths this year were in Alabama in January, killing seven people, all in mobile homes. All but one were thrown at least 1,000 feet from their homes, with the seventh person thrown at least 500 feet, said Ernie Baggett, the former emergency management chief for Autauga County, Alabama.

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Less than 100 yards from where four of those people died was a permanent home that had little more than shingle damage, he said.

When the wind hits the mobile homes, "it's like a house of cards. They just crumble," Baggett said.

So far this year, at least 45 of the 74 people killed in the U.S. by tornadoes were in some form of manufactured housing when they died, according to NOAA data. Nine others died in site homes and the rest were killed in other places, such as in vehicles.

The manufactured housing industry — which disputes that there's any disproportionate danger — insists on calling the structures manufactured homes if they are built after hurricane-based federal standards in 1976 and mobile homes if they are built before, saying age of the home matters. Federal housing officials use the term manufactured housing. Other people, including many researchers and residents, use the terms interchangeably.

More than 70% of the 8 million manufactured homes in America were built after 1976. Because a big chunk were built in the 1980s and early 1990s, 60% of all those homes were installed before increased federal standards were adopted in 1994, the industry's trade group, Manufactured Housing Institute said.

TORNADOES DON'T HAVE TO BE DEADLY

Tornado experts say most tornadoes should be survivable.

"You just have to be in some structure that's attached to the ground. And then no matter what the tornado throws at you, you have really good odds," said NOAA social scientist Kim Klockow-McClain.

But in manufactured homes, even the weakest tornadoes are killing people in large numbers when they shouldn't be, more than a dozen experts in meteorology, disasters and engineering told The AP.

More than 240 people in mobile homes in the past 28 years have died in tornadoes with winds of 135 mph or less, the three weakest of the six categories of twisters, the AP analysis found. That's 79% of the deaths at home in the weaker tornadoes. It's only in storms with winds higher than 165 mph where most of the at home deaths are in more permanent structures.

Auburn's Roueche not only studies what happens in mobile homes during tornadoes, he grew up in one. What he sees over and over are mobile homes that fail from the bottom up because they are not secured enough to the ground, like permanent homes are.

WHAT HAPPENS IN A TORNADO

"The whole structure is rolling or flying through air. You've got dressers falling on top of you. You've got the entire structure that's trying to crush you," said Roueche.

That March evening in Rolling Fork, when the tornado roared through Ida Cartlidge remembered the air blowing so powerfully that she couldn't breathe, the sounds of windows shattering and then utter mayhem.

"The only thing that's holding a mobile home down are the little straps in the ground," Cartlidge said. "It picked up the home one time, set it down. It picked it up again, set it down. It picked it up a third time, and we were in the air."

The tornado hit Mildred Joyner's mobile home so hard she felt the mobile home shake, heard the crackling sound of what she figured was her home coming apart and then she woke up in the hospital and her mother who was in the mobile home with her ended up paralyzed from the waist down.

The problem is worsening in the South because tornadoes have been moving more from the Great Plains to the mid-South in recent decades and will likely to continue to do so with climate change a possible factor, studies show. Alabama has the most tornado deaths by far.

Unlike the rest of the country, which usually has most manufactured housing in parks, the South has mobile homes scattered about the countryside in ones and twos, making central tornado shelters less effective and likely to be built, said Villanova University tornado expert Stephen Strader and Northern Illinois meteorology professor Walker Ashley.

THE IMPORTANCE OF ANCHORING

One thing scientists, emergency managers and the manufactured housing industry agree on is that anchoring mobile homes to the ground is key.

That requires expensive concrete or expensive tie down systems, said former Alabama emergency official Jonathan Gaddy, now a professor at Idaho State University.

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"Why does that matter? Well, it explains why we haven't fixed the problem with anchoring because nobody can fix the problem and still make money. That's the bottom line," Gaddy said.

"Anchoring matters and has been shown to be the difference between life or death," Villanova's Strader said in an email. "However, the MH industry seems disinterested in addressing this because it would make their homes more expensive."

Manufactured Home Institute Chief Executive Officer Lesli Gooch said the industry is "very clear" about the importance of anchoring. "We also talk about making sure that a professional checks your anchoring systems on your manufactured home, especially on mobile homes built prior to (19)76," she said.

"We're very focused on making sure that there are minimum installation standards in the states," Gooch said.

Northern Illinois' Ashley said lack of state regulations and inspections, especially in much of the South, is a big problem.

Improvements in federal codes that went into effect in 1976, 1994 and 2008 make a big difference, Gooch said, arguing that the NOAA data the AP analyzed and that scientists use lump different ages of manufactured homes together and tar them with the problems of the oldest ones.

"I wouldn't want your readers to misinterpret your data to suggest that living in a manufactured home is somehow more deadly than living in a site-built home because I would tell you that I don't think that the data bears that out," Gooch said.

Gooch pointed to manufactured homes in Florida, where tighter federal Housing and Urban Development safety rules apply because it is a hurricane wind zone. "Homes in Florida that are manufactured homes are performing better than what you see in the site-built world," she said.

IT'S NOT GETTING BETTER

Several scientists and engineers said data, and history, show the situation has not improved.

"This is more of the handwaving- and misdirection-type statements that has come to represent the manufactured housing industry's take on tornado and manufactured home safety," Villanova's Strader said in an email, with Northern Illinois' Ashley agreeing.

"Our study of the Lee County Alabama EF4 tornado found that 19 of the 23 deaths were in manufactured homes (all built after 1994)," Strader said. "All of those deaths were due to a lack of anchoring or a floor-to-wall connection. There have been many prior studies that have illustrated that these homes are failing at lower wind loads than permanent homes."

If Gooch were right, the percentage of tornado deaths in mobile homes would be going down with time and they are not, NOAA National Severe Storms Lab tornado scientist Harold Brooks said, presenting data that goes back to 1975. His data showed mobile home deaths between 1975 and 1984 were 43.6% of all at-home tornado deaths and the same figure was 63.2% for the past ten years through the end of May.

A contributing factor, Strader, Ashley and Roueche said, is that federal rules for anchoring only apply in hurricane zones, mostly in Florida. Those are not the areas where tornadoes usually hit. Instead, they hit inland where the weakest federal standards are, they said. Most of tornado-prone areas, including almost all of Alabama, Oklahoma, Missouri, Texas and Mississippi are in "Zone 1," where safety and anchoring of mobile homes have the most lax standards.

"People are dying in new and old Zone 1 manufactured homes," Roueche said in response to Gooch's comments. Tornado homes throughout the country would be much safer if the coastal federal requirements applied everywhere, he said.

HURTING POOR PEOPLE MORE

One of the issues with mobile homes and tornadoes is that it is an intersection of risk and "different social vulnerability factors like poverty, even some issues pertaining to race, ethnicity, age," NOAA's Klockow said.

And it makes it harder for people to leave their mobile homes and head for a permanent shelter.

"I always think about the single mother who's living in a manufactured home. It's the middle of the night. She has three kids. Her car's not starting correctly and all of a sudden here comes a tornado," Strader said in an interview.

Officials tell her "to get to a storm shelter because our manufactured home isn't safe," Strader said.

"Well, the problem there is that there's all these factors up against them."

Tornadoes pop down rapidly, which doesn't allow meteorologists to give much warning, maybe 10 to 15 minutes. In many cases, the National Weather Service warns days in advance that the conditions are ripe for tornadoes, but that isn't the same as warning that one has touched down.

University of Oklahoma social scientist Justin Sharpe, who studies disaster warnings, said with poor and disabled residents the key is to avoid warnings that simply say "get out now" and nothing else.

Instead, a couple hours before a tornado is possible, meteorologists should warn people to be packed up and ready to go at a moment's notice later, Sharpe and Klockow-McClain said.

FINDING SAFER PLACES

A relatively new law in Alabama could help provide more shelters and be a model for other states. The law gives liability protection to buildings like churches and stores that open up in an emergency as a shelter if specifically-built shelters aren't available.

When this year's first deadly tornado struck just outside Montgomery, Alabama, Autauga County had about 30 minutes warning but no "safer places" to send people, the then-emergency chief, Baggett said. Seven people in mobile homes died.

The tornado continued into neighboring Elmore County, which had already set off its 30 warning sirens, used a mass notification system to make 16,772 calls to phones in the danger area and opened up 16 churches and other safer places.

People went into the temporary shelters. Homes were destroyed, but no one died.

Associated Press photographer Gerald Herbert and video journalist Stephen Smith contributed to this report. Borenstein reported from Washington and Fassett from Seattle.

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Associated Press climate and environmental coverage receives support from several private foundations. See more about AP's climate initiative here. The AP is solely responsible for all content.

Moscow blames Kyiv for attacks in south Russia as Kremlin forces hit Ukrainian buildings

By FELIPE DANA and JIM HEINTZ Associated Press

KYIV, Ukraine (AP) — Russian forces on Friday struck the central Ukrainian city of Dnipro and pounded a key village in the southeast that Ukraine claimed to have recaptured in its grinding counteroffensive, while Moscow accused Kyiv of firing two missiles at southern Russia and wounding 20 people.

President Volodymyr Zelenskyy, meanwhile, marked Ukraine's Statehood Day by reaffirming the country's sovereignty — a rebuke to Russian President Vladimir Putin, who used his claim that Ukraine didn't exist as a nation to justify his invasion.

"Now, like more than a thousand years ago, our civilizational choice is unity with the world," Zelenskyy said in a speech on a square outside St. Michael's Monastery in Kyiv. "To be a power in world history. To have the right to its national history — of its people, its land, its state. And of our children — all future generations of the Ukrainian people. We will definitely win!"

He also honored servicemen and handed out first passports to young citizens as part of ceremonies. The holiday coincides with commemorations of the adoption of Christianity on lands that later became Ukraine, Russia and Belarus.

The Russian Defense Ministry said it shot down a Ukrainian missile in the city of Taganrog, about 40 kilometers (about 24 miles) east of the border with Ukraine, and local officials reported 20 people were

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injured, identifying the epicenter as an art museum.

Debris fell on the city, the ministry added, alleging the missile was part of a "terror attack" by Ukraine. Oleksiy Danilov, Ukraine's secretary of the National Security and Defense Council, blamed Russian air defense systems for the explosion.

Russia's Defense Ministry said it downed a second Ukrainian missile near the city of Azov, which like Taganrog is in the Rostov region, and debris fell in an unpopulated location.

Earlier in the day, a Ukrainian drone was shot down outside Moscow, the Defense Ministry said, in the third drone strike or attempt on the capital region this month. The ministry reported no injuries or damage in the latest incident, and it didn't give an exact location where the drone fell.

Since the war began, Russia has blamed Ukraine for drone, bomb and missile attacks on its territory far from the battlefield's front line. Ukrainian officials rarely confirm being behind the attacks, which have included drone strikes on the Kremlin that unsettled Russians.

The strikes have hit Russian ammunition and fuel depots, as well as bridges the Russian military uses to supply its forces, and military recruitment stations. The attacks have also included killings of Russian-appointed officials on occupied Ukrainian territory.

Three months ago, a Russian warplane accidentally dropped a bomb on Belgorod, injuring two people, in an incident where Ukraine was initially suspected.

In Dnipro, an apparent Russian missile attack wounded nine people in the area of a newly constructed and as yet unoccupied 12-story apartment building, as well as an unoccupied adjacent Security Service of Ukraine building. "Russian missile terror again," Zelenskyy wrote on social media.

Video showed the apartment building's upper floors in ruins, with gray smoke billowing from them, and flames raging in the night at ground level, where shattered concrete and glass littered a courtyard.

Russia has often struck apartment buildings during the conflict, while denying it intentionally targets civilians.

Meanwhile, the commander of Ukraine's armed forces, Col.-Gen. Oleksandr Syrskyi, said his troops were pushing forward in parts of eastern Ukraine occupied by Russia and meeting stiff resistance as the war drags into its 18th month.

"The enemy fiercely clings to every centimeter, conducting intense artillery and mortar fire," he said in a statement.

Recent fighting has taken place at multiple places along the more than 1,000-kilometer (more than 600-mile) front, where Ukraine deployed its recently acquired Western weapons to push out the Kremlin's forces. However, it is attacking without vital air support and faces a deeply entrenched foe.

A Western official said Thursday that Ukraine had launched a major push in the southeast. Putin acknowledged that fighting has intensified there, but insisted Kyiv's push has failed.

Zelenskyy posted a video Thursday night in which Ukrainian soldiers said they had taken Staromaiorske in the Donetsk region. Russian military bloggers said artillery fire at the Ukrainian troops had effectively razed the village and reported more barrages Friday.

Capturing the village, which in 2014 had a population of 682, would give Ukraine a platform to push deeper into Russian-held territory, the bloggers noted.

The area has been a focus of Ukraine's counteroffensive since June, and its troops have previously captured several other villages there as they slowly work their way across extensive Russian minefields.

It was not possible to verify either side's claims about what is happening in the war zone.

Syrskyi said fighting that targets the enemy's artillery as well as its command and control structure is a priority as his troops probe Russian lines for weaknesses.

"In these conditions, it is crucial to make timely management decisions in response to the situation at hand and take measures for maneuvering forces and resources, shifting units and troops to areas where success is evident, or withdrawing them from the enemy's fire," he said.

Russia is trying to hold on to the territory it controls in the four provinces it illegally annexed in September -- Zaporizhzhia, Donetsk, Kherson and Luhansk.

Heintz reported from Tallinn, Estonia. Andrew Katell in New York contributed.

An earlier version corrected that Oleksiy Danilov is Ukraine's secretary of the National Security and Defense Council, not defense minister.

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

Justice Alito says Congress lacks the power to impose an ethics code on the Supreme Court

By MARK SHERMAN Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Justice Samuel Alito says Congress lacks the power to impose a code of ethics on the Supreme Court, making him the first member of the court to take a public stand against proposals in Congress to toughen ethics rules for justices in response to increased scrutiny of their activities beyond the bench.

"I know this is a controversial view, but I'm willing to say it. No provision in the Constitution gives them the authority to regulate the Supreme Court—period," Alito said in an interview he gave to the Wall Street Journal opinion pages. An account of the interview, which the paper said took place in New York in early July, was published Friday.

Democrats last week pushed Supreme Court ethics legislation through a Senate committee, though the bill's prospects in the full Senate are dim.

All federal judges other than the justices already adhere to an ethics code that was developed by the federal judiciary. But the Supreme Court's unique status — it's the only federal court created by the Constitution — puts it outside the reach of those standards that apply to other federal jurists.

Democrats first sought to address that after ProPublica reported earlier this year that Justice Clarence Thomas participated in lavish vacations and a real estate deal with a top Republican donor — and after Chief Justice John Roberts declined to testify before the committee about the ethics of the court.

Since then, ProPublica also revealed that Alito had taken a luxury vacation in Alaska with a Republican donor who had business interests before the court. The Associated Press reported in early July that Justice Sonia Sotomayor, aided by her staff, has advanced sales of her books through college visits over the past decade.

The 73-year-old Alito, who joined the court in 2006, has rejected the idea that he should have disclosed the Alaska trip or stepped away from cases involving the donor, hedge fund owner Paul Singer. Alito penned his own Wall Street Journal op-ed, which was published hours before ProPublica posted its story.

Alito said that he is unwilling to leave allegations unanswered, though he acknowledged judges and justices typically don't respond to their critics.

"And so at a certain point I've said to myself, nobody else is going to do this, so I have to defend myself," he said in the newest column.

While no other justice has spoken so definitively about ethics legislation, Roberts has raised questions about Congress' authority to oversee the high court.

In his year-end report in 2011, Roberts wrote that the justices comply with legislation that requires annual financial disclosures and limits their outside earned income. "The Court has never addressed whether Congress may impose those requirements on the Supreme Court. The Justices nevertheless comply with those provisions," Roberts wrote.

The justices have so far resisted adopting an ethics code on their own, although Roberts said in May that there is more the court can do to "adhere to the highest standards" of ethical conduct, without providing specifics.

The column is co-written by James Taranto, the paper's editorial features editor, and David Rivkin, a

Washington lawyer. Rivkin represents Leonard Leo, the onetime leader of the conservative legal group The Federalist Society, in his dealings with Senate Democrats who want details of Leo's dealings with the justices. Leo helped arrange Alito's trip to Alaska.

Rivkin, in a letter Tuesday to leading Democrats on the Senate Judiciary Committee, said the request was politically motivated and violates Leo's constitutional rights. Rivkin also wrote that a congressionally imposed ethics code for the Supreme Court would falter on constitutional grounds. Separately, Rivkin represents a couple whose tax case will be argued before the court in the fall.

Alito talked with the Taranto and Rivkin for four hours in interviews in April and July, they wrote. They published an account of the earlier interview in April.

Senators rebuke Wisconsin congressman who yelled vulgarities at high school-age pages

By MARY CLARE JALONICK and SCOTT BAUER Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — A freshman Republican congressman from Wisconsin is refusing to apologize after he yelled and cursed at high school-aged Senate pages during a late night tour of the Capitol this week, eliciting a bipartisan rebuke from Senate leaders.

Rep. Derrick Van Orden, speaking in a round of interviews Friday on Wisconsin conservative talk radio, did not refute reports of his actions or back down from what he did.

Van Orden used a profanity to describe the pages as lazy and another to order them off the floor of the Capitol Rotunda on Wednesday night, according to a report in the online political newsletter PunchBowl News. The pages were laying down to take photos in the Rotunda, according to the publication.

"I'm not going to apologize for making sure that anybody — I don't care who you are and who you're related to — defiles this House," Van Orden said on "The Dan O'Donnell Show." "It's not going to happen on my watch, man."

Van Orden said he was protecting the integrity of the Capitol Rotunda because it served as a field hospital during the Civil War and it's where presidents have lain in state upon their deaths. He said the young people he confronted were "goofing off" and that Democrats were making it an issue.

"Would this be an issue if those young people did not have political connections?" Van Orden said on "The Jay Weber Show." "Why do you think this is an issue, pal?"

A former Navy SEAL who was outside of the Capitol during the Jan. 6, 2021 insurrection, Van Orden also appeared to embrace the presence of alcohol in his office the same evening he encountered the pages. Images were posted on social media showing bottles of liquor and beer cans on a desk in his office. Van Orden said on X, the platform previously known as Twitter, that the alcohol was from constituents.

And his spokeswoman Anna Kelly posted: "As the Congressman says, once you cross the threshold to our office, you are in Wisconsin!" She followed that with a beer mug emoji.

Van Orden represents Wisconsin's 3rd Congressional District, a GOP-leaning jurisdiction that comprises parts of central, southwestern and western Wisconsin, including moderate exurbs of Minnesota's Twin Cities.

On Thursday evening, just before the Senate left for its August recess, Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer, D-N.Y., and Republican Leader Mitch McConnell, R-Ky., rebuked Van Orden's behavior and thanked the pages, high school-age students who serve as helpers and messengers around the Senate. Several of the pages were sitting on the Senate floor at the time, smiling and nodding as dozens of senators stood and gave them a standing ovation.

Without mentioning Van Orden by name, Schumer said he was "shocked" to hear about the behavior of a member of the House Republican majority and "further shocked at his refusal to apologize to these young people." He noted that Thursday was the final day for this class of pages.

"They're here when we need them," Schumer said. "And they have served this institution with grace."

McConnell said he associated himself with Schumer's words. "Everybody on this side of the aisle feels exactly the same way," he said.

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When asked about McConnell's rebuke, Van Orden said Friday "I don't know what it was because I honestly have not tracked any of this stuff."

Van Orden was elected to Congress in 2022 after a losing bid in 2020. He has insisted that he did not enter the Capitol on Jan. 6, 2021, and on Friday again condemned those who did, calling them "buffoons." That didn't stop fellow Wisconsin Rep. Mark Pocan, a Democrat, from invoking the Jan. 6 attack in criticizing Van Orden.

"Wonder if he told that to his fellow insurrectionists, who were beating police officers on the same ground?" Pocan said on X.

Rebecca Cooke, a Democrat who is running to challenge Van Orden in 2024, called him an embarrassment and a hypocrite. She called Van Orden a "serial harasser" and referenced an incident in June 2021 when Van Orden was upset about a display of LGBTQ+ books at a southwestern Wisconsin library and yelled at a teenager who was working there.

"For someone to perhaps drunkenly, and definitely belligerently, yell at these kids for enjoying our nation's Capitol is just stupid," Pocan said Friday. "He would be best to say it was stupid and just move on."

EDITORS' NOTE: An earlier version of this story misidentified the name of "The Dan O'Donnell Show."

Bauer reported from Madison, Wisconsin.

The Emmy Awards are postponed due to the Hollywood actors and writers strike, source says

By ALICIA RANCILIO Associated Press

The 75th Emmy Awards are the latest production to be put on pause due to the Hollywood strikes and will not air as planned in September.

A person familiar with the postponement plans but not authorized to speak publicly pending an official announcement confirmed the delay Friday. No information about a new date was immediately available.

The Emmy Awards were scheduled to be broadcast on Fox on Sept. 18. Rules laid out by the actors' union, the Screen Actors Guild-American Federation of Television and Radio Artists, say stars cannot campaign for the Emmys or attend awards shows while on strike.

Writers are also not permitted to work on awards shows until the strike ends.

Whenever the next Emmy Awards are held, HBO will walk in as the leading contender. The network is up for 74 awards for three of its top shows: "Succession," "The White Lotus" and "The Last of Us."

"Ted Lasso" has the most comedy category nominations with 21, including best comedy series and best actor for Jason Sudeikis.

Roughly 65,000 SAG-AFTRA actors and 11,500 Writers Guild of America screenwriters are on strike, calling for better pay, structure with residual payments and protection from the use of artificial intelligence.

How living in a mobile home makes you more likely to die in a tornado

BY SETH BORENSTEIN, CAMILLE FASSETT and MICHAEL GOLDBERG Associated Press

ROLLING FORK, Miss. (AP) — Many were not just killed at home. They were killed by their homes.

Angela Eason had visited Brenda Odoms' tidy mobile home before. It was a place where Odoms, who had many tragedies in her life, felt safe.

In March, a tornado ripped through this small Mississippi town and people in mobile or manufactured homes were hit the hardest. Inside a mobile morgue, Eason, the county coroner, examined Odoms' gaping fatal head wound. Odoms was found just outside of her collapsed mobile home that was tossed around by a tornado. Blunt force trauma killed her.

"The one place she felt safe she was not," Eason said. Fourteen people died in that Rolling Fork tornado,

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nine of them, including Brenda Odoms, were in uprooted manufactured or mobile homes.

Tornadoes in the United States are disproportionately killing more people in mobile or manufactured homes, especially in the South, often victimizing some of the most socially and economically vulnerable residents. Since 1996, tornadoes have killed 815 people in mobile or manufactured homes, representing 53% of all the people killed at home during a tornado, according to an Associated Press data analysis of National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration tornado deaths. Meanwhile, less than 6% of America's housing units are manufactured homes, according to the U.S. Census Bureau.

While the dangers of tornadoes to mobile homes have long been known, and there are ways to mitigate the risk, the percentage of total tornado deaths that happen in mobile homes has been increasing. Part of the problem is that federal housing rules that call for tougher manufactured home standards, including anchoring, only apply in hurricane zones, which is most of Florida and then several counties along the coast. Those are not the areas where tornadoes usually hit.

Auburn University engineering professor David Roueche called manufactured homes in non-coastal places "death traps compared to most permanent homes" when it comes to tornadoes.

So far this year, at least 45 of the 74 people killed in the U.S. by tornadoes were in some form of manufactured housing when they died, according to NOAA data.

The manufactured housing industry — which disputes that there's any disproportionate danger — insists on calling the structures manufactured homes if they are built after hurricane-based federal standards in 1976 and mobile homes if they are built before, saying age of the home matters.

Tornado experts say most tornadoes should be survivable.

"You just have to be in some structure that's attached to the ground. And then no matter what the tornado throws at you, you have really good odds," said NOAA social scientist Kim Klockow-McClain.

But in manufactured homes even the weakest tornadoes are killing people in mobile homes in large numbers, more than a dozen experts in meteorology, disasters and engineering told The Associated Press.

More than 240 people in mobile homes in the past 28 years have died in tornadoes with winds of 135 mph or less, the three weakest of the six categories of twisters, the AP analysis found. That's 79% of the deaths at home in the weaker tornadoes.

"The whole structure is rolling or flying through air. You've got dressers falling on top of you. You've got the entire structure that's trying to crush you," said Roueche.

The South has mobile homes scattered about the countryside in ones and twos, making centralized tornado shelters less effective and likely to be built, said Villanova University tornado expert Stephen Strader and Northern Illinois meteorology professor Walker Ashley.

Anchoring mobile homes to the ground is key and the strongest anchoring is more expensive, said former Alabama emergency official Jonathan Gaddy, now a professor at Idaho State University.

"Why does that matter? Well, it explains why we haven't fixed the problem with anchoring because nobody can fix the problem and still make money. That's the bottom line," Gaddy said.

Manufactured Home Institute Chief Executive Officer Lesli Gooch said the industry is "very clear" about the importance of anchoring.

"We're very focused on making sure that there are minimum installation standards in the states," Gooch said.

Northern Illinois' Ashley said lack of state regulations and inspections, especially in much of the South, is a big problem.

Improvements in federal codes that went into effect in 1976, 1994 and 2008 make a big difference, Gooch said, arguing the NOAA data the AP analyzed and that scientists use lump different ages of manufactured homes together and tar them with the problems of the oldest ones.

Villanova's Strader said Gooch's argument that newer mobile homes are safer is proven wrong by a study that he and Roueche did of the fatalities of a March 2019 tornado in Alabama and published in the journal *Natural Hazards Review*. In that tornado 19 of the 23 deaths were in manufactured homes, all built after 1994 and all due to lack of anchoring, he said.

If Gooch were right, the percentage of tornado deaths at home in mobile homes would be going down with time and they are not, NOAA National Severe Storms Lab tornado scientist Harold Brooks said.

One of the big problems, Strader, Ashley and Roueche said, is that the federal rules that call for tougher manufactured home standards, including anchoring, only apply in hurricane zones. Most tornado-prone areas, including almost all of Alabama, Oklahoma, Missouri, Texas and Mississippi are in the zone with the most lax standards.

A lack of shelters is another big issue. A relatively new law in Alabama could be a model for states to address this. The law gives liability protection to buildings like churches and stores that open up in an emergency as a shelter if specifically-built shelters aren't available.

When this year's first deadly tornado struck just outside Montgomery, Alabama, Autauga County had about 30 minutes warning but no "safer places" to send people, said Ernie Baggett, the county's former emergency management chief. Seven people in mobile homes died.

The tornado continued into neighboring Elmore County, which had already set off its 30 warning sirens, used a mass notification system to make 16,772 calls to phones in the danger area and opened up 16 churches and other safer places.

People went into the temporary shelters. Homes were destroyed, but no one died.

This story has been corrected to show that Stephen Strader is affiliated with Villanova University, not Vanderbilt University.

Associated Press photographer Gerald Herbert and video journalist Stephen Smith contributed to this report. Borenstein reported from Washington and Fassett from Seattle.

Associated Press climate and environmental coverage receives support from several private foundations. See more about AP's climate initiative here. The AP is solely responsible for all content.

'We were in the air.' Mississippi family recounts surviving tornado that tore mobile home apart

By MICHAEL GOLDBERG Associated Press/Report for America

ROLLING FORK, Miss. (AP) — Streams of air whirled by Ida Cartlidge in every direction, but she couldn't breathe.

Between the thin walls and above the shaky foundation of a mobile home, Cartlidge, 32, miraculously survived a March tornado that carved a path of destruction through Rolling Fork, Mississippi. Mobile home residents in the path of a twister's fury often don't live to recount the experience.

"It sounded like a real loud train coming through," Cartlidge said. "And I could feel the wind, it was so powerful you couldn't even breathe while you were in the air."

Cartlidge and her husband, Charles Jones, 59, had forged a quiet life in Rolling Fork with their three sons. She worked in customer service for an appliance company and Jones for a local auto parts shop. They viewed Rolling Fork as a refuge from city life and an ideal place to raise kids. The family lived in a mobile home park behind Chuck's Dairy Bar, a diner that had long been a nexus of local life for Rolling Fork residents.

Then the tornado tore through the park, making it a point of misery.

Most of the 14 people who died in Rolling Fork when the March 24 tornado hit the Mississippi Delta lived in the mobile home park, with large families crowding into one or two-bedroom units. Such living arrangements have been a way to offset the financial strain endemic to the Mississippi Delta, where poverty is prevalent and stable jobs are scarce.

Tornadoes in the United States are disproportionately killing more people in mobile or manufactured homes, especially in the South. Since 1996, tornadoes have killed 815 people in mobile or manufactured

homes. That's 53% of all the people killed in their homes during a tornado, according to an Associated Press data analysis of National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration tornado deaths.

Cramped living arrangements forced mobile home inhabitants to shelter just as they lived: with little space between them.

"The only thing I could tell them to do was get on the floor," said Charles Jones, Cartlidge's husband. "And I got on top. I got on top of my family."

Just seconds before Cartlidge found herself burrowed beneath her husband on the mobile home's living room floor, her father had called her. He had been watching the news and saw that a tornado had touched down in Rolling Fork.

Cartlidge heard car windows shattering outside. The home's windows shattered next. She scooped up her 1-year-old son and dove to the floor, with her 11- and 12-year-old sons next to her and Jones atop them. They didn't know the incoming winds had reached 200 mph (320 kph). The storm's force was instead measured by the fear it induced.

"The only thing that's holding a mobile home down are the little straps in the ground," Cartlidge said. "It picked up the home one time, set it down. It picked it up again, set it down. It picked it up a third time, and we were in the air."

Her future was suspended in the air alongside her home. "You don't know what's happening next, whether you're going to live it through it or not," she said.

The next thing Cartlidge remembers is lying with her back on the ground and the baby resting on her chest. He was the only member of the family who made it through the storm unscathed.

Her fear didn't subside. "All you could hear were people screaming and hollering for help," she recalled.

Cartlidge propped herself up with a piece of wood and walked to the highway. She could feel her bones shifting with every step.

She suffered a crushed pelvis bone and broken shoulder. One of her sons punctured a lung and had shattered bones in his spine and shoulder blade. Jones injured his ribs and spine.

Since returning from the hospital, the family has been living in a motel room only minutes down the highway from where their mobile home used to be. Rain storms still make Cartlidge and Jones anxious, as they experienced the raw force of twister first-hand.

"The tornado's going to win every time," Jones said. "It's just like when a nail meets a tire."

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

Associated Press climate and environmental coverage receives support from several private foundations. See more about AP's climate initiative here. The AP is solely responsible for all content.

With Trump newly indicted, here's what to know about the documents case and what's next

By MEG KINNARD Associated Press

Former President Donald Trump has been indicted on three additional charges in a case that accuses him of illegally possessing classified documents at his Mar-a-Lago estate, allegations that add fresh detail to the criminal case initially issued last month.

Here's a look at the charges, the special counsel's investigation and how Trump's case differs from those of other politicians known to be in possession of classified documents:

WHAT ARE THE NEW CHARGES?

There are three new charges against Trump, as well as a new defendant in the case.

Prosecutors accuse the former president of trying to "alter, destroy, mutilate, or conceal evidence," and

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of inducing another person to do so. They say Trump asked a staffer — Mar-a-Lago property manager Carlos De Oliveira — to delete camera footage at his Florida estate in an effort to obstruct the federal investigation into his possession of classified documents.

Prosecutors allege that De Oliveira schemed with Trump and his valet, Walt Nauta, to conceal the footage from investigators.

A third count also accuses Trump of willfully retaining national defense information related to a presentation about military activity in another country.

Investigators say Trump showed a classified document during July 2021 meeting at his Bedminster, New Jersey, resort to the writer and publisher of the memoir of his former chief of staff Mark Meadows. Details about that document and the meeting were included in the original indictment, but none of the charges had related to it until now.

Trump had returned that document to the government on Jan. 17, 2022 — nearly a year after he left office, according to the indictment.

Trump was indicted last month on 37 counts related to the mishandling of classified documents. The charges include counts of retaining classified information, obstructing justice and making false statements, among other crimes.

Trump is accused of keeping documents related to “nuclear weaponry in the United States” and the “nuclear capabilities of a foreign country,” along with documents from White House intelligence briefings, including some that detail the military capabilities of the U.S. and other countries, according to the indictment. Prosecutors alleged Trump showed off the documents to people who did not have security clearances to review them and later tried to conceal documents from his own lawyers as they sought to comply with federal demands to find and return documents.

The top charges carry a penalty of up to 20 years in prison.

After leaving office in 2021, the former president showed someone working for his political action committee a map that detailed a military operation in a foreign country, prosecutors allege in the document. On another occasion that year, Trump showed a writer, a publisher and two of his staffers — none of whom had security clearances — a military plan of attack.

HOW IS TRUMP REACTING?

A Trump campaign statement dismissed the new charges as “nothing more than a continued desperate and flailing attempt” by the Biden administration “to harass President Trump and those around him” and to influence the 2024 presidential race.

In an interview Thursday night with Breitbart News, Trump called the superseding indictment “harassment,” repeating his insistence that his activities were “protected by the Presidential Records Act.”

On Friday, Trump and a dozen other Republicans seeking the 2024 presidential nomination were expected at an Iowa GOP event.

WHAT HAPPENS NEXT?

De Oliveira is due in court in Florida on Monday.

Both Trump and Nauta have pleaded not guilty to the original 38-count indictment.

Their trial is currently scheduled for May 20, 2024 — deep into the presidential nominating calendar, and probably well after the Republican nominee is known — and it was unclear if the addition of a new defendant could result in a postponement.

Prosecutors, who had wanted the case to go to trial in December, wrote in a separate court filing Thursday that the new charges “should not disturb” the May trial date, “and the Special Counsel’s Office is taking steps related to discovery and security clearances to ensure that it does not do so.”

Trump’s lawyers have claimed that he can’t get a fair trial before the 2024 election.

HOW DID THIS CASE COME ABOUT?

Officials with the National Archives and Records Administration contacted representatives for Trump in spring 2021 when they realized that important material from his time in office was missing.

According to the Presidential Records Act, White House documents are considered property of the U.S. government and must be preserved.

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A Trump representative told the National Archives in December 2021 that presidential records had been found at Mar-a-Lago. In January 2022, the National Archives retrieved 15 boxes of documents from Trump's Florida home, later telling Justice Department officials that they contained "a lot" of classified material.

That May, the FBI and Justice Department issued a subpoena for remaining classified documents in Trump's possession. Investigators who went to visit the property weeks later to collect the records were given roughly three dozen documents and a sworn statement from Trump's lawyers attesting that the requested information had been returned.

But that assertion turned out to be false. With a search warrant, federal officials returned to Mar-a-Lago in August 2022 and seized more than 33 boxes and containers totaling 11,000 documents from a storage room and an office, including 100 classified documents.

In all, roughly 300 documents with classification markings — including some at the top secret level — have been recovered from Trump since he left office in January 2021.

HOW DID A SPECIAL COUNSEL GET INVOLVED?

Last year, U.S. Attorney General Merrick Garland picked Jack Smith, a veteran war crimes prosecutor with a background in public corruption probes, to lead investigations into the presence of classified documents at Trump's Florida estate, as well as key aspects of a separate probe involving the Jan. 6, 2021, insurrection and efforts to undo the 2020 election.

Smith's appointment was a recognition by Garland of the politics involved in an investigation into a former president and current White House candidate. Garland himself was selected by Democratic President Joe Biden, whom Trump is seeking to challenge for the White House in 2024.

Special counsels are appointed in cases in which the Justice Department perceives itself as having a conflict or where it's deemed to be in the public interest to have someone outside the government come in and take responsibility for a matter.

According to the Code of Federal Regulations, a special counsel must have "a reputation for integrity and impartial decision making," as well as "an informed understanding of the criminal law and Department of Justice policies."

DIDN'T BIDEN AND FORMER VICE PRESIDENT MIKE PENCE HAVE CLASSIFIED DOCUMENTS, TOO?

Yes, but the circumstances of their cases are vastly different from those involving Trump.

After classified documents were found at Biden's think tank and Pence's Indiana home, their lawyers notified authorities and quickly arranged for them to be handed over. They also authorized other searches by federal authorities to search for additional documents.

There is no indication either was aware of the existence of the records before they were found, and no evidence has so far emerged that Biden or Pence sought to conceal the discoveries. That's important because the Justice Department historically looks for willfulness in deciding whether to bring criminal charges.

A special counsel was appointed earlier this year to probe how classified materials ended up at Biden's Delaware home and former office. But even if the Justice Department were to find Biden's case prosecutable on the evidence, its Office of Legal Counsel has concluded that a president is immune from prosecution during his time in office.

As for Pence, the Justice Department informed his legal team this month that it would not be pursuing criminal charges against him over his handling of the documents.

DOES A FEDERAL INDICTMENT PREVENT TRUMP FROM RUNNING FOR PRESIDENT?

No. Neither the indictment itself nor a conviction would prevent Trump from running for or winning the presidency in 2024.

And, as his indictment earlier this year in a New York hush-money case showed, criminal charges have historically been a boon to his fundraising. The campaign announced that it had raised over \$4 million in the 24 hours after that indictment became public, smashing its previous record after the FBI search of Trump's Mar-a-Lago club.

Meg Kinnard can be reached at <http://twitter.com/MegKinnardAP>

Sudan conflict brings new atrocities to Darfur as militias kill, rape, burn homes in rampages

By SAMY MAGDY Associated Press

CAIRO (AP) — Amna al-Nour narrowly escaped death twice. The first was when militias torched her family's home in Sudan's Darfur region. The second was two months later when paramilitary fighters stopped her and others trying to escape as they tried to reach the border with neighboring Chad.

"They massacred us like sheep," the 32-year-old teacher said of the attack in late April on her home city Geneina. "They want to uproot us all."

Al-Nour and her three children now live in a school-turned-refugee housing inside Chad, among more than 260,000 Sudanese, mostly women and children, who have fled what survivors and rights groups say is a new explosion of atrocities in the large western region of Sudan.

Two decades ago, Darfur became synonymous with genocide and war crimes, particularly by the notorious Janjaweed Arab militias against populations that identify as Central or East African. Fears are mounting that that legacy is returning with reports of widespread killings, rapes and destruction of villages in Darfur amid a nationwide power struggle between Sudan's military and a powerful paramilitary group called the Rapid Support Forces.

"This spiraling violence bears terrifying similarity with the war crimes and crimes against humanity perpetrated in Darfur since 2003," said Tigere Chagutah, a regional director with Amnesty International. "Even those seeking safety are not being spared."

Fighting erupted in the capital, Khartoum, in mid-April between the military and the RSF after years of growing tensions. It spread to other parts of the country, but in Darfur it took on a different form — brutal attacks by the RSF and its allied Arab militias on civilians, survivors and rights workers say.

During the second week of fighting in Khartoum, the RSF and militias stormed Geneina, the capital of West Darfur state, located near the Chad border. In that and two other assaults since, the fighters went on a rampage of burning and killing that reduced large parts of the city of more than half a million people to wreckage, according to videos shared by activists.

"What happened in Geneina is indescribable," said Sultan Saad Abdel-Rahman Bahr, the leader of the Dar Masalit sultanate, which represents Darfur's Masalit ethnic community. "Everywhere (in the city) there was a massacre. All was planned and systemic."

The sultanate said in a report that more than 5,000 people were killed and 8,000 others were wounded in Geneina alone in attacks by the RSF and Arab militias between April 24 and June 12.

The report detailed three main waves of attacks on Geneina and surrounding areas in April, May, and June, which it said aimed at "ethnically cleansing and committing genocide against African civilians."

The RSF was born out of the Janjaweed militias that during the conflict in the 2000s were accused of mass killings, rapes and other atrocities against Darfur's African communities. Former President Omar al-Bashir later formed the RSF out of Janjaweed fighters and put it under the command of Gen. Mohammed Hamdan Dagalo, who hails from Darfur's Arab Rizeigat tribe.

The RSF didn't respond to repeated requests by The Associated Press for comment on the allegations concerning the recent violence, including rapes. On its social media, the paramilitary force characterized the fighting in Darfur as renewed tribal clashes between Arabs and non-Arabs.

In interviews with the AP, more than three dozen people and activists gave similar descriptions of waves of attacks by the RSF and Arab militias on Geneina and other towns in West Darfur. Fighters stormed houses, driving out residents, taking men away and burning their homes, they said. In some cases, they would kill the men and rape women and often shot people fleeing in the streets, al-Nour and other survivors said. Almost all interviewees said the military and other rebel groups in the region failed to provide protection to civilians.

"They were looking for men. They want to eliminate us," said Malek Harun, a 62-year-old farmer who survived an attack in May on his village of Misterei, near Geneina. He said gunmen attacked the village from all directions. They looted homes and detained or killed the men.

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His wife was killed when she was shot by fighters firing in the village market, he said. He buried her in his home's yard. Arab neighbors then helped him escape and he arrived in Chad on June 5.

On July 13, the U.N. Human Rights Office said a mass grave was found outside Geneina with at least 87 bodies, citing credible information. The international group Human Rights Watch said it also documented atrocities including summary executions and mass graves in Misterei.

The Sudanese Unit for Combating Violence against Women, a government organization, said it documented 46 rape cases in Darfur, including 21 in Geneina and 25 in Nyala, the capital of South Darfur, as well as 51 in Khartoum.

The true number of cases of sexual violence are likely in the thousands, said Sulima Ishaq Sharif, head of the unit.

"There is an emerging pattern of large-scale targeted attacks against civilians based on their ethnic identities," said Volker Perthes, the U.N. envoy in Sudan. The International Criminal Court's prosecutor, Karim Khan, told the U.N. Security Council last week they were investigating alleged new war crimes and crimes against humanity in Darfur.

Al-Nour, whose husband was killed in a bout of tribal clashes in early 2020, said assailants stormed her district of Jamarek in Geneina in late April and burned down dozens of houses, including hers. "They forced people to get out of their homes, then shot at them," she said, speaking by phone from the Chadian border town of Adre.

She and her children — aged 4, 7 and 10 — escaped with the aid of Arab neighbors. They kept moving from town to town amid clashes.

In mid-June, she and a group of 40 men, women and children started on foot down the 20-kilometer (12-mile) highway to the border, planning to escape to Chad. They were soon stopped at an RSF checkpoint, she said.

Holding the group at gunpoint, the fighters asked about their ethnicity. Two of the 14 men in the group were Arab, with fairer skin. The fighters abused and beat the others, who were darker skinned and had Masalit accents.

"You want to escape? You will die here," one fighter told the Masalit. They whipped everyone in the group, men and women. They beat the men to the ground with rifle butts and clicked the triggers of their guns to frighten them. One man was shot in the head and died immediately, al-Nour said.

They took away the remaining men along with four women in their 20s, she said. She does not know what happened to them but fears the women were raped. They allowed the rest of the women and children to continue their trip.

Other refugees in Adre reported similar violence on the road to the border.

"It was a relief to reach Chad," said Mohammed Harun, a refugee from Misterei who arrived in Adre in early June, "but the wounds (from the war) will last forever."

Defense Secretary Austin says the US stands with countries against China's 'bullying behavior'

By ROD McGUIRK Associated Press

CANBERRA, Australia (AP) — U.S. Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin said Friday the United States stands with countries fighting Chinese "bullying behavior" as he launched bilateral talks in Australia aimed at countering Beijing's growing influence in the Indo-Pacific region.

Austin and U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken arrived in the Australian city of Brisbane late Thursday ahead of annual bilateral meetings on Friday and Saturday that will focus on a deal to provide Australia, a defense treaty partner, with a fleet of submarines powered by U.S. nuclear technology.

Ahead of a meeting with Australian Defense Minister Richard Marles, Austin said both countries share concerns about China's break from international laws and norms that resolve disputes peacefully and without coercion.

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"We've seen troubling P.R.C. coercion from the East China Sea, to the South China Sea, to right here in the Southwest Pacific," Austin told reporters, referring to the People's Republic of China.

"We'll continue to support our allies and partners as they defend themselves from bullying behavior," he added.

China has imposed a series of official and unofficial trade barriers in recent years against Australian exports including coal, wine, barley, beef, seafood and wood. The barriers are widely seen as a punitive reaction to Australian government policy that has cost Australian exporters as much as \$15 billion a year.

Australia's icy relationship with Beijing was thawing since a change of Australian government at elections last year. Meanwhile, the sharing of U.S. nuclear secrets with Australia takes that bilateral relationship to a new level.

Prime Minister Anthony Albanese is planning state visits to both the United States and China before the end of the year.

Under the AUKUS partnership — an acronym for Australia, the United Kingdom and the United States — Australia will buy three Virginia-class submarines from the United States and build five of a new AUKUS-class submarine in cooperation with Britain.

Australian media have focused on a letter signed by more than 20 Republican lawmakers to President Joe Biden that warned the deal would "unacceptably weaken the U.S. fleet" without a plan to boost U.S. submarine production.

Albanese said he remained "very confident" that the United States would deliver the three submarines.

The prime minister said he'd been reassured by discussions he had with Republicans and Democrats earlier in July at a NATO summit in Lithuania.

"What struck me was their unanimous support for AUKUS, their unanimous support for the relationship between the Australia and United States," Albanese said.

Marles agreed the AUKUS program was on track.

"Congress can be a complicated place as legislation makes its way through it, but actually we're encouraged by how quickly it is going through it and we are expecting that there will be lots of discussions on the way through," Marles said.

"Fundamentally, we have reached an agreement with the Biden administration about how Australia acquires the nuclear-powered submarine capability and we're proceeding along that path with pace," he added.

Australia understood there was "pressure on the American industrial base" and would contribute to submarine production, Marles said. The AUKUS deal is forecast to cost Australia up to 368 billion Australian dollars (\$246 billion) over 30 years.

Albanese publicly welcomed Austin and Blinken at a media event before the three began a meeting with Marles, Foreign Minister Penny Wong, U.S. Ambassador to Australia Caroline Kennedy and Australian Ambassador to the United States Kevin Rudd, a former prime minister.

"The relationship between Australia and the United States has never been stronger," Albanese told the two visitors.

Homeless struggle to stay safe from record high temperatures in blistering Phoenix

By THOMAS MACHOWICZ and ANITA SNOW Associated Press

PHOENIX (AP) — Homeless in America's hottest big metro, Stefon James Dewitt Livengood was laid out for days inside his makeshift dwelling, struggling to breath, nauseous and vomiting.

Every day this month, temperatures have soared past 110 degrees Fahrenheit (43.3 degrees Celsius).

Livengood said he stopped briefly at a free clinic that took his blood pressure and declared it acceptable. But he received no other medical help for his apparent heat exhaustion, or for the peeling skin on his arms he believes was caused by sun exposure. He is careful when he walks through the sprawling tent city, cognizant that if he falls, the simmering black asphalt could seriously burn his skin.

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"If you're going outside, let somebody know where you're going so you can be tracked so you don't pass out out there," he said. "If you fall out in the heat, you don't want a third degree burn from the ground."

The 38-year-old sleeps in a structure cobbled together with a frame of scavenged wood and metal covered by blue vinyl tarp. The space inside is large enough to stand up and walk around in and features an old recliner and a bicycle Livengood uses less now that he spends more time inside with the sides of his dwelling open.

"Some of the friends that I've made down here, they come check on me if they don't see me moving around," he said.

Homeless people are among those most likely to die in the extreme heat in metro Phoenix. The city is seeing its longest run of consecutive days of 110 Fahrenheit (43.3 Celsius) ever recorded, clocking 28 in a row as of Thursday, even as the first monsoon storm of the season brought some overnight relief.

"It has been a scary situation this year and it's especially scary for our homeless population," said Dr. Geoff Comp, an emergency room physician for Valleywise Health in central Phoenix. "They have a more constant exposure to the heat than most of us."

People living outside are also vulnerable to surface burns from contact with hot metal, concrete or asphalt. Surgeons at the Arizona Burn Center–Valleywise Health recently warned about burns caused by walking, sitting or falling on outside surfaces reaching up to 180 degrees Fahrenheit (82.2 degrees Celsius). The burn center last year saw 85 people admitted with heat-related surface burns for the months of June through August. Seven died.

Record high overnight temperatures persisted above 90 degrees Fahrenheit (32.2 degrees Celsius) for 16 days straight after finally slipping to 89 Fahrenheit (31.6 Celsius) on Thursday after a storm Wednesday evening kicked up dust, high winds and a bit of rainfall.

If temperatures don't drop sufficiently after the sun sets, it's hard for people's bodies to cool down, health professionals say, especially those who live in flimsy structures without air conditioning or fans.

"People really need a lot of water and a cooling system to recover overnight," Comp said.

There is no air conditioner, fan or even electricity in Livengood's home, just a little, flat piece of plastic he uses as a hand fan.

Unhoused people accounted for about 40% of the 425 heat-associated deaths tallied last year in Maricopa County, home to Phoenix, during its hottest summer on record. More than half of the 425 deaths occurred in July and 80% occurred outdoors.

Maricopa County reported Wednesday that as of July 22, there were 25 heat-associated deaths confirmed this year going back to April 11. Another 249 deaths remain under investigation.

Livengood's shack stands among some 800 people living in tents and other makeshift dwellings outside Arizona's largest temporary shelter. The tents stand close together on concrete sidewalks, and seem to increase the stifling heat from the encampment called "The Zone."

But the location is convenient. Nearby agencies provide social services, food and life-saving water, including the Society of St. Vincent de Paul, the Boys and Girls Club, the YMCA and St. Mary's Food Bank.

Livengood can get breakfast and lunch with faith-based groups in the area before taking a nap in his recliner.

On some hot days, the local transportation agency Valley Metro send over a couple of empty buses so people can sit for hours in the air conditioning. On other days, Livengood and a few friends walk to a nearby city park and sit in the grass under shade trees outside a public swimming pool.

"It's a definite part of what keeps everybody safe down here in the 'The Zone,'" Livengood said, ticking off the things people distribute: hygiene items, sunscreen, lip balm, hats and cooling rags. "A lot of love is given out here."

Livengood tells of a childhood of trauma and neglect. Born in Phoenix and originally named Jesse James Acosta Jr., Livengood spent much of his early years in public housing in a low-income, largely African American neighborhood of south Phoenix. Both of his parents spent time in prison. His mother struggled with addiction, giving birth to a daughter behind bars, and later slipped into homelessness.

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"My childhood has been filled with a lot of memories of being bounced around, never really having anything stable," Livengood said.

Livengood was adopted at age 12 by a woman named Denise who legally changed his name to the current one. He and the rest of his adoptive family moved to Alaska, where his adoptive mother died in a traffic accident.

Livengood struggled in school and met the mother of his son. He later left behind the woman and their child to return to Phoenix, a decision he regrets.

Back in the desert, Livengood said he is well aware of the dangers from extreme heat from the pamphlets volunteers pass out with bottles of icy water.

"Yeah, it gets really hot out here, guys," he said. "Stay hydrated, drink plenty of water even when you think you've had a lot of water. And drink more."

Associated Press climate and environmental coverage receives support from several private foundations. See more about AP's climate initiative here. The AP is solely responsible for all content.

Big 12 not quite the same, but it feels like home to a 98-year-old Colorado fan

By ERIC OLSON AP College Football Writer

Peggy Coppom hasn't quite seen it all with the Colorado Buffaloes, but she's seen much more than most, so believe her when she says Thursday was a good day to be a fan.

The 98-year-old has been attending football games since her family moved from the high plains of eastern Colorado to Boulder in 1939 to escape the Dust Bowl, and she's missed only a couple home games since buying season tickets in 1966.

The excitement in her voice was obvious during a phone call minutes after university regents approved the school's return to the Big 12 in 2024.

"I'm so happy to get back to the Big 12 — or the Big 15 or whatever it ends up being," she said, laughing. "It seems like that's where we belong. We don't belong with the West Coast people."

Of course, the Big 12 isn't the same league it was when the Buffs left for the Pac-12 in 2012. Nebraska and Missouri are gone, and Oklahoma and Texas will be, too. BYU could become a rival, but the Buffs have little in common with Cincinnati, Houston and Central Florida.

"I wish some of those old schools were there, but we'll make the best of it," Coppom said.

The conference change, plus the hiring of Deion Sanders, has her eagerly anticipating watching the Buffs from her seats near the 40-yard line on the west side of Folsom Field — "God willing, I always have to add," she said.

Coppom, carrying a gold pom-pom, was escorted onto the field by Sanders and performed a ceremonial kickoff during the spring game in April. Coppom said Sanders and the return to the Big 12 has created the most buzz about the team since it won a share of the national championship in 1990.

Former CU fullback Jim Kelleher, who was second in the Big Eight with 15 rushing touchdowns in 1976, said he's in wait-and-see mode about the move.

"I originally wasn't that excited about it, but at the same time, the Pac-12 had let things get to such a point where you had to do something," he said. "The Big 12 signed a good media rights agreement. It's just sad the Pac-12 hasn't been able to get a TV contract."

Kelleher said that while Colorado will get exposure across three time zones, which is a positive, he's sad to see how traditions and geographic rivalries have been sacrificed with realignment in general.

Specific to Colorado, he said, the Buffs seemed to be a good fit in the Pac-12. He said his sentimental attachment to the Big 12 won't be there without Nebraska and other teams he played against in the old Big Eight.

"Whether it's the school or the individual athletes — with TV and NIL — it's all money, money, money," he said. "I understand their decision. Hey, I'm part of the Colorado team, so I'm for my team and hope

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it works out.”

Tom Osborne, the College Football Hall of Fame coach at Nebraska and its former athletic director, shepherded the Cornhuskers’ move from the Big 12 to Big Ten in 2011. He said he’s able to view past, present and future realignment from the perspective of both a fan and administrator.

“You’re talking about lost traditions,” Osborne said. “I can share the feelings of the fans in that I miss those drives to Manhattan, Kansas; Lawrence, Kansas; Ames, Iowa, and some of those relationships.”

Nebraska’s move to the Big Ten had as much or more to do with finding stability as it did with finances, Osborne said. In the summer of 2011, Osborne said, Big 12 South teams were negotiating with the Pac-12, Missouri wanted to go to the SEC and Texas A&M also was looking to leave.

“Finances are driving this thing more than anything, and my guess is that the uncertainty about where the Pac-12 stands right now appears to make the Big 12 better for Colorado — even though the Big 12 has not been a paragon of stability.”

AP college football: <https://apnews.com/hub/college-football> and https://twitter.com/ap_top25 Sign up for the AP Top 25 newsletter here: <https://link.apnews.com/join/6nr/morning-wire-newsletter-footer-internal-ads>

Today in History: July 29, Prince Charles marries Lady Diana

By The Associated Press undefined

Today in History

Today is Saturday, July 29, the 210th day of 2023. There are 155 days left in the year.

Today’s Highlight in History:

On July 29, 1981, Britain’s Prince Charles married Lady Diana Spencer in a glittering ceremony at St. Paul’s Cathedral in London. (The couple divorced in 1996.)

On this date:

In 1890, artist Vincent van Gogh, 37, died of an apparently self-inflicted gunshot wound in Auvers-sur-Oise, France.

In 1914, transcontinental telephone service in the U.S. became operational with the first test conversation between New York and San Francisco.

In 1921, Adolf Hitler became the leader of the National Socialist German Workers Party.

In 1957, the International Atomic Energy Agency was established. Jack Paar made his debut as host of NBC’s “Tonight Show.”

In 1958, President Dwight D. Eisenhower signed the National Aeronautics and Space Act, creating NASA.

In 1967, an accidental rocket launch on the deck of the supercarrier USS Forrestal in the Gulf of Tonkin resulted in a fire and explosions that killed 134 servicemen.

In 1968, Pope Paul the Sixth reaffirmed the Roman Catholic Church’s stance against artificial methods of birth control.

In 1980, a state funeral was held in Cairo, Egypt, for the deposed Shah of Iran, who had died two days earlier at age 60.

In 1986, a federal jury in New York found that the National Football League had committed an antitrust violation against the rival United States Football League. But the jury ordered the N-F-L to pay token damages of only three dollars.

In 1994, abortion opponent Paul Hill shot and killed Dr. John Bayard Britton and Britton’s escort, James H. Barrett, outside the Ladies Center clinic in Pensacola, Florida.

In 1999, a former day trader, apparently upset over stock losses, opened fire in two Atlanta brokerage offices, killing nine people and wounding 13 before shooting himself to death; authorities said Mark O. Barton had also killed his wife and two children.

In 2016, former suburban Chicago police officer Drew Peterson was given an additional 40 years in prison for trying to hire someone to kill the prosecutor who put him behind bars for killing his third wife.

Ten years ago: The U.S. launched a fresh bid to pull Israel and the Palestinians into substantial negotiations

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with a dinner meeting in Washington hosted by Secretary of State John Kerry. The FBI said authorities had rescued 105 young people and arrested 150 alleged pimps and others in a three-day sweep in 76 cities.

Five years ago: President Donald Trump tweeted that he was willing to see the government shut down over border security issues, including money for a U.S.-Mexico border wall. Pitcher Sean Newcomb of the Atlanta Braves was within one strike of a no-hitter before Chris Taylor singled for the Los Angeles Dodgers. After the game, the 25-year-old Newcomb apologized for racist, homophobic and sexist tweets he had sent as a teenager; he described the tweets as "some stupid stuff" he said with friends.

One year ago: Search and rescue teams backed by the National Guard searched for people missing in record floods that wiped out entire communities in some of the poorest places in America. Kentucky's governor said at least 16 people there had died. Russia and Ukraine accused each other of shelling a prison in a separatist region of eastern Ukraine, an attack that reportedly killed dozens of Ukrainian prisoners of war captured after the fall of Mariupol, the city where troops famously held out against a monthslong Russian siege. Will Smith again apologized to Chris Rock for slapping him during the Oscar telecast, saying that his behavior was "unacceptable."

Today's Birthdays: Former Sen. Nancy Kassebaum-Baker is 91. Actor Robert Fuller is 90. Former Sen. Elizabeth H. Dole is 87. Actor Roz Kelly is 81. Rock musician Neal Doughty (REO Speedwagon) is 77. Marilyn Tucker Quayle, wife of former Vice President Dan Quayle, is 74. Actor Mike Starr is 73. Documentary maker Ken Burns is 70. Style guru Tim Gunn is 70. Rock singer-musician Geddy Lee (Rush) is 70. Rock singer Patti Scialfa (Bruce Springsteen and the E Street Band) is 70. Actor Kevin Chapman is 61. Actor Alexandra Paul is 60. Actor/comedian Dean Haglund is 58. Country singer Martina McBride is 57. Actor Rodney Allen Rippey is 55. Actor Tim Omundson is 54. Actor Ato Essandoh is 51. Actor Wil Wheaton is 51. R&B singer Wanya Morris (Boyz II Men) is 50. Country singer-songwriter James Otto is 50. Actor Stephen Dorff is 50. Actor Josh Radnor is 49. Hip-hop DJ/music producer Danger Mouse is 46. Actor Rachel Miner is 43. Actor Kaitlyn Black is 40. Actor Matt Prokop is 33. Actor Cait Fairbanks is 30.