

Groton Daily Independent

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Saturday, Aug. 5

Common Cents Community Thrift Store, 209 N Main, open 10 a.m. to 1 p.m.

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

State Jr. Legion Baseball Tournament in Lennox. Groton plays around noon today.

Sunday, Aug. 6

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

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

Groton CM&A: Sunday School at 9:15 a.m., Worship Service at 10:30 a.m. (Daniel and Karla Grenz will be speaking)

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.

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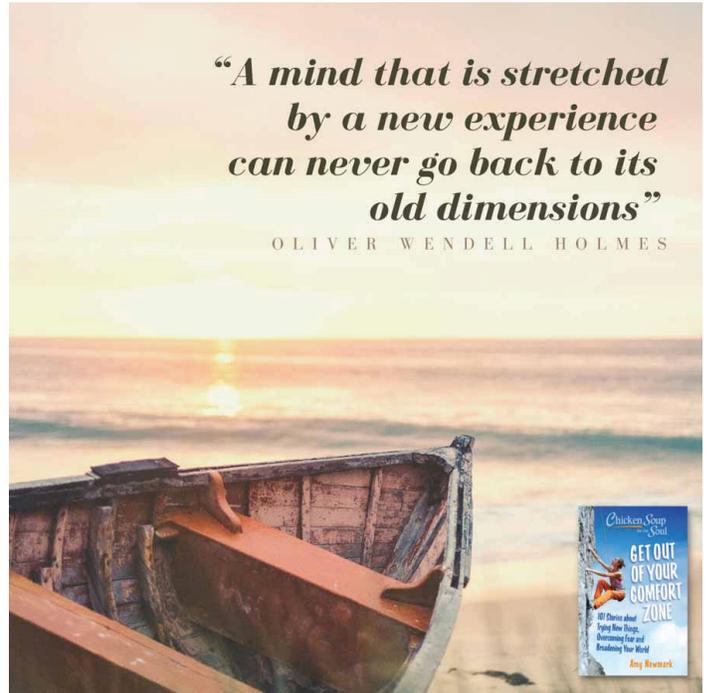
PO Box 34, Groton SD 57445

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.

*"A mind that is stretched
by a new experience
can never go back to its
old dimensions"*

OLIVER WENDELL HOLMES



State Jr. Legion Baseball Tournament in Lennox
Groton CM&A: Vacation Bible School (Keepers of the Kingdom), 6:15 p.m. to 8:30 p.m.

First Presbyterian Church: Bible Study, 9:30 a.m.;
Worship, 11 a.m.

Monday, Aug. 7

Senior Menu: Turkey sub with lettuce, tomato and cheese, macaroni salad with peas, peaches, whole wheat bread.

The Pantry at Groton Community Center, 11 a.m. to 3 p.m.

School Supply Drive, Groton Community Center, 4 p.m. to 8 p.m.

Emmanuel Lutheran: Bible Study, 6:30 a.m.; Sunday school meeting, 6 p.m.

United Methodist: Vacation Bible School, 5:30 p.m.

Groton CM&A: Vacation Bible School (Keepers of the Kingdom), 6:15 p.m. to 8:30 p.m.

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The Bulletin by Newsweek

World in Brief

A game console giveaway event in Manhattan's Union Square turned chaotic as hundreds gathered, with crowds throwing garbage and objects at police and standing on top of cars passing by.

Donald Trump is asking the Supreme Court to "intercede" in his legal fights while Democratic members of Congress have requested televised coverage of the former president's case regarding efforts to overturn the 2020 election.

Fabian Marta, an investor of anti-child trafficking film Sound of Freedom, was recently arrested and charged for child kidnapping.

Three women were injured in a "rare" otter attack while floating on inner tubes along Montana's Jefferson River, according to Montana Fish Wildlife and Parks.

North Carolina Rep. Kathy Manning is recovering at home from a broken sternum and bone in her foot after being injured in a serious car crash this week.

Russian opposition leader Alexei Navalny has been handed a further 19 year jail term after being found guilty of funding an extremist organization. He was already serving a nine-year term and has been in jail since 2021.

Adrienne Vaughan, president of the U.S. branch of the Bloomsbury publishing house, was killed in a boat collision off of Italy's Amalfi coast. The 45-year-old was on vacation with her husband and two children.

Actor Mark Margolis, known for his roles in "Breaking Bad" and "Better Call Saul" has died at 83-years-old.

In the ongoing war in Ukraine, satellite images obtained by Newsweek show last month's Ukrainian strike on Crimea's Kerch Strait Bridge damaged its crucial railway..

TALKING POINTS

"Unemployment near a record low and the share of working age Americans who have jobs at a 20-year high: that's Bidenomics. Our economy added 187,000 jobs last month, and we've added 13.4 million jobs since I took office — more jobs added in two and a half years than during any president's four-year term." President Joe Biden said following July's employment report.

"Isn't it TERRIBLE that a Political Opponent can haphazardly charge you with FAKE crimes in the middle of your campaign in order to interfere with your time & message, and there is nothing you can do to stop this travesty of "justice." They had 2.5 years to file, long before the campaign started. Another Russia, Russia, Russia HOAX. Should not be allowed to happen!" Former President Donald Trump posted on Truth Social one day after pleading not guilty to charges of conspiring to overturn the results of the 2020 election.

WHAT TO WATCH IN THE DAY AHEAD

Saudi Arabia will host a summit with some 30 countries this weekend in Jeddah to discuss Ukraine's 10-point peace plan, according to Kyiv officials. Russia has rejected the plan, which includes restoring Ukraine's territorial integrity and the withdrawal of Russian troops.

The Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) set a Sunday deadline for the military junta in Niger to reinstate President Mohamed Bazoum and restore constitutional order.

The U.S. Women's National Soccer Team faces Sweden as the 2023 FIFA Women's World Cup round of 16 begins on Saturday.

Seven-time Olympic medalist Simone Biles returns to gymnastics Saturday in Chicago for the first time since the 2021 Tokyo Olympics — where she withdrew from several events over mental

Donald Trump's spokesperson issued a statement seeking to clarify a social media post that appeared to threaten revenge on people who "go after me." It said he was talking about "RINO, China-loving, dishonest special interest groups and Super PACs" after the DOJ requested a protective order in Trump's election case over the post.

The Mega Millions jackpot is predicted to hit \$1.55 billion after no ticket matched all the winning numbers in Friday's draw. The next drawing will take place on Tuesday at 11 p.m. ET.

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The Perfect DOG

This search is gonna be ruff!

MUSIC AND LYRICS BY
DAVID ABBINANTI

BOOK BY
JILL ABBINANTI

INSPIRED BY THE BOOK
"THE PERFECT DOG"
BY JOHN O'HURLEY

When: Thursday, August 10, 2023

Time: 1:00pm

Where: Groton Community Center – 109 N 3rd St

Entry Fee: \$0



Broton Daily Independent

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**BROWN COUNTY
BROWN COUNTY COMMISSION AGENDA
REGULAR MEETING TUESDAY**

August 8, 2023, 8:45 A.M.

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

- Call To Order - Pledge of Allegiance
- Approval of Agenda
- Opportunity for Public Comment
- Public Hearing for Special Malt Beverage Licenses:
- Boys & Girls Club – August 14-20, 2023 - Grandstand Concessions @ BCF
- SPURS Therapeutic Riding Center – September 16, 2023 – Barn Dance & Benefit Auction
- Speed Zone Amendment
- Mike Scott, Landfill Manager – Approve Free Residential Clean-up
- Rachel Kippley, Fair/Fairgrounds/Parks Manager:
- Approve & Authorize Chairman sign contract with Centennial Village
- Contracts
- Fair Update
- Consent Calendar
- Approval of General Meeting Minutes from August 1, 2023
- Claims
- HR Report
- Claim Assignments
- June Auditors Report of Accounts
- Travel Requests
- Set Hearing Date/Authorize Publication – Ord. 255 – Amend Portions of Title 4 Zoning
- Landfill Tonnage Report for July
- Other Business
- Executive Session (if requested per SDCL 1-25-2)
- Adjourn

Brown County Commission Meeting

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

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

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

Access Code: 601-168-909 #

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

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

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

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

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

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Many Donors make park sound system a reality

A sound system in the City Park started out as a dream; but in just over one month, became a reality as donations started to appear from many wonderful businesses and individuals in the Groton SD Community! We thank Tom with Liedholt Electric for the trenching work, Locke Electric for wiring, Brian of Bahr Spray Foam for the use of his lift and Pauer Sound owner, Alex Bartlett and his trusty sidekick, Caleb Crosby! Enrich Groton SoDak, Inc. would like to thank each and every one of you for continuing to support our mission to serve the needs of our community through acts of giving and enrichment.



PRESENTS THE PARK SOUND SYSTEM TO THE GROTON SD COMMUNITY THESE DONORS MADE THIS POSSIBLE!

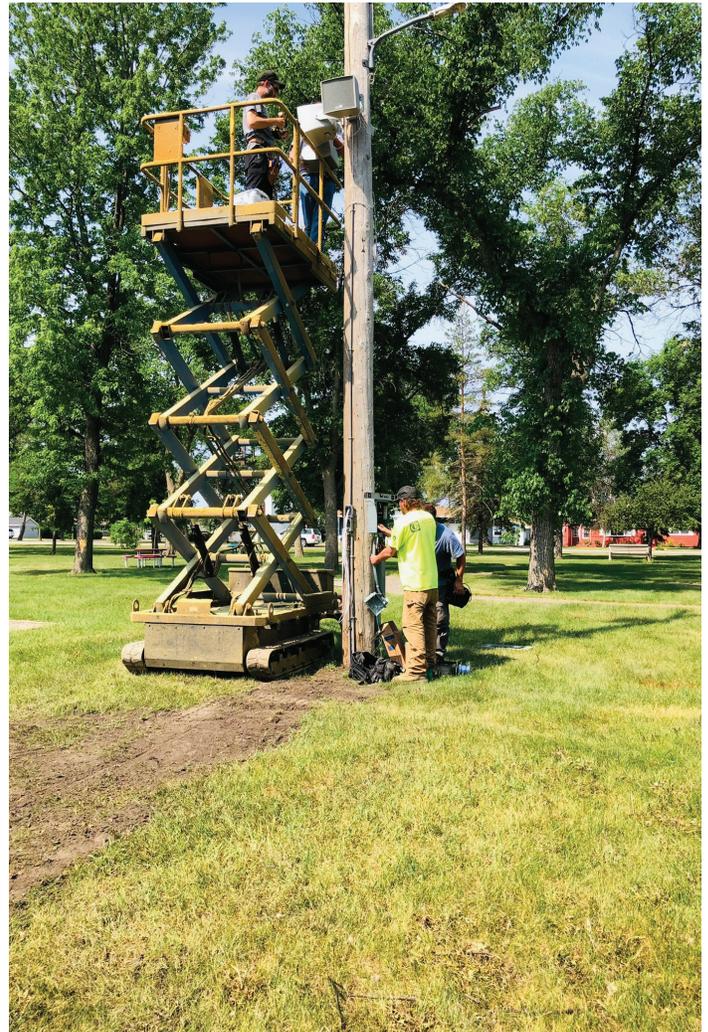
Agtegra	Dunker Farms - Steve & Betty Dunker	James Valley Telecommunications	Neal & Wynella Abeln
Alan Strom & Shelly Lerew	Emmanuel Lutheran Church	Jay & Linda Johnson	Northern Plains Insulation- Hunter Bahr
Allied Climate Professionals	Essential Options- Jon & Jerrie Vedvei	John & Meri Erickson	Olive Grove
April Abeln	Full Circle Ag	Jungle Lanes & Lounge- Dion & Sam Bahr	Paetznick Garness Funeral Chapel
Bahr Spray Foam	Grand Slam Computers	Justin Buckley	Patios Plus- Joe Foertsch
Beauty Brew Coffee & Boutique	Greg's Repair- Greg Belden	Karma Salon & Boutique- Mark & Kelly Abeln	Pauer Sound
Bierman Farm Service	Groton Ag Partners Inc	KB Law PLLC- Kari Bartling	Professional Management Services
Blocker Construction-	Groton American Legion Post #39	Ken's Food Fair	Randy & Sue Stanley
Perry & Rebecca Blocker	Groton Chamber of Commerce	KR Body Shop- Kevin Raap	Ron & Kathyne Rehfuss
Brad & Pam Hanson	Groton Chiropractic Clinic	Krueger Bros	Ron & Lori Westby
Brian & Elizabeth Bahr	Groton Daily Independent	Lance & Melynda Larsen	Rosewood Court- Monte & Sandi Sippel
Bruce & Karyn Babcock	Groton Firemen	Locke Electric	Ryan Kutter
Christian & Missionary Alliance Church	Groton Ford	Lori's Pharmacy	S&S Lumber
CJ Lane Construction	Groton Lions Club	Love to Travel	Simon Insurance- Steve & Peggy Simon
Dacotah Bank	Groton Pumpkin Fest	LW Sales Inc- John Wheeting	Smith Autobody
Dakota Doors	Groton Vet Clinic- Dr. Steve & Carol Smith	McGannon Plumbing & Heating-	Steve & Sandy Dresbach
Dale & Joyce Grenz	H&H Fliehs	Travis McGannon	Suzie Easthouse
Deb Fredrickson	Hanlon Bros- Scott Hanlon	Mike & Kristi Stiklestad	Teddy Bear Home Care- Charity Hinman
Dick Kolker	Heartland Energy	MJ's Sinclair	Tom & Alesa Mahan
Dollar General	J.R. & Paula Johnson	Nancy Larsen	Topper Tastad

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Pictured above are representatives of Enrich Groton SD: Topper Tastad, Nancy Larsen, April Abeln and Karyn Babcock. The new sound system is featured in the bottom left photo. An installation photo is featured in the bottom right. (Courtesy Photos from April Abeln)



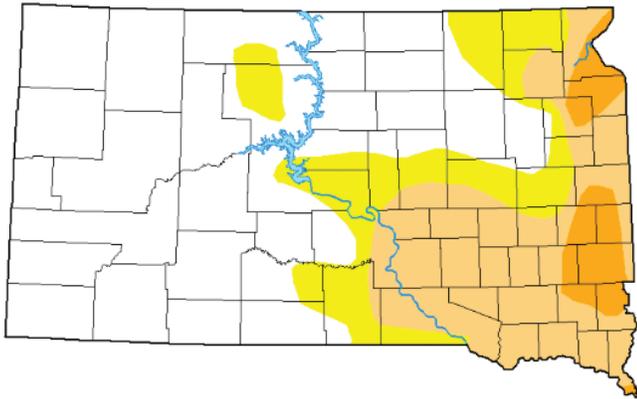
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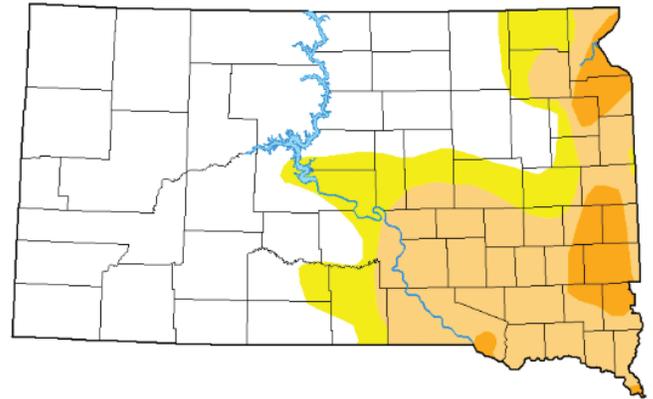
Drought Classification

- | | | |
|-----------------------|----------------------|--------------------------|
| None | D2 (Severe Drought) | D4 (Exceptional Drought) |
| D0 (Abnormally Dry) | D3 (Extreme Drought) | No Data |
| D1 (Moderate Drought) | | |

Drought Monitor



August 1



July 25

Precipitation was mixed in the region for the week. Areas of northwest North Dakota and throughout much of Nebraska recorded above-normal precipitation while most of Kansas, eastern South Dakota and eastern Colorado were below normal for the week. Temperatures were above normal for the week along with some areas of high dew point temperatures too. Departures were generally 2-4 degrees above normal for the week, with areas of central Kansas, western North Dakota and eastern Nebraska 6-8 degrees above normal. The recent trend of wetter conditions over Nebraska allowed for improvements to be made to the drought depiction this week. Extreme and severe drought were improved over north central Nebraska and southeast Nebraska. Drought expanded and intensified over most of northern North Dakota where moderate drought conditions now cover much of the northern tier of the state. Abnormally dry conditions expanded over northern South Dakota.

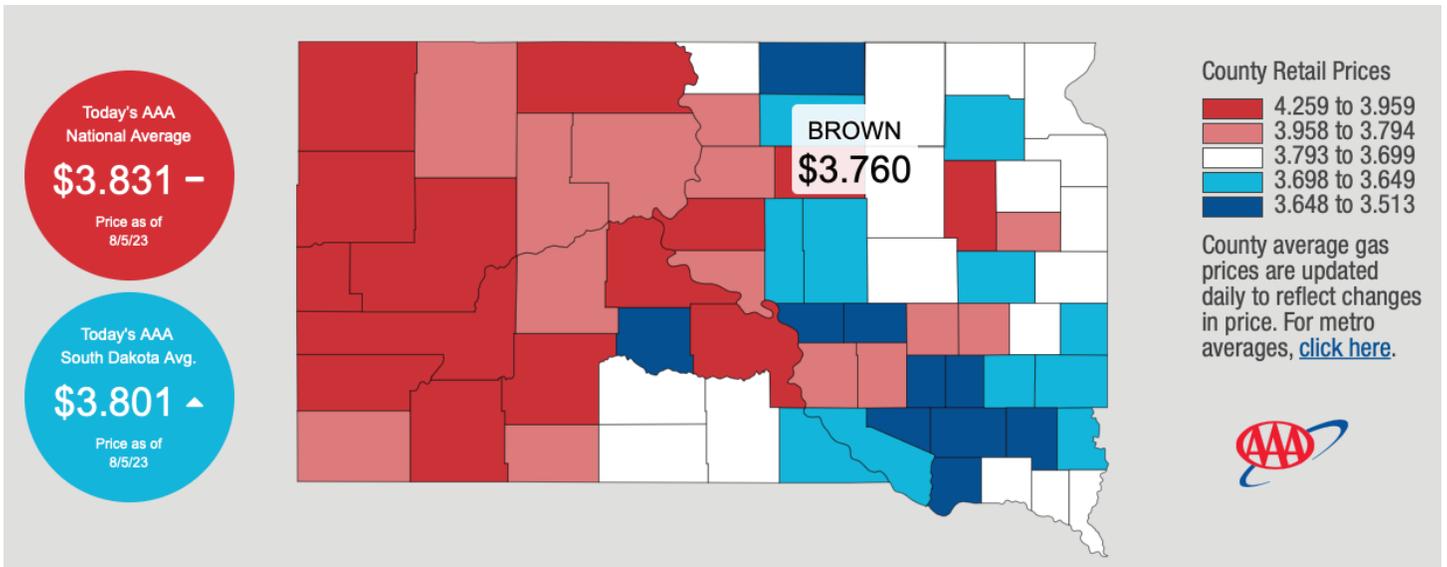
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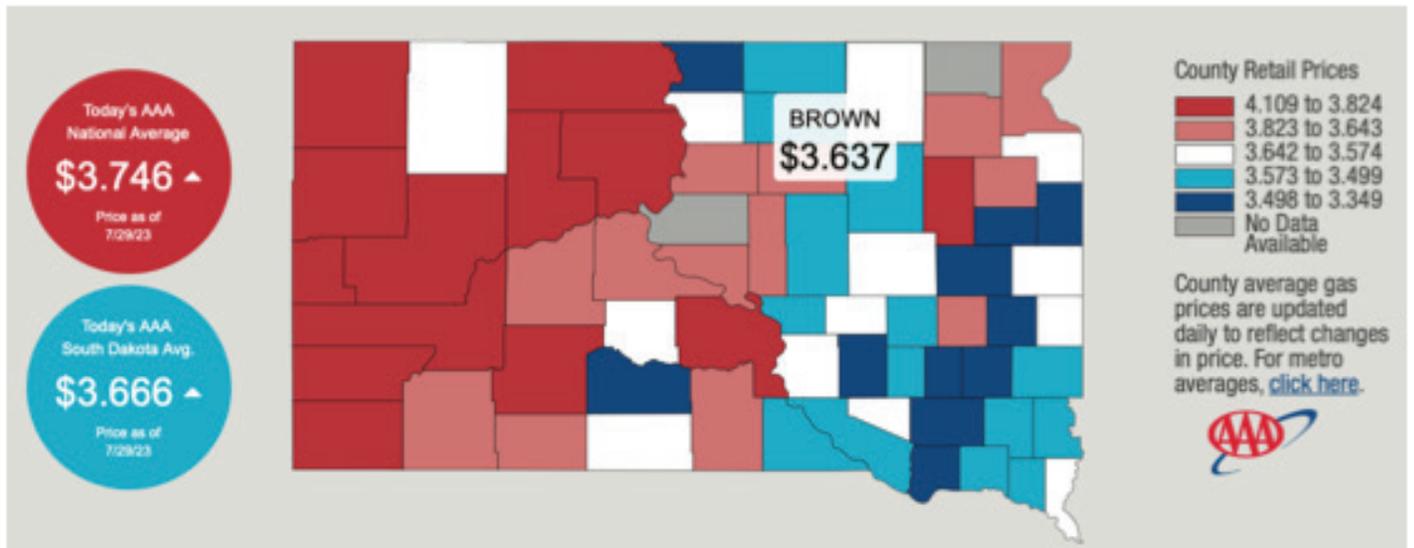
South Dakota Average Gas Prices

	Regular	Mid-Grade	Premium	Diesel
Current Avg.	\$3.801	\$3.943	\$4.409	\$3.997
Yesterday Avg.	\$3.799	\$3.937	\$4.392	\$3.989
Week Ago Avg.	\$3.666	\$3.829	\$4.290	\$3.818
Month Ago Avg.	\$3.485	\$3.680	\$4.151	\$3.685
Year Ago Avg.	\$4.097	\$4.280	\$4.783	\$4.973

This Week



Two Weeks Ago



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Groton Post 39 Jr. Legion Loses Despite Out Hitting Sioux Falls Christian

Groton Post 39 Jr. Legion fell 5-2 to Sioux Falls Christian on Friday in the first round of the State Junior Legion Baseball Tournament despite out-hitting them eight to six.

Sioux Falls Christian got on the board in the bottom of the first inning after Brayden Witte singled, Tate Connel singled, and Will Harmelick was struck by a pitch, each scoring one run.

Sioux Falls Christian added one run in the third. Connel grounded out, making the score 4-0.

Tim DeSautel earned the win for Sioux Falls Christian. The starting pitcher surrendered eight hits and two runs (one earned) over seven innings, striking out four and walking one. Korbin Kucker pitched five and two-thirds innings in relief for Groton Post 39 Jr. Legion. The reliever allowed three hits and two runs (zero earned) while, striking out nine and walking four. Gavin Englund took the loss for Groton Post 39 Jr. Legion. The right-handed pitcher went one-third of an inning, allowing three runs on three hits, striking out one and walking one.

Taylor Diegel and Englund were a one-two punch in the lineup, as each drove in one run for Groton Post 39 Jr. Legion.

Jack Twinkleburg and Witte were a force together in the lineup, as they each collected two hits for Sioux Falls Christian while hitting back-to-back. Connel provided pop in the middle of the lineup, and led Sioux Falls Christian with two runs batted in. The catcher went 1-for-4 on the day.

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Groton Post 39 Jr. Legion 2 - 5 Sioux falls christian

📍 Away 📅 Friday August 04, 2023

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	R	H	E
GRTN	0	0	0	1	0	1	0	2	8	3
SXFL	3	0	1	1	0	0	X	5	6	3

BATTING

Groton Post 39 Jr.	AB	R	H	RBI	BB	SO
B Flihs (CF, SS)	4	0	1	0	0	1
B Imrie (1B, LF)	4	0	0	0	0	0
K Kucker (SS, P)	4	2	2	0	0	0
T Diegel (LF, CF)	3	0	2	1	0	0
G Englund (P, 1B)	3	0	2	1	0	0
N Morris (C)	2	0	0	0	1	0
N Groeblichhoff (...)	3	0	1	0	0	1
C Simon (3B)	3	0	0	0	0	1
C Mcinerney (RF)	1	0	0	0	0	1
J Erdmann (RF)	2	0	0	0	0	0
Totals	29	2	8	2	1	4

2B: K Kucker, **TB:** G Englund 2, T Diegel 2, B Flihs, K Kucker 3, N Groeblichhoff, **CS:** G Englund, **SB:** T Diegel, N Morris, **LOB:** 7

PITCHING

Groton Post 39 Jr.	IP	H	R	ER	BB	SO	HR
G Englund	0.1	3	3	3	1	1	0
K Kucker	5.2	3	2	0	4	9	0
Totals	6.0	6	5	3	5	10	0

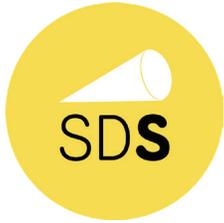
L: G Englund, **P-S:** G Englund 26-14, K Kucker 91-55, **HBP:** G Englund 2, **BF:** G Englund 7, K Kucker 25

Sioux falls christian	AB	R	H	RBI	BB	SO
K Hartman (SS)	3	1	0	0	1	2
T DeSautel (P)	3	1	0	0	1	2
J Twinkleburg (3B)	4	1	2	0	0	1
B Witte (LF)	4	2	2	1	0	0
T Connel (C)	4	0	1	2	0	0
A Connel (RF)	2	0	0	0	0	2
W Harmelick (1B)	0	0	0	1	1	0
J Bohl (1B)	0	0	0	0	1	0
J Kooima (CF)	3	0	1	0	0	2
C Kolterman (2B)	2	0	0	0	0	1
D Crant (2B)	0	0	0	0	1	0
CR: Brayden	0	0	0	0	0	0
Totals	25	5	6	4	5	10

TB: B Witte 2, T Connel, J Twinkleburg 2, J Kooima, **CS:** J Bohl, **HBP:** W Harmelick, A Connel, **SB:** T Connel, **LOB:** 9

Sioux falls ch	IP	H	R	ER	BB	SO	HR
T DeSautel	7.0	8	2	1	1	4	0
Totals	7.0	8	2	1	1	4	0

W: T DeSautel, **P-S:** T DeSautel 98-65, **BF:** T DeSautel 30



SOUTH DAKOTA SEARCHLIGHT

<https://southdakotasearchlight.com>

Why hasn't a lawsuit challenged SD's trans health care ban?

Protesters push for repeal, consider ballot referendum options

BY: MAKENZIE HUBER - AUGUST 4, 2023 4:15 PM

Twenty-one states have implemented laws or policies banning gender-affirming care for transgender children. Nearly half of the laws have been challenged in court, but not South Dakota's.

That's partly because a similar ban was already blocked by a federal judge in Arkansas earlier this summer. The American Civil Liberties Union challenged the Arkansas law in May 2021 (before South Dakota's law was passed), and a judge's June 2023 decision said the ban violates constitutional rights of transgender youth, their parents and medical providers.

Specifically, the judge ruled Arkansas' "Save Adolescents From Experimentation Act" violates the U.S. Constitution's equal protection clause, due process clause and First Amendment free-speech protections. Arkansas' attorney general said he'd appeal the decision.

Legal issues explained

South Dakota and Arkansas are both part of the U.S. Court of Appeals' 8th Circuit. If the 8th Circuit affirms the lower court's decision, it would set a precedent for South Dakota federal courts, said Stephanie Amiotte, legal director for the ACLU of North Dakota, South Dakota and Wyoming.

The ACLU is "analyzing whether a challenge to South Dakota's ban would be effective at this time," she added.

"Our goal is to ensure that if or when the ACLU of South Dakota files a lawsuit challenging the gender-affirming care ban, we can do so victoriously for all trans families and for all people in South Dakota who are concerned about government overreach, safety of their children and erosion of their constitutional rights," Amiotte said in an emailed statement.

That "wait and see" approach is "understandable," said Lisa Hager, an associate professor of political science at South Dakota State University. She said litigation is expensive and time-consuming, and could be unnecessary with a related case possibly on a path to the U.S. Supreme Court.

"In the meantime, similar cases are likely going to be playing out in other courts," Hager said in an email.

Since over a third of U.S. states have passed gender-affirming care bans and nearly half of those laws are facing legal challenges, courts could split on their decisions.

Litigants who lose in the circuit and appellate courts may petition the U.S. Supreme Court to hear the cases.

"Depending on what the Supreme Court's decision is, then that would impact South Dakota's gender-affirming care law," Hager said.

"However," she continued, "the Supreme Court does not have to take up any of the cases." That's likely to happen if lower courts disagree, "but there's no guarantee."

Hager said gender-affirming care bans could show up on the U.S. Supreme Court's agenda in fall 2024 — if the court takes up any cases.

Other challenges to gender-affirming care bans across the country concern state constitutions instead of the federal Constitution, Amiotte said. Missouri and Montana's lawsuits, for example, were introduced in state court.

"The ACLU of South Dakota is considering all possibilities to help transgender families in the state," Amiotte said. "The state constitution and other South Dakota statutes could form a basis for a lawsuit, too, if one is filed."

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South Dakota's law

South Dakota's ban passed the Legislature in February with nearly 86% of legislators voting for the bill, and Gov. Kristi Noem signed the bill into law saying it is "protecting kids from harmful, permanent medical procedures." It bans health care professionals who treat transgender children from prescribing drugs such as puberty blockers and performing some types of surgeries. Health care providers could lose their license if caught providing the banned services and could also be held liable in lawsuits.

Medical experts say gender-affirming surgeries for minors are rare, drugs are only administered after years of therapy to analyze the condition of the child, and receiving treatment as a minor through puberty blockers and hormone therapy could prevent invasive procedures that transgender people might otherwise undergo as adults.

The bill became law on July 1. A provision allows children already receiving care to receive systematically reduced treatment until 2024.

A fraction of South Dakotans under the age of 18 identify as transgender. That leaves those individuals to seek care out of state – requiring time off from work and school, travel costs and other financial burdens, such as paying for treatment outside of insurance networks.

State Attorney General Marty Jackley signed a letter of support along with 18 other attorneys general last month, urging the Biden administration to withdraw a proposed rule shielding the medical records of people seeking abortions or gender-affirming care across state lines.

Elizabeth Broekemeier, a speaker at the "We Won't Go Back" rally held in downtown Sioux Falls last week and a mother of a transgender child, said her son is seeking gender-affirming care in Minnesota. He's also planning to leave the state as soon as he turns 18 years old.

"My son is worried constantly that somebody is going to attack him, that he might be outed in some way," Broekemeier said. "He doesn't want to live in South Dakota. He constantly asks if we can move to Minnesota. He doesn't feel like he's welcome here."

Legislative and electoral options

Instead of waiting on a lawsuit or a U.S. Supreme Court decision, some South Dakotans opposed to the state's law are considering two other options in the short term: pressuring the Legislature to repeal it, or introducing a ballot referendum.

Given the lack of education surrounding transgender health care among South Dakota voters, protesters attending the rally questioned if a ballot measure could be successful.

"People of course don't want to hurt children," said Jessica Meyers, president of the Transformation Project Board. "But they don't realize that trans individuals and kids in the LGBT community have an 80% higher chance of self harm than regular kiddos."

Some protesters are hoping to pressure lawmakers to change their positions on the law and repeal it during the 2024 legislative session, which begins in January. Such a move would "undo the harm the new law will inevitably cause for trans South Dakotans – and avoid costly taxpayer-funded litigation, like in Arkansas," said Samantha Chapman, ACLU of South Dakota advocacy manager.

Rep. Kameron Nelson, D-Sioux Falls, was a vocal opponent of House Bill 1080 during this year's legislative session. He plans to introduce legislation to repeal the law.

"We'll be very vocal this next legislative session and demand that my colleagues consider a repeal of HB 1080," Nelson told South Dakota Searchlight. "As far as a referendum to the people, if (legislators) take no action then, of course, we're going to consider all of our options."

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.

COMMENTARY

Thousands of South Dakotans will see immediate benefits from Medicaid expansion

CHRISSEY MEYER

Many South Dakotans rejoiced with their family, friends and neighbors on July 1, the effective date of voter-approved Amendment D. With Medicaid expansion, we are keeping millions of our federal taxpayer dollars in the state, strengthening our economy and helping to keep rural hospitals open. South Dakota joins 39 other states across the nation in closing the health care coverage gap.

Nobody should have to choose between medical care and feeding their children or themselves. Lives will be saved and extended thanks to Amendment D, with roughly 52,000 South Dakotans newly eligible for health care coverage. Many gaining coverage are entrepreneurs or full-time employees whose jobs offer no or unaffordable health insurance.

When Mitchell resident Lisa Thompson returned to her home state from a stint living in Minnesota, she learned she fell into the coverage gap and said she felt like she had been given a "death sentence," forced to deal with chronic conditions without access to health care or prescriptions. She applied as soon as registration opened for Medicaid expansion and encourages others to "reclaim their lives and access the health coverage they need and deserve."

Indigenous South Dakotans suffer disproportionately from the coverage gap, with limited access to care affecting overall health outcomes. Indian Health Service will likely be one of the greatest beneficiaries of federal funds via Medicaid expansion, as was the case in neighboring Montana, where preventative care access increased, a clear victory for overall wellness.

Organizations like ours are working together to educate individuals and families who may be eligible for Medicaid expansion about the application and enrollment process.

Those interested in learning more about coverage options can visit www.GetCoveredSouthDakota.org to connect with a trained and certified navigator who can offer free support. Navigators are required to provide fair, impartial and accurate information about health insurance options, including Medicaid.

Enrollment usually takes less than an hour and recipients will have access to a comprehensive health insurance benefit package.

Thousands of South Dakotans will see immediate benefits from Amendment D's implementation, but the investment will continue to be felt for years to come in the form of a healthier work force, reduced health disparities and expanded access to federal health care funds.

Every American deserves access to affordable health insurance. South Dakotans now have increased access, and there's hope, in time, this victory will be a reality in all 50 states.

Additional signers of this commentary

AARP South Dakota

American Cancer Society Cancer Action Network

American Heart Association

Community HealthCare Association of the Dakotas

South Dakota Nurses Association

South Dakota State Medical Association

Chrissy Meyer is the regional senior director of marketing and communications for the American Heart Association.

No Labels recognized as a political party in South Dakota

BY: SEARCHLIGHT STAFF - AUGUST 4, 2023 3:26 PM

A national organization that might field a third-party candidate for president has been recognized as a political party in South Dakota.

Monae Johnson, South Dakota's secretary of state, announced Friday that No Labels has filed the required number of petition signatures to establish itself as a party in the state. No Labels now has 30 days to adopt a constitution or bylaws governing its organization and conduct.

Johnson said the organization needed 3,502 petition signatures and turned in approximately 8,000. She said the party does not yet have any registered voters in the state. Democrats, Libertarians and Republicans are the other recognized parties in South Dakota.

No Labels recently enlisted former Missouri Gov. Jay Nixon to direct its effort to qualify for ballots in all 50 states next year.

The organization was founded in 2009 by former U.S. Sen. Joe Lieberman, a one-time Democrat from Connecticut who ended his political career as an independent. The group has advocated for bipartisan solutions, and prior to the current effort has not tried to nominate candidates for any office.

By the end of July, No Labels had qualified for the ballot in five states, the organization said in a news release.

"By early 2024," the news release said, "No Labels will gauge the mood of the American public and their openness to an independent Unity ticket and will offer our ballot line to a ticket if and only if such a ticket has a viable path to victory in the 2024 presidential election."

Farmers voice concern about accidental damage to proposed carbon pipeline

BY: JOSHUA HAIAR - AUGUST 4, 2023 6:27 PM

Farmers expressed concerns Friday about the potential for accidental damages to a proposed liquid carbon dioxide pipeline.

It was the eighth day of a permit hearing in Fort Pierre before the state Public Utilities Commission for the Heartland Greenway project proposed by Navigator CO2. Commissioners said the hearing will continue Saturday and probably also next week.

As South Dakota regulators were conducting the hearing Friday, their counterparts in North Dakota rejected a permit for a separate carbon pipeline, proposed by Summit Carbon Solutions, that would also enter South Dakota. Officials for that company indicated they might file a revised application in North Dakota.

At the Navigator CO2 hearing in South Dakota, Denis Anderson, who has farmland near Brandon and Valley Springs, said carbon pipelines are "one of the worst things for a community."

Anderson and others worry that heavy farm machinery might disturb Navigator CO2's proposed 1,300-mile, five-state pipeline. They also fear its installation could harm their drain tile, which is perforated pipe installed beneath cropland to manage water levels.

The planned \$3 billion project would capture carbon dioxide emissions from 21 ethanol and several fertilizer plants, converting the gas into a liquid for transport. The carbon could then be deposited underground in Illinois or utilized for industrial and commercial applications, including oil extraction or dry ice production.

The pipeline could qualify for \$1.3 billion annually in federal tax credits for atmospheric carbon reduction, to help fight climate change. It would stretch across 112 miles in five South Dakota counties: Brookings, Moody, Minnehaha, Lincoln and Turner. South Dakota is the initial state to host hearings for the project.

The scrutiny of carbon pipeline regulations has intensified at the federal level following a 2020 Mississippi pipeline leak, which resulted in a carbon dioxide plume that hospitalized 45 people. California has subsequently paused new CO2 pipeline construction pending a federal review of regulations. Navigator CO2 has said federal regulators are aware of the project and have not raised concerns.

Navigator's analysis estimates an annual 1% risk of a leak or rupture every 1,000 miles. Some farmers

are concerned about potential liability should they accidentally damage the pipeline. Jeffrey L. Pray, a property insurance agent at Fischer Rounds & Associates, said such mishaps would typically be covered by insurance.

"The policy will cover that," Pray said, "It's an accident." Though, he distinguished between damage to a pipeline and "damage caused by the release of a pollutant," which he said may not be covered.

Pray noted that each policy varies and would not necessarily prevent farmers from getting sued by the company.

So far, the company has secured easements from 30% of impacted landowners, offering an average of \$24,000 per acre, company officials have said. Navigator has not yet exercised eminent domain, which is a legal process for gaining access to land when an agreement can't be reached with a landowner.

The hearing is scheduled to conclude Saturday, but commissioners said it's likely to continue on Tuesday. A decision is expected by Sept. 26.

The other carbon pipeline proposed in South Dakota, by Summit Carbon Solutions, which has used eminent domain, is scheduled to have its permit hearing Sept. 11-22.

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.

North Dakota denies Summit Carbon a pipeline permit

Company statement indicates it might file another application

BY: JARED STRONG - AUGUST 4, 2023 4:44 PM

Summit Carbon Solutions has failed to minimize the negative impacts of its proposed carbon dioxide pipeline in North Dakota and will not be permitted to construct it, state regulators decided on Friday.

The state is a key part of the company's \$5 billion project, which would span more than 2,000 miles in five states, including South Dakota. The company's plan is to transport captured carbon dioxide from ethanol plants to North Dakota for underground sequestration.

That state's three-person Public Service Commission unanimously denied the company a route permit.

"The commission finds that (Summit Carbon Solutions) has not provided sufficient evidence to demonstrate that the location, construction, operation and maintenance of the project will produce minimum adverse impacts upon the welfare of the citizens of North Dakota," the commission wrote in its Friday order.

Summit can appeal the decision in state court but indicated on Friday that it will file a new application with a revised proposal.

"We're committed to understanding and incorporating the considerations outlined in the decision," said Sabrina Zenor, a Summit spokesperson. "We are confident that our project supports state policies designed to boost key economic sectors: agriculture, ethanol, and energy."

Zenor did not say when that new application would be submitted. The application that was denied was submitted in October 2022, and the process took about 10 months, according to state records.

Summit has a permit hearing in South Dakota scheduled for Sept. 11-22; another company seeking to build a separate carbon pipeline, Navigator CO2, is currently in the midst of a multi-day hearing before the South Dakota Public Utilities Commission.

Opposing viewpoints

The project is meant to capitalize on generous federal tax incentives that reward the ethanol plants for sequestering carbon dioxide they would otherwise emit into the atmosphere or for producing low-carbon fuels. It would also allow the plants to sell their ethanol in low-carbon-fuel markets at potentially higher prices.

A study commissioned by the Iowa Renewable Fuels Association — a lobbying group that supports Summit's proposal — concluded that ethanol plants could more than triple their profits by connecting to a pipeline like Summit's.

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Federal officials have said the pipelines are necessary for helping the country achieve its goals of reducing greenhouse gas emissions, but opponents of the projects say they will prolong the use of fossil fuels and delay a transition to electric vehicles that can be powered by wind and solar energy.

There is also growing public outcry over property rights of landowners in the path of the projects. Summit has filed dozens of eminent domain cases in South Dakota, seeking to gain access to land from landowners who've so far refused to grant it.

The company said recently about 950 parcels of land in Iowa might be subject to eminent domain at its Iowa Utilities Board hearing that starts Aug. 22. That hearing could go on for weeks or months.

South Dakota lawmakers considered a bill last winter that would have prohibited the use of eminent domain for carbon pipelines, but the bill was rejected.

North Dakota deficiencies

About 320 miles of Summit's route is planned for North Dakota. Its end point is northwest of Bismarck, where it would be pumped deep into the ground.

But the North Dakota commissioners found that Summit's proposal doesn't minimize its impact on the environment and residents or didn't have sufficient proof that it does.

Among the deficiencies the commissioners noted were:

Summit did not fully allay the concerns of the State Historical Society of North Dakota about its route's effects on cultural sites.

The pipeline's effects on property values was not thoroughly shown to be minimized.

Summit did not show it had fully considered alternative routes to avoid public wildlife areas and to address "legitimate impacts expressed by landowners."

The company did not address how it would build and operate its pipeline in more than a dozen areas that have potential geologic instability.

The commission noted that its decision did not hinge on eminent domain or safety concerns, which it deemed outside of its purview.

Pipeline opponents said the commission's decision is a significant win for them.

"I think it's precedent setting," said Jess Mazour, of the Sierra Club of Iowa. "It shows us that organized people who are willing to work together for a common cause can beat big money, like Summit's pipeline. ... It also shows us that Iowa needs to slow down."

Summit's project was initially estimated to cost about \$4.5 billion, but the company's chief operating officer testified to the North Dakota commissioners that it would be about \$5.5 billion. Summit has paid hundreds of millions of dollars to landowners up front for easements and will not recoup that money if the pipeline isn't built.

"We applaud the Public Service Commission for their courage and thoughtfulness in denying Summit's application and encourage the other states to follow suit," said Brian Jorde, an Omaha, Nebraska, attorney who represents dozens of landowners in several states who oppose the pipeline projects.

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Jared Strong is the senior reporter for the Iowa Capital Dispatch. He has written about Iowans and the important issues that affect them for more than 15 years, previously for the Carroll Times Herald and the Des Moines Register. His investigative work exposing police misconduct has notched several state and national awards. He is a longtime trustee of the Iowa Freedom of Information Council, which fights for open records and open government. He is a lifelong Iowan and has lived mostly in rural western parts of the state.

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Today	Tonight	Sunday	Sunday Night	Monday	Monday Night	Tuesday
						
70% / 80%	90% / 80%	40%				
Showers Likely then Heavy Rain	Breezy. Heavy Rain then Showers	Chance Showers and Breezy	Mostly Cloudy	Mostly Sunny	Mostly Clear	Mostly Sunny
High: 75 °F	Low: 62 °F	High: 76 °F	Low: 55 °F	High: 80 °F	Low: 55 °F	High: 81 °F

Wet Weekend Continues...



Periods of Moderate to Heavy Rain expected through the weekend, diminishing Sunday afternoon



Central South Dakota: Highest chances of showers & storms today

Eastern South Dakota & west central MN: Highest chances of showers & storms mid afternoon into Sunday morning

Probability of Precipitation Forecast

	8/5 Sat						8/6 Sun							
	6am	9am	12pm	3pm	6pm	9pm	12am	3am	6am	9am	12pm	3pm	6pm	9pm
Aberdeen	50	50	70	85	85	80	80	65	45	50	50	10	10	5
Britton	40	30	55	75	75	80	70	75	50	55	55	15	15	5
Brookings	30	45	55	60	75	85	60	45	65	45	45	20	20	10
Chamberlain	25	15	30	55	45	40	60	65	60	20	20	10	10	5
Clark	35	45	50	65	85	60	60	80	80	65	65	25	25	5
Eagle Butte	65	80	85	75	75	55	35	20	10	15	15	10	10	0
Ellendale	55	65	85	85	80	80	70	45	25	40	40	10	10	0
Eureka	75	70	85	85	75	65	50	35	25	25	25	5	5	0
Gettysburg	65	80	75	70	65	75	65	50	35	35	35	10	10	5
Huron	40	55	60	70	80	85	45	55	65	25	25	15	15	5
Kennebec	15	20	20	50	40	45	80	70	55	45	45	15	15	5
McIntosh	85	80	70	70	55	30	10	5	5	5	5	5	5	0
Milbank	15	15	35	65	75	75	60	70	85	75	75	40	40	10
Miller	60	45	45	70	65	55	75	85	70	55	55	15	15	5
Mobridge	80	85	85	80	75	55	40	25	15	15	15	5	5	0
Murdo	10	25	30	45	50	65	80	55	40	35	35	10	10	5
Pierre	35	45	50	60	65	75	80	55	40	35	35	10	10	5
Redfield	55	60	55	70	75	60	75	85	70	55	55	15	15	5
Sisseton	20	20	35	75	75	75	70	75	75	70	70	25	25	5
Watertown	20	25	45	60	80	75	60	75	85	75	75	35	35	10
Webster	25	30	50	75	85	80	75	85	80	65	65	20	20	5
Wheaton	10	10	25	60	65	60	65	65	70	70	70	30	30	5

*Table values in %



NWS Aberdeen, SD

Periods of Moderate to Heavy Rain expected through the weekend, diminishing Sunday afternoon. Over central South Dakota, the highest chances for showers and storms will be today. Over eastern South Dakota and west central Minnesota, the highest chances will be mid afternoon into Sunday morning.

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How Much Rain Could We Get?

August 5, 2023
3:31 AM

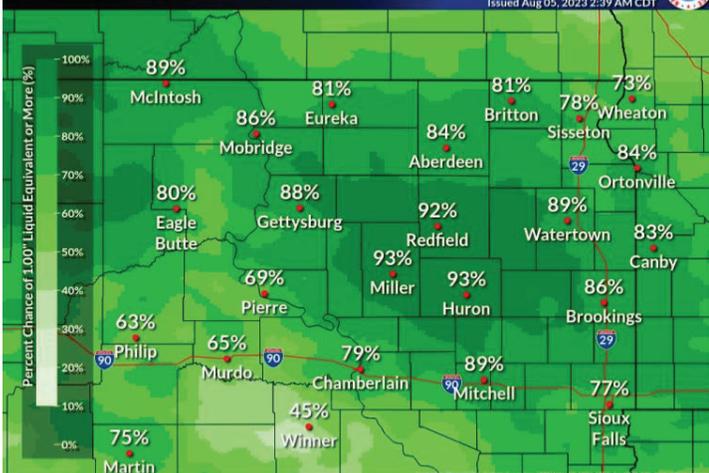


Any stronger shower or storm will be capable of producing over 0.50 inch of rain an hour.

Probabilities of Rainfall are calculated from this morning through the day Sunday...

Probability of 1 inch or more Rainfall

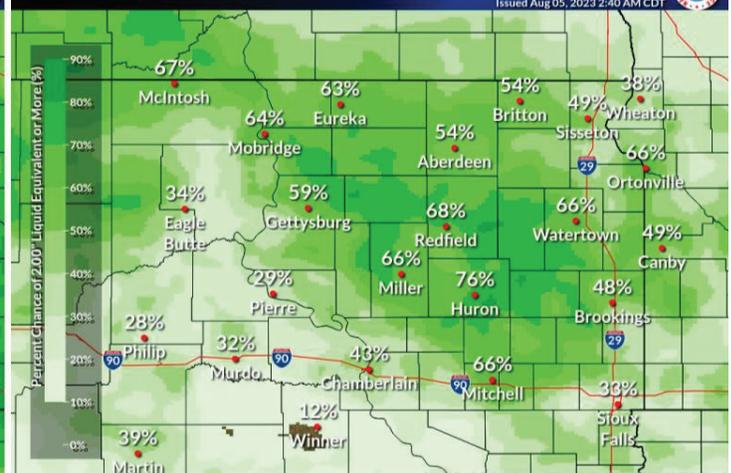
Weather Forecast Office
Aberdeen, SD
Issued Aug 05, 2023 2:37 AM CDT



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

Probability of 2 inches or more Rainfall

Weather Forecast Office
Aberdeen, SD
Issued Aug 05, 2023 2:40 AM CDT



National Weather Service
Aberdeen, SD

Any stronger shower or storm will be capable of producing over 0.50 inch of rain an hour. Probabilities of Rainfall are calculated from this morning through the day Sunday. There is a 65 to near 100 percent chance of getting 1 inch of rain or more. There is a 30 to 70 percent chance of getting 2 inches or more through the day Sunday. The lowest chances are over portions of south central South Dakota.



Severe Weather Threat through tonight

August 5, 2023
3:37 AM

Main threat area will be over southeastern South Dakota

Scattered Strong to Severe storms possible over mainly southeastern South Dakota



from mid afternoon through this evening

Have a way to get warnings and think about where you would take shelter if a strong storm nears your area!



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

National Weather Service
Aberdeen, SD

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Yesterday's Groton Weather

High Temp: 86 °F at 2:04 PM

Low Temp: 68 °F at 5:25 AM

Wind: 14 mph at 4:40 PM

Precip: : 0.12

Day length: 14 hours, 37 minutes

Today's Info

Record High: 107 in 1941

Record Low: 41 in 1994

Average High: 85

Average Low: 59

Average Precip in Aug.: 0.37

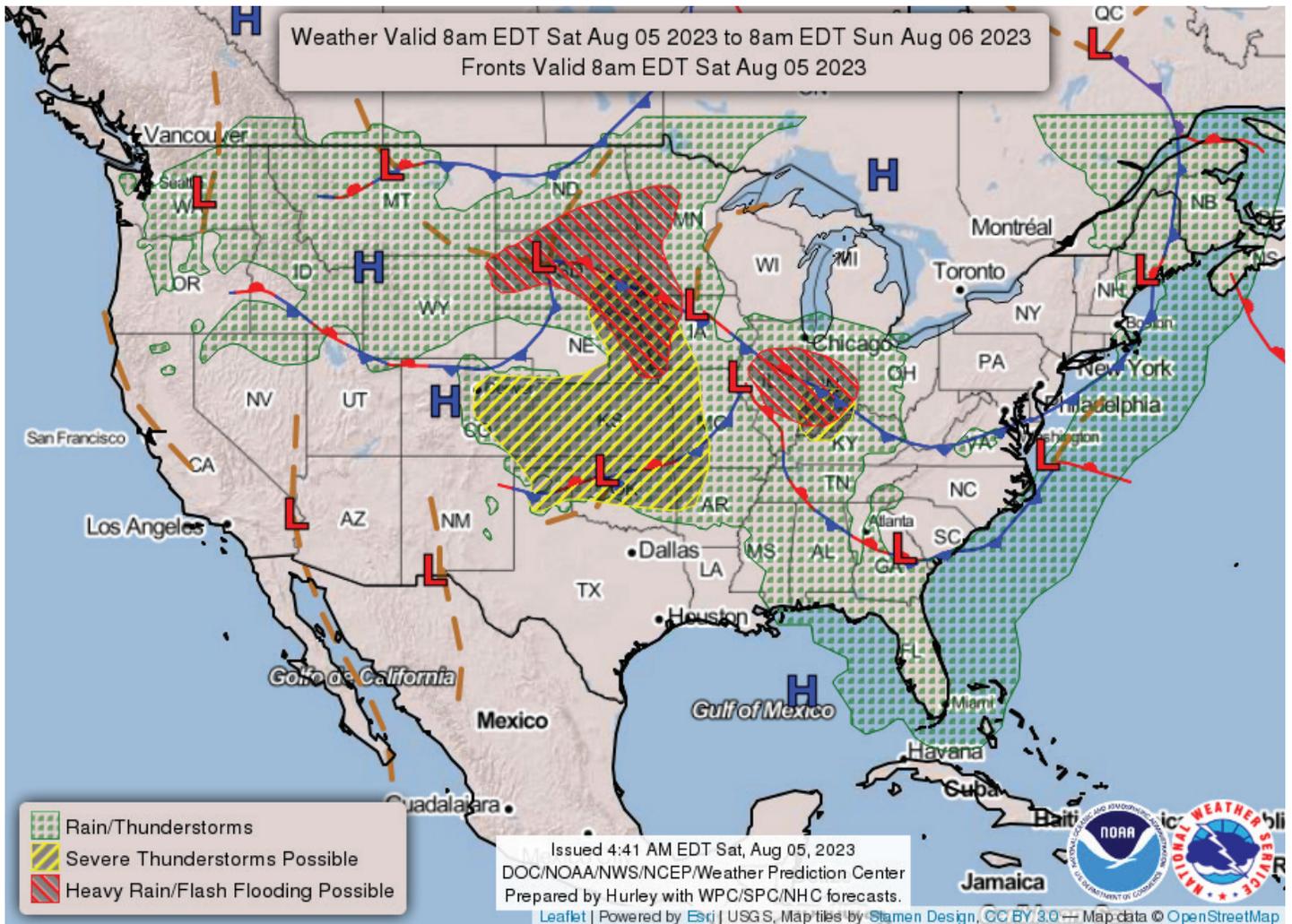
Precip to date in Aug.: 0.12

Average Precip to date: 14.47

Precip Year to Date: 12.79

Sunset Tonight: 8:57:08 PM

Sunrise Tomorrow: 6:20:53 AM



Today in Weather History

August 5, 1987: Six tornadoes touched down in central South Dakota. Five of these tornadoes touched down in Lyman County, including three which did damage near Kennebec within 25 minutes of each other. One of the tornadoes destroyed three farms, downing outbuildings, power lines, granaries, and killing cattle.

August 5, 2000: A wet microburst with winds estimated at 120 mph caused substantial damage in and around Mitchell. Apartments and several mobile homes were destroyed, vehicles were overturned, and other damage occurred to buildings and vehicles. Widespread tree and power line damage also occurred. Ten people were injured, although the majority of the injuries were minor. The damage path was approximately a mile and a half long and a mile wide, extending over the southwest part of Mitchell.

1875: Several tornadoes moved across northern and central Illinois. One of the stronger tornadoes touched down in Warren and Knox County where it destroyed 25 homes and killed two people. Another in a series of tornadoes touched down near Knoxville and moved east into northern Peoria County. This estimated F4 tornado injured 40 people and was described by eyewitnesses as looking like a "monstrous haystack."

1843 - A spectacular cloudburst near Philadelphia turned the small creeks and streams entering the Delaware River into raging torrents. As much as sixteen inches of rain fell in just three hours. Flooding destroyed thirty-two county bridges, and caused nineteen deaths. It is believed that several small tornadoes accompanied the torrential rains, one of which upset and sank more than thirty barges on the Schuylkill River. (David Ludlum)

1961 - The temperature at Ice Harbor Dam, WA, soared to 118 degrees to equal the state record established at Wahluke on the 24th of July in 1928. The afternoon high of 111 degrees at Havre, MT, was an all-time record for that location. (The Weather Channel)

1987 - Severe thunderstorms raked eastern South Dakota. The thunderstorms spawned half a dozen tornadoes, produced softball size hail at Bowdle, and produced wind gusts to 90 mph south of Watertown. Hot weather continued in eastern Texas. Afternoon highs of 100 degrees at Houston and 106 degrees at Waco equalled records for the date. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1988 - Thunderstorms produced severe weather from Indiana and Lower Michigan to Pennsylvania and New York State during the day. Thunderstorms in Michigan produced wind gusts to 80 mph at Ashley, Hastings and Lennon. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1989 - Thunderstorms produced severe weather in Oklahoma, and from Iowa to the Upper Ohio Valley, with 216 reports of large hail or damaging winds between early Saturday morning and early Sunday morning. Thunderstorms moving across Iowa around sunrise produced extremely high winds which caused ten million dollars damage to crops in Carroll and Greene Counties. Thunderstorm winds at Jefferson IA reached 102 mph. Afternoon thunderstorms produced tennis ball size hail at Bay Mills, WI. (Storm Data) (The National Weather Summary)

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Daily Devotionals

Seeds of Hope

OVERCOMING ADVERSITY

Enterprise, Alabama is known for having a monument to an agricultural pest - the boll weevil. In 1915, the "pest" invaded the area and destroyed their only crop - cotton. This disaster left the farmers destitute and nearly hopeless. However, in 1917 the county produced and harvested more peanuts than any other county in the nation.

The monument, erected in 1919, stands in the center of the downtown district as a symbol of their willingness and ability to adjust to and overcome adversity. The residents are quick and proud to remind visitors of the lessons they learned from the boll weevil.

One resident said, "There was a time when we had one crop - cotton; the boll weevil destroyed it. Then we were forced to diversify. Now we are doing better than ever. The boll weevil was a blessing in disguise."

Paul said, "We can rejoice when we run into problems and trials, for we know that they help us to develop endurance." Difficulties are not to be dreaded. They are to be accepted as unique opportunities that God brings into our lives as challenges to help us "diversify" - to develop all of the skills and talents God has given us.

Prayer: Lord, help us to trust in Your goodness and grace, believing that all of the obstacles in our lives are gifts from You. Help us to accept them willingly and grow through them. In Jesus' Name, Amen.

Scripture For Today We can rejoice, too, when we run into problems and trials, for we know that they help us develop endurance. Romans 5:3



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

- 01/28/2024 Groton Robotics Pancake Feed, 10am-1pm, Community Center
- 01/28/2024 85th Carnival of Silver Skates 2pm & 6:30pm (Last Sunday of January)
- 03/23/2024 Lion's Club Easter Egg Hunt 10am Sharp at the City Park (Saturday a week before Easter)
- 04/20/2024 Firemen's Spring Social at the Fire Station 7pm-12:30am (Same Saturday as GHS Prom)
- 04/21/2024 Princess Prom 4:30-8pm (Sunday after GHS Prom)
- 05/04/2024 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:
08.04.23

11 30 45 52 56 20

MegaPlier: 2x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:
\$1,550,000,000

NEXT DRAW:

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

LOTTO AMERICA

WINNING NUMBERS:
08.02.23

1 18 33 41 51 10

All Star Bonus: 2x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:
\$7,100,000

NEXT 16 Hrs 2 Mins 46
DRAW: Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

LUCKY FOR LIFE

WINNING NUMBERS:
08.04.23

3 16 18 42 47 7

TOP PRIZE:

\$7,000/week

NEXT 16 Hrs 17 Mins 47
DRAW: Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

DAKOTA CASH

WINNING NUMBERS:
08.02.23

8 9 12 14 19

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:
\$20,000

NEXT 16 Hrs 17 Mins 47
DRAW: Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

POWERBALL

DOUBLE PLAY

WINNING NUMBERS:
08.02.23

5 23 30 62 63 9

TOP PRIZE:
\$10,000,000

NEXT 16 Hrs 46 Mins
DRAW: 47 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

POWERBALL

WINNING NUMBERS:
08.02.23

23 24 33 51 64 5

Power Play: 2x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:
\$124,000,000

NEXT 16 Hrs 46 Mins
DRAW: 47 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

News from the Associated Press

North Dakota regulators deny siting permit for Summit carbon dioxide pipeline; company will reapply

By JACK DURA Associated Press

BISMARCK, N.D. (AP) — North Dakota regulators denied a siting permit Friday for a proposed carbon dioxide pipeline that would cross five states.

The decision complicates an already complex process for Summit Carbon Solutions, which is seeking similar authorization in the other states and is facing opposition from landowners and environmental groups. It wasn't immediately clear how the permit denial would affect Summit's carbon dioxide storage plans in North Dakota.

The North Dakota Public Service Commission denied the permit for Summit's Midwest Carbon Express pipeline, which planned a 320-mile (515-kilometer) route through North Dakota. Summit proposed the \$5.5 billion, 2,000-mile (3,219 kilometer) pipeline network to capture carbon dioxide from more than 30 ethanol plants in Iowa, Minnesota, Nebraska, North Dakota and South Dakota, and to store it deep underground in North Dakota.

In a statement, Summit said it "respects the decision by the North Dakota Public Service Commission, and we will revisit our proposal and reapply for our permit. We're committed to understanding and incorporating the considerations outlined in the decision. We are confident that our project supports state policies designed to boost key economic sectors: agriculture, ethanol, and energy."

The project raised landowner concerns of eminent domain, or the taking of private land for the pipeline, and potential dangers of a pipeline break.

The company has "legal options" it can take, commission spokesperson Stacy Eberl said. The regulators do not have jurisdiction over injection sites, she said. Summit proposed an underground injection site for storage of the carbon dioxide in central North Dakota.

The Public Service Commission held public hearings throughout North Dakota earlier this year, during which landowners expressed many concerns, including about eminent domain, safety and requests for reroutes on their property.

"The Commission felt that Summit has not taken steps to address outstanding legitimate impacts and concerns expressed by landowners or demonstrated why a reroute is not feasible," the regulators said in a statement. "The Commission also requested additional information on a number of issues that came up during the hearings. Summit either did not adequately address these requests or did not tender a witness to answer the questions."

The commission's statement also noted other information Summit hasn't submitted, including how the company would address 14 areas of potential geological instability noted by the U.S. Geological Survey within the pipeline's path. Summit also did not submit a revised report to the state's historical preservation office regarding impacts to cultural resources. The office said Summit's report didn't meet its standards.

The regulators' vote to deny the permit was unanimous.

Commission Chair Randy Christmann told The Associated Press that his vote wasn't "necessarily emblematic of my opinions of carbon sequestration or even of the importation of CO2. This is about this project in this place under these circumstances."

Among their findings filed Friday, the panel concluded that Summit "failed to meet its burden of proof to show the location, construction, operation, and maintenance of the Project will produce minimal adverse effects on the environment and upon the welfare of the citizens of North Dakota."

The denial of the permit is "a win for private property rights in North Dakota, plain and simple," said former Bismarck mayor Steve Bakken, who opposed the pipeline.

The proposed Bismarck-area route would have constrained future growth of the city, Bakken said. He also cited safety concerns for not knowing how the company would plan to respond to a pipeline break.

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Republican state Sen. Jeff Magrum welcomed the news for his legislative district, which is in the proposed path, as "victory in round one," but said he expects "some type of appeal" from Summit.

"We'll stand guard for what's coming," he told the AP.

Magrum, who opposes the pipeline due to safety and private property concerns, introduced a raft of unsuccessful legislation earlier this year that sought to bolster private property rights and restrict aspects of eminent domain and carbon dioxide pipelines.

Republican Gov. Doug Burgum supports the pipeline. Spokesman Mike Nowatzki told the AP, "This is a matter between the PSC and the company, and we'll continue to monitor it as the process plays out."

The pipeline has generated similar landowner concerns about eminent domain in other states, including South Dakota, where a group of lawmakers last month began a petition drive for a special legislative session to protect private property rights against Summit.

The Iowa Farm Bureau Federation and the Iowa chapter of the Sierra Club are pushing Summit to release financial agreements with ethanol companies in the project, the Des Moines Register reported.

Rape charges filed against multiple teenage South Dakota baseball players

By SUMMER BALLENTINE Associated Press

Six teenage players on a private South Dakota baseball team have been charged with rape for assaults that allegedly occurred at a tournament, and another three have been charged in juvenile court.

A grand jury indicted six 17-to 19-year-olds from the Mitchell Legion baseball team for second-degree rape and aiding and abetting second-degree rape, the Pennington County State's Attorney's Office announced Thursday. The felonies are punishable by up to 50 years in prison, a \$50,000 fine or both.

Three younger teammates face undisclosed charges in juvenile court.

South Dakota law requires minors ages 16 and older who are charged with such felonies to be tried as adults, although the minors can attempt to have their cases moved to juvenile court, prosecutors said.

The victims were 16 years old, according to the indictments.

The assaults allegedly occurred during a baseball tournament in Rapid City, South Dakota, the first weekend of June, prosecutors said.

Three of the defendants are representing themselves, according to court records. Phone calls to the lawyers of the other three were not immediately returned Friday.

The State's Attorney's Office is also considering charges against adults affiliated with the team who knew about the assaults but did not report them.

The American Legion organizes and sponsors youth baseball leagues throughout the nation, including the Mitchell team.

The Legion canceled the team's season, and "upon legal determination in the courts we will assess the American Legion's continued affiliation and sponsorship of the Mitchell Baseball Association," South Dakota Legion Adjutant Chris Van DeList said in an email.

"The allegations are very disturbing," Van DeList said, "and are not in keeping with the traditions and the core purposes of American Legion Baseball 'To instill in the nation's youth a sincere desire to develop within themselves a feeling of citizenship, sportsmanship, loyalty and team spirit.'"

Fewer Americans got jobs in July than expected. But a steady market suggests US may avoid recession

By PAUL WISEMAN and RODRIQUE NGOWI AP Economics Writer

WASHINGTON (AP) — The job market has cooled over the summer. But it's still strong enough to defy predictions that higher interest rates would tip the United States into recession.

U.S. employers added 187,000 jobs last month, fewer than expected. But the unemployment rate dipped to 3.5% in a sign that the job market remains resilient.

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Hiring was up from 185,000 in June, a figure that the Labor Department revised down from an originally reported 209,000. Economists had expected to see 200,000 new jobs in July.

Still last month's hiring was solid, considering that the Federal Reserve has raised its benchmark interest 11 times since March 2022. And the Fed's inflation fighters will welcome news that more Americans entered the job market last month, easing pressure on employers to raise wages to attract and keep staff.

"This is a good strong report," said Julia Pollak, chief economist at the jobs website ZipRecruiter. "The worst fears that people had of a painful downturn, a loss of jobs, longer unemployment durations, all those things — those are not coming to pass."

Unemployment fell to a notch above a half century low as 152,000 Americans entered the job force. The number of unemployed fell by 116,000.

Despite the influx of workers, average hourly wages rose 0.4% from June and 4.4% from a year earlier — numbers that were hotter than expected and are likely to worry the Fed.

The Labor Department revised payroll figures down for both May and June, reducing the number of jobs created in those months by 49,000. With the revisions, June and July were "the two weakest monthly gains in two-and-a-half years," noted Paul Ashworth, chief North America economist at Capital Economics.

In July, health care companies added 63,000 jobs. But temporary help jobs — often seen as a sign of where the job market is headed — fell by 22,000. And factories cut 2,000 jobs.

Eugene Lupario, who owns the SVS Group staffing firm in Oakland, California, is seeing signs of a labor market slowdown — though certain businesses, such as restaurants and bars, are still hiring aggressively. "Interest rates have had an impact," he said. Banks and home lenders have been hit hard by higher borrowing costs and aren't looking for much help. "They're not getting new loans. They're not getting refis," Lupario said. "Because rates are where they are, nobody's going out there and buying first or second homes right now."

And he said that some of the pandemic hiring frenzy has receded. "During COVID, a nurse, an RN, could ask for and get \$100 an hour," Lupario said. But hospitals are "not paying \$100 an hour anymore. They're paying pre-COVID rates at \$75 to \$85 an hour. Those same nurses that were making 100 bucks an hour are sitting on the sidelines maybe waiting for somebody to offer them \$100 an hour, not realizing that they're probably not going to get it."

The U.S. economy and job market have repeatedly confounded predictions of an impending recession. Increasingly, economists are expressing confidence that inflation fighters at the Federal Reserve can pull off a rare "soft landing" — raising interest rates just enough to rein in rising prices without tipping the world's largest economy into recession. Consumers are feeling sunnier too: The Conference Board, a business research group, said that its consumer confidence index last month hit the highest level in two years.

"These numbers," acting Labor Secretary Julie Su said after the jobs report came out, "are inconsistent with recession."

There's other evidence the job market, while still healthy, is losing momentum. The Labor Department reported Tuesday that job openings fell below 9.6 million in June, lowest in more than two years. But, again, the numbers remain unusually robust: Monthly job openings never topped 8 million before 2021. The number of people quitting their jobs — a sign of confidence they can find something better elsewhere — also fell in June but remains above pre-pandemic levels.

The Fed wants to see hiring cool off. Strong demand for workers pushes up wages and can force companies to raise prices to make up for the higher costs.

The U.S. labor market "is now cooling in a gradual and orderly fashion in line with the policy goals at the Federal Reserve, which points to a growing probability of a soft landing for the economy," said Joe Brusuelas, chief economist for the tax and accounting firm RSM. "Demand for labor remains solid but is clearly cooling compared to the torrid pace in 2021 and 2022."

Many businesses continue to struggle to find workers.

In New Hampshire, the unemployment rate was 1.8% in June, tied with South Dakota for the nation's lowest. "The labor market is very tight in this area," said Jeff Winslow, general manager at DiPrizio Pine

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Sales, a sawmill in Middleton, New Hampshire, near the Maine border that employs 50 workers and could use a few more. "The competition is very difficult to keep up with."

Finding dependable help, Winslow said, is tough. So the mill pays a \$1 an hour bonus to workers who complete their scheduled shifts. He looks for workers on job websites. But gesturing at his roadside help-wanted sign, he said: "My last four or five good hires have come from this sign. People drive by and they see the sign and they see things going on, and it's a small community; so they know someone that works here or has worked here, and they stop by, and we tell them our story."

He said he had just talked to a recent high school graduate about joining the firm, promising to provide training. His pitch: "Once you become a skilled employee, we have to pay you to retain-you - or you'll go up the street to another mill."

Workers at the mill typically earn around \$50,000 a year. "Without a good solid workforce," he said, "you don't have anything, so you have to pay a competitive wage."

In Goffstown, New Hampshire, Filtrexx Northeast Systems, which makes products that prevent soil erosion, just can't find enough people locally. So it relies on foreign workers through the federal government's H-2B visa program. "If it wasn't for that type of program - with the job market how desperate as it is - I probably wouldn't be here. I'd probably be out of business or retired or something," said regional manager David Letourneau.

But even the visas can be a hassle. "We need them around April," Letourneau said. "We don't get them until June, July. One year we didn't get them until October ... I wish I had an answer on the labor market."

Pope visits Portuguese shrine known for apocalyptic prophecy linked to Russia as war rages on

By NICOLE WINFIELD Associated Press

FATIMA, Portugal (AP) — Pope Francis visited the Portuguese town of Fatima on Saturday to pray at a shrine known for apocalyptic prophecies of hell, peace and Soviet communism that have found new relevance with Russia's war in Ukraine.

Francis spent the morning in Fatima, praying with sick people and prisoners, alongside pilgrims who began filling the shrine's central esplanade long before sunrise. As Francis prayed before a statue of the Madonna, nearby wildfires turned the sky smoky black and sent ash fluttering down on the crowd.

For the third time this trip, Francis ditched his prepared remarks and didn't even recite a prayer that had been prepared for the occasion. Instead, he offered a meditation on the welcoming embrace of the Virgin Mary, to whom the shrine is dedicated.

The Vatican spokesman didn't immediately respond to questions about why the pope had again skipped his planned texts. The 86-year-old Francis often deviates from his prepared remarks, even more when speaking in his native Spanish. However on Friday he had said his glasses weren't working, that he couldn't read well and didn't want to strain his vision.

Fatima Bishop Jose Ornelas made a prayer for Ukraine explicit in his remarks. "We associate ourselves to Your Holiness' prayer for peace, for which this sanctuary is profoundly identified, thinking in particular of the war in Ukraine and so many other conflicts in the world," he said.

The trip was a brief excursion from Lisbon, where Francis has been presiding over World Youth Day celebrations, the big Catholic jamboree that has gathered nearly 1 million young Catholics together. He returns to the Portuguese capital for a Saturday night vigil service and then will preside over a final Mass on Sunday, where the site of the next edition of the faith festival will be announced.

The Fatima story dates back to 1917, when according to tradition, Portuguese siblings Francisco and Jacinta Marto and their cousin Lucia said the Virgin Mary appeared to them six times and confided to them three secrets. The first two described an apocalyptic image of hell, foretold the end of World War I and the start of World War II, and portended the rise and fall of Soviet communism. The children were between 7 and 10 years old.

At the time of the apparitions, Europe was still in the grip of World War I and Portugal's Catholic Church

was facing a crisis after Portugal became a republic in 1910. The republican government introduced a host of anti-clerical laws, including prohibiting religious teaching at schools. In that context, in which priests and bishops were exiled, the youngsters' visions helped reinvigorate a persecuted church.

In 2000, the Vatican disclosed the long-awaited third secret, describing it as foretelling the May 13, 1981, assassination attempt against St. John Paul II in St. Peter's Square, which fell on the anniversary of the original vision.

According to later writings by Lucia, who became a nun and died in 2005, Russia would be converted and peace would reign if the pope and all the bishops of the world consecrated Russia to the "Immaculate Heart of Mary." Lucia later claimed that John Paul fulfilled that prophecy during a 1984 Mass, even though he never specified Russia in the prayer.

Last year, in a prayer for peace following Russia's invasion of Ukraine, Francis corrected the 1984 omission and consecrated both Russia and Ukraine to Mary.

Francis has made repeated appeals for an end to Russia's war, frequently expressing solidarity with the "martyred" Ukrainian people while refraining from criticizing Russia by name. Recently, he sent an envoy to Kyiv, Moscow and Washington on a mission to try to facilitate the return of Ukrainian children taken to Russia.

Portuguese babies were out in force on Saturday and Francis took his time kissing them from his perch on the popemobile as he made his way to the central sanctuary to pray before the Madonna statue. Lodged in her crown is the bullet casing from the 1981 attempt on John Paul's life; On Saturday Francis placed a gilded rosary at her feet.

Niger's junta isn't backing down, and a regional force prepares to intervene. Here's what to expect

By CHINEDU ASADU Associated Press

ABUJA, Nigeria (AP) — Regional mediation efforts to reverse the coup in Niger and restore its democracy collapsed as soon as they started. Tensions have escalated as the Sunday deadline nears for possible military intervention by other West African countries.

As its meeting ended Friday in neighboring Nigeria's capital, Abuja, the region's defense chiefs finalized a plan to use force against the Niger junta — needing approval by their political leaders — if Mohamed Bazoum is not reinstated as Niger's president. An Economic Community of West African States delegation to Niger, led by Nigeria's former head of state Gen. Abdulsalami Abubakar, had tried unsuccessfully to meet with the coup leader, Gen. Abdourahmane Tchiani, who later declared that any aggression against Niger "will see an immediate response and without warning."

What started as an overthrow of the president by his closest commanders in the Presidential Guard has received the support of some other soldiers, including the Nigerien army command.

Here's what to expect:

ECOWAS INTERVENTION

This would be the first time in years that the regional bloc known as ECOWAS would try to forcefully put down a coup in West Africa, which has seen several successful coups since 2020.

"The events of the last two days make it more likely that this (military) intervention may actually happen," said Nathaniel Powell, Africa analyst at the Oxford Analytica geopolitical intelligence firm. "And if they offer resistance to an ECOWAS intervention, this can turn out to be really catastrophic."

ECOWAS would be doing so as a split family, with three other regimes — Mali and Burkina Faso, which border Niger, and Guinea — choosing to side with the junta.

Niger's other neighbors include Chad, whose leader has tried to mediate between the coup plotters and ECOWAS, and Algeria and Libya, which are not members of the bloc. This leaves any military intervention through land largely restricted to Nigeria's 1,600-km (1,000-mile) border with Niger.

MILITARY STRATEGY

It's not yet clear what the strategy of military intervention in land-locked Niger would look like, but the

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country enjoys some territorial advantage. With Bazoum being held in the capital, Niamey, the focus will start there.

With a population of 25 million, Niger is West Africa's second-largest country in terms of landmass, spanning over 1.26 million square kilometers (486,000 square miles) — a hundred times more than that of Gambia, where ECOWAS last intervened militarily in 2017.

On the frontline of efforts to reverse the coup in Niger is its longtime ally Nigeria, which currently holds the chairmanship of ECOWAS.

Nigeria has West Africa's largest military strength of 223,000 personnel — 22 times that of Niger's 10,000, according to World Bank Open Data, and four times that of Burkina Faso, Mali, Guinea and Niger combined.

In Niger, some believe the military intervention might involve airstrikes. But with Bazoum still in detention, he could be both a bargaining tool and a shield for the junta.

An intervention force coming overland from Nigeria would have to cross a swath of mostly unoccupied land that hosts more than 200,000 refugees who have fled violence in northern Nigeria, further complicating any military deployment.

Niger's international airport in Niamey is just 12 kilometers (7 miles) from the presidential palace where Bazoum is being held, which could make it more difficult to be overtaken. The country has two other international airports, including one in Agadez, where the U.S. military operates a drone base.

CONCERNS FOR THE WORLD

The latest military takeover amid a resurgence of coups in West Africa has been particularly concerning for the West, which saw Niger as its last remaining strategic partner in its counterterrorism fight in the Sahel. Niger also matters to the global market on various fronts, including its 5% share of the global supply of uranium.

Nnamdi Obase, a senior adviser with the International Crisis Group, warned that a military intervention "could also deteriorate into a conflict by proxy between forces outside Africa, between those supporting the restoration of democracy and those supporting the junta, which has taken a strong anti-Western stance."

On one end is Niger's longtime strategic allies the United States and France. On the other is Russia and its private military contractor, Wagner, which have been hailed as allies by the military regimes of Mali and Burkina Faso.

CONSEQUENCES IN NIGER

There are fears that any battle in the event of a military intervention by ECOWAS will not be limited to Niger's capital, Niamey.

"I fear the junta would gladly use its own people as cannon fodder or human shields, and ECOWAS militaries don't have a good record when it comes to avoiding collateral damage," said James Barnett, a researcher specializing in West Africa at Hudson Institute.

Even the best-case scenario from such an intervention would leave ECOWAS troops stationed in the country as anti-coup forces for what could be a lengthy period. That doesn't look good for democracy — both for the country and the region, said Powell with Oxford Analytica.

"That would make Bazoum look like he is only a president because of foreign armies, and that is going to destroy his legitimacy."

CHALLENGES FOR NIGERIA

Nigeria leading the ECOWAS intervention in Niger could face challenges on the homefront, where its military has struggled with overstretched, outgunned and outnumbered personnel, fighting armed groups that have killed thousands in the past year across the northern and central regions.

"Nigerian military has internal problems in Nigeria," said Bello Tangaza, a resident of Tangaza in northern Sokoto state. "They have bandits, they have Boko Haram — but they have failed to tackle these problems and they want to jump to Niger."

A military intervention led by Nigeria could shift attention from the armed groups that sometimes enter the country through the porous border with Niger. Four people were abducted by gunmen on Wednesday in Tangaza district, and residents fear the situation won't improve anytime soon if the military turns its attention to Niger.

Heat and wildfires put southern Europe's vital tourism earnings at risk

By MICHAEL VARAKLAS and KELVIN CHAN Associated Press

RHODES, Greece (AP) — Tourists at a seaside hotel on the Greek island of Rhodes snatched up pails of pool water and damp towels as flames approached, rushing to help staffers and locals extinguish one of the wildfires threatening Mediterranean locales during recent heat waves.

The quick team effort meant that "by the time the fire brigade came, most of the fire actually was dealt with," said Elena Korosteleva from Britain, who was vacationing at the Lindos Memories hotel.

The next morning, some unsettled guests cut their holiday short — but most stayed on as the resort wasn't damaged in the small brush fire outside its grounds.

The Greek island known for sparkling beaches and ancient sites is nursing its wounds after 11 days of devastating wildfires in July. After thousands of people were evacuated during the height of travel season, Rhodes is weighing how the crisis will affect its vital tourism sector, which fuels most of its economy and some 20% of Greece's.

It's the same for other Mediterranean destinations, like Italy and Spain, where the tourism sector also is being hit by heat waves and wildfires. Greece, Italy, Algeria and Tunisia combined lost more than 1,350 square kilometers (520 square miles) to blazes that affected 120,000 people in late July, according to European Union estimates. And Greece is expecting even more extreme heat in the coming days.

The mayor of Villardecievros village, in part of northwestern Spain ravaged by fires last summer, said hikers are still coming.

"Tourism is bound to suffer a bit in the next few years, (whether) we like it or not," Rosa María López said. "On the hiking trails, there are no trees, and it is very sad to see. ... But this area is still highly valued by tourists in spite of everything. We will have to adapt."

Fires have chased away tourists in hard-hit parts of Greece and Italy. Rhodes saw mass cancellations of flights and the trend is similar in Sicily, said Olivier Ponti, vice president of insights at ForwardKeys, a travel data company with access to airline industry ticketing data.

While travel to Greece overall has not been hit too hard, Italy isn't as lucky. Wildfires "have caused a slowdown in bookings for many Italian destinations, even places not close to the fires," he said, noting a drop for Rome in the last week of July.

Even without the flames, summer heat intensified by climate change can be a turnoff for travelers.

Hoteliers are worried in southeastern Spain's coastal resort city of Benidorm, a longtime favorite for British and Scandinavian tourists.

"If heat waves were to be repeated every summer, the impact on our economy would be significant," said Antonio Mayor, chair of the hotel and tourism association in the Valencia region, which includes Benidorm. "Our activity is centered on the three summer months."

That could mean tourists head north to Scandinavian countries or the United Kingdom instead.

"Record-setting temperatures in European countries such as Greece, Italy and Spain are not scheduled to ease up as we enter August, so it might be considered a much safer option to opt for a stay in northern Europe," said Tim Hentschel, CEO of digital booking platform HotelPlanner.

The World Meteorological Organization and the EU's Copernicus Climate Change Service calculated July to be the hottest month on record. Heat records foreshadow changes ahead as the planet warms, scientists say, including more flooding, longer-burning wildfires and extreme weather events that put people at risk.

With that in mind, U.S.-based climate technology startup Sensible Weather is developing insurance that would compensate people if extreme heat wrecks their holiday.

It's rolled out "weather guarantee" coverage to travel companies in the U.K., France and the U.S., which pays travelers if prolonged rain ruins their beach break or there's no snow for a ski trip.

Sensible Weather will soon add a heat cover option "in anticipation of next summer," founder Nick Cavanaugh said. "People are asking me about it more because they're thinking about these things more."

While people differ on how hot is too hot, "in the simplest version, if it was 42 degrees Celsius (107.6 Fahrenheit) for three hours in the middle of the day and you couldn't go out and do an activity, we could

give you some money back," he said.

Rhodes had expected foreign arrivals to increase 8%-10% over a bumper year in 2022, when about 2.6 million people flew in to the Greek island, mostly from Britain and Germany. But after the fires, flight cancellations in the last week of July exceeded all bookings made in the equivalent week in 2019, said Ponti of ForwardKeys.

Manolis Markopoulos, head of the Rhodes hotel association, is optimistic that rebounding arrivals to parts of the island not damaged by flames can salvage much of the projected boost in tourism.

"Every day we're seeing more business," he said. "By Aug. 8-10, I think we'll be back to our normal pace at all these resorts," which account for about 90% of the island's 220,000 beds.

In damaged areas, "some brave tour operators have already decided to bring customers from this coming weekend," Markopoulos said. "These areas have a longer road before they return to normality — but they're not even 10% of the (island's) total capacity."

New bookings for future travel to Rhodes did take a hit, falling 76% the week of July 17, when the fires began, over the previous week. For Greece as a whole, they slumped 10%, Ponti said.

While some major British operators briefly canceled all Rhodes flights and holidays — offering refunds to people who'd booked for fire-hit areas — other budget airlines kept offering seats and reported normal travel figures, HotelPlanner's Hentschel said.

In Germany, leading travel operator TUI is again offering vacations to all parts of Rhodes after it stopped flying tourists in.

"We would do more damage to the people of Rhodes if no more tourists came now after the forest fires," TUI CEO Sebastian Ebel told Germany's dpa news agency.

Greek Prime Minister Kyriakos Mitsotakis offered an additional incentive, appearing on ITV's "Good Morning Britain" this week to promise people whose Rhodes vacations were spoiled by the fires a free week on the island next spring or fall.

Korosteleva, the Rhodes vacationer, said the blazes should motivate action against climate change.

"It makes people aware what we've caused to the planet, that this change may not be reversible. So it's not just about tourism," said Korosteleva, who heads the University of Warwick's Institute of Global Sustainable Development. "I think it actually clearly touches upon how we need to start acting now."

A judge has ruled Texas' abortion ban is too restrictive for women with pregnancy complications

By PAUL J. WEBER Associated Press

AUSTIN, Texas (AP) — A Texas judge ruled Friday the state's abortion ban has proven too restrictive for women with serious pregnancy complications and must allow exceptions without doctors fearing the threat of criminal charges.

The ruling was the first to undercut Texas' law since it took effect in 2022 and delivers a major victory to abortion rights supporters, who see the case as a potential blueprint to weaken restrictions elsewhere that Republican-led states have rushed to implement.

However, the injunction was immediately blocked by an appeal to the Texas Supreme Court, the state attorney general's office said.

"The trial court's injunction is ineffective, and the status quo remains in effect," spokesperson Paige Willey said in an email.

State District Judge Jessica Mangrum's ruling granted a temporary injunction that prevents Texas from enforcing the ban against physicians who in their "good faith judgment" end a pregnancy that, because of complications, creates a risk of infection or is otherwise unsafe for the woman to continue.

The injunction also applies to women who have a condition "exacerbated by pregnancy" who can't be effectively treated during their term. It also covers cases where the fetus has a condition that makes it unlikely to survive after birth.

"For the first time in a long time, I cried for joy when I heard the news," lead plaintiff Amanda Zurawski

said in a statement. "This is exactly why we did this. This is why we put ourselves through the pain and the trauma over and over again to share our experiences and the harms caused by these awful laws."

Mangrum's decision said the injunction would run until the completion of the case, which is scheduled for a trial to begin next March 25.

However, the state's immediate appeal "stays an activist Austin judge's attempt to override Texas abortion laws pending a ruling by the Texas Supreme Court," said a statement from First Assistant Attorney General Brent Webster.

The immediate impact of Mangrum's decision also was unclear in a state where all abortion clinics have shuttered in the past year.

The challenge to the state law is believed to be the first in the U.S. brought by women who have been denied abortions since the Supreme Court last year overturned *Roe v. Wade*, which for nearly 50 years had affirmed the constitutional right to an abortion.

In a six-page ruling, the judge found that portions of the abortion law violated the rights afforded to pregnant people under the Texas Constitution.

The court found that the patients challenging the law each experienced "emergent medical conditions" during pregnancy that risked their health or lives "and required abortion care."

However, they were delayed or denied access to such care because of widespread uncertainty about the impact on physicians, the ruling said.

"Today's ruling should prevent other Texans from suffering the unthinkable trauma our plaintiffs endured," said Nancy Northup, president and CEO of the Center for Reproductive Rights, which helped bring the lawsuit.

During two days of emotional testimony in an Austin courtroom, women gave wrenching accounts of learning their babies would not survive birth and being unable to travel long distances to states where abortion is still legal.

The challenge, filed in March, does not seek to repeal Texas' abortion ban, but instead aims to force more clarity on when exceptions are allowed under the law, which is one of the most restrictive in the U.S.

Under the law in Texas, doctors who perform abortions risk life in prison and fines of up to \$100,000. Opponents say that has left some women with providers who are unwilling to even discuss terminating a pregnancy.

The majority of U.S. adults, including those living in states with the strictest limits on abortion, want it to be legal at least through the initial stages of pregnancy, according to a poll released in late June by The Associated Press-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research.

Vermont's flood-wracked capital city ponders a rebuild with one eye on climate change

By LISA RATHKE Associated Press

MONTPELIER, Vt. (AP) — A beloved bookstore in Vermont's small capital city moved across the street to a new spot farther from the Winooski River after an ice jam sent river water into the store in 1992. A nearby office supply and gift store did the same in 2011 because it liked a different space that came with a bonus: it was higher and farther from the river.

But their moves to higher ground weren't enough to save them from flooding after torrential rains in July caused what some saw as the state's worst natural disaster since a 1927 flood that killed dozens of people and caused widespread destruction. Some communities suffered more severe flood damage this year than when Tropical Storm Irene ravaged the small, mountainous state in 2011.

"I think most people in this area were very concerned about climate change, but we also were a little pretty much thought we were a little safer here because we had not really suffered the drastic events that some other parts of the country have," said Rob Kasow, co-owner of Bear Pond Books. "But I think now we've been a little disabused of the notion that Vermont is safe from climate change."

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Now the mostly gutted shops, restaurants and businesses that lend downtown Montpelier its charm are considering where and how to rebuild in an era when extreme weather is occurring more often. Vermont's flooding was just one of several major flood events around the globe this summer that scientists have said are becoming more likely due to climate change.

"It's definitely going to happen again," said Lauren Oates of the Nature Conservancy of Vermont. "It's not a question of if, but when and how bad next time."

Two people died in the flooding. More than 4,000 homes and 800 businesses reported damage, though officials expect those numbers to rise as the damage is tallied.

Many communities in Vermont — small, rural and mountainous — grew up in valleys where the rivers were needed to move goods. Hundreds of years later, that means roads and waterways that often lie close to each other, State Climatologist Lesley-Ann Dupigny-Giroux said.

"That's a piece that's not going to change soon," Dupigny-Giroux said. "But I think in terms of development, in terms of settlement, in terms of what do we do in relation to those roads and rivers is something we need to start thinking about really really closely so that we can be a little bit more proactive."

After Irene, Vermont spent heavily in rebuilding roads, bridges and other infrastructure to better withstand future floods. But much of July's rains fell elsewhere, and officials say more such work is needed around the state.

Oates, of the Nature Conservancy, said thoughtful planning is needed to simply give rivers more room to flood, too.

"A lot more still needs to be done if we're going to continue to have our towns and villages alongside our rivers to make sure we're all better prepared, to make sure our rivers have more space to move and release all of their potential energy as well as their volume," Oates said.

The storms dumped up to two months of rain in two days in Vermont, causing the river to overflow into basements and first floors of Montpelier businesses and homes, and covered the historic downtown in waist-high water. The rains ripped out blacktop and washed out dirt roads to cut off some areas while inundating communities in southern Vermont.

After the water receded in Montpelier, a city of 8,000, those in its creative and vibrant downtown found themselves taking stock after many had only recently started to rebound from the COVID-19 pandemic. Some are still paying off loans that got them through that. Most did not have flood insurance.

At Bear Pond Books, scores of soaked books lay in mud, silt and debris on the floor after the flood. Volunteers and staff helped to pull the damaged books into a large pile and shovel out the mud. As at other businesses, the wall boards and flooring were removed to prevent mold.

After being hit by Irene and COVID-19, Kasow described the latest disaster as "sort of like a dull exhaustion." Retirement just keeps getting farther away, he said.

"It does sap your energy to constantly have to rebuild every couple of years or reinvent or reinvest," Kasow said.

Many businesses said they planned to reduce their vulnerability to future floods by moving utilities upstairs and no longer using their basements for storage. Some may move to other spaces altogether.

That includes Jenny Sebold, owner of Rebel Heart clothing and gift store and Pink Shutter Flowers, who called it "devastating" to see her businesses gutted. Last week, she pulled out a last bit of insulation already bearing the black marks of mold and peered through a hole in the wall. She could see the river through another hole in the floor.

Glenn Sturgis, owner of Capitol Copy, lost about \$150,000 in equipment that he says would cost almost twice that to replace. At age 67, he had planned to sell the business next year. Now he's simply going to walk away.

He said he hopes funding is used to prevent or accommodate flooding rather than just to rebuild.

"I don't know how you do that with a city that's this age, and these buildings and it's right on the river," he said.

He and his wife shopped downtown all the time, loved having an independent bookstore and want the businesses to come back, he said. "And they'll be back but it's got to be getting hard for people that have

had to go through this a number of times," he said.

The state has made \$20 million in grants available to businesses looking to rebuild, capped at \$20,000 each. Republican Gov. Scott said he knows that's not enough money to help everyone. The businesses aren't eligible for Federal Emergency Management Agency funding but several fundraising events are planned and GoFundMe sites have appeared.

Experts warn that the recovery — filing paperwork and pursuing insurance, finding contractors — can be more stressful than the immediate response to the disaster.

Sebald is already feeling that stress as she tries to keep her floral design business going without a space. "I'm doing like twenty times the amount of work to make a fraction of the money but I have to do all of it," she said. "And I need to fill out paperwork and I need to go to this meeting and I need to do insurance claims and I need to be ready when they say that that's happening. So it's like being a triage nurse but everyone's missing a limb and everyone is bleeding out at the same time."

Mega Millions players spurned again as jackpot climbs to \$1.55 billion

By The Associated Press

Another Mega Millions drawing, another night without a jackpot winner.

The numbers drawn Friday night were: 11, 30, 45, 52, 56 and the gold ball 20.

Because no one matched all six numbers and won the estimated \$1.35 billion jackpot, the top prize increased to \$1.55 billion for the next drawing Tuesday night.

There now have been 31 straight drawings without a jackpot winner. The last time someone won the Mega Millions jackpot was April 18.

The \$1.55 billion prize would be for a sole winner who chooses the annuity option with payment stretched over 30 years. Most winners opt for a lump-sum payment, which would be an estimated \$757.2 million on Tuesday.

A big slice of those winnings would go toward federal taxes, while many states also tax lottery payouts.

The jackpot is so hard to win because of the 1 in 302.6 million odds of matching the numbers on five white balls and a separate mega ball. The odds are better to win smaller prizes, which start at \$2.

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

Prosecutors ask judge to issue protective order after Trump post appearing to promise revenge

By ALANNA DURKIN RICHER Associated Press

The Justice Department on Friday asked a federal judge overseeing the criminal case against former President Donald Trump in Washington to step in after he released a post online that appeared to promise revenge on anyone who goes after him.

Prosecutors asked U.S. District Court Judge Tanya Chutkan to issue a protective order in the case a day after Trump pleaded not guilty to charges of trying to overturn his 2020 election loss and block the peaceful transition of power. The order — which is different from a so-called "gag order" — would limit what information Trump and his legal team could share publicly about the case brought by special counsel Jack Smith.

Such protective orders are common in criminal cases, but prosecutors said it's "particularly important in this case" because Trump has posted on social media about "witnesses, judges, attorneys, and others associated with legal matters pending against him."

Prosecutors pointed specifically to a post on Trump's Truth Social platform from earlier Friday in which Trump wrote, in all capital letters, "If you go after me, I'm coming after you!"

Prosecutors said they are ready to hand over a "substantial" amount of evidence — "much of which includes sensitive and confidential information" — to Trump's legal team.

They told the judge that if Trump were to begin posting about grand jury transcripts or other evidence

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"It's rapidly changing and there's a rapid adoption of people using it. So we need to get ahead of this," he said in a later interview. "We're actually already behind it, but we can't really wait too much longer to put in some form of accountability."

Overall, at least 25 states, Puerto Rico and the District of Columbia introduced artificial intelligence bills this year. As of late July, 14 states and Puerto Rico had adopted resolutions or enacted legislation, according to the National Conference of State Legislatures. The list doesn't include bills focused on specific AI technologies, such as facial recognition or autonomous cars, something NCSL is tracking separately.

Legislatures in Texas, North Dakota, West Virginia and Puerto Rico have created advisory bodies to study and monitor AI systems their respective state agencies are using, while Louisiana formed a new technology and cyber security committee to study AI's impact on state operations, procurement and policy. Other states took a similar approach last year.

Lawmakers want to know "Who's using it? How are you using it? Just gathering that data to figure out what's out there, who's doing what," said Heather Morton, a legislative analyst at NCSL who tracks artificial intelligence, cybersecurity, privacy and internet issues in state legislatures. "That is something that the states are trying to figure out within their own state borders."

Connecticut's new law, which requires AI systems used by state agencies to be regularly scrutinized for possible unlawful discrimination, comes after an investigation by the Media Freedom and Information Access Clinic at Yale Law School determined AI is already being used to assign students to magnet schools, set bail and distribute welfare benefits, among other tasks. However, details of the algorithms are mostly unknown to the public.

AI technology, the group said, "has spread throughout Connecticut's government rapidly and largely unchecked, a development that's not unique to this state."

Richard Eppink, legal director of the American Civil Liberties Union of Idaho, testified before Congress in May about discovering, through a lawsuit, the "secret computerized algorithms" Idaho was using to assess people with developmental disabilities for federally funded health care services. The automated system, he said in written testimony, included corrupt data that relied on inputs the state hadn't validated.

AI can be shorthand for many different technologies, ranging from algorithms recommending what to watch next on Netflix to generative AI systems such as ChatGPT that can aid in writing or create new images or other media. The surge of commercial investment in generative AI tools has generated public fascination and concerns about their ability to trick people and spread disinformation, among other dangers.

Some states haven't attempted to tackle the issue yet. In Hawaii, state Sen. Chris Lee, a Democrat, said lawmakers didn't pass any legislation this year governing AI "simply because I think at the time, we didn't know what to do."

Instead, the Hawaii House and Senate passed a resolution Lee proposed that urges Congress to adopt safety guidelines for the use of artificial intelligence and limit its application in the use of force by police and the military.

Lee, vice-chair of the Senate Labor and Technology Committee, said he hopes to introduce a bill in next year's session that is similar to Connecticut's new law. Lee also wants to create a permanent working group or department to address AI matters with the right expertise, something he admits is difficult to find.

"There aren't a lot of people right now working within state governments or traditional institutions that have this kind of experience," he said.

The European Union is leading the world in building guardrails around AI. There has been discussion of bipartisan AI legislation in Congress, which Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer said in June would maximize the technology's benefits and mitigate significant risks.

Yet the New York senator did not commit to specific details. In July, President Joe Biden announced his administration had secured voluntary commitments from seven U.S. companies meant to ensure their AI products are safe before releasing them.

Maroney said ideally the federal government would lead the way in AI regulation. But he said the federal government can't act at the same speed as a state legislature.

"And as we've seen with the data privacy, it's really had to bubble up from the states," Maroney said.

Some state-level bills proposed this year have been narrowly tailored to address specific AI-related concerns. Proposals in Massachusetts would place limitations on mental health providers using AI and prevent "dystopian work environments" where workers don't have control over their personal data. A proposal in New York would place restrictions on employers using AI as an "automated employment decision tool" to filter job candidates.

North Dakota passed a bill defining what a person is, making it clear the term does not include artificial intelligence. Republican Gov. Doug Burgum, a long-shot presidential contender, has said such guardrails are needed for AI but the technology should still be embraced to make state government less redundant and more responsive to citizens.

In Arizona, Democratic Gov. Katie Hobbs vetoed legislation that would prohibit voting machines from having any artificial intelligence software. In her veto letter, Hobbs said the bill "attempts to solve challenges that do not currently face our state."

In Washington, Democratic Sen. Lisa Wellman, a former systems analyst and programmer, said state lawmakers need to prepare for a world in which machine systems become ever more prevalent in our daily lives.

She plans to roll out legislation next year that would require students to take computer science to graduate high school.

"AI and computer science are now, in my mind, a foundational part of education," Wellman said. "And we need to understand really how to incorporate it."

Justice Department faces biggest test in its history with election conspiracy case against Trump

By COLLEEN LONG and LINDSAY WHITEHURST Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — When the Justice Department was announcing the highest-profile prosecution in its history in Washington, Attorney General Merrick Garland was 100 miles away, meeting with local police in Philadelphia.

He stepped outside briefly to speak about how the decision to indict Donald Trump for conspiracy to overturn the 2020 election came from career prosecutors and was led by a special counsel committed to "accountability and independence."

In other words, this wasn't about politics.

Try as Garland might, though, there is no escaping the politics of the moment when the Justice Department of a president who is running for reelection is indicting his chief political rival, the frontrunner for the Republican nomination.

And though he has distanced himself from the investigation since he appointed special counsel Jack Smith 10 months ago, Garland has the last word on matters related to the prosecution of Trump as long as he is the attorney general.

The Justice Department is facing its biggest test in history — navigating unprecedented conditions in American democracy while trying to fight back against relentless attacks on its own credibility and that of the U.S. election system. The success or failure of the case has the potential to affect the standing of the department for years to come.

"In grand terms this is a really huge historic moment for the Department of Justice," said Wendy Weiser, vice president for the Democracy Program at the Brennan Center for Justice.

President Joe Biden has sought to distance himself from the Justice Department to avoid any appearance of meddling when the agency is not only probing Trump, but also the president's son Hunter. But it's going to get more challenging for Biden, too. Anything he says about the Jan. 6, 2021, insurrection at the Capitol from now on could complicate matters for prosecutors. And any trial is likely to take place against the backdrop of the 2024 presidential election.

The latest indictment is the third criminal case filed against Trump this year, but the first to try to hold

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him criminally responsible for his efforts to cling to power in the weeks between his election loss and the Capitol attack that stunned the world. He pleaded not guilty on Thursday before a federal magistrate judge and was ordered not to speak about the case with any potential witnesses.

Trump has said he did nothing wrong and has accused Smith of trying to thwart his chances of returning to the White House in 2024. Trump and other Republicans have railed against the investigation and the Justice Department in general, claiming a two-tiered system of justice that vilifies Trump and goes easy on Biden's son, who was accused of tax crimes after a yearslong probe.

"Another dark day in America as Joe Biden continues to weaponize his corrupt Department of Justice against his leading political opponent Donald J. Trump," said U.S. Rep Elise Stefanik, R-N.Y.

Trump's own Justice Department was subject to complaints of politicization, drawing heavy criticism as the federal probe of Russia's 2016 election interference thrust prosecutors center stage and dragged out scandals that Trump seized on as proof of a "deep state" operating against him.

The release of the Russia report by special counsel Robert Mueller was colored by politics, with then-Attorney General William Barr issuing a four-page memo ahead of the report that was widely criticized as spinning the investigation's findings in favor of Trump. Mueller's actual report — two volumes and 448 pages — was far more nuanced and laid out in part how Trump directed others to influence or curtail the Russia investigation after the special counsel's appointment in May 2017.

On Nov. 9, 2020, as Trump began to suggest with no evidence there might be widespread voter fraud, Barr issued a directive pushing prosecutors to investigate any suspected instances. But by the waning days of the Trump administration Barr had turned against Trump, telling The Associated Press before he told the president that there had been no widespread election fraud.

Garland, a longtime federal appeals court judge who had been Barack Obama's choice for the U.S. Supreme Court but never got a hearing, was chosen by President Biden to be a stabilizing force. He promised to return the Justice Department to "normal," restoring its reputation for political independence and ensuring equal justice.

Throughout his career, Garland has been steeped in Justice Department procedures and norms, and as a judge his decisions were thorough but "judicially modest," said Jamie Gorelick, a lawyer who served as deputy attorney general in the 1990s and has been a Garland colleague and friend for decades.

"His view was, you do what you need to thoroughly and well and you don't reach, you don't do more than you have to do," she said.

While Garland hasn't been directly involved with the Trump case since naming Smith as special counsel, the indictment handed down Tuesday reflects a similar approach, she said. "It doesn't rely on crazy new theories. It does not try to do more when less would be more effective," she said.

Indeed, the indictment covered much of same ground that played out on live TV, or was unearthed in the House investigation into the Jan. 6 insurrection, where violent protesters beat and bloodied police officers, smashed through windows and occupied the Capitol for hours.

If Smith loses the case, the Justice Department could lose credibility, particularly as the barrage of Republican attacks against the department grows. If prosecutors win, a former president could see time behind bars. If Trump is reelected, he could undo the charges and has said he plans to "completely overhaul the federal Department of Justice and FBI," part of a larger effort by Trump to push more power toward the presidency.

"There are pieces now in play that the Justice Department is going to continue to take on for years to come," said Robert Sanders, a senior lecturer of national security at the University of New Haven. "The next 12 months are going to be a critical stage in the history of this nation."

Against that fraught backdrop, the broader work of the department goes on.

On the same day Trump was arraigned in Washington, federal prosecutors announced guilty pleas in a racist assault on two Black men who were brutalized during a home raid in Mississippi. And U.S. officials also announced the arrest of two U.S. Navy soldiers for spying for China in California.

Garland, during his Philadelphia visit, went almost immediately back to the community event he'd gone

there to observe, chatting with police officers outside, as reporters shouted questions about the unprecedented indictment. But Garland wouldn't bite.

"I appointed Jack Smith special council to take on the ongoing investigation in order to underline the department's commitment to accountability and independence," he said. "Any questions about this matter will have to be answered by the filings made in the courtroom."

Trump and allies boost calls for Justice Dept. takeover in new attack on democratic institutions

By NICHOLAS RICCARDI Associated Press

In the two-and-a-half years since the Jan. 6 assault on the U.S. Capitol, Congress passed a bipartisan law closing loopholes in the complex process of choosing a new president that Donald Trump tried to exploit in his push to stay in office after losing the 2020 election.

Candidates for crucial swing-state election posts who backed Trump's push to overturn the 2020 election all lost their bids in last year's elections. And, this week, federal prosecutors filed four felony charges against the former president for his role in the scheme to overturn President Joe Biden's win.

But while those avenues for electoral mischief may be blocked or severely constrained in 2024, the prosecution — along with another federal indictment accusing Trump of mishandling classified information after leaving office — is providing additional urgency among conservatives for a plan to make over the U.S. Department of Justice.

That's a step democracy advocates warn could mark a new assault on the U.S. system should Trump win the presidency a second time.

"The incentives for him to move in that direction will be even stronger, and we should worry even more about the degree of control he'll attempt to wield over federal law enforcement," said Brendan Nyhan, a political scientist at Dartmouth College and co-director of Bright Line Watch, an academic group that monitors democracy in the U.S. "We have many examples from other countries demonstrating the dangers of a political takeover of law enforcement."

To be sure, other risks for American democracy beyond a takeover of federal law enforcement remain. The myth that Trump won the 2020 election has taken firm hold in the Republican electorate, with nearly 60% of GOP voters saying in an Associated Press poll last fall that Biden was not legitimately elected. The belief has led millions to distrust voting machines, mail balloting and vote counting while leading to death threats against election officials.

Numerous rural counties have seen election conspiracy theorists take control of elections and vote-counting, raising worries of more election chaos next year. Certification of election results remains a potential pressure point for delaying or undermining a final outcome in the next election — whether by local commissions, state certification boards, legislatures or even Congress.

Despite those potential risks, the accelerating GOP primary has highlighted a new worry for some — calls by Trump and his allies for more control of federal prosecutions. Several legal experts highlighted this as perhaps the most troubling threat to the country's democratic institutions should Trump — or another Republican — win the White House next year.

Currently, the president can appoint the attorney general and other top Department of Justice officials, subject to Senate confirmation, but has more limited tools to change the behavior of career prosecutors.

"Doing away with or diminishing the independence of the Justice Department would be a huge mistake," said Paul Coggins, past president of the National Association of Former U.S. Attorneys. "We can't afford for people to lose more faith in the system than they have now."

He said federal prosecutors have been paying attention to Trump's recent vows to seize greater control of the system.

"I think the fact that Trump has raised this idea sent shock waves through prosecutors everywhere," Coggins said.

Trump and other conservatives have argued that such a takeover is overdue, especially because they

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see the prosecutions against him as the 2024 campaign is heating up as nakedly political. Indeed, after his previous indictment, Trump vowed to pursue Biden and his family should he return to the White House.

"This is the persecution of the person that's leading by very, very substantial numbers in the Republican primary and leading Biden by a lot," Trump told reporters after his most recent arraignment. "So if you can't beat 'em, you persecute 'em or you prosecute 'em."

At a Republican Party dinner Friday night in Alabama, Trump repeated his claims that the latest criminal case he faces is an "outrageous criminalization of political speech," and said his "enemies" were trying to stop him and his political movement with "an army of rabid, left-wing lawyers, corrupt and really corrupt Marxist prosecutors," "deranged government agents and rogue intelligence officers."

He called the indictment "an act of desperation by a failed and disgraced, crooked Joe Biden and his radical left thugs to preserve their grip on power."

Allies of Trump's, including his former budget office head Russell Vought and Jeffrey Clark, a former Justice Department official who was involved enough in the push to overturn the election that he is referred to in the indictment as "Co-Conspirator 4," are working on a plan to increase control of the federal bureaucracy the next time a Republican is in the White House. That would include at the Department of Justice, where internal regulations limit the influence of the president and other political actors.

Vought and the organization he helps run to map out future control of the bureaucracy, the Center for Renewing America, did not respond to requests for comment.

The push does not only come from Trump, suggesting how his contentious views toward federal law enforcement have shaped a party that has long promoted itself as the protector of law-and-order. On the day the most recent indictment was released this week, Florida Gov. Ron DeSantis called for a new FBI director and the right for defendants to choose not to be prosecuted in Washington, D.C., a primarily Democratic city. House Republicans have empaneled a committee to investigate what they call the "weaponization" of federal law enforcement. FBI director Christopher Wray, a Republican nominated to the position by Trump, has become a frequent target of Republican attacks.

Some longtime conservatives say they've become disillusioned with the agency's conduct, especially in recent years as they see it pursuing Trump with more vigor than Democrats such as Biden's son Hunter.

"The Justice Department has become more politicized and leaned more and more to the left as the years have gone on," said Mark Corallo, who was communications director for the department under President George W. Bush.

Corallo, who described his politics as "Never-Again Trump," said career lawyers in the agency are reliably Democratic. But he also scoffed at the notion of being able to more tightly control them, absent reform of the civil service system that protects their jobs.

"I think there is a zero chance that the career people at the Justice Department will ever bend to his will," Corallo said.

Trump tried to enlist the agency in his fight to stay in office. Election conspiracy theorists urged him to use the Department of Justice to seize voting machines to highlight the search for fraud. Trump tried to get the agency to announce probes of some of his supporters' more paranoid theories of how the election was stolen, even after his own attorney general, William Barr, told him there was no indication of widespread fraud.

Wendy Weiser of the Brennan Center for Justice, said Justice Department attorneys helped stop Trump's attempt to stay in office, and worried that, if he becomes president again, there may not be similar safeguards the next time.

"Had the department not resisted the attempts to enlist it in this conspiracy, it could have actually led to a sabotaged election," she said.

What happens in future elections, voting officials said, is up to the voters themselves.

"Every American needs to consider what role are they going to play in this moment," Michigan Secretary of State Jocelyn Benson, a Democrat, said in an interview. "Are they going to potentially support candidates who would enable -- not just an obstruction -- but an elimination of justice? Or are they going to consider that when weighing their decisions at the ballot box next year?"

provided by the Justice Department, it could have a "harmful chilling effect on witnesses or adversely affect the fair administration of justice in this case."

Prosecutors' proposed protective order seeks to prevent Trump and his lawyers from disclosing materials provided by the government to anyone other than people on his legal team, possible witnesses, the witnesses' lawyers or others approved by the court. It would put stricter limits on "sensitive materials," which would include grand jury witness testimony and materials obtained through sealed search warrants.

A Trump spokesperson said in an emailed statement that the former president's post "is the definition of political speech," and was made in response to "dishonest special interest groups and Super PACs."

The indictment unsealed this week accuses Trump of brazenly conspiring with allies to spread falsehoods and concoct schemes intended to overturn his election loss to President Joe Biden as his legal challenges floundered in court.

The indictment chronicles how Trump and his Republican allies, in what Smith described as an attack on a "bedrock function of the U.S. government," repeatedly lied about the results in the two months after he lost the election and pressured his vice president, Mike Pence, and state election officials to take action to help him cling to power.

Trump faces charges including conspiracy to defraud the U.S. and conspiracy to obstruct Congress' certification of Biden's electoral victory.

It's the third criminal case brought this year against the the early front-runner in the 2024 Republican presidential primary. But it's the first case to try to hold Trump responsible for his efforts to remain in power during the chaotic weeks between his election loss and the attack by his supporters on the U.S. Capitol on Jan. 6, 2021.

After his court appearance on Thursday before a magistrate judge, Trump characterized the case as a "persecution" designed to hurt his 2024 presidential campaign. His legal team has described it as an attack on his right to free speech and his right to challenge an election that he believed had been stolen.

Smith has said prosecutors will seek a "speedy trial" against Trump in the election case. Judge Chutkan has ordered the government to file a brief by Thursday proposing a trial date. The first court hearing in front of Chutkan is scheduled for Aug. 28.

Trump is already scheduled to stand trial in March in the New York case stemming from hush-money payments made during the 2016 campaign and in May in the federal case in Florida stemming from classified documents found at his Mar-a-Lago estate.

Artificial intelligence is gaining state lawmakers' attention, and they have a lot of questions

By SUSAN HAIGH Associated Press

HARTFORD, Conn. (AP) — As state lawmakers rush to get a handle on fast-evolving artificial intelligence technology, they're often focusing first on their own state governments before imposing restrictions on the private sector.

Legislators are seeking ways to protect constituents from discrimination and other harms while not hindering cutting-edge advancements in medicine, science, business, education and more.

"We're starting with the government. We're trying to set a good example," Connecticut state Sen. James Maroney said during a floor debate in May.

Connecticut plans to inventory all of its government systems using artificial intelligence by the end of 2023, posting the information online. And starting next year, state officials must regularly review these systems to ensure they won't lead to unlawful discrimination.

Maroney, a Democrat who has become a go-to AI authority in the General Assembly, said Connecticut lawmakers will likely focus on private industry next year. He plans to work this fall on model AI legislation with lawmakers in Colorado, New York, Virginia, Minnesota and elsewhere that includes "broad guardrails" and focuses on matters like product liability and requiring impact assessments of AI systems.

Russia's war with Ukraine has generated its own fog, and mis- and disinformation are everywhere

By JIM HEINTZ Associated Press

TALLINN, Estonia (AP) — On the battlefields of Ukraine, the fog of war plagues soldiers. And far from the fighting, a related and just as disorienting miasma afflicts those who seek to understand what's happening in the vast war.

Disinformation, misinformation and absent information all cloud civilians' understanding. Officials from each side denounce devious plots being prepared by the enemy, which never materialize. They claim victories that can't be confirmed — and stay quiet about defeats.

None of this is unique to the Russia-Ukraine conflict. Any nation at war bends the truth — to boost morale on the home front, to rally support from its allies, to try to persuade its detractors to change their stance.

But Europe's largest land war in decades — and the biggest one since the dawn of the digital age — is taking place in a superheated information space. And modern communications technology, theoretically a force for improving public knowledge, tends to multiply the confusion because deceptions and falsehoods reach audiences instantly.

"The Russian government is trying to portray a certain version of reality, but it's also being pumped out by the Ukrainian government and advocates for Ukraine's cause. And those people currently also have views and are using information very effectively to try to shape all of our views of the war and its impact," says Andrew Weiss, an analyst at the Carnegie Foundation for International Peace.

THE 'FOG' IS NOT A NEW DEVELOPMENT

Even before the war began, confusion and contradiction were rife.

Russia, despite massing tens of thousands of soldiers on the border, claimed it had no intent of invading. Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy consistently downplayed the likelihood of war — an alarming stance to some Western allies — although the defense of Kyiv showed Ukrainian forces were well-prepared for just that eventuality.

Within a day of the war's start on Feb. 24, 2022, disinformation spread, notably the "Ghost of Kyiv" tale of a Ukrainian fighter pilot who shot down six Russian planes. The story's origin is unclear, but it was quickly backed by Ukrainian official accounts before authorities admitted it was a myth.

One of the most flagrant cases of disinformation arose in the war's second week, when a maternity hospital in the besieged city of Mariupol was bombed from the air. Images taken by a photographer for The Associated Press, which had the only foreign news team in the city, appalled the world, particularly one of a heavily pregnant woman being carried on a stretcher through the ruins.

The brutal attack flew in the face of Russian claims that it was hitting only targets of military value and was avoiding civilian facilities. Russia quickly launched a multi-pronged and less-than-coherent campaign to tamp down the outrage.

Diplomats, including Russia's U.N. ambassador, denounced AP's reporting and images as outright fakes. It claimed that a patient interviewed after the attack — who was standing and appeared uninjured — and the woman on the stretcher were the same person and that she had been a crisis actor. Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov alleged Ukrainian fighters were sheltering in the hospital, making it a legitimate target.

The patient who was interviewed muddied the situation by later claiming she had not given journalists permission to cite her and saying she had not heard planes over the hospital before the blasts, suggesting it could have been shelled rather than bombed. Russian authorities seized on those statements to bolster their claims, although the woman confirmed the attack itself was real.

A week later, Mariupol's main drama theater was destroyed in an airstrike even though the word "children" was written in Russian in large letters in two spots around the theater to show that civilians were sheltering there. The blast killed as many as 600 people.

Russia denied the attack, claiming again that Ukrainian fighters were sheltering inside and that the fighters themselves blew up the building.

RUSSIA MAKES ITS OWN CLAIMS ABOUT ITS PROGRESS

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The Russian ministry almost daily makes claims of killing dozens or hundreds of Ukrainian soldiers, which cannot be confirmed and are widely believed to be inflated.

In January, the Defense Ministry bragged that its forces killed as many as 600 Ukrainian soldiers in a missile attack on buildings in the city of Kramatorsk, where the soldiers were temporarily billeted. However, journalists including an AP reporter who went to the site the next day found the buildings without serious damage and no sign of any deaths.

Russia said the purported attack was in retaliation for a Ukrainian strike on a Russian base that killed at least 89, one of the largest known single-incident losses for Russia.

Sometimes the fact of shocking destruction cannot be denied, but who caused it is disputed. When a renowned cathedral in Odesa was heavily damaged in July, Ukraine said it was hit by a Russian missile; Russia said it was hit by the remnants of a Ukrainian defense missile.

The disastrous collapse in May of the Kakhovka dam, which was under Russian control, brought vehemently competing accounts from Russia — which claimed it was hit by Ukrainian missiles — and Ukraine, which alleged Russian forces blew it up. An AP analysis found Russia had the means and motive to destroy the dam, which was the only remaining fixed crossing between the Russian- and Ukrainian-held banks of the Dnieper River in the frontline Kherson province.

Both sides play at demonizing the other with claims of the other's devious plans. Sometimes one alleges the other side is preparing a "false-flag" attack, as when Ukraine claimed Russia planned missile strikes on its ally Belarus in order to blame Ukraine and to draw Belarus' troops into the war.

Russia and Ukraine both invoke the specter of nuclear disaster. Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov and Defense Minister Sergei Shoigu grabbed worldwide attention in October with claims that Ukraine was preparing a "dirty bomb" — a conventional explosive that spreads radioactive material. Zelenskyy in turn has repeatedly warned that Russia has planted explosives to cause a catastrophe at the Zaporizhzhia nuclear power plant, which it occupies. Corroborating evidence of either is absent.

FOG ALSO CLOAKS THE FUTURE

In the war, fog shrouds both events that occur and didn't occur — and obscures understanding of what may occur next. And it does not creep in on little cat feet, but spreads instantly as Russia and Ukraine each take advantage of social media, messaging apps and the world's hunger for news to put forth both facts and deceptions.

And what has or hasn't happened isn't the only fodder. What might or might not happen is fair game, too. Occasionally, dark allegations about what the other side is planning take a step further and complain about what supposedly won't happen.

When a Russian journalist died in an attack by Ukrainian forces in July, Foreign Ministry spokeswoman Maria Zakharova claimed within hours that a reaction to the death from international organizations was unlikely. She fumed that "pathological hypocrisy has long been a political tradition of Western liberalism and its unconditioned reflex."

Among those who deplored the reporter's death in the following days: the head of UNESCO and the International Federation of Journalists.

After clash over teaching on gender, psychology class may be available to Florida students

By ANNIE MA and ADRIANA GOMEZ LICON Associated Press

MIAMI (AP) — The first time the College Board bumped up against Florida Gov. Ron DeSantis's efforts to inject conservative ideals into education standards, it ultimately revamped the Advanced Placement course for African American studies, watering down curriculum on slavery reparations and the Black Lives Matter movement — and a nationwide backlash ensued.

Now, faced with altering its AP Psychology course to comply with Florida's limits on teaching about sexual orientation and gender identity, the nonprofit College Board is pushing back. It advised the state's school

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districts Thursday to not offer the college-level course to Florida's high school students unless it can be taught in full.

By late Friday, statements from both sides suggested students in Florida would be able to take the full course after all.

In a letter to state superintendents, Florida Education Commissioner Manny Diaz Jr. said the state believed the psychology course could be taught "in its entirety."

The College Board said it hoped Florida teachers now will be able "to teach the full course, including content on gender and sexual orientation, without fear of punishment in the upcoming school year."

With students preparing to return to school in less than a week in many school districts, it remained unclear whether any modifications to the course would be expected to comply with Florida's rules.

Parents and students were left trying to figure out what to do.

Brandon Taylor Charpied said his daughter, who goes to school in a suburb of Jacksonville, had been set to take an AP psychology course but made a last-minute switch a few weeks ago after "rumblings" about the rift between Florida and the College Board.

"To be fair, we saw the writing on the wall," Charpied said. "It's a very difficult situation for high schools to navigate right now with only days until the school year starts."

In Tallahassee, Florida's capital, the Leon County school district's superintendent met with high school teachers and principals to decide what to do about the roughly 300 students who had already registered for the course this year — and who bank on AP classes to earn college credits. In Orlando, Orange County Public Schools sent a message to parents who have children who were registered for AP Psychology to say they were working to come up with other options.

Because the College Board is standing by its decades-old psychology curriculum, school districts in the rest of the country are not being affected — unlike when it made changes to the African American studies curriculum.

In its statement Thursday, the College Board said DeSantis' administration "has effectively banned AP Psychology in the state by instructing Florida superintendents that teaching foundational content on sexual orientation and gender identity is illegal under state law."

Florida's Department of Education rejected the assertion that it had banned the course. The statement Friday from Diaz said the AP course can be taught "in a manner that is age and developmentally appropriate."

Under an expanded Florida law, lessons on sexual orientation and gender identity are not allowed unless required by existing state standards or as part of reproductive health instruction that students can choose not to take. In the spring the state asked the College Board and other providers of college-level courses to review their offerings for potential violations.

The College Board refused to modify the psychology course to comply with Florida's new legislation. The course asks students to describe how sex and gender influence a person's development — topics that have been part of the curriculum since it launched 30 years ago.

In standing firm against pressure from Florida officials, the College Board, which administers the SAT and AP exams, has acknowledged missteps in the way it handled the African American studies curriculum.

"We have learned from our mistakes in the recent rollout of AP African American Studies and know that we must be clear from the outset where we stand," the non-profit said in June.

Literacy and free-speech experts lauded the College Board's new approach.

"These concessions are not a strategy that's working," said Kasey Meehan, the Freedom to Read program director at PEN America, a nonprofit dedicated to the advancement of literature and human rights. "It's not like there's some common middle ground and then we've resolved it and moved on."

Meehan said that while other states may not have gone as far as Florida in asking for course revisions, legislation across the country is having a chilling effect on teachers at all grade levels. Even if concepts are not explicitly banned, many educators are left in the dark about what they may get in trouble for teaching in the classroom, she said.

"We have heard that it's hard to teach about everything from the Civil War to Harvey Milk, who is the first openly gay elected official in California," Meehan said. "There's just an increased culture of fear and intimidation that's playing out."

The American Psychological Association said Florida's new policy means students will receive an incomplete education.

"Requiring what is effectively censored educational material does an enormous disservice to students across Florida, who will receive an incomplete picture of the psychological research into human development," said Arthur Evans Jr., CEO of the association.

Big Ten grabs Oregon, Washington; Big 12 completes Pac-12 raid with Arizona, Arizona State and Utah

By RALPH D. RUSSO AP College Football Writer

Dealing a crushing combination to the Pac-12 on Friday, the Big Ten announced Oregon and Washington would be joining the conference next August, and the Big 12 completed its raid of the beleaguered league by adding Arizona, Arizona State and Utah.

The day began with hope and nine members for the Pac-12. It ended with the Pac-12 — with roots that date back a century and more NCAA championships than any other — down to four schools and facing extinction because it was unable to land a media rights agreement to match its competitors.

"Today's news is incredibly disappointing for student-athletes, fans, alumni and staff of the Pac-12 who cherish the over 100-year history, tradition and rivalries of the Conference of Champions," the conference said in a statement. "We remain focused on securing the best possible future for each of our member universities."

The super-conference era has arrived in college sports, and it has swallowed the Pac-12 — the conference the produced Jackie Robinson, John Elway, Jackie Joyner-Kersey and Barry Bonds.

After the Big Ten paved the way Friday morning for the Pacific Northwest rivals to join, the Ducks were first to make it official with a unanimous vote by the school's 13 trustees. The Big Ten a short time later said its presidents' council had voted to accept Oregon along with Washington and become an 18-team coast-to-coast conference, with four West Coast members.

"Our student-athletes will participate at the highest level of collegiate athletic competition, and our alumni, friends, and fans will be able to carry the spirit of Oregon across the country," Oregon President John Karl Scholz said.

The Big 12, meanwhile, had three more Pac-12 schools in its sights, a week after luring away Colorado. Arizona's entry was approved Thursday night, but the Big 12's long-brewing expansion plan was far from complete.

Once it became apparent on Friday that Oregon and Washington were leaving the Pac-12, Arizona State and Utah didn't have much choice but to jump, too. The Big 12 presidents OK'd the Sun Devils and Utes, and soon after the conference made it official. The Big 12 will be a 16-team conference, spanning from Florida to Arizona, in the fall of 2024.

"We are thrilled to welcome Arizona, Arizona State and Utah to the Big 12," said Commissioner Brett Yormark, whose aggressive approach in his first year on the job has sent shock waves across major college sports. "The Conference is gaining three premier institutions both academically and athletically, and the entire Big 12 looks forward to working alongside their presidents, athletic directors, student-athletes and administrators."

Beyond this school year, the Pac-12 is down to: Stanford, California, Oregon State and Washington State. The Big Ten's latest grab from its Rose Bowl partners comes a little more than a year after it landed Southern California and UCLA. The Big Ten will be the largest conference in major college sports, spanning 15 states from New Jersey to Washington.

"The Big Ten is a thriving conference with strong athletic and academic traditions, and we are excited and confident about competing at the highest level on a national stage," Washington President Ana Mari

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Cauce said.

Pac-12 leaders met early Friday to determine if its remaining schools would accept the potential media rights deal with Apple that Commissioner George Kliavkoff presented this week.

Two people with knowledge of the discussion between the Big Ten and Oregon said the Ducks were leaning toward staying in the Pac-12 late Thursday, boosting the possibility that others would stay put, too.

Instead, Oregon officials notified the Pac-12 early Friday they were still uncomfortable with the Apple deal and the school would be re-engaging with the Big Ten.

"We are disappointed with the recent decisions by some of our Pac-12 peers," Washington State President Kirk Schulz and athletic director Pat Chun said Friday before its Apple Cup rival announced it was leaving, "While we had hoped that our membership would remain together, this outcome was always a possibility, and we have been working diligently to determine what is next for Washington State athletics. We've prepared for numerous scenarios, including our current situation."

Former Big Ten Commissioner Kevin Warren had encouraged member schools to add Oregon and Washington after the conference landed the Los Angeles schools last summer, the blow that began the Pac-12's descent.

Less than two weeks ago, Big Ten Commissioner Tony Petitti said his presidents and chancellors wanted to him to focus on USC and UCLA's transition and not more expansion. Now, the Pac-12's two biggest remaining brands and perennial football powers are heading for a new home. Oregon's and Washington's closest new conference neighbor, the University of Nebraska, will be more than a 1,600-mile drive away.

The Ducks and Huskies will receive a reduced payout, Scholz confirmed, compared to current Big Ten members and to USC and UCLA, which are projected to receive more than \$60 million each in media rights revenue from the league starting next year. A person familiar with the negotiations said the Ducks and Huskies would receive about \$30 million per year for its first six years in the conference, with annual escalators and the ability to draw on future payments.

Washington and Oregon were charter members of the Pacific Coast Conference in 1916, the organization that eventually became the Pac-8, then 10, then 12.

While the USC and UCLA decisions to leave started the Pac-12's demise, last fall's move by the Big 12 and Yormark to get an early extension of its media rights deals with ESPN and Fox was key.

That left a thin market for Kliavkoff and the Pac-12, which ended up with the streaming-heavy proposal with Apple that would have left its schools lagging behind a paywall and other Power Five conferences in revenue.

Less than a month before a football season kicks off that is expected to feature one of the strongest and most exciting group of Pac-12 teams in years, it very well might be the conference's last.

Idaho bus filled with teen campers crashes on winding highway, injuring 11

BOISE, Idaho (AP) — A school bus carrying teenage campers rolled over on a winding Idaho highway Friday afternoon, injuring 11 people, the Idaho State Police said.

Seven of those hurt had critical injuries and four had non-critical injuries, according to an ISP news release. The Boise County Coroner's office had not received any reports of fatalities as of 5:45 p.m., coroner's investigator Noah Webster said.

The bus was carrying about 30 campers and staff back to Boise from the Treasure Valley YMCA's camp at Horsethief Reservoir. All of the teens on the bus were between 13 and 18 years old, according to ISP. They were all taken to area hospitals to be checked out, the ISP said.

The Valley County Sheriff's Office said they were notified of the crash about 3 p.m., and several law enforcement and emergency medical agencies responded.

St. Luke's Health System was caring for multiple patients at its Boise and Meridian hospitals and was "working to reunite families," said spokesperson Taylor Reeves Marschner.

Treasure Valley YMCA President and CEO David Duro said later Friday that it had been a very challeng-

ing afternoon but that all the campers, both on the bus that crashed and on a bus that was behind it, had made it back to the Boise area. The Sunday to Friday overnight camp session had just ended and he said riding the bus is normally a great part of the experience for campers.

"It's one of those experiences that every child should be able to enjoy safely and I don't know what happened," he said. "All we've been told is that it's under investigation."

The YMCA camp where children can engage in canoeing, archery, zip-lining and other outdoor activities opened in 2010 and is about 35 miles (56 kilometers) north of the crash site. The popular camp runs multiple sessions throughout the summer for kids between 2nd and 11th grades, and the YMCA frequently runs several buses full of kids to and from each session.

Another session is set to begin on Sunday. Duro said officials are now determining whether to hold it as scheduled. He said families always have the option of driving their children to camp instead of taking the bus.

"It's the first time we've ever had something like this and we hope it's the last time," he said about the crash, adding that they'll be awaiting any reports to review and see what can be done to make the journey safer.

The YMCA contracts with Caldwell Transportation to take kids on school buses to and from the camp, he said, adding that the company also transports many students to area schools throughout the school year. No one answered the phone at the company's Boise location on Friday evening.

The crash blocked both lanes of Highway 55 for hours. The two-lane road is one of the state's two major north-south routes, and it is frequently packed with weekend travelers headed from the Boise region to the vacation destination of McCall and popular area campsites.

Trump was told not to talk to witnesses in 2020 election conspiracy case. That could be a challenge

By COLLEEN LONG Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — It was a routine part of a federal court hearing: The defendant was told not to discuss the case with any witnesses without lawyers present.

But there's nothing routine about this case. The defendant is Donald Trump, accused of orchestrating a conspiracy to overturn the results of the 2020 election. The potential witness pool is vast and includes members of the former president's inner circle deeply involved in his reelection campaign, including some currently on his payroll. His lies about the election — which form the basis of the charges — are repeated in nearly every speech he gives.

"The standard language may not work here, when you have thousands of Americans who could be witnesses and he continues to have daily contact with people who may be involved," said Laurie Levenson, a law professor at Loyola Law School of Loyola Marymount University in Los Angeles. "Everything is more complicated in this case because of who the defendant is, what he has done and that he wants to be president again."

The issue raised its head quickly. On Friday, just a day after his latest arraignment, Trump made this proclamation, in all capital letters, on his Truth Social site: "If you go after me, I'm coming after you."

Federal prosecutors alerted the judge overseeing the case to Trump's post. In a court filing, they sought a protective order limiting what sensitive information Trump and his legal team could share publicly about the case.

Speaking Friday at the Alabama Republican Party's annual Summer Dinner, Trump portrayed himself as the victim of political persecution, telling the crowd, "They want to take away my freedom because I will never let them take away your freedom."

He is set to deliver the keynote speech at the South Carolina GOP's 56th Annual Silver Elephant Gala on Saturday.

As his campaign unfolds, the potential witness pool in his latest case is very broad. The congressional hearings on the Jan. 6, 2021, Capitol riot could offer some insight — those interviews spanned more than

1,000 people, and included some of Trump's closest advisers and family members, including his daughter Ivanka and his son Donald Trump Jr.

So it's possible he may already be talking about the case in front of witnesses.

Even as he traveled to Washington Thursday for his arraignment, Trump was accompanied by top aides including Jason Miller, a communications staffer who had been featured heavily in the Jan. 6 congressional hearings, and Boris Epshteyn, a longtime adviser who was part of the efforts to overturn the election results by organizing fake electors. The complications reflect the reality that Trump's campaign and his legal issues are now intertwined.

"The legal messaging is the political messaging and the political messaging is the legal messaging," Trump campaign spokesman Steven Cheung said before the latest indictment. "It's part of what we're running on. Trump has made the legal issues a big focus of his campaign and from our standpoint, it's messaging that works."

Trump makes reference to the 2020 election in almost every speech he gives, telling his supporters that he ran twice and won twice as he vows to do it again. Trump's speeches also often include extensive discussion of the cases he faces as he tries to cast the investigations as part of a politicized effort to damage his candidacy.

And many close advisers are potential witnesses. His 2024 campaign includes some, like Miller, who worked for his 2020 effort, as well as some new leaders who were not involved in his efforts to overturn the election.

The issue has come up before, after Trump was charged by federal prosecutors with illegally hoarding classified records at his Florida Mar-a-Lago estate and rejecting government demands to give them back.

In that case, there was a back-and-forth between the judge and Trump lawyers over whether he could speak to his co-defendant, valet Walt Nauta. Trump's attorney Todd Blanche noted that Nauta and potential witnesses are people with whom Trump interacts daily, whether at his Mar-a-Lago resort in Florida or his other clubs.

The judge said he could speak with Nauta, just not about the case. Nauta was with Trump again in Washington on Thursday, holding an umbrella as the former president spoke to reporters before he boarded a plane back to Bedminster, New Jersey.

The former president and current Republican front-runner said on the tarmac that the latest case was "persecution" of a political opponent by President Joe Biden.

During his arraignment in Washington, where he pleaded not guilty to four counts, including conspiracy to defraud the United States, he agreed not to talk about the case with any witnesses without lawyers present, and not to attempt to influence any potential jurors or tamper with witnesses.

U.S. Magistrate Judge Moxila Upadhyaya told him that if he failed to comply with any conditions of his release, a warrant might be issued for his arrest. A formal witness list is usually presented closer to trial, though prosecutors often signal candidates earlier in the process.

The former president is not known to hold back or refrain from talking about off-limits subjects. He's also been accused of defying court orders before, and he's already been reprimanded by one judge overseeing a hush-money prosecution to refrain from comments that were "likely to incite violence or civil unrest."

Georgia prosecutors have also been probing Trump and his allies for their efforts to overturn his election loss in that state.

Shots again fired at site of Parkland school massacre in reenactment after lawmakers visit

By TERRY SPENCER and FREIDA FRISARO Associated Press

PARKLAND, Fla. (AP) — Gunfire erupted again at Parkland's Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School on Friday as part of a reenactment by ballistics experts of the 2018 massacre that left 14 students and three staff members dead.

Two shots were heard by reporters sitting about 200 yards (180 meters) from the building about noon

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and then two more about an hour later. A few hours later, the fire alarm went off, just like it did during the Valentine's Day 2018 attack, but no shots were heard underneath it. During the massacre, 139 shots were fired.

The reenactment is part of a lawsuit by the victims' families and the wounded that accuses the Broward County deputy assigned to the school, Scot Peterson, of failing in his duty to protect them and their loved ones. Peterson, who was acquitted at a criminal trial in June, has said that because of echoes he could not pinpoint the shooter's location.

David Brill, the attorney overseeing the reenactment on behalf of the families, did not return a call from The Associated Press seeking comment Friday. He told the South Florida Sun-Sentinel that 49 rounds were fired Friday and that the test showed Peterson would have heard the shots and known their location.

The reenactment began shortly after nine members of Congress toured the blood-stained and bullet-pocked halls of the three-story classroom building where Nikolas Cruz carried out his six-minute attack. The building has been kept standing behind a locked chain-link fence to serve as evidence during Cruz's trial last year.

The shooting sparked a nationwide movement for gun control and traumatized the South Florida community. Cruz, a 24-year-old former Stoneman Douglas student, pleaded guilty in 2021 and was sentenced to life in prison.

The experts were firing with an AR-15-style semiautomatic rifle identical to the one Cruz used, and the bullets were to be caught by a safety device.

Peterson got within feet of the building's door and drew his gun, but backed away and stood next to an adjoining building for 40 minutes, making radio calls. He has said he would have charged into the building if he had known the shooter's location.

Families of the victims who filed the lawsuit contend Peterson knew Cruz's location, but retreated out of cowardice.

Peterson, 60, was the first U.S. law enforcement officer ever tried criminally for conduct during an on-campus shooting.

The burden of proof is lower in the civil lawsuit, however. Circuit Judge Carol-Lisa Phillips allowed the reenactment, but made clear she was not ruling on whether the recording will be played at trial. That will have to be argued later, she said. It is likely Peterson's attorneys will oppose the attempt.

No trial date has been set. The families and wounded are seeking unspecified damages.

Earlier in the day, six Democrats and three Republicans from the House School Safety and Security Caucus toured the building for almost two hours — an experience few have had since the shooting. They called it a "time-capsule" of the attack's devastation.

Broken glass still litters the floor, along with wilted roses, deflated balloons and discarded gifts. Opened textbooks and laptop computers remain on students' desks — at least those that weren't toppled during the chaos.

In one classroom, there is an unfinished chess game one of the slain students had been playing, the pieces unmoved. Reporters were barred from Friday's tour, but The Associated Press was one of five media outlets allowed inside after Cruz's jury went through last year.

"We just had a shared experience that will transform our lives for the rest of our lives. To see the blood of children on the floor in a school together, is going to change the way we interact and collaborate," New York Democratic Rep. Jamaal Bowman said.

After the tour, the members traveled to a nearby hotel to discuss school safety issues with parents and wives who lost loved ones in the attack. The roundtable meeting was being held in the same ballroom where the families learned of their loved ones' deaths.

The members said that while there is wide disagreement on issues such as gun control, there should be bipartisan support for providing federal funds for installing bullet-proof glass and panic buttons in classrooms, mental health assistance for students and better training for on-campus police officers.

Florida Democratic Rep. Jared Moskowitz, a Stoneman Douglas graduate whose district includes Parkland, said Congress owes it to the families who have lost children, parents and spouses in school shootings to

pass such measures and make campuses safer. He said seeing the scene allowed the members to fully grasp what happened.

"You can read about it all day long, and debate it all day long, but it is not the same as walking through the school," said Moskowitz, who organized the tour with Republican Rep. Mario Diaz-Balart of Miami. Moskowitz pointed out that Parkland, an upscale suburb of Fort Lauderdale, is considered Florida's safest city.

"It is now the home of the largest (high) school shooting in our history," he said.

Diaz-Balart said that while touring the building, he was struck by how fast the lives were lost — all the fatalities happened within the attack's first four minutes.

"The key is not just to come and see, the key is that we can put aside our differences, put aside the perfect and try to get some good things done. I am optimistic," Diaz-Balart said.

The building is scheduled to be demolished soon, but the House members and families are hoping it can be kept up a bit longer so more state and federal legislators and White House advisors can also tour it.

Parent Max Schachter, whose 14-year-old son Alex died in the shooting, suggested the tour and school safety roundtable to Moskowitz.

"We can come together and enact common-sense school safety solutions so this will never happen again," said Schachter, a former insurance broker who is now a full-time campus safety advocate. "Safety has to come before education — you cannot teach dead kids."

The school is closed for the summer and no students or teachers were on campus Friday.

Thousands overwhelm New York's Union Square for streamer giveaway, tossing chairs and pounding cars

By BOBBY CAINA CALVAN Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — A crowd of thousands that packed Manhattan's Union Square for a popular livestreamer's hyped giveaway got out of hand Friday afternoon, with some clambering on vehicles, hurling chairs and throwing punches, leaving police struggling to rein in the chaos.

Aerial TV news footage showed a surging, tightly packed crowd running through the streets, scaling structures in the park and snarling traffic. Shouting teenagers swung objects at car windows, threw paint cans and set off fire extinguishers. Some people climbed on a moving vehicle, falling off as it sped away. Others pounded on or climbed atop city buses.

By 5:30 p.m., police officers in growing numbers had regained control of much of the area, but small skirmishes were still breaking out, with young people knocking over barricades and throwing bottles and even a flowerpot at officers. Police were seen wrestling people to the ground and chasing them down the street.

Police planned to charged the streamer, Kai Cenat, with multiple counts of inciting a riot, unlawful assembly and possibly other crimes, NYPD Chief of Department Jeffrey Maddrey said in the evening. Officers arrested 65 people, including 30 juveniles.

A number of people were injured, including at least four people taken away in ambulances, Maddrey said, adding that he saw other people leaving the area with bloodied heads.

"People were suffering out here," Maddrey said. Some motorists were trapped as people climbed on top of their cars. Maddrey said several police vehicles were damaged, including his.

On his Instagram feed, Cenat had promoted a giveaway at 4 p.m. in the park. People started lining up as early as 1:30 p.m. By 3 p.m., the crowd had swelled and was getting unruly. Some young people leaving the park said they had come expecting to get a computer for livestreaming or a new PlayStation.

Skylark Jones, 19, and a friend came to see Cenat and try to get something from his giveaway. When they arrived the scene was already packed. Bottles were being thrown. There was a commotion even before Cenat appeared, they said.

"It was a movie," Jones said. Police "came with riot shields, charging at people."

Cenat, 21, is a video creator with 6.5 million followers on the platform Twitch, where he regularly

livestreams. He also boasts 4 million subscribers on YouTube, where he posts daily life and comedy vlogs ranging from "Fake Hibachi Chef Prank!" to his most recent video, "I Rented Us Girlfriends In Japan!"

His 299 YouTube videos have amassed more than 276 million views among them. In December he was crowned streamer of the year at the 12th annual Streamy Awards. Messages sent to his publicist, management company and an email address for business inquiries were not immediately returned.

Livestreaming on Twitch from a vehicle as the event gathered steam, Cenat displayed gift cards he planned to give away. Noting the crowd and police presence, he urged, "Everybody who's out there, make sure y'all safe. ... We're not gonna do nothin' until it's safe."

Eventually he and an entourage got out of the vehicle and hustled through a crowd, crossed a street and went into the park, where Cenat was surrounded by a cheering, shoving mob.

Maddrey said Cenat at some point in the afternoon was removed "for his safety" and police were in contact with him. Videos posted on social media and taken from news helicopters showed Cenat being lifted over a fence and out of the crowd and then placed in a police vehicle.

The police chief also said a city bus filled with people who were arrested came under attack, and more police had to be sent to protect it. Numerous people were seen in hand restraints, sitting on the sidewalks, and multiple young men were taken away in handcuffs.

"We have encountered things like this before but never to this level of dangerousness," Maddrey said. Three officers were hurt, including a sergeant who broke a hand. A teenager was injured by exploding fireworks, he said.

Businesses adjoining the square closed their doors. Carina Treile, manager of Petite Optique, an eyeglass shop nearby, sheltered inside while police dispersed the crowd.

"Usually with people giving away free stuff, it's never like this. It's very organized," she said. "And here we have a very chaotic scene."

Loud bangs at one point frightened some in the crowd.

"That was a little bit scary, especially when people started running," Treile said.

Police, some with batons, used metal barricades to push the crowd back and loudspeakers to repeatedly declare the gathering unlawful.

"Listen, we're not against young people having a good time, we're not against young people gathering," Maddrey said. "But it can't be to this level where it's dangerous. A lot of people got hurt today."

The first pill to treat postpartum depression has been approved by US health officials

By MATTHEW PERRONE AP Health Writer

WASHINGTON (AP) — Federal health officials have approved the first pill specifically intended to treat severe depression after childbirth, a condition that affects thousands of new mothers in the U.S. each year.

The Food and Drug Administration on Friday granted approval of the drug, Zurzuvae, for adults experiencing severe depression related to childbirth or pregnancy. The pill is taken once a day for 14 days.

"Having access to an oral medication will be a beneficial option for many of these women coping with extreme, and sometimes life-threatening, feelings," said Dr. Tiffany Farchione, FDA's director of psychiatric drugs, in a statement.

Postpartum depression affects an estimated 400,000 people a year, and while it often ends on its own within a couple weeks, it can continue for months or even years. Standard treatment includes counseling or antidepressants, which can take weeks to work and don't help everyone.

The new pill is from Sage Therapeutics, which has a similar infused drug that's given intravenously over three days in a medical facility. The FDA approved that drug in 2019, though it isn't widely used because of its \$34,000 price tag and the logistics of administering it.

The FDA's pill approval is based on two company studies that showed women who took Zurzuvae had fewer signs of depression over a four- to six-week period when compared with those who received a dummy pill. The benefits, measured using a psychiatric test, appeared within three days for many patients.

Sahar McMahon, 39, had never experienced depression until after the birth of her second daughter in late 2021. She agreed to enroll in a study of the drug, known chemically as zuranolone, after realizing she no longer wanted to spend time with her children.

"I planned my pregnancies, I knew I wanted those kids but I didn't want to interact with them," said McMahon, who lives in New York City. She says her mood and outlook started improving within days of taking the first pills.

"It was a quick transition for me just waking up and starting to feel like myself again," she said.

Dr. Kimberly Yonkers of Yale University said the Zurzuvae effect is "strong" and the drug likely will be prescribed for women who haven't responded to antidepressants. She wasn't involved in testing the drug.

Still, she said, the FDA should have required Sage to submit more follow-up data on how women fared after additional months.

"The problem is we don't know what happens after 45 days," said Yonkers, a psychiatrist who specializes in postpartum depression. "It could be that people are well or it could be that they relapse."

Sage did not immediately announce how it would price the pill, and Yonkers said that'll be a key factor in how widely its prescribed.

Side effects with the new drug are milder than the IV version, and include drowsiness and dizziness. The drug was co-developed with fellow Massachusetts pharmaceutical company Biogen.

Both the pill and IV forms mimic a derivative of progesterone, the naturally occurring female hormone needed to maintain a pregnancy. Levels of the hormone can plunge after childbirth.

Sage's drugs are part of an emerging class of medications dubbed neurosteroids. These stimulate a different brain pathway than older antidepressants that target serotonin, the chemical linked to mood and emotions.

How 6 Mississippi officers tried to cover up their torture of 2 Black men

By MICHAEL GOLDBERG Associated Press/Report for America

JACKSON, Miss. (AP) — Men who had sworn an oath to protect and serve were huddled on the back porch of a Mississippi home as Michael Corey Jenkins lay on the floor, blood gushing from his mutilated tongue where one of the police officers shoved a gun in his mouth and pulled the trigger.

As Jenkins writhed in pain, the six white officers devised a scheme to cover up dozens of stunning acts of brutality that they had just carried out during 90 minutes of terror against Jenkins and a second Black victim.

The officers planted drugs. They stole surveillance footage from the house. They tried to dispose of other evidence. They agreed on a set of lies that would further upend their victims' lives.

And that was just the cover-up.

Careful to avoid security cameras at the house, they burst in without a warrant, starting the physical, sexual and psychological abuse. They handcuffed Jenkins and his friend Eddie Terrell Parker and poured milk, alcohol and chocolate syrup over their faces. They forced them to strip naked and shower together to conceal the mess. They mocked the victims with racial slurs. They shocked them with stun guns.

The officers had meant to torture the men without leaving physical scars. But one shot Jenkins in the mouth. Miraculously, Jenkins survived.

The six officers pleaded guilty Thursday to a long list of federal civil rights charges. The Mississippi attorney general's office announced afterward that it had filed state charges that include assault, conspiracy and obstruction of justice.

Law enforcement officers are seldom charged for crimes committed on the job, and it's rarer still for them to plead guilty.

The charges follow an investigation by The Associated Press that linked some of the deputies to at least four violent encounters with Black men since 2019 that left two dead and another with lasting injuries.

The officers included Christian Dedmon, Hunter Elward, Brett McAlpin, Jeffrey Middleton and Daniel

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Opdyke of the Rankin County Sheriff's Department and Joshua Hartfield, a Richland police officer. They pleaded guilty to charges including conspiracy against rights, obstructions of justice, deprivation of rights under color of law, discharge of a firearm under a crime of violence, and conspiracy to obstruct justice.

The terror began on Jan. 24 in a racist call for extrajudicial violence that felt like it was from a bygone era.

A white neighbor phoned Rankin County Deputy Brett McAlpin and complained that two Black men were staying with a white woman inside a Braxton home. McAlpin told Deputy Christian Dedmon, who texted a group of white deputies so willing to use excessive force they called themselves "The Goon Squad."

"Are y'all available for a mission?" Dedmon asked. They were.

Opdyke "admits he was wrong for his part in the horrific harms" and "is prepared to face the consequences of his actions," attorney Jason Kirschberg said in a statement.

Hartfield's attorney Vicki Gilliam said while he "cannot change what he did, he has shown that he is ready to accept consequences."

Attorneys for the other men did not respond to requests for comment.

The deputies were under the watch of Sheriff Bryan Bailey, who called it the worst episode of police brutality he has seen in his career.

Black residents on Friday expressed revulsion at the former officers' actions, gratitude toward Jenkins and Parker for speaking out about their treatment, and relief that the officers were being brought to justice.

"When the people that you expect to protect you are the people who are hurting you and killing you, there just are no words to describe how it has affected the mindset, the mental state of our people," said Angela English, the county's NAACP president.

Law enforcement misconduct in the U.S. has come under increased scrutiny. The 2020 killing of George Floyd by Minneapolis police ignited calls for sweeping criminal justice reforms and a reassessment of American race relations. The January beating death of Tyre Nichols by five Black members of a special police squad in Memphis, Tennessee, led to a probe of similar units nationwide.

In Rankin County, the brutality visited upon Jenkins and Parker was not a botched police operation, but an assembly of rogue officers "who tortured them all under the authority of a badge, which they disgraced," U.S. Attorney Darren LaMarca said.

The majority-white county is just east of the state capital, Jackson, home to one of the highest percentages of Black residents of any major U.S. city. A towering monument topped by a Confederate soldier stands across the street from the Rankin County sheriff's office.

Federal court records detail what happened.

As Jenkins lay bleeding, the officers knew the "mission" had gone too far. Instead of coming clean, they devised a hasty cover-up that included a fictitious narcotics bust and threats.

The officers warned Jenkins and Parker to "stay out of Rankin County and go back to Jackson or 'their side' of the Pearl River," court documents say, referencing an area with higher concentrations of Black residents.

Kristen Clarke, head of the Justice Department's Civil Rights Division, said the trauma "is magnified because the misconduct was fueled by racial bias and hatred" that recalled that a sheriff's deputy was also involved in one of Mississippi's most notorious crimes — the 1964 kidnapping and killing of three civil rights workers by Ku Klux Klan members.

After Dedmon summoned "The Goon Squad," the officers crept around the ranch-style home to avoid a surveillance camera. They kicked down the carport door and burst inside without a warrant.

Opdyke found a sex toy, which he mounted on a nearby BB gun and forced into Parker's mouth. Dedmon tried to sexually assault Jenkins with the toy. The officers used stun guns on them, comparing whose weapons were more powerful.

Elward forced Jenkins to his knees for a "mock execution," intending to fire the gun without a bullet. But it was loaded, and discharged, cutting Jenkins' tongue, breaking his jaw and exiting through his neck.

As Jenkins bled on the floor, the officers devised a cover story for investigators: Elward brought Jenkins into a side room to stage a drug bust over the phone and said Jenkins reached for a gun when he was

released from handcuffs.

Middleton offered to plant an unregistered gun, but Elward said he would use the BB gun. Dedmon volunteered to plant methamphetamine he had received from an informant.

Prosecutors in Rankin County initially charged Jenkins with a felony based on the methamphetamine. That was later dropped.

Opdyke put one of Elward's shell casings in a water bottle and threw it into tall grass nearby. Hartfield removed the hard drive from the home's surveillance system and later tossed it in a creek.

Afterward, McAlpin and Middleton made a promise: They would kill any of the officers who told the truth about what happened.

The officers kept quiet as pressure mounted from a Justice Department civil rights probe. One came forward in June, Sheriff Bailey said.

Bailey said Thursday that he was lied to and only learned the truth when he read unsealed court documents. McAlpin and Elward worked under Bailey for years and were sued several times for alleged misconduct.

The sheriff said the deputies violated existing body camera rules by not wearing them when in uniform. He promised to mandate body cameras be turned on with fewer exceptions and said he was open to more federal oversight. He also called the officers "criminals," echoing federal prosecutors.

"Now, they'll be treated as the criminals they are," U.S. Attorney LaMarca said.

Ukraine says its drones damaged a Russian warship, showing Kyiv's growing naval capabilities

By HANNA ARHIROVA and EMMA BURROWS Associated Press

KYIV, Ukraine (AP) — Ukraine said its sea drones struck a major Russian port Friday and damaged a warship in an attack that underlined Kyiv's growing naval capabilities as the Black Sea becomes an increasingly important battleground in the war.

The strike on Novorossiysk halted maritime traffic for a few hours and marked the first time a commercial Russian port has been targeted in the nearly 18-month-old conflict. The port has a naval base, shipbuilding yards and an oil terminal, and is key for exports. It lies about 110 kilometers (about 60 miles) east of Crimea, where Russia's Defense Ministry said it thwarted another attack.

The Security Service of Ukraine and the country's navy carried out the attack that damaged the Olenegorsky Gorniyak, a landing vessel of the Russian navy, according to an official with the security service. The official, who spoke on condition of anonymity because he was not authorized to give the information to the media, said the attack rendered the ship unable to perform combat missions.

Satellite photos analyzed by The Associated Press appeared to show the ship leaking oil. An image from Planet Labs, taken a few hours after the attack, showed a ship dockside with another vessel next to it. The ship in the image matched the measurements of the Olenegorsky Gorniyak, as well as known physical features of the vessel. Images posted on social media showed a ship listing.

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy noted that he had received a report from the country's security service, the SBU, but didn't say what was in it.

"I will only say that we are all grateful to the Security Service of Ukraine for pushing back the war to the aggressor state. What you bring to the world, you end up with the same," he said. Oblique references to attacks carried out against Russia are common for Ukrainian officials, who often do not take credit for them or only do so days after the fact.

Friday's attack was the latest in a series of strikes inside Russia, including two in Moscow that unsettled residents. It also reflected an increase in fighting in the Black Sea following the Kremlin's withdrawal from a deal that allowed Ukraine to export its grain through the waterway.

On Wednesday, Russian drones caused significant damage and a huge fire at grain facilities in the Odesa region. A day earlier, the Russian military said Kyiv's forces tried to attack two of its patrol vessels at sea southwest of the Russian-controlled city of Sevastopol in Moscow-annexed Crimea.

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Mykhailo Podolyak, an adviser to Zelenskyy, heralded the latest attack, saying it showed “drones are changing the rules of the game ... and ultimately destroying the value of the Russian fleet.”

Russia’s far superior navy has controlled the seas in the war so far. Its ships have regularly launched cruise missiles at major ports and cities across Ukraine, and they have largely blockaded the country’s coast as well as mined the Black Sea, making passage through it treacherous.

Podolyak’s remarks and other recent attacks in the sea and on the Kerch Bridge connecting Crimea to Russia could indicate Ukraine is trying to change that dynamic.

With the latest assault, “Kyiv showed that it can attack any vessel of the Black Sea Fleet, no matter the distance,” said Ukrainian military analyst Roman Svytan.

The end of the grain deal, under which ships carrying food from Ukrainian ports were promised safe passage, “untied Kyiv’s hands,” he said, predicting the frequency of attacks on Russian ships would only increase.

While Friday’s attack served as an important morale booster for Ukraine, challenging Russia’s naval power in the Black Sea will be hard for Ukraine.

The Russian Black Sea Fleet has nearly 50 warships, seven submarines and many support vessels, dwarfing the capability of Ukraine, which said it lost more than 80% of its naval capabilities after Moscow’s illegal annexation of Crimea.

Despite Russia’s superiority, Ukrainian missiles last year sank the fleet’s flagship, the Moskva missile cruiser, and destroyed the Saratov landing ship in the occupied port of Berdyansk. Several more vessels have reportedly been damaged.

The Russian Defense Ministry claimed that the navy fended off Friday’s attack, saying that its ships destroyed two Ukrainian sea drones. Footage published on Russian social media channels appeared to show a ship firing into the sea and a burning object exploding.

But other images that appeared on messaging app channels claimed to show the Olenegorsky Gornyak listing to one side, and some Russian military bloggers confirmed that it was damaged. Ukrainian media outlets also carried footage they said was from a drone’s onboard camera showing it approaching the Russian landing ship.

The AP could not verify the videos.

Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov refused to comment on the attack during a conference call with reporters.

The Caspian Pipeline Consortium, which operates an oil terminal in Novorossiysk, said maritime traffic was halted for a few hours but that its facilities were not damaged. The regional governor said there were no casualties.

Minutes after confirming the attack on the Black Sea port early Friday, Russia’s Ministry of Defense said it had also repelled another attack by Ukraine on Crimea. The ministry said air defense systems shot down 10 drones and jammed another three.

Videos shared on Russian social media channels reportedly from around the city of Feodosia showed what appeared to be air defense systems working, as well as loud explosions.

Last month, another Ukrainian attack struck a key bridge that links Russia to the peninsula it illegally annexed in 2014 and serves a key artery for sending military and civilian supplies to Crimea and sustaining Russia’s war effort.

In other developments:

— The U.N. atomic watchdog said its monitors at the Russian-occupied Zaporizhzhia Nuclear Power Plant have observed no mines or explosives on rooftops of reactor units 3 and 4 and on the plant’s turbine halls after having been given access the previous day. Ukraine’s military intelligence said in June, without providing evidence, that Russia had placed suspected explosives on the roof and was planning a “large-scale provocation.”

The International Atomic Energy Agency cited its chief, Rafael Mariano Grossi, saying that the the monitoring team “continues to request to visit the roofs of the other 4 units.” The IAEA has repeatedly expressed

concern about a potential radiation leak from the plant. Its six reactors have been shut down for months. — Saudi Arabia said it will host an international meeting on the Ukraine war on Saturday to be attended by national security advisers and other officials. The talks will be held behind closed doors, like the first such meeting in Copenhagen in June. Officials have said Ukraine will be represented, while Russia was not invited.

Saudi Arabia's assertive Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman has sought to position himself as a possible negotiator in the war. The kingdom hosted an Arab League summit earlier this year that President Volodymyr Zelenskyy attended. The kingdom maintains close ties to Russia through OPEC+.

— The Moscow-appointed governor of the Russia-occupied part of the Zaporizhzhia region, Yevgeny Balitsky, said several Ukrainian drones were shot down near the Sea of Azov port city of Berdyansk during the night.

After 27 years, authorities identify woman whose remains were found along Gilgo Beach parkway

By JAKE OFFENHARTZ, JENNIFER PELTZ and BOBBY CAINA CALVAN undefined

HAUPPAUGE, N.Y. (AP) — A woman whose remains were among discoveries that became known as the Gilgo Beach killings has been identified after 27 years, authorities said Friday, disclosing the latest in a series of recent revelations about the long-cold case.

Known until now to the public only as "Jane Doe No. 7," she was Karen Vergata, 34, Suffolk County District Attorney Ray Tierney told a news conference.

Her family last heard from her on Valentine's Day in 1996, when she called her father on his birthday, according to court papers he filed in 2015 seeking to have her declared presumptively dead.

The filing lays out years of relatives' and attorneys' efforts to find her and says Suffolk County police contacted the family as far back as 1997 about an unidentified woman's death. It was not immediately clear whether that woman was indeed Vergata, whose then-unidentified remains had been found the prior year.

Tierney credited a recent reinvestigation and new DNA sampling with finally establishing who she was. Yet much remains unclear about the investigative turns of a case that bedeviled detectives for over a decade and was beset by clashes among law enforcement agencies and changes in their leadership.

Friday's development was part of a reinvestigation that, last month, spurred the first arrest in connection with the long-unsolved string of killings of 10 people whose remains were found over a decade ago along a coastal parkway in Gilgo Beach on New York's Long Island.

But it is unclear whether Vergata's death might ever be tied to the ongoing case against Rex Heuermann, an architect who has been charged with three of the killings and named the prime suspect in a fourth. Tierney declined to comment on "what, if any, suspects" were developed in Vergata's death.

Some of Vergata's remains were discovered in 1996 on Fire Island. More of her bones were found in 2011 near Gilgo Beach, more than 20 miles (32 kilometers) west of the original location.

A woman with a "troubled lifestyle," in the words of father Dominic Vergata, she was living in a rented room in Manhattan's then-gritty Hell's Kitchen neighborhood.

Child-welfare officials had taken her two sons from her, and they had been adopted by a foster mother. She had not seen the young boys since 1992, but she visited her father and brother frequently, her father said in sworn statements in the court proceeding that sought to have her declared legally dead.

Karen Vergata had been arrested numerous times, according to documents in the court papers, which don't specify the charges or outcomes. Tierney said investigators believe she was working as an escort. Most of the other victims in the Gilgo Beach killings also were sex workers.

Vergata was behind bars again when she called her father for what would be the last time on Feb. 14, 1996, seeming "very troubled," he said.

"As the year began to progress, and no one in the family had heard from Karen, nor had been able to make contact with her, I became increasingly worried," he added.

The family learned she had never tried to reclaim bail money she had posted for a friend before Febru-

ary 1996, a police officer who frequently saw her around her neighborhood had not caught sight of her since then, and she'd missed a March 1996 court date, the father's court filing said.

Tierney said Friday that no missing persons report was filed when Vergata disappeared. But her father had said he tried to file a missing persons report with the New York Police Department in 1996 but was told he could not. A message seeking comment was left with the NYPD.

The family heard the next year, from a Suffolk County detective, that an unidentified woman's body had been found, the father said. He said relatives gave DNA samples but were told they did not match.

Over the ensuing years, the family and attorneys canvassed law enforcement and social services agencies in the New York metropolitan area and hired a private investigator, according to the court filing. Yet they turned up no sign of her.

The investigator, Jacqueline Buda-Moss, declined Friday to detail her search for Vergata but said she "determined that there were no records that she was still alive."

Vergata's father died in December, according to an obituary.

A new investigative task force, formed last year to investigate the Gilgo Beach killings, developed a DNA profile of the woman whom investigators called Jane Doe No. 7, Tierney said. Then the FBI used genetic genealogy techniques to identify her tentatively as Vergata and used a relative's DNA to cement the identification in October, he said.

"It's important that we remember and honor not only Ms. Vergata but all the victims on Gilgo Beach," the prosecutor said. He declined to answer any questions at the news conference.

Tierney said authorities held off releasing Vergata's name while contacting her relatives and furthering their investigation, which led last month to Heuermann's arrest in the deaths of Melissa Barthelemy, Megan Waterman and Amber Lynn Costello. Prosecutors say they also are working to charge him with the death of a fourth woman, Maureen Brainard-Barnes, but they have not yet done so.

Heuermann has pleaded not guilty, and his lawyer says the 59-year-old denies killing anyone.

Authorities have said he is unlikely to be responsible for all the deaths.

The case first drew headlines in 2010, when police began searching for a missing woman named Shanan Gilbert near Gilgo Beach. Instead, they discovered 10 sets of remains of other people, including eight women, one man and a toddler.

Gilbert's body was found in December 2011 in a marsh about 3 miles (5 kilometers) from the other 10 sets of remains. Investigators have found she drowned accidentally; her relatives have long disputed that determination.

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 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.

Kremlin critic Navalny convicted of extremism and sentenced to 19 years in prison

MELEKHOVO, Russia (AP) — A Russian court convicted imprisoned opposition leader Alexei Navalny on charges of extremism and sentenced him to 19 years in prison on Friday. Navalny is already serving a nine-year term on a variety of charges that he says were politically motivated.

The new charges are related to the activities of Navalny's anti-corruption foundation and statements by his top associates. It was his fifth criminal conviction and his third and longest prison term — all of which his supporters see as a deliberate Kremlin strategy to silence its most ardent opponent.

Russian state news agencies said he would serve this new term concurrently with his current sentence on charges of fraud and contempt of court. Navalny's spokeswoman Kira Yarmysh told The Associated Press it's the most likely scenario but that his team has not seen the text of the verdict yet.

The prosecution had demanded a 20-year prison sentence, and Navalny said beforehand that he expected to receive a lengthy term.

He was also sentenced in 2021 to two and a half years in prison for a parole violation. The extremism trial took place behind closed doors in the penal colony east of Moscow where Navalny is imprisoned.

Navalny appeared in the courtroom wearing prison garb and looking gaunt, but with a defiant smile on his face. As the judge read out the verdict, the politician stood alongside his lawyers and his co-defendant with his arms crossed, listening with a serious expression on his face.

It took the judge less than 10 minutes to announce the verdict and the sentence — something that in Russia usually takes hours and even days. The hearing was broadcast to reporters in a separate room, but the judge's speech was barely audible.

Navalny commented on the sentence in a social media post, presumably relayed through his team, saying that "the number doesn't matter."

"I understand perfectly that, as many political prisoners, I'm serving a life sentence, which is measured by the length of my life or the length of life of this regime," Navalny said, urging his supporters "not to lose the will to resist" in the wake of his sentence.

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Yarmysh confirmed the verdict to the AP, adding that Navalny was also ordered to pay a fine of 500,000 rubles (about \$5,200). She said that Navalny feels optimistic despite the harsh sentence, and "absolutely believes in what he's doing," adding that "it certainly helps him cope with all that and keep doing what he's doing."

The U.S. State Department condemned Navalny's new sentence as "an unjust conclusion to an unjust trial" and called for his immediate release.

"For years, the Kremlin has attempted to silence Navalny and prevent his calls for transparency and accountability from reaching the Russian people," it said. "By conducting this latest trial in secret and limiting his lawyers' access to purported evidence, Russian authorities illustrated yet again both the baselessness of their case and the lack of due process afforded to those who dare to criticize the regime."

The 47-year-old Navalny is President Vladimir Putin's fiercest foe and has exposed official corruption and organized major anti-Kremlin protests. He was arrested in January 2021 upon returning to Moscow after recuperating in Germany from nerve agent poisoning that he blamed on the Kremlin.

Navalny's allies said the extremism charges retroactively criminalized all of the anti-corruption foundation's activities since its creation in 2011. In 2021, Russian authorities outlawed the foundation and the vast network of Navalny's offices in Russian regions as extremist organizations, exposing anyone involved to possible prosecution.

U.N. human rights chief Volker Türk said Navalny's new sentence "raises renewed serious concerns about judicial harassment and instrumentalisation of the court system for political purposes in Russia" and called for his release.

One of Navalny's associates, Daniel Kholodny, stood trial alongside him after being relocated from a different prison. His lawyer told the independent Novaya Gazeta newspaper that Kholodny was sentenced to eight years in prison.

Navalny rejected all the charges against him as politically motivated and accused the Kremlin of seeking to keep him behind bars for life.

On the eve of the verdict hearing, Navalny released a statement on social media, presumably through his team, in which he said he expected his latest sentence to be "huge ... a Stalinist term." Under the Soviet dictator Joseph Stalin, millions of people were branded "enemies of the state," jailed and sometimes executed in what became known as the "Great Terror."

In his statement, Navalny called on Russians to "personally" resist and encouraged them to support political prisoners, distribute flyers or go to a rally. He told Russians that they could choose a safe way to resist, but he added that "there is shame in doing nothing. It's shameful to let yourself be intimidated."

The politician is currently serving his sentence in a maximum-security prison — Penal Colony No. 6 in the town of Melekhovo, about 230 kilometers (more than 140 miles) east of Moscow.

He has spent months in a tiny one-person cell, also called a "punishment cell," for purported disciplinary violations, such as an alleged failure to button his prison clothes properly, introduce himself appropriately to a guard or to wash his face at a specified time.

Yarmysh said that prison officials once again placed Navalny in the punishment cell right after his closing arguments in late July, and that he was released from it only on Friday for the verdict hearing.

On social media, Navalny's associates urged supporters to come to Melekhovo on Friday to express solidarity with the politician.

About 40 supporters from different Russian cities gathered outside the colony, one of them told the AP in the messaging app Telegram. Yelena, who spoke on condition that her last name was withheld for safety reasons, said the supporters weren't allowed into the colony, but decided to stay outside until the verdict as announced: "People think it's important to be nearby at least like that, for moral support. We will be waiting."

Navalny was ordered to serve the new prison term in a "special regime" penal colony, a term that refers to the Russian prisons with the highest level of security and the harshest inmate restrictions.

It wasn't immediately clear when he would be transferred to such a colony from the Melekhovo prison.

Yarmysh said Navalny's lawyers will definitely appeal the verdict, so it will not take effect until the appeal is ruled on.

Russian law stipulates that only men given life sentences or "especially dangerous recidivists" are sent to those types of prisons.

The country has many fewer "special regime" colonies compared to other types of adult prisons, according to state penitentiary service data: 35 colonies for "dangerous recidivists" and six for men imprisoned for life. Maximum-security colonies are the most widespread type, with 251 currently in operation.

Still, Navalny is "always in this optimistic spirit," Yarmysh said. "It seems to me that he is probably the biggest optimist among all of us," she added. "This happens because Alexei is absolutely convinced in what he's doing and confident that he is right. This, of course, helps him cope with everything and continue doing what he does."

Judge's decision could force change in Michigan's handling of newborn blood samples

By ED WHITE Associated Press

DETROIT (AP) — The state of Michigan must return or destroy dried blood samples from nine newborns or get approval from parents to keep them, according to the latest scathing opinion from a federal judge who found parts of a routine testing program unconstitutional.

U.S. District Judge Thomas Ludington is not interfering with the practice of pricking the heels of babies to draw blood to screen for more than 50 diseases, a longstanding procedure in hospitals across the United States.

Rather, he is overseeing a lawsuit that challenges how the Michigan health department handles leftover blood spots — and whether parents truly understand what they're doing when, following childbirth, they check a box allowing the state to use spots for research.

The form, for example, doesn't disclose that health researchers pay to use leftover blood spots and that police can get access to them in some circumstances. Ludington noted that newborn genetic markers are effectively stored indefinitely.

"The Fourth Amendment shelters citizens against governmental intrusions," the judge said in a lengthy opinion on July 31.

The state's "attempts to sidestep constitutional scrutiny fall flat in the face of the imperatives of the Fourth Amendment," Ludington wrote. "Even within the confines of medical and law-enforcement purposes, the retention and usage of blood samples bear implications that tread on personal privacy rights."

He said the state was relying on "sanctimonious rationales" for its conduct.

Ludington said the state must contact the parents of nine children in the lawsuit and explain several options, including the return of dried blood spots, destruction of the spots and any related data, or approval to continue storing them. The spots must be destroyed if no consent is given within a year.

The order is a follow-up to a 2022 decision in which Ludington said parts of the program were unconstitutional.

The lawsuit is limited to children of four parents and is not a class action lawsuit. That means the judge's order is not a sweeping remedy that applies to every blood spot stored at the Michigan Neonatal Biobank in Detroit.

But Phil Ellison, an attorney who won the case, said Ludington set a valuable precedent.

"He's set a template for millions of others whose blood samples are in the Detroit biobank unknowingly," Ellison told The Associated Press. "I think it's going to force the state to change the entire program — and change it for the better."

He said the vague form, and the timing of when parents are asked for consent, doesn't allow them to make a thorough decision about the use of a baby's blood spots.

"The judge did a really unique thing. He changed the balance here," Ellison said. "It's going to highly incentivize the state to change the process so moms and dads have all the information and can make an

informed choice.”

The current version of the consent form has been in use since 2017.

The health department is “reviewing this decision and determining next steps. At this time, no changes are planned,” spokesperson Lynn Sutfin said in an email.

In 2022, at a separate stage of the case, the health department agreed to destroy more than 3 million blood spots stored in Lansing, Michigan, but millions more remain under state control.

The department has defended the program. It notes that no blood spots are kept for research unless parents give permission, though the spots still will be stored for up to a hundred years even if permission is not granted.

Spots also can be destroyed upon request, but the number of people who have taken that step is small.

A code — not someone’s name — is attached to spots that are stored in Detroit, making threats to privacy during research “very low,” according to the state.

Research with blood spots occurs in other states, including California, New York and Minnesota, where samples can be kept for decades.

In 2009, Texas agreed to destroy millions of newborn blood spots that were stored without consent. Spots obtained since 2012 now are destroyed after two years unless Texas parents agree to have them maintained longer for research.

Pence seizes on Trump’s latest indictment as he looks to break through in crowded GOP field

By JILL COLVIN Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — As Donald Trump was being arraigned in Washington on yet another round of criminal charges, his running mate-turned-rival Mike Pence hurried to capitalize on the news.

Pence’s campaign unveiled new T-shirts and baseball caps for sale featuring the phrase “Too Honest” in big red letters — a reference to an episode in the indictment in which the former president called Pence to berate him over his refusal to go along with Trump’s scheme to overturn the results of the 2020 election.

“You’re too honest,” Trump allegedly scoffed at his second-in-command on New Year’s Day.

Pence’s decision to seize on the words marks a notable change in tone for a usually cautious candidate who has struggled to break through in a primary dominated by his former boss. Since the release of the indictment in which he plays a central role, Pence has criticized Trump more aggressively, casting himself as the person who stood up to Trump, averting catastrophe.

“The American people deserve to know that President Trump and his advisers didn’t just ask me to pause. They asked me to reject votes, return votes, essentially to overturn the election,” Pence told Fox News Wednesday. Had he listened to Trump and “his gaggle of crackpot lawyers,” Pence said, “literally chaos would have ensued.”

Pence’s response might seem like the expected reaction of a man who had to flee for his life on Jan. 6, 2021, when a violent mob of Trump’s supporters violently stormed the Capitol building, clashing with police and disrupting the joint session of Congress over which Pence was presiding. Trump had convinced legions of his followers that Pence had the unilateral power to undo the election, and Pence, his staff and family spent hours in hiding in a Senate loading dock as rioters chanted, “Hang Mike Pence!” outside.

But Pence’s new words stand out, in part because of just how staunchly he refused to publicly criticize Trump during his four years as vice president, dutifully and deferentially defending his boss, no matter what. His newly tough talk also contrasts with Trump’s other rivals, who have largely shied away from attacking the former president over his mounting legal troubles and efforts to remain in power.

“I think this is the ‘Enough is enough’ Mike Pence. This is the ‘Let’s do this thing,’ ‘Let’s get it done’ Mike Pence,” said his spokesman, Devin O’Malley.

Pence notably had refused to appear before the congressional committee that investigated Jan. 6, criticizing its work as politicized. And he fought a subpoena to appear before the grand jury that heard the election case.

But Pence had never shied away from defending his own actions on Jan. 6.

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His advisers had long acknowledged that many of the former president's followers continue to believe Trump's lies and blame Pence for failing to keep Trump in power. But they believed that if he addressed the issue head-on and spent time explaining his position to voters, they would come to respect his decision and adherence to the Constitution.

In his campaign launch speech, Pence put his actions at the forefront and directly assailed Trump, saying, "Anyone that puts themselves over the Constitution should never be president of the United States" and "Anyone who asks someone else to put them over the Constitution should never be president of the United States again." The press Wi-Fi password at the event underscored that message: "KeptHisOath!"

When a supportive super PAC first launched, allies said Jan. 6 would be a fundamental part of their messaging. The group's first ad featured footage from the riot and contrasted the two men's actions that day.

Since then, however, Pence has spent most of his energy casting himself as the most conservative candidate in the field on economic and social issues, particularly abortion, instead of going after Trump.

He did not issue statements in response to Trump's first two indictments. When he did react, he focused heavily on charges of a two-tiered system of justice and allegations that the Justice Department had been "weaponized" by the Biden administration. Pence had spent four years as a loyal Trump defender and, even when pressed, seemed unwilling to drop his guard.

But during a senior campaign leadership call Monday, as Washington awaited news of the indictment, Pence and his team discussed the idea of releasing a statement this time given his central role in the day's events. Some on the call urged Pence to go further than he had before and to deliver a message in line with what he'd said as he launched his campaign and argued Trump was unfit to return to the White House. If we're running against him, one person urged, let's run against him.

A draft of the statement was ready by Tuesday morning, before the indictment was unveiled.

"Today's indictment serves as an important reminder: Anyone who puts himself over the Constitution should never be President of the United States," it read. "Our country is more important than one man. Our constitution is more important than any one man's career."

The next day, Pence continued to drive that message, telling reporters at the Indiana State Fair that "Sadly the president was surrounded by a group of crackpot lawyers that kept telling him what his itching ears wanted to hear."

On Fox, he argued that "all the other legal issues around the president," including a possible additional indictment in Georgia, were a distraction.

Pence's team blasted out clips of the interview via email — "ICYMI: PENCE CHOSE THE CONSTITUTION OVER TRUMP AND ALWAYS WILL" — and another in which Pence clashed with a conservative talk radio host who had characterized Pence's stance on Jan. 6 as merely his "beliefs."

The attention sparked by the Trump indictment also brought a cash infusion. The Pence campaign received 7,000 new contributions in the first 24 hours, aides said. While 5,000 of those stemmed from the more than 1 million pieces of direct mail the campaign recently sent to voters, it nonetheless marked a sevenfold increase from the campaign's usual daily haul and will likely qualify Pence for the first GOP debate in the coming days.

Committed to America, the super PAC supporting Pence's candidacy, also increased its spending on digital ads amid heightened interest in Pence online.

"This is the first of many moments Pence will have between now and the Iowa caucus," said Scott Reed, the group's co-chair.

The attention caught Trump's notice as well.

"I feel badly for Mike Pence, who is attracting no crowds, enthusiasm, or loyalty from people who, as a member of the Trump Administration, should be loving him," Trump wrote on his Truth Social network.

Soon after, the Pence campaign decided to move forward with the new merchandising plan.

While some outside allies had long believed that Trump would eventually face charges and that Pence would have to respond more forcefully, Marc Short, who was Pence's chief of staff on Jan. 6 and was referenced several times in the indictment, said Pence had grown increasingly tired of Trump's bad-mouthing.

"I just think there's the reality that for 2 1/2 years, the president has misrepresented the events of that day and grossly distorted what the vice president's authority was and knowingly presented that in false ways to the American people. And I think that there's an understandable frustration," he said.

While Short believes most Republican voters would rather be talking about other issues and focusing on President Joe Biden, he said he always believed Pence's actions that day would serve as a point of strength. "I think people respect him for upholding his oath under enormous pressure," he said.

Fewer Americans got jobs in July than expected. But a steady market suggests US may avoid recession

By PAUL WISEMAN and RODRIQUE NGOWI AP Economics Writer

WASHINGTON (AP) — The job market has cooled over the summer. But it's still strong enough to defy predictions that higher interest rates would tip the United States into recession.

U.S. employers added 187,000 jobs last month, fewer than expected. But the unemployment rate dipped to 3.5% in a sign that the job market remains resilient.

Hiring was up from 185,000 in June, a figure that the Labor Department revised down from an originally reported 209,000. Economists had expected to see 200,000 new jobs in July.

Still last month's hiring was solid, considering that the Federal Reserve has raised its benchmark interest 11 times since March 2022. And the Fed's inflation fighters will welcome news that more Americans entered the job market last month, easing pressure on employers to raise wages to attract and keep staff.

"This is a good strong report," said Julia Pollak, chief economist at the jobs website ZipRecruiter. "The worst fears that people had of a painful downturn, a loss of jobs, longer unemployment durations, all those things — those are not coming to pass."

Unemployment fell to a notch above a half century low as 152,000 Americans entered the job force. The number of unemployed fell by 116,000.

Despite the influx of workers, average hourly wages rose 0.4% from June and 4.4% from a year earlier — numbers that were hotter than expected and are likely to worry the Fed.

The Labor Department revised payroll figures down for both May and June, reducing the number of jobs created in those months by 49,000. With the revisions, June and July were "the two weakest monthly gains in two-and-a-half years," noted Paul Ashworth, chief North America economist at Capital Economics.

In July, health care companies added 63,000 jobs. But temporary help jobs — often seen as a sign of where the job market is headed — fell by 22,000. And factories cut 2,000 jobs.

Eugene Lupario, who owns the SVS Group staffing firm in Oakland, California, is seeing signs of a labor market slowdown — though certain businesses, such as restaurants and bars, are still hiring aggressively. "Interest rates have had an impact," he said. Banks and home lenders have been hit hard by higher borrowing costs and aren't looking for much help. "They're not getting new loans. They're not getting refis," Lupario said. "Because rates are where they are, nobody's going out there and buying first or second homes right now."

And he said that some of the pandemic hiring frenzy has receded. "During COVID, a nurse, an RN, could ask for and get \$100 an hour," Lupario said. But hospitals are "not paying \$100 an hour anymore. They're paying pre-COVID rates at \$75 to \$85 an hour. Those same nurses that were making 100 bucks an hour are sitting on the sidelines maybe waiting for somebody to offer them \$100 an hour, not realizing that they're probably not going to get it."

The U.S. economy and job market have repeatedly confounded predictions of an impending recession. Increasingly, economists are expressing confidence that inflation fighters at the Federal Reserve can pull off a rare "soft landing" — raising interest rates just enough to rein in rising prices without tipping the world's largest economy into recession. Consumers are feeling sunnier too: The Conference Board, a business research group, said that its consumer confidence index last month hit the highest level in two years.

"These numbers," acting Labor Secretary Julie Su said after the jobs report came out, "are inconsistent

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with recession.”

There’s other evidence the job market, while still healthy, is losing momentum. The Labor Department reported Tuesday that job openings fell below 9.6 million in June, lowest in more than two years. But, again, the numbers remain unusually robust: Monthly job openings never topped 8 million before 2021. The number of people quitting their jobs – a sign of confidence they can find something better elsewhere – also fell in June but remains above pre-pandemic levels.

The Fed wants to see hiring cool off. Strong demand for workers pushes up wages and can force companies to raise prices to make up for the higher costs.

The U.S. labor market “is now cooling in a gradual and orderly fashion in line with the policy goals at the Federal Reserve, which points to a growing probability of a soft landing for the economy,” said Joe Brusuelas, chief economist for the tax and accounting firm RSM. “Demand for labor remains solid but is clearly cooling compared to the torrid pace in 2021 and 2022.”

Many businesses continue to struggle to find workers.

In New Hampshire, the unemployment rate was 1.8% in June, tied with South Dakota for the nation’s lowest. “The labor market is very tight in this area,” said Jeff Winslow, general manager at DiPrizio Pine Sales, a sawmill in Middleton, New Hampshire, near the Maine border that employs 50 workers and could use a few more. “The competition is very difficult to keep up with.”

Finding dependable help, Winslow said, is tough. So the mill pays a \$1 an hour bonus to workers who complete their scheduled shifts. He looks for workers on job websites. But gesturing at his roadside help-wanted sign, he said: “My last four or five good hires have come from this sign. People drive by and they see the sign and they see things going on, and it’s a small community; so they know someone that works here or has worked here, and they stop by, and we tell them our story.”

He said he had just talked to a recent high school graduate about joining the firm, promising to provide training. His pitch: “Once you become a skilled employee, we have to pay you to retain-you - or you’ll go up the street to another mill.”

Workers at the mill typically earn around \$50,000 a year. “Without a good solid workforce,” he said, “you don’t have anything, so you have to pay a competitive wage.”

In Goffstown, New Hampshire, Filtrexx Northeast Systems, which makes products that prevent soil erosion, just can’t find enough people locally. So it relies on foreign workers through the federal government’s H-2B visa program. “If it wasn’t for that type of program – with the job market how desperate as it is – I probably wouldn’t be here. I’d probably be out of business or retired or something,” said regional manager David Letourneau.

But even the visas can be a hassle. “We need them around April,” Letourneau said. “We don’t get them until June, July. One year we didn’t get them until October ... I wish I had an answer on the labor market.”

Pioneering mothers are breaking down barriers to breastfeeding in Olympic sports

By JOHN LEICESTER Associated Press

PARIS (AP) — When Clarisse Agbégénou won her sixth world judo title, confirming the reigning Olympic champion as one of the athletes to watch at next year’s Paris Games, the French star’s smallest but greatest fan was less wild about her mother’s newest gold medal than she was about her breast milk.

After a peckish day of few feeds — because mum had been busy putting opponents through the wringer — 10-month-old Athéna made amends that night.

“She didn’t let my boobs out of her mouth,” Agbégénou says. “I was like, ‘Wow, okay.’ I think it was really something for her.”

Breastfeeding and high-performance sports were long an almost impossible combination for top female athletes, torn for decades between careers or motherhood, because having both was so tough.

But that’s becoming less true ahead of the 2024 Olympics, where women will take another step forward in their long march for equality, competing in equal numbers with men for the first time, and with pioneer-

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ing mothers like Agbégnéou showing that it is possible to breastfeed and be competitive.

They don't pretend that late-night feeds, broken sleep, pumping milk and having to eat for two people are easy. But some female athletes are also discovering that juggling their careers with the rigors of motherhood can pay off with powerful emotional well-being.

Speaking in an interview with The Associated Press, Agbégnéou said she stunned even herself by coming back so quickly from childbirth to win at the worlds in May, with Athéna in tow and expecting to be fed every few hours.

In training, Agbégnéou would stop for quick feeds when Athéna needed milk, nestling her hungry baby in the folds of her kimono, while other athletes in the judo hall paid them no mind, carrying on with their bouts.

"I was sweating on her, poor baby," she says. "But she didn't pay attention. She just wanted to eat."

Women who have breastfed and carried on competing say that support from coaches and sports administrators is essential. Agbégnéou credits the International Judo Federation for allowing her to take Athéna to competitions. IJF officials sounded out other competitors and coaches about whether the baby was a nuisance for them and were told, "No, she was really perfect, we didn't hear the baby," she says.

"It's amazing," she says of her peers' acceptance and support. "They are part of my fight and I am really proud of them."

As well as Agbégnéou, three other women also asked and were allowed to nurse their babies at IJF World Tour competitions in the past six years, with arrangements made each time that enabled the moms "to care for the child and to not disturb other athletes' preparation," says the governing body's secretary general, Lisa Allan. She says the IJF is now drawing up specific policies for judokas who are pregnant or postpartum because "more and more athletes are continuing their careers whilst balancing having a family."

The Paris Olympics' chief organizer, Tony Estanguet, says they're also exploring the possibility of providing facilities for nursing athletes at the Games.

"They should have access to their children — for the well-being of the mothers and the children," he said in an AP interview. "The status of athletes who are young mothers needs to evolve a bit. We need to find solutions to perhaps make it easier for these athletes to bring babies" into the Olympic village where athletes are housed.

For some breastfeeding athletes, being a pioneer is part of the kick.

Two-time Olympic rowing champion Helen Glover, now aiming for her fourth Summer Games, gave birth to twins at the start of the COVID-19 outbreak, breastfed them and then came out of what she'd intended to be retirement to compete at the pandemic-delayed Tokyo Games in 2021. Glover was the first rower to compete for Britain at the Olympics as a mother.

Glover's eldest, Logan, lost interest in her milk about the time of his first birthday, but twins Kit and Willow kept feeding to 14 months old. She says that mixing her punishing rowing training with long feeds for two babies was "very draining. It was taking every calorie I had."

"But I could do it because it was my own time and my own choice," she says.

"Everyone should have the choice," Glover adds. "Our bodies ... are sometimes very changed through childbirth and pregnancy and breastfeeding. So the answers are never going to be one-size-fits-all. But I think it's really exciting that these conversations are even being had."

For some athletes, Milk Stork has also been a help. The U.S.-based transporter ships working moms' milk when they're separated from their babies. It says it shipped milk pumped by athletes who competed at the 2021 Paralympic Games in Tokyo and also transported 21 gallons (80 liters) of milk from coaches, trainers and other support staff at the Olympics that year.

The daughter of British archery athlete Naomi Folkard was just 5 1/2-months old and breastfeeding exclusively when her mother traveled to Tokyo for her fifth and final Olympic Games.

Nursing mothers successfully pushed to be able to take babies to those Olympics, held with social distancing and without full crowds because of the coronavirus pandemic. Rather than put her daughter, Emily, through the ordeal of having to live apart from her, in a Tokyo hotel outside of the athletes' village, Folkard

reluctantly left her behind with a large stock of frozen milk. She built that up over months, pumping into the night so Emily wouldn't go hungry while she was in Japan.

But that created another problem: Because Folkard's breasts had become so good at making milk, she had to pump regularly at the Games to stop them from becoming painfully swollen. She threw that milk away.

"I was having to get up in the night and pump just because my supply was so much," she says. "It wasn't great for performance preparation really. But I did what I had to do to be there."

And with each drop, progress.

"There's still a long way to go, but people are talking about it now. Women aren't retiring to have children. They're still competing," Folkard says.

"I feel like things are changing."

Global food prices rise after Russia ends grain deal and India restricts rice exports

By The Associated Press undefined

LONDON (AP) — Global prices for food commodities like rice and vegetable oil have risen for the first time in months after Russia pulled out of a wartime agreement allowing Ukraine to ship grain to the world, and India restricted some of its rice exports, the U.N. Food and Agriculture Organization said Friday.

The FAO Food Price Index, which tracks monthly changes in the international prices of commonly traded food commodities, increased 1.3% in July over June, driven by higher costs for rice and vegetable oil. It was the first uptick since April, when higher sugar prices bumped up the index slightly for the first time in a year.

Commodity prices have been falling since hitting record highs last year in the wake of Russia's invasion of Ukraine. Disrupted supplies from the two countries exacerbated a global food crisis because they're leading suppliers of wheat, barley, sunflower oil and other affordable food products, especially to nations in parts of Africa, the Middle East and Asia where millions are struggling with hunger.

The world is still rebounding from those price shocks, which have increased inflation, poverty and food insecurity in developing nations that rely on imports.

Now, there are new risks after Russia in mid-July exited a deal brokered by the U.N. and Turkey that provided protections for ships carrying Ukraine's agricultural products through the Black Sea. Along with Russian attacks on Ukrainian ports and grain infrastructure, wheat and corn prices have been zigzagging on global markets.

International wheat prices rose by 1.6% in July over June, the first increase in nine months, FAO chief economist Maximo Torero said.

More worrying is India's trade ban on some varieties of non-Basmati white rice, prompting hoarding of the staple in some parts of the world. The restrictions imposed late last month came as an earlier-than-expected El Niño brought drier, warmer weather in some parts of Asia and was expected to harm rice production.

Rice prices rose 2.8% in July from a month earlier and 19.7% this year to reach their highest level since September 2011, the FAO said.

More expensive rice "raises substantial food security concerns for a large swath of the world population, especially those that are most poor and who dedicate a larger share of their incomes to purchase food," the organization said in a statement.

It will be especially challenging for sub-Saharan Africa because it's a key importer of rice, Torero told reporters.

Even sharper was the jump in vegetable oil prices as tracked by the FAO, rising 12.1% last month over June after falling for seven months in a row. The organization pointed to a 15% surge in sunflower oil prices following "renewed uncertainties" about supplies following the end of the grain deal.

"While the world has adequate food supplies, challenges to supplies from major producers due to conflict, export restrictions or weather-induced production shortfalls can lead to supply and demand imbalances across regions," said Torero, the FAO chief economist. That will lead to a "lack of food access because of

increasing prices and potential food insecurity.”

He noted that global food commodity prices are different than what people pay at markets and grocery stores. Despite prices plunging on world markets since last year, that relief hasn't reached households.

Local food prices are still rising in many developing countries because their currencies have weakened against the dollar, which is used to buy grain and vegetable oil.

“That transmission from lower commodity prices to the final consumer prices, which include other components like logistics and other products we produce — bread, for example — is not yet happening in developing countries,” Torero said.

Moving back to higher food commodity prices “could make this lack of transmission take longer than expected,” he said.

Play it again, Joe. Biden bets that repeating himself is smart politics

By JOSH BOAK Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Joe Biden has his zingers (“This is not your father’s Republican Party”). He’s got patriotism (“This is the United States of America, dammit”). He’s got a geometry-based explanation on how to grow the economy (“from the middle out and the bottom up”).

Move over, Beyonce and Taylor Swift. Biden has his own greatest hits, and he’s keeping them on repeat. If you’ve heard one of the Democratic president’s recent speeches, you’ve basically heard them all — and you’re sure to keep hearing the same refrains in the year-plus leading up to Election Day 2024. People in Arizona, New Mexico and Utah will get to sample the playlist starting Tuesday, when Biden makes a three-day swing through the Southwest.

Biden knows where the country is in the arc of history (“at an inflection point”). He knows what the middle class needs (“a little bit of breathing room”). Did you know his wife, Jill, is from Philadelphia? Yep, he “married a Philly girl” and will be “sleeping alone” if he fails to root for Philadelphia sports teams.

The repetition is a strategic choice — one with a scientific basis in a society that is loaded with distractions. People need to see his TV ads and speeches dozens of times before they truly absorb them, his campaign believes. The president has built a multi-decade political career on repeating the same stories to explain the principles behind his policies.

“That’s communications 101 — developing a compelling message and repeating it again and again,” said White House communications director Ben LaBolt, who noted that marketing has a “rule of seven” in which a customer generally needs to see a message at least seven times before making a purchase.

LaBolt noted that most voters are busy taking their kids to soccer, making breakfast or commuting to their jobs. “They’re not consuming news like they’re sitting in the White House briefing room — you have to repeat a message over time so that people remember it,” he said, noting that this has become increasingly the case in a fractured media environment.

The president has staked his reelection on convincing a wary public that the economy is rock solid because of his policies.

That means Biden is putting his economic pitch on repeat, hoping to break through the daily clutter by delivering his message often enough that voters will recall it and accept it as truth. The White House thinking is that voters will turn out for him if they know that their new bridge, new factory or tax break for an electric vehicle came from his legislative accomplishments.

He’s even repeated in speeches the importance of repetition.

“We got to let people know what we’ve done and how we’ve done it and why we did it,” he recently told donors in Chicago after delivering a speech about “Bidenomics” — a term he has used at least 39 times during the past month in public remarks.

Philly girl Jill Biden has her own estimates for how often her husband deploys one of his other favorite phrases about the economy.

“It’s the future of our workforce, how we strengthen the economy from the bottom up and the middle

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out," she said at a recent childcare event. "Joe has said that, I think, a million times."

Close readers of the president's speeches will note that sometimes "middle out" and "bottom up" switch places. The first lady led with "bottom up," while her husband has lately been more of a "middle out" guy. But the administration sees the Friday jobs report as proof that the philosophy works as 187,000 jobs were added in July and the unemployment rate ticked down to 3.5%.

Repetition has been a time-tested strategy for politicians of all stripes and throughout the ages.

Donald Trump, the former president and early Republican front-runner for 2024, promised over and over to "build the wall" at the Mexican border. He dubbed his 2016 opponent "Crooked Hillary" and pledged to "drain the swamp" like a mantra. He likes to recite the lyrics to the Al Wilson song "The Snake" like an encore at a concert.

Bill Clinton signaled that he was a young Democrat with an eye to the future by frequently talking about building a "bridge to the 21st century." Republicans defined Democrats in the 1980s as "tax-and-spend liberals." In his famed "I have a dream" speech, Martin Luther King Jr. used the word "dream" 11 times.

Speaking in the Roman Senate more than 2,100 years ago, Cato the Elder famously ended his speeches with the well-worn line "Carthage must be destroyed." (Roman forces did just that a few years later.)

"Repetition increases retention," said Kathleen Hall Jamieson, a professor of communications at the University of Pennsylvania. "There is no hard and fast rule on number of reiterations needed to produce retention. Concise, vividly phrased messages that employ parallelism and alliteration are more readily remembered."

What Biden is trying to do is a bit more challenging: He's using repetition to try to change voters' decidedly negative views of the economy because cold hard data has not been enough. The low 3.6% unemployment rate and a decline in inflation over the past year to 3% annually has done little to boost his ratings.

Only 24% of U.S. adults described the economy as good in a June survey by The Associated Press-NORC Center for Public Affairs. Nearly two-thirds disapprove of how Biden has handled the economy.

"It's hard to get awareness levels up for policy accomplishments," said John Anzalone, Biden's 2020 pollster. Holding out repetition as part of the solution. "At the end of the day, people are going to know a heck of a lot about the roads and water systems and broadband that are being put around America."

Officials at the White House and campaign know Biden's standard stump speech isn't likely to make national news, particularly as his domestic travels pick up along with the campaign. They're more interested in getting local coverage that drives home the idea that his economic policies are having a tangible effect with voters on the ground.

There are early signs that people are starting to feel better about the economy. The Conference Board said Tuesday that consumer confidence has leapt to a two-year high and a key indicator is no longer signaling a recession.

But even with the best lines, repetition is not foolproof — and it can even tip over into annoyance if overdone.

"The liking of the message tends to follow a bell curve," said Juliana Fernandes, a communications professor at the University of Florida. "It's tiredness and boredom actually. If I'm not learning anything new from the message, I'm going to at some point dislike it."

For members of the news media — who can recite many of the president's lines verbatim — overexposure inevitably leads them to play down the very lines that Biden most wants to highlight.

The president acknowledged as much at a June fundraiser in Chevy Chase, Maryland, when he prefaced one of his boilerplate stories by allowing, "I apologize to the press for hearing me say this so many times."

That apology? He's repeated it many times over.

India's top court temporarily halts conviction of opposition leader for mocking Modi's surname

By ASHOK SHARMA Associated Press

NEW DELHI (AP) — India's top court on Friday temporarily halted the criminal defamation conviction of opposition leader Rahul Gandhi for mocking the prime minister's surname. His party said it would now seek to have Gandhi reinstated as a member of parliament.

A fierce critic of Prime Minister Narendra Modi and his main challenger in the 2024 polls, Gandhi was ousted from Parliament after his conviction by a magistrate's court in March.

The Supreme Court stayed the conviction, which means it is temporarily halted while the court goes into Gandhi's appeal in detail before issuing a final ruling.

Gandhi's disqualification as a lawmaker also now remains in abeyance, said Live Law, an online portal for Indian legal news. Congress party leader K.C. Venugopal said the party would approach the Parliament speaker to restore his seat.

The court's order also means that Gandhi will be able to contest next year's general elections unless a final court decision goes against him.

Scores of his elated supporters danced to drumbeats and exchanged sweets as Gandhi briefly greeted them at the party headquarters in New Delhi. "Truth prevails ultimately," Gandhi told reporters.

Gandhi's party president, Mallikarjun Kharge, said it was "time for them (Modi and his party leaders) to stop their malicious targeting of opposition leaders."

The ruling party's "conspiratorial hounding of Gandhi has been thoroughly exposed," Kharge said.

Despite its decision, the Supreme Court noted that Gandhi's comments were not in "good taste" and that a public figure ought to have been more careful while making public speeches.

The defamation case involved comments Gandhi made in a 2019 election speech. Gandhi asked, "Why do all thieves have Modi as their surname?" He then referred to three well-known and unrelated Modis: a fugitive Indian diamond tycoon, a cricket executive banned from the Indian Premier League and the prime minister.

The case was filed by Purnesh Modi, who is a member of Modi's Bharatiya Janata Party in Gujarat state but is also not related to the prime minister.

Gandhi was sentenced to two years in prison but the court suspended his prison sentence in April. The conviction was upheld by the Gujarat state High Court so he filed an appeal in the country's Supreme Court last month.

The Supreme Court said the trial judge gave the maximum sentence of two years to Gandhi. Except for the admonition to Gandhi, no other reason was given for that sentence, the court said.

The case against Gandhi, the great-grandson of Jawaharlal Nehru, India's first prime minister and scion of the dynastic Congress party, was widely condemned by opponents of Modi as the latest assault against democracy and free speech by a government seeking to crush dissent. The speed of his removal from Parliament shocked Indian politics.

Legal experts had earlier said Gandhi's case is unusual as defamation convictions remain rare, especially with the maximum sentence.

Gandhi on Wednesday reiterated in an affidavit before the Supreme Court that he is not guilty of the offense of criminal defamation. He said he will not apologize for his remark and that if he wanted he could have made it much earlier.

Gandhi also said that there is no community going by the name 'Modi' and so he cannot be accused of defaming Modi community as a whole. People having the surname Modi may fall into different communities and castes, he said.

Purnesh Modi said in his counter affidavit that Gandhi has shown arrogance rather than being apologetic.

India, with 1.4 billion people, is the world's largest democracy. However, Modi's critics say democracy has been in retreat since he came to power in 2014. They accuse his government of pursuing a Hindu nationalist agenda. The government denies that, saying its policies benefit all Indians.

The Nehru-Gandhi family has produced three prime ministers. Rahul Gandhi's grandmother, Indira Gandhi, was assassinated while in office, as was his father, Rajiv Gandhi, after he left office.

Zimbabwe's opposition leader tells AP intimidation is forcing voters to choose ruling party or death

By FARAI MUTSAKA Associated Press

HARARE, Zimbabwe (AP) — Zimbabwe's main opposition leader accused President Emmerson Mnangagwa of violating the law and tearing apart independent institutions to cling to power.

In an interview with The Associated Press, Nelson Chamisa also warned that any evidence of tampering by Mnangagwa's ruling party in upcoming elections could lead to "total disaster" for a beleaguered nation that is in economic ruin and already under United States and European Union sanctions for its human rights record.

Chamisa, who will challenge Mnangagwa and the ruling ZANU-PF party's 43-year hold on power in the Aug. 23 presidential, parliamentary and local government elections, claimed widespread intimidation against his opposition party ahead of the vote.

Chamisa said Mnangagwa has utilized institutions like the police and the courts to crack down on critical figures, ban opposition rallies and prevent candidates from running. In the AP interview, he laid out a series of concerns that indicate the country, with its history of violent and disputed elections, could be heading for another one.

In rural areas far from the international spotlight, many of Zimbabwe's 15 million people are making their political choices under the threat of violence, Chamisa alleged. People are getting driven to ruling party rallies and threatened to support Mnangagwa and the Zimbabwe African National Union – Patriotic Front if they want to stay safe — or even alive.

Chamisa, who leads the Citizens Coalition for Change party, called it a choice of "death or ZANU-PF" for some.

"Mnangagwa is clearly triggering a national crisis," he said during the interview in his 11th-floor office in Zimbabwe's capital, Harare. "He is driving the country into chaos. He is actually instigating instability. He is violating the law. He is tearing apart institutions of the country."

On Thursday, a man wearing the yellow colors of Chamisa's CCC party was beaten and stoned to death on the way to a political rally, police said. The CCC accused ZANU-PF followers of killing him and attacking other opposition supporters.

Mnangagwa has repeatedly denied allegations of intimidation and violence by authorities or his party and has publicly called on his supporters to act peacefully during the campaign.

But Chamisa's portrayal of a highly repressive political landscape in the southern African nation — where the removal of autocrat Robert Mugabe in 2017 appears to have been a false dawn — is backed by reports released by Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch ahead of the elections taking place in less than three weeks.

They will take place amid "five years of brutal crackdowns on human rights," Amnesty said, since Mnangagwa gained power from Mugabe in a coup and then won a disputed presidential election by a razor-thin margin against Chamisa in 2018. In its assessment, Human Rights Watch said Zimbabwean authorities have "weaponized the criminal justice system against the ruling party's opponents" and the buildup to the vote has not met free and fair international standards.

Zimbabwe has significant mineral resources — including Africa's largest deposits of highly sought-after lithium — and rich agricultural potential, and could be of huge benefit to the continent if it gained the political and economic stability that has eluded it for years. Zimbabwe was shunned by the West for two decades because of abuses during the regime of Mugabe, who died in 2019.

Mugabe's removal sent Zimbabweans into the streets to celebrate, and Mnangagwa promised democracy and freedom would be born from the coup. He maintained recently that "Zimbabwe is now a mature democracy" under him.

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Rights groups say it's a mirage and the 80-year-old Mnangagwa, a former Mugabe ally once known as his enforcer, has been as repressive as the man he removed.

Under Mnangagwa, critics and opposition figures have been jailed, including CCC lawmaker Job Sikhala, who has been in detention for over a year after accusing ruling party supporters of hacking to death an opposition activist. Some have faced legal backlash for seemingly minor criticisms, like world-renowned author Tsitsi Dangarembga, who was arrested for participating in a protest that called for better services for citizens.

A court decision disqualified all 12 CCC candidates in Bulawayo, the second-largest city, from standing in the election, even after the electoral agency said they had registered properly. They successfully appealed to the Supreme Court to be allowed to stand.

"I am nowhere near the court," Mnangagwa said, denying any influence on the initial decision to bar the opposition candidates.

Chamisa, a 45-year-old lawyer and pastor, said Mnangagwa was now overseeing a second coup in Zimbabwe.

"You can't have a contest without contestation. You can't have an election without candidates," Chamisa said. "Once you eliminate candidates, you are actually eliminating an election. And that's the point we are making. ... It's a coup on choices."

The elections will be monitored by observers from the European Union and African Union, who were invited by Mnangagwa. He says he has nothing to hide. Human Rights Watch has questioned if the observers will be allowed to access all parts of the country, while their small numbers make it likely they won't be able to monitor the entire vote. There are 150 observers from the EU and more than 12,500 polling stations across the country.

Chamisa told the AP that his party has put in place systems to be able to independently check vote counts, but there are also doubts that the CCC can deploy enough members to watch over those stations, many deep in rural areas regarded as ZANU-PF strongholds.

Should their calculations show fraud this time, as was alleged in 2018 and other elections before that, Chamisa warned it will "plunge the country into total disaster and chaos."

He urged Mnangagwa to step back from his repressive policies in a country denied democracy under white minority rule before 1980 and again — according to international rights groups — under the only two leaders it has seen since: Mugabe and Mnangagwa.

"He must be stopped because he can't drive the whole nation and plunge it into darkness and an abyss on account of just wanting to retain power," Chamisa said of Mnangagwa. "Zimbabweans deserve peace, they deserve rest. They have suffered for a long time."

Today in History: Aug. 5, Nelson Mandela arrested

By The Associated Press undefined

Today in History

Today is Saturday, Aug. 5, the 217th day of 2023. There are 148 days left in the year.

Today's Highlight in History:

On Aug. 5, 1981, the federal government began firing air traffic controllers who had gone out on strike.

On this date:

In 1864, during the Civil War, Union Adm. David G. Farragut led his fleet to victory in the Battle of Mobile Bay, Alabama.

In 1884, the cornerstone for the Statue of Liberty's pedestal was laid on Bedloe's Island in New York Harbor.

In 1914, what's believed to be the first electric traffic light system was installed in Cleveland, Ohio, at the intersection of East 105th Street and Euclid Avenue.

In 1936, Jesse Owens of the United States won the 200-meter dash at the Berlin Olympics, collecting the third of his four gold medals.

In 1953, Operation Big Switch began as remaining prisoners taken during the Korean War were exchanged

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at Panmunjom.

In 1957, the teenage dance show "American Bandstand," hosted by Dick Clark, made its network debut on ABC-TV.

In 1962, South African anti-apartheid activist Nelson Mandela was arrested on charges of leaving the country without a passport and inciting workers to strike; it was the beginning of 27 years of imprisonment. Marilyn Monroe, 36, was found dead in her Los Angeles home; her death was ruled a probable suicide from "acute barbiturate poisoning."

In 1964, U.S. Navy pilot Everett Alvarez Jr. became the first American flier to be shot down and captured by North Vietnam; he was held prisoner until February 1973.

In 1974, the White House released transcripts of subpoenaed tape recordings showing that President Richard Nixon and his chief of staff, H.R. Haldeman, had discussed a plan in June 1972 to use the CIA to thwart the FBI's Watergate investigation; revelation of the tape sparked Nixon's resignation.

In 2010, the Senate confirmed Elena Kagan, 63-37, as the Supreme Court's 112th justice and the fourth woman in its history. Thirty-three workers were trapped in a copper mine in northern Chile after a tunnel caved in (all were rescued after being entombed for 69 days).

In 2011, the sun-powered robotic explorer Juno rocketed toward Jupiter on a five-year quest to discover the secret recipe for making planets. (Juno reached Jupiter on July 4, 2016.)

Ten years ago: A gunman opened fire at a municipal meeting in Ross Township, Pennsylvania, killing three people before he was tackled and shot with his own gun; authorities say the shooting stemmed from a dispute over living conditions at his ramshackle, trash-filled property. (Rockne Newell pleaded guilty and was sentenced to life in prison.) Alex Rodriguez was suspended through 2014 and All-Stars Nelson Cruz, Jhonny Peralta and Everth Cabrera were banned 50 games apiece as Major League Baseball disciplined 13 players in a drug case.

Five years ago: President Donald Trump tweeted that a 2016 meeting at Trump Tower involving his son and a lawyer with Kremlin connections had been aimed at collecting information about his opponent, an apparent change from an earlier assertion that the meeting "primarily" dealt with adoption of Russian children. Authorities in Venezuela detained six people suspected of using drones packed with explosives in a failed bid to assassinate President Nicolas Maduro. Actress Charlotte Rae, best known as the house-mother on the long-running sitcom "The Facts of Life," died at her Los Angeles home at the age of 92.

One year ago: China said it was canceling or suspending dialogue with the U.S. on a range of issues from climate change to military relations and anti-narcotics efforts in retaliation for a visit to Taiwan by U.S. House Speaker Nancy Pelosi. A report showed that U.S. employers had added an astonishing 528,000 jobs last in the previous month despite warning signs of an economic downturn, easing fears of a recession. Sam Gooden, one of the original members of the Chicago soul group The Impressions and a member of the Rock & Roll Hall of Fame, died at age 87.

Today's Birthdays: College Football Hall of Famer and former NFL player Roman Gabriel is 83. Country songwriter Bobby Braddock is 83. Actor Loni Anderson is 78. Actor Erika Slezak is 77. Rock singer Rick Derringer is 76. Actor Holly Palance is 73. Pop singer Samantha Sang is 72. Rock musician Eddie Ojeda (Twisted Sister) is 68. Actor-singer Maureen McCormick is 67. Rock musician Pat Smear is 64. Author David Baldacci is 63. Actor Janet McTeer is 62. Basketball Hall of Famer Patrick Ewing is 61. Actor Mark Strong is 60. Director-screenwriter James Gunn is 57. Actor Jonathan Silverman is 57. Actor Jesse Williams is 43. Actor Brendon Ryan Barrett is 37. Actor Meegan Warner is 32. Actor/singer Olivia Holt is 26. Actor Albert Tsai is 19. Actor Devin Trey Campbell is 15.