

# Groton Daily Independent

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## Soccer Scores

Groton Area girls 4, West Central 0  
Freeman Academy boys 6, Groton Area 0

## Sunday, Aug. 13

Emmanuel Lutheran: Worship, 9 a.m.  
United Methodist: 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.  
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.  
First Presbyterian Church: Bible Study, 9:30 a.m.; Worship, 11 a.m.

## Monday, Aug. 14

Senior Menu: Chicken rice casserole, mixed vegetables, chocolate pudding with banana, whole wheat bread.  
Boys Golf at Sioux Valley (Volga), 10 a.m.  
School Board Meeting, 7 p.m.

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



"The greatest gifts you can give your children are the roots of responsibility and the wings of independence."

—Denis Waitley

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

Senior Citizens meet at the Groton Community Center, 1 p.m.

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

## Tuesday, Aug. 15

Senior Menu: Baked pork chops, creamy noodles, California blend, apple sauce, whole wheat bread.

Girls Soccer hosts Garretson, 6 p.m.

The Pantry at Groton Community Center, 4 p.m. to 8 p.m.

Common Cents Community Thrift Store, 209 N Main, open 3 p.m. to 6 p.m.

United Methodist: Conde Ad Council  
City Council Meeting, 7 p.m.

## **OPEN:** Recycling Trailer in Groton

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

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**The Groton Swimming Pool was busy Friday evening as Friday's are family fun night.** (Photo by Paul Kosel)

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## Highway Patrol Sturgis Rally Daily Information

Compiled from 6 a.m. Saturday August 5, 2023, to 6 a.m. Saturday August 12, 2023

### Fatal Crashes:

At 6:00pm, Friday, US Highway 14A, mile marker 11: a Harley Davidson motorcycle traveling westbound left the roadway, entered the ditch, and tipped over. The driver was separated from the motorcycle. The 73-year-old male driver was not wearing a helmet and was pronounced dead at the scene.

At 7:28pm, Friday, Norris Peak Road, and Bogus Jim Road: a 2014 Harley Davidson motorcycle was traveling northbound. The driver attempted to brake for a deer entering the roadway, locked up the brakes and left the roadway. The driver became separated from the motorcycle. The 62-year-old male driver was not wearing a helmet and was pronounced dead at the scene.

### Injury Crashes:

At 8:14am, Friday, US Highway 16A, mile marker 40: a 2009 Harley Davidson motorcycle was traveling southbound, failed to negotiate a curve, left the roadway, and stuck a tree. The driver was not wearing a helmet and received minor injuries.

At 11:35am, Friday, Crook City Road and Blue Ridge Loop: a 2005 Harley Davidson motorcycle lost control and entered the south ditch. The driver was wearing a helmet and received serious non-life-threatening injuries.

At 12:31pm, Friday, US Highway 16A, mile marker 55: a 2018 Harley Davidson motorcycle was traveling eastbound. A 1996 Harley Davidson motorcycle was traveling westbound. The motorcycles collided near the center line. The driver of the 2018 Harley Davidson was not wearing a helmet and received minor injuries. The driver of the 1996 Harley Davidson was wearing a helmet and received serious non-life-threatening injuries.

At 2:27pm, Friday, US Highway 14A, mile marker 45: a 2015 Harley Davidson motorcycle was slowing down for a vehicle turning left on Larkspur Road. A 2010 Harley Davidson motorcycle was unable to slow down and struck the rear of the 2015 Harley Davidson. Both units went down and entered the westbound lane. A 2005 Yamaha motorcycle was unable to avoid the other collision, flipped over the motorcycles and hit a 2020 Ram 2500. The driver of the 2010 Harley Davidson received minor injuries. The rest of the parties involved were not injured.

At 3:21pm, Friday, Vanocker Canyon Road, mile marker 11: a 2021 Indian motorcycle was traveling eastbound, failed to negotiate a curve, and tipped. The driver was wearing a helmet and received minor injuries.

At 3:59pm, Friday, US Highway 85, mile marker 3: a 2013 Harley Davidson motorcycle failed to negotiate a curve, lost control, and entered the south ditch. The driver was wearing a helmet and received minor injuries.

At 6:00pm, Friday, South Dakota Highway 79, mile marker 47: a 2017 Indian motorcycle was traveling northbound, left the roadway, and overturned. The driver was wearing a helmet and received serious non-life-threatening injuries.

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Item	Sturgis	Rapid City District	District Total	Last Year to Date
DUI Arrests	90	19	109	136
Misd Drug Arrests	158	54	212	130
Felony Drug Arrests	118	22	140	97
Total Citations	804	499	1303	1263
Total Warnings	2277	1557	3834	4654
Cash Seized	\$2005.00	\$0.00	\$2005.00	\$4335.00
Vehicles Seized	0	0	0	4
For Drug Poss.	0	0	0	4
For Serial No.	0	0	0	0
Non-Injury Accidents	18	32	50	43
Injury Accidents	20	39	59	45
Fatal Accidents	4	1	5	3
# of Fatalities	4	1	5	3

## 2023 Sturgis Rally Vehicle Count – Through Day Seven

STURGIS, S.D. – The South Dakota Department of Transportation (SDDOT) will provide daily traffic counts for vehicles entering Sturgis for the 83rd Annual Sturgis Motorcycle Rally which runs from Aug. 4-13, 2023. The traffic counts to date at nine locations entering Sturgis for the 2023 Rally are as follows:

**Friday, Aug. 4: 45,652 vehicles entered**

Down 13.4% from the previous five-year average

**Saturday, Aug. 5: 38,126 vehicles entered**

Down 37.3% from the previous five-year average

**Sunday, Aug. 6: 60,586 vehicles entered**

Up 4.4% from the previous five-year average

**Monday, Aug. 7: 50,487 vehicles entered**

Down 16.9% from the previous five-year average

**Tuesday, Aug. 8: 55,848 vehicles entered**

Down 4.2% from the previous five-year average

**Wednesday, Aug. 9: 56,444 vehicles entered**

Up 1.4% from the previous five-year average (note update)

**Thursday, Aug. 10: 52,195 vehicles entered**

Up 3.7% from the previous five-year average

**2023 Total to Date: 359,338 Vehicles**

Previous Five-Year Average to Date: 396,673 Vehicles

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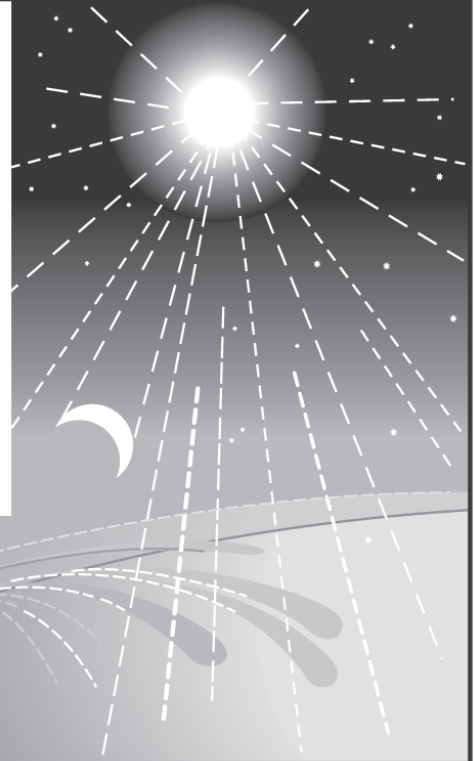
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## THE ILLUSTRATED BIBLE

*Yours is the day, Yours also is the night;  
You have prepared the light and the sun.  
You have established all the boundaries of the earth;  
You have made summer and winter.  
Remember this, O Lord, that the enemy has reviled,  
and a foolish people has spurned Your name.*

*PSALM 74: 16-18*



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**BIBBLE**  
**TRIVIA**  
by Wilson Casey

1. Is the book of Lamentations (KJV) in the Old or New Testament or neither?

2. Which book may be summarized as “It really is true, Jesus Christ is God Himself”? *Matthew, Mark, Luke, John*

3. In Esther 2:17, who was she (Esther) made queen instead of? *Vashti, Ruth, Anna, Sapphira*

4. Who gave Solomon cedar and fir trees according to all his desire? *David, Hiram, Chalcol, Mahol*

5. From Ecclesiastes 3, there is a time to mourn and a time to ...? *Leave, Dance, Love, Profit*

6. In 1 John 4:8 God is ...? *Always, Grace, Love, Beloved*

ANSWERS: 1) Old, 2) John, 3) Vashti, 4) Hiram, 5) Dance, 6) Love

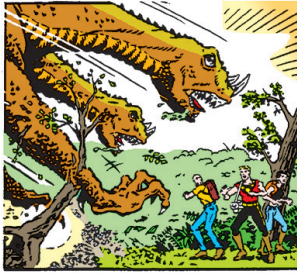
*Sharpen your understanding of scripture with Wilson’s Casey’s latest book, “Test Your Bible Knowledge,” available in bookstores and online.*

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THE  
STORY  
SO  
FAR...

FLASH AND HIS COMPANIONS ARE ATTACKED!



FLASH FIRES AT THE CREATURE, ALLOWING DALE AND ZARKOV TO ESCAPE.

PURSUED BY THE CREATURE, HE'S CORNERED!



IN THE DISTANCE, HAWKMEN ARE SIGHTED...

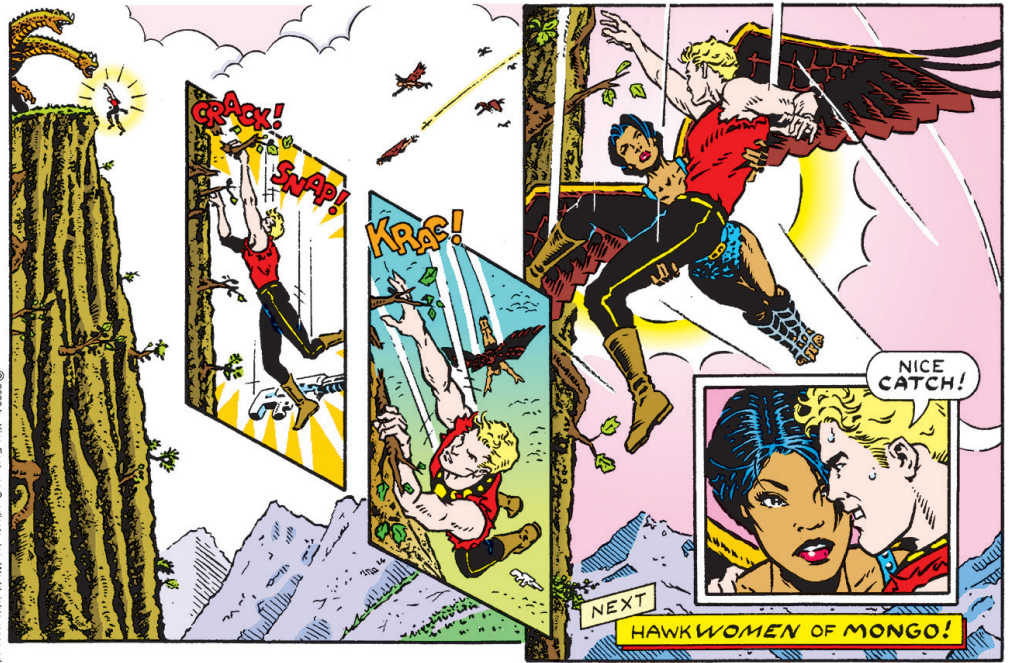


BUT CAN THEY MAKE IT IN TIME TO SAVE FLASH?!

## FLASH GORDON

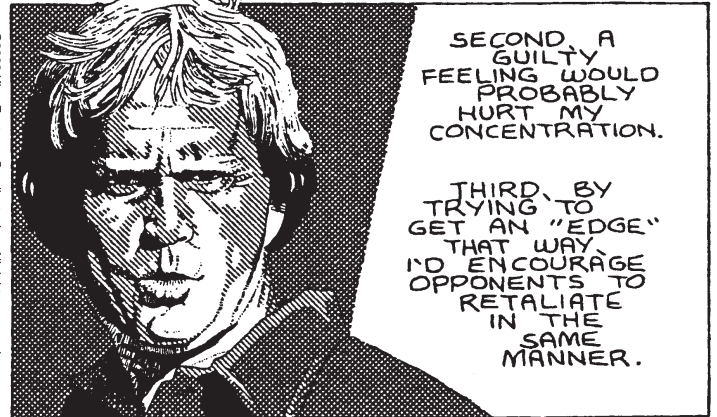
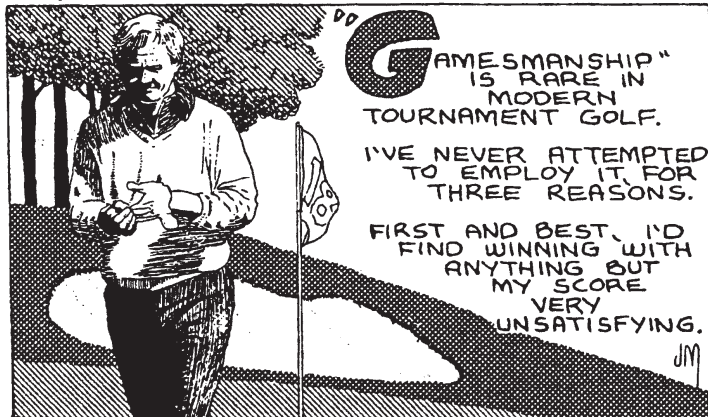
BY JIM KEEFE 8-13

AS THE HAWKMEN RACE TO RESCUE FLASH, THE CREATURE ATTACKS!



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### Play Better Golf with JACK NICKLAUS





## Patient With Osteoarthritis Develops Hives After Taking Ibuprofen

**DEAR DR. ROACH:** I took ibuprofen for my osteoarthritis, but developed hives. Does this mean I'm allergic to all NSAIDs? What other therapeutic options do I have? — J.B.

**ANSWER:** Anti-inflammatory drugs can have many allergic and allergic-type reactions, and ibuprofen is probably the most likely of all to do so.

For people with mild reactions (such as hives that go away) without swelling or shortness of breath, I recommend avoiding ibuprofen and similar medicines, such as naproxen (Aleve and Naprosyn, among others), as well as any other medication ending in “-profen,” such as ketoprofen or flurbiprofen.

Aspirin is safe for most people as far as allergies go, although it is a little more likely to cause side effects at higher doses. The prescription medicines meloxicam (Mobic), nabumetone (Relafen) and celecoxib (Celebrex) are among the least likely to have any cross reaction with ibuprofen. Anti-inflammatory gels like diclofenac cream (Voltaren) should also be safe for topical use.

People with more serious reactions need a referral to an allergist, who may consider desensitization.

\*\*\*

**DEAR DR. ROACH:** We had to get a router attached to our computer to get Wi-Fi for our house. Is there any health risk by sitting or sleeping near the router from the radio waves it puts out? — B.R.

**ANSWER:** The energy output from a typical Wi-Fi router is about 10 watts,

non-ionizing type. Very powerful radio sources, such as AM radio towers, can actually cause injury by heating tissues, but these have a power output in the thousands, or even tens of thousands, of watts. There has never been evidence of health effects on humans by low-output radio waves, such as the waves from Wi-Fi or cellphones.

\*\*\*

**DEAR DR. ROACH:** One time, I drove a friend to the airport for an international flight. We were running late, and she feared missing the flight. My friend did not yell or even say much, but she got so stressed that her lips turned blue. And I mean both lips turned a deep, dark blue — nearly black.

That scared me then and still does now. I don't think that's normal. What could that have been, and could she possibly be in danger if she gets stressed like that again? — A.F.

**ANSWER:** Blue discoloration of skin or mucous membranes is called cyanosis. When the lips are affected, it's considered “central” cyanosis. The leading cause of this is low oxygen levels. Why a person would get low oxygen levels due to stress, without any physical activity, is a tough question — and not normal or common.

The first thing that comes to mind is congenital heart disease, the type that allows unoxygenated blood to mix with oxygenated blood. However, having an adult with undiagnosed congenital heart disease is almost unheard of, and it would be likely that she would have many more symptoms. So, it's hard for me to believe it. Many of the other causes are potential emergencies, such as a blood clot in the lung.

Some people, when they get very nervous, breathe very shallowly. It is possible to have oxygen levels drop from this. If she had some mild heart, lung or hemoglobin disease, it could cause the oxygen level to go very low. That's probably my best guess, but I would be happy to hear from readers with other explanations.

*Dr. Roach regrets that he is unable to answer individual questions, but will incorporate them in the column whenever possible. Readers may email questions to [ToYourGoodHealth@med.cornell.edu](mailto:ToYourGoodHealth@med.cornell.edu).*



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"High School Musical: The Musical: The Series" (TV-PG) -- The mockumentary series that catapulted stars like Olivia Rodrigo and Joshua Bassett to fame is officially wrapping with a fourth and final season. Over the four seasons, viewers have gotten to follow the debacles of the theater students at East High School (the school where the "High School Musical" franchise was shot). As the theater department prepares a production based on the third "High School Musical" film, the original cast of "High School Musical" gather on campus to announce that they'll also be shooting a reunion film at the same time. The final season features guest appearances from Corbin Bleu, Monique Coleman, Lucas Gabeel, Kaycee Stroth and more. All eight episodes are out now. (Disney+)



**From left, Lucas Gabeel, Corbin Bleu and Monique Coleman guest star in the final season of "High School Musical: The Musical: The Series."**

Courtesy of Disney

"Depp v. Heard" (TV-MA) -- In 2022, the media was saturated for months by the Johnny Depp v. Amber Heard trial that ended up ruling in Johnny Depp's favor, so naturally, it only took a year for Netflix to compile all the gruesome details for a documentary mini-series. For those who didn't follow along with the daily events of the trial, this three-part series shows both Depp and Heard's testimonies, while also touching on the off-the-charts engagement that it drew online from supporters of both parties. The series also explores how the sensationalism of the trial generated so much harassment against Heard and if that could have played a part in swaying the jury. Premieres Aug. 16. (Netflix)

"Unseen" (18+) -- From Blumhouse and MGM+, this horror film stars Jolene Purdy ("Orange Is the New Black") as gas station clerk Sam. In the middle of her shift at work, Sam receives a call from a stranger named Emily (Midori Francis), who mistakenly thought she dialed 9-1-1. Frantically navigating the woods, and nearly blind after breaking her glasses, Emily is on the run from a psychotic ex-boyfriend who's attempting to kill her and begs Sam to lead her to safety. Declaring this a state of emergency, Sam abandons her duties at the gas station to guide Emily through any means possible. Releasing Aug. 18, "Unseen" is director Yoko Okumura's feature film debut. (Amazon Prime)

"The Friendship Game" (NR) -- Peyton List leads this suspenseful thriller about a group of four teenage friends who happen upon an object deemed a "friendship survival game" that can only be won if they remain friends after the game ends. By placing their fingers on the object and sharing their deepest desires, the game will supposedly test their loyalties against each other through a series of trials. While most of their desires are granted, one unlucky friend suddenly goes missing at a party. Shortly afterward, the others begin experiencing horrific paranormal visions that distort their reality to the point of insanity, all to see if their friendship can truly withstand the trauma. The premise is gutsy and original enough, but the film does lack the elements necessary to fully land its message. Premieres Aug. 18. (Hulu)

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1. Name the movie that included "Secret Surfin' Spot" and "Swingin' and Surfin'" in the musical lineup.
2. Who wrote the melody behind "Hello Muddah, Hello Fadduh"?
3. What do The Great Society, Jefferson Airplane, Jefferson Starship and Starship have in common?
4. Who wrote and released "Peppermint Twist"?
5. Name the song that contains these lyrics: "When she mentioned how her aunt bit off the spoon, She completely done me in."

## Answers

1. "Beach Party," in 1963, starring Frankie Avalon and Annette Funicello. There were seven beach films over the years.
2. Allan Sherman's 1963 parody about a boy writing a letter home from camp was put to the music of Ponchielli's "Dance of the Hours," written in 1876. Several other works have also borrowed from that music, including Disney cartoons.
3. Grace Slick sang lead in all the groups.
4. Joey Dee and the Starlites in 1961. The early '60s saw dozens of "twist" songs, but this one topped the charts.
5. "On the Street Where You Live," by Jeremy Brett in the 1964 film "My Fair Lady," based on George Bernard Shaw's 1913 stage play "Pygmalion." Jeremy Brett's song was actually dubbed by Bill Shirley, as Brett couldn't sing.

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## GRIN and BEAR IT <sup>by Wagner</sup>



"You need some snack machines in your waiting room, Doc."

## Just Like Cats & Dogs

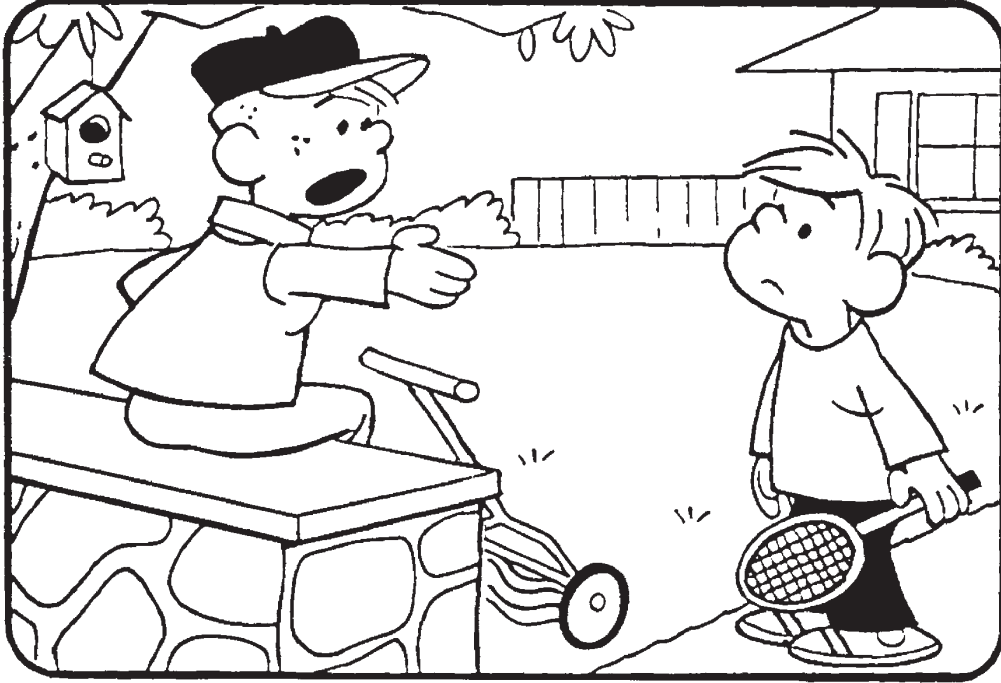
by Dave T. Phipps



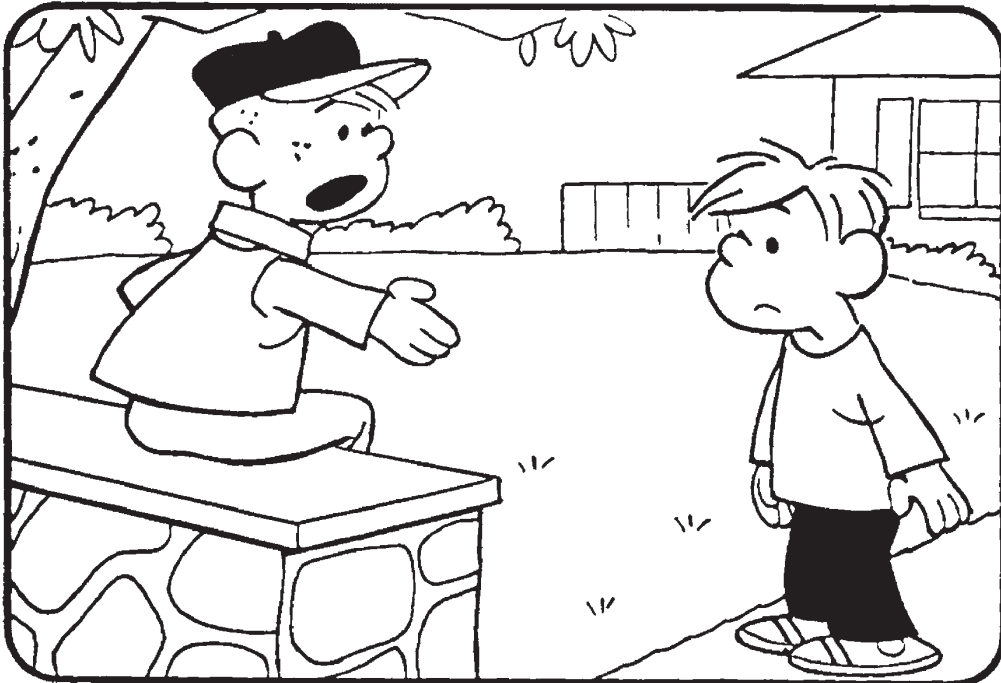
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## HOCUS-FOCUS

BY  
HENRY BOLTINOFF



Find at least six differences in details between panels.



Differences: 1. Birdhouse is missing. 2. Arm is missing. 3. Lawn mower is missing. 4. Fence is shorter. 5. Head is tilted. 6. Tennis racket is missing.

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\* Glitter cleanup can be a hassle. Here's my tip for getting it up quickly with no mess left behind: Use play dough. Just press it into the stray glitter and it will pick it right up. Then you've created glitter dough! Oh, your kids will be impressed. Here are some more kid tips. -- JoAnn

\* Can't seem to part with those baby blankets now that the kids are not babies anymore? Don't! Sew them into floor pillow covers and watch the kids get a few more years out of them.

\* My daughter is old enough to play on our street with her friends, but not necessarily old enough for a cellphone. Instead, we repurposed a set of walkie talkies. Her boundary is in walkie talkie range, and we can communicate. Plus, it's just fun! -- T.F. in Maryland

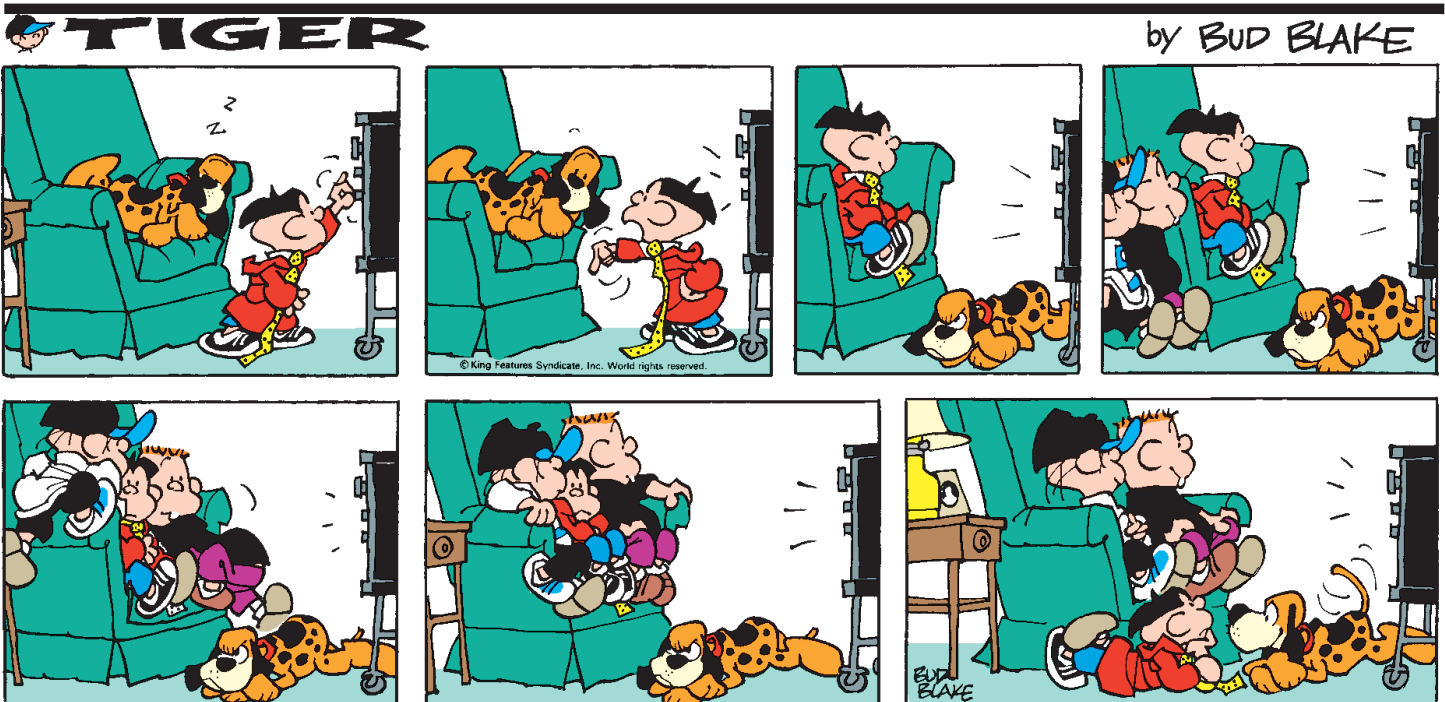
\* Our friends who live in an apartment have a great storable sandbox solution. They use a plastic under-the-bed storage bin filled with sand and toys. It has a lid and can be stored easily on their balcony. The kids still get to play in the sand even on rainy days. -- W. in Kentucky

\* I saw this idea in a magazine somewhere, and now I make them for other moms and dads, as they are cute and functional: Make a cell number beaded bracelet your kids can wear when you go out. Little kids may not remember Mommy's cellphone number, but they can bring the bracelet to a store employee and ask him or her to call the number on the bracelet. Use elastic thread and colorful number beads. -- P.S. in Oregon

\* If you use a 1/4-inch hole punch, which you can get at a hardware store for cheap, you easily can make a straw hole in the plastic tops of kids' single serving drinks, like milk and water bottles. Less chance of a spill.

Send your tips to Now Here's a Tip, 628 Virginia Drive, Orlando, FL 32803.

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## King Crossword

### ACROSS

- 1 Solidify
- 4 Tummy muscles
- 7 Rum cake
- 11 Sir Guinness
- 13 Cistern
- 14 Modern taxi rival
- 15 Wife of Jacob
- 16 Melody
- 17 Shoe fillers
- 18 Wash thoroughly
- 20 Canadian flag emblem
- 22 Uncivilized
- 24 Prepared potatoes
- 28 Medium
- 32 Condition
- 33 Orem's place
- 34 Talk on and on
- 36 Actress Merrill
- 37 Talk a blue streak?
- 39 Extreme
- 41 Tolerate
- 43 Light brown
- 44 Tropical tree
- 46 Salon sounds
- 50 "— and Away"
- 53 Charged bit
- 55 Duel tool
- 56 Fan publication
- 57 Bar bill
- 58 Pro —
- 59 Mr. Stravinsky

1	2	3		4	5	6		7	8	9	10	
11			12		13			14				
15					16			17				
18				19		20		21				
			22		23		24			25	26	27
28	29	30				31		32				
33					34		35		36			
37				38		39		40				
41					42		43					
			44			45		46		47	48	49
50	51	52			53		54		55			
56					57				58			
59					60					61		

- 60 JFK info
- 61 Author Brown
- 9 Spell-off
- 10 Illustrations
- 12 Communal meal at a place of worship
- 19 "Humbug!"
- 21 DDE's opponent
- 23 Peruke
- 25 Secular
- 26 Sicilian spouter
- 27 Bargain
- 28 Brownish purple
- 29 Dazzle
- 30 Lawn party site
- 31 Automobile
- 35 Cudgel
- 38 Epoch
- 40 "— Kapital"
- 42 Select group defense
- 45 Castle
- 47 Apple tablet
- 48 Anti-fur org.
- 49 Penn or Astin
- 50 Submachine gun
- 51 Glutton
- 52 Family card game
- 54 Cagers' gp.

### DOWN

- 1 Guys' dates
- 2 Power co. supply
- 3 Tragic king
- 4 "Selma" director
- 5 Release DuVernay
- 6 Throat affliction
- 7 Self-serve meal
- 8 Honest politician

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## — King Crossword —

Answers

Solution time: 22 mins.

G	E	L		A	B	S		B	A	B	A
A	L	E	C	V	A	T		U	B	E	R
L	E	A	H	A	I	R		F	E	E	T
S	C	R	U	B		L	E	A	F		
			R	A	W		P	E	E	L	E
P	S	Y	C	H	I	C		S	T	A	T
U	T	A	H		G	A	B		D	I	N
C	U	R	S	E		R	A	D	I	C	A
E	N	D	U	R	E		T	A	N		
			P	A	L	M		S	N	I	P
U	P	U	P		I	O	N		E	P	E
Z	I	N	E		T	A	B		R	A	T
I	G	O	R		E	T	A		D	A	N

Out on a Limb

by Gary Kopervas



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THIMBLE THEATRE PRESENTS  
**POPEYE**  
BY RANDY MILHOLLAND

HERE YA GOES, SWEE'PEA! I GOTSK YA A GIFT T'BRING TO LIL IODINE!

IS IT A NEW TOY CAR?

SHE DIDN'TSK ASK FER THAT. YA GIT SOMEONE A GIFT THEY WANTS, NOT ONE YA WANTS FER YERSELF.

I NEVER SAID I WANTED TO HAVE A NEW TOY CAR!

... I WOULDN'T BE OPPOSED TO BEIN' ABLE TO BORROW ONE, THOUGH.

YOU TWO WANNA PLAY IN THE BALL PIT BEFORE THE BIRTHDAY CAKE ARRIVES?

AND GET LOST FOREVER?!

WHAT ARE YOU TALKING ABOUT?

THAT BALL PIT'S BOTTOMLESS!

YEARS AGO, THREE BROTHERS GOT IN...

... BUT ONLY TWO GOT OUT! THE THIRD WAS NEVER SEEN AGAIN, STOLEN BY THE THE BALL PIT GOBLINS!

THAT SOUNDS LIKE A LOT OF NONSENSE.

THEY ALSO DON'T CLEAN THE BALL PIT.

NOW THAT'S SCARY.

TAP TAP

BALL PIT GOBLINS!

STILL NO LUCK?! WE GOTTA REHOME THIS THING BEFORE OUR LANDLORD FINDS OUT.

IT'S NOT LIKE I HAVEN'T BEEN TRYING, GARY!

BARNEY GOOGLE AND  
**SNUFFY SMITH**

TH' GOOD NEWS IS TH' COST'A LIVIN' MIGHT BE STARTIN' A TO LEVEL OFF !!

LOCAL GAZETTE

TH' BAD NEWS IS TH' COST'A JEST GITTIN' BY AIN'T !!

LOCAL GAZETTE

I'M HERE TO PAY DOC'S BILL, NUSS !! GONNA HAFTA BE BARTER !!

THAT'S FINE, LOWEEZY !! WHAT'CHA GOT FER HIM TODAY... EGGS ?

LOVE

JOHN ROSE

BACON ? CHICKENS ?

LOVE

VEGGIES ? HAM ? JELLIES AN' JAMS ?

NO TO ALL OF 'EM !!

DOC PRITCHART MD & DDS

TODAY I BRUNG HIM TH' EXPENSIVE STUFF !!

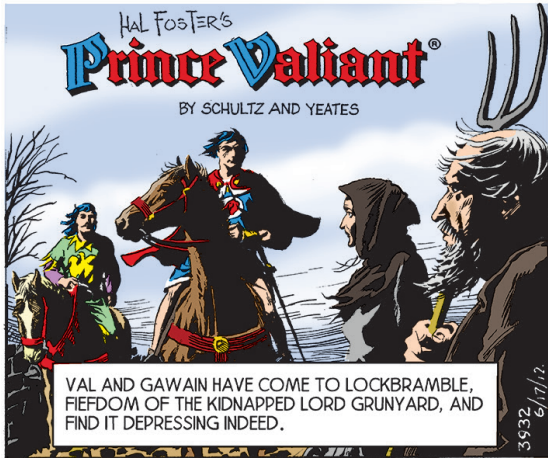
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THAR !! THAT OUGHTA COVER US FER TH' REST'A TH' WHOLE DARN YEAR !!

GAS

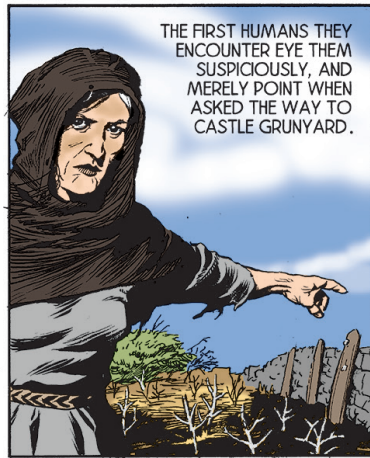
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VAL AND GAWAIN HAVE COME TO LOCKBRAMBLE, FIEFDOM OF THE KIDNAPPED LORD GRUNYARD, AND FIND IT DEPRESSING INDEED.

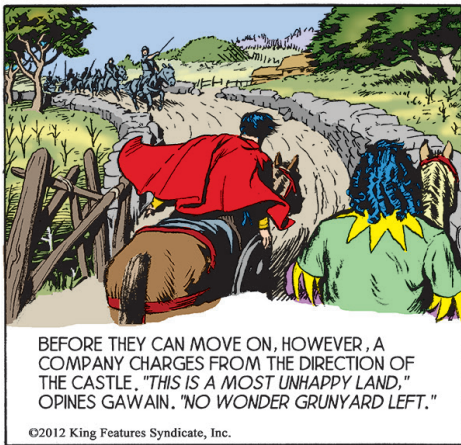
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THE FIRST HUMANS THEY ENCOUNTER EYE THEM SUSPICIOUSLY, AND MERELY POINT WHEN ASKED THE WAY TO CASTLE GRUNYARD.



COMMONERS HAVE EVERY RIGHT TO BEHAVE CAUTIOUSLY AROUND ARMED KNIGHTS, BUT SURVEYING THE UNKEMPT FIELDS, VAL SUSPECTS SOMETHING MORE TROUBLING. "I THINK WE'D BEST KEEP OUR MISSION TO OURSELVES FOR THE TIME," HE WHISPERS TO GAWAIN.



BEFORE THEY CAN MOVE ON, HOWEVER, A COMPANY CHARGES FROM THE DIRECTION OF THE CASTLE. "THIS IS A MOST UNHAPPY LAND," OPINES GAWAIN. "NO WONDER GRUNYARD LEFT."

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THE OVEREAGER LOCAL GUARD PROVES NO CONTEST TO KNIGHTS TRAINED IN THE COURT OF KING ARTHUR. VAL AND GAWAIN WASTE LITTLE TIME AND ENERGY ESTABLISHING THEMSELVES AS VISITORS TO BE RESPECTED.

NEXT:  
Val's gambit

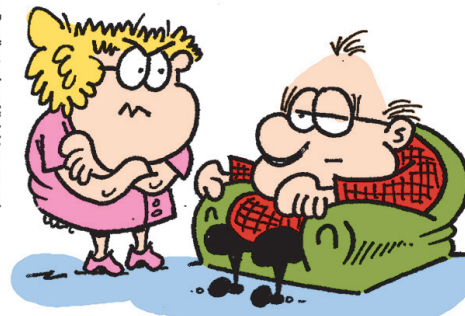
## The Spats

by Jeff Pickering



HAROLD, YOU ARE THE "WORST" SLOB.

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GEEZ, AND I ALWAYS THOUGHT I WAS THE "BEST."

PICKERING



## SENIOR NEWS LINE

by Matilda Charles

### Getting Through the Drug Shortages

In the spring of this year, the U.S. saw a larger prescription drug shortage than we've seen in 10 years. And we haven't recovered yet.

Part of the problem is that 78% of our drugs (or at least a crucial ingredient in each one) are made in foreign countries. Chemotherapy drugs, antibiotics, mental health drugs ... so many are in short supply. As of this writing, cisplatin, a commonly used cancer drug, is on the shortages list, and has been since February.

It doesn't help that a drug manufacturer filed for bankruptcy and closed its doors. If this isn't bad enough, a major drug facility was recently hit by a tornado. Hospitals all over the country saw the writing on the wall and immediately tried to overbuy and get as much as they could. The manufacturer stepped in and put a stop to that.

If you can't get your drugs due to shortages:

Talk to your pharmacist. Ask whether they can ask your doctor about changing the dose. For example, can you have two half doses that would add up to the same amount? Ask your doctor if they have samples or can get them from the sales rep.

Call the drug manufacturer and ask when they expect pharmacies in your area to be resupplied. Give them the name and address of your pharmacy and ask specifically that the drugs you need be sent there.

What you should NOT do: Divide your drugs to make them last longer. Call your health care team and ask for help. Is there a different drug you can take?

One important thing you can do: Call your congressmen and let them know what it's like to be unable to get the drugs you need. Ask what they're doing about the shortages. Foreign countries should not be able to hold our drugs hostage.

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1. What long-running NFL-highlights TV series debuted on cable channel HBO in 1977?

2. Name the Baseball Hall of Famer for the St. Louis Cardinals who is the last NL pitcher to win 30 games in one season.

3. What offensive lineman, who played one season with the Buffalo Bills in 1968, was killed in action in the Vietnam War in 1970?

4. Name the ESPN analyst who, during a 2020 NBA game broadcast, said, "I do like being right. Ask my ex-husband."

5. What hard-drinking, trash-talking heavyweight boxer wrestled a giant octopus for a publicity stunt in 1946?

6. What Los Angeles Rams player had more than 1,000 receiving yards in four consecutive NFL seasons from 1988-91?

7. Francisco Lazaro, an Olympic marathoner who slathered his body with fat and died while running in the 1912 Stockholm Summer Games, represented what country?



by Ryan A. Berenz

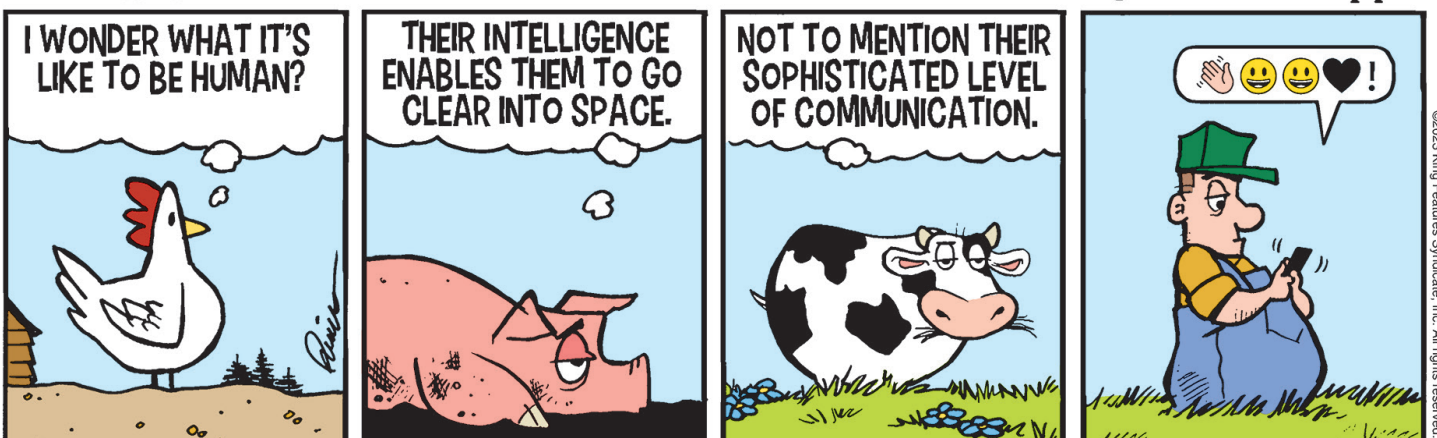
## Answers

1. "Inside the NFL."
2. Dizzy Dean (1934).
3. Bob Kalsu.
4. Doris Burke.
5. "Two Ton" Tony Galento.
6. Henry Ellard.
7. Portugal.

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## Amber Waves

by Dave T. Phipps





## Creative Solutions for Dog Poop in the Yard From Readers

DEAR READERS: My recent column about a neighbor's dog who kept leaving "deposits" in the yard got quite a response from all of you! This is clearly an issue from coast to coast. Here are a few of the responses I received.

DEAR PAWS: Many years ago, my grandmother recommended a solution to dog poop left in the yard by other people's pooches. She told me, "Just put a drop of bacon grease on top of it, and the problem will take care of itself." Think about it. -- John C., Dubuque, Iowa

DEAR PAWS: I put signs in the yard reminding people to pick up after their dog. I couldn't find a sign with the perfect language on it at the store. But I have a laminator and a color printer. So I made up several signs and placed them around the perimeter of my yard. Adding the "F" word seemed to get my message across. No more poop! -- Janet F., Portland, Oregon

DEAR PAWS: The neighbor's dog Tawny regularly digs underneath the privacy fence between our properties when I'm at work, runs around, chews up all of MY dog's toys, and leaves deposits all over the place. Once a week, I go around the yard with a shovel, pick up each pile of poo, and fling it back over the fence. Neighbor hasn't said a word, yet. -- Bill V., Orlando, Florida

DEAR PAWS: The building next to my house is a multi-unit rental property. Occasionally a new renter will let their dog poop in my front yard and not pick it up. Well, the manager of the property is a real witch with a capital B, who has no problem confronting the tenants. I bring her fresh-baked cookies and have a chat. The problem gets solved real quick. -- Gladys K., Lowell, Massachusetts

Send your tips, comments or questions to [ask@pawscorner.com](mailto:ask@pawscorner.com).

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## Strange BUT TRUE

By Lucie Winborne

\* When African American soldiers began enlisting in the Civil War, they were paid \$10, while white troops earned \$13, and were also charged a monthly fee for their uniforms. In protest, they refused to accept their pay at all for 18 months, though they continued to fight.

\* Throughout the average sofa's life, it will hold roughly 782 visitors.

\* While it was believed for a long time that ancient Greek sculptures made of white marble were originally colorless, scientific studies confirmed the theory that they were actually painted in a wide range of shades that eventually wore away under the long-term effects of light and air.

\* The lollipop, invented in 1908 by George Smith, was named after a racehorse known as Lolly Pop.

\* Researchers have found that octopuses occasionally punch fish, sometimes for obvious reasons, such as directing them away from intended prey, and other times for no apparent reason at all -- unless, perhaps, they're merely having a bad day.

\* A flight data recorder, aka black box, isn't black at all, but bright orange. The heat-resistant paint hue makes it easier to spot in the event of an accident.

\* The most expensive guitar ever sold, a Martin 1959 D-18 acoustic, changed hands at auction for a staggering \$6 million. Formerly owned by Nirvana frontman Kurt Cobain, it was used by the singer-musician during the band's 1993 MTV Unplugged performance.


\* Including television, theater, film and radio, Charles Dickens is the most adapted author of all time.

\* Oh, my aching feet! In an average day of walking, those appendages at the ends of our legs experience forces totaling hundreds of tons -- the equivalent of a fully loaded cement truck!

\*\*\*

Thought for the Day: "The question isn't who's going to let me, it's who's going to stop me." -- Ayn Rand

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### Plants with "people" names

- Creeping Jenny (*Lysimachia nummularia*)
- Sweet William (*Dianthus barbatus*)
- Jack-in-the-Pulpit (*Arisaema triphyllum*)
- Johnny Jump-Up (*Viola tricolor*)
- Queen Anne's Lace (*Daucus carota*)
- Black-eyed Susan (*Rudbeckia hirta*)
- Saint John's Wort (*Hypericum perforatum*)
- Golden Alexander (*Zizia aurea*)

— Brenda Weaver  
Source: [birdsandblooms.com](http://birdsandblooms.com)



by Freddy Groves

## New Presumptives Coming

Cross your fingers that we'll see three new presumptives added to the list of medical conditions that the Department of Veterans Affairs uses to consider automatic service connection after toxic exposure.

Getting these new conditions added to the list is part of the PACT Act. The act itself added 20 presumptives to the list when it was signed and covers a wide variety of toxic exposures. There is the water at Camp Lejeune and Marine Corps Air Station New River, agent orange, radiation and much more.

Now they are considering adding acute leukemias, chronic leukemias and multiple myeloma outside of the head and neck to the list. The locations include deployment to Jordan, Iraq, Syria, Yemen, Djibouti, Egypt, Afghanistan, Somalia, Lebanon, Uzbekistan and southeast Asia.

Inclusion on the list of presumptives won't be immediate -- they never are. But scientific reviews have begun, and if they're approved, we won't need to prove that the cause of our medical condition was our service in those locations. The assumption will be automatic, as will the benefits.

The current presumptives list includes cancers of the brain, head, kidney, neck, pancreas and many more. Less serious are allergic rhinitis, bronchial asthma, chronic bronchitis and others. Of the five conditions most frequently claimed via the PACT Act, hypertensive vascular disease tops the list, with 80% of claims granted.

If you have any of the three new conditions and served in any of those locations, apply for VA health care and benefits right now. Don't wait until you hear that they've been approved. It's possible you could be approved for care and benefits even before the three new conditions are declared presumptives.

To read more about the PACT Act, check online at [www.accesstocare.va.gov/healthcare/pactact](http://www.accesstocare.va.gov/healthcare/pactact). Or see [VA.gov/pact](http://VA.gov/pact) for the full list of presumptives and eligible locations, or call them at 800-698-2411. Get Form 10-10EZ to apply for VA health care.

Ask about exposure screenings and get signed up. Get on the books so if you ever need the care, you will have saved several steps.

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## Wishing Well®

5	4	7	2	4	3	2	5	4	6	2	4	5
L	A	A	R	T	N	E	E	T	N	L	R	A
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8	6	4	7	2	4	3	6	4	2	7	4	7
V	E	V	Y	G	E	U	T	O	O	F	P	O
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2	8	5	7	3	6	8	3	2	3	2	4	3
O	R	L	O	T	A	O	O	D	D	T	N	A
4	2	5	7	3	6	8	5	2	6	8	2	2
S	A	L	U	Y	R	W	S	S	S	S	T	E

HERE IS A PLEASANT LITTLE GAME that will give you a message every day. It's a numerical puzzle designed to spell out your fortune. Count the letters in your first name. If the number of letters is 6 or more, subtract 4. If the number is less than 6, add 3. The result is your key number. Start at the upper left-hand corner and check one of your key numbers, left to right. Then read the message the letters under the checked figures give you.

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1. GEOGRAPHY: What South American country lies between Colombia and Peru?
2. MEDICAL TERMS: What is the more common name for a contusion?
3. CHEMISTRY: What is the chemical element symbol for tungsten?
4. MATH: What is the Arabic equivalent of the Roman numerals DXC?
5. U.S. STATES: What is the state capital of Michigan?
6. LANGUAGE: What does the Greek suffix "gamy" mean in English?
7. ANIMAL KINGDOM: What is a group of domesticated turkeys called?
8. U.S. PRESIDENTS: Who was the first president to fly in an airplane (while in office)?
9. TELEVISION: What is the name of the dog on "Family Guy" animated series?
10. AD SLOGANS: "The dogs kids love to bite" are made by which company?

### Answers

1. Ecuador.
2. A bruise.
3. W.
4. 590.
5. Lansing.
6. Marriage.
7. A rafter.
8. Franklin D. Roosevelt.
9. Brian.
10. Armour.

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South Dakota Governor

**Kristi Noem**



**South Dakota:** *Under God, the People Rule*

## The Unsung Heroes of Sturgis

I didn't think I'd find so much Jesus at the Sturgis Motorcycle Rally. He's everywhere all the time, but I didn't expect to feel his presence at a pancake breakfast at the Buffalo Chip. He was clearly there when the Sons of Light Ministry graciously hosted hundreds of guests, including myself and Lawrence Jones from Fox and Friends. The Sons of Light witnessed by serving a free breakfast to all who came, sharing songs of praise, and just joining in fellowship.

South Dakotans are a tight-knit bunch. We look out for one another. We lend a hand when a neighbor is in need. We go the extra mile. And we witness Christ's love to those around us.

After attending the Sturgis Motorcycle Rally, I want to recognize folks like the Sons of Light – the unsung heroes of Sturgis.

There's one thing that is pretty critical to a successful Rally – working motorcycles. Throughout the Sturgis Motorcycle Rally, mechanics were working all hours of the day and night to make sure that bikes were ready to ride. I paid a visit to Black Hills Harley Davidson and saw just how hard those mechanics work. I am grateful to them for making sure my bike was in great condition, and I know they saved the day for a lot of people throughout the Rally.

Anyone who has been to the Sturgis Motorcycle Rally knows that it can get rowdy. That's part of the fun – until it goes too far. Our law enforcement officers make sure that everyone can stay safe while participating in all the activities that the Rally has to offer.

In a time when there are entire states turning their backs on hard-working law enforcement officers, I am proud that South Dakota stands with ours. Those men and women in uniform are essential every single year to a safe and successful Sturgis Motorcycle Rally.

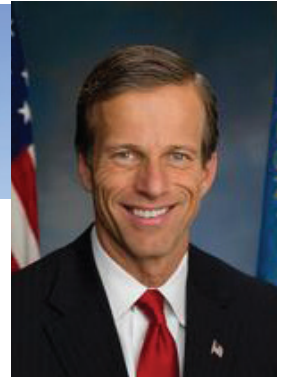
Our first responders also deal with a lot during the Rally. Thousands of bikers from all over the United States – and even from other countries – all flock to the Black Hills of South Dakota. That leads to some bizarre incidents. I'm sure that our first responders received some calls that they may not have experienced before. Nonetheless, they always showed up. They did what they do every single time – they went above and beyond the call of duty to help those in need.

I could go on and on about these unsung heroes. They are truly the backbone of South Dakota. They create the kind of atmosphere that makes people want to come back year after year. They make Sturgis an event for the whole family. I met a lot of people who brought their family members with them – dads and sons, spouses, grandfathers and grandkids, and even moms and daughters – all spending time together making memories.

In South Dakota, we celebrate these folks. We are grateful for them every day. And we show them the respect that they deserve.

Thank you to all of the unsung heroes of the Sturgis Motorcycle Rally for your hard work. It's because of you that we can con

**John Thune**  
U.S. SENATOR - SOUTH DAKOTA



## Support South Dakota Businesses This Summer

Summer is in full swing in South Dakota. Fair season is ramping up. The weather is great for a hike in the Black Hills or a day at the lake. And visitors from all over are flocking to South Dakota's unique sites and natural wonders. With so much to see and do, it's no wonder that South Dakota is a popular tourist destination each year.

The tourism season is an important contributor to South Dakota's economy. Tourism supports countless jobs and small businesses around the state. Last year, 14.4 million people visited our communities and spent \$4.7 billion while they traveled from town to town. Growing up in Murdo, at the intersection of Highway 83 and I-90, I saw firsthand the impact of tourism on our small town. Everyone in my family worked a job related to the travel industry. From my job at the Star Family Restaurant, I saw families from across the country coming through Murdo on their way out west to visit the Black Hills and make a pilgrimage to Mount Rushmore.

Tourism is not the only thing that's contributing to our state's strong economy. Today, South Dakota has the lowest unemployment rate in the country. While this is great news, it can also pose challenges to job creators who need workers to staff and grow their business. I recently met with business leaders in Yankton who expressed a frustration I hear often from businesspeople around South Dakota in nearly every sector: They need more workers.

With South Dakota's unemployment rate under 2 percent, it can be hard to find workers to fill openings. And when there aren't enough workers on the payroll, it can hold back businesses' operations and growth. To help fill this gap, many South Dakota businesses rely on the H-2B visa program, which allows businesses to hire nonimmigrant foreign workers for temporary, nonagricultural jobs. Employers in the tourism, hospitality, construction, and forestry industries have benefited from an additional pool of workers when they have struggled to find domestic labor to hire. I've made it a priority to ensure South Dakota's businesses aren't held back by labor shortages.

I recently introduced legislation to empower states to alleviate workforce shortages through the H-2B visa program. The State Executive Authority for Seasonal Occupations Needing Additional Labor (SEASONAL) Act would allow governors to request a specific number of additional visa slots when their states have experienced persistently low unemployment. Visa recipients would still be subject to existing program requirements that protect the domestic workforce, ensuring that states can fill open jobs without negatively impacting hardworking Americans or their wages. Governors could request supplemental visas for specific occupations or economic regions, while state legislatures would be able to impose limitations on the program. And while the federal government continues to balk at reforming our broken immigration system, my bill would ensure that Washington's inaction doesn't prevent state leaders from strengthening their states' economies and supporting local businesses.

Summertime is a great time to experience the best of South Dakota, and more workers could amplify the economic success of our businesses. Whether you're at a local fair or going down Main Street, I encourage you to support our local businesses and the products that are made right here in South Dakota. And I hope to see you there.



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CONGRESSMAN  
**DUSTY JOHNSON**  
Representing **SOUTH DAKOTA** at large



## Honoring Our Veterans

As of 2021, more than 65,000 veterans live in South Dakota, more than 20,000 of those are Vietnam veterans who served from 1961 to 1975. Many of these veterans did not receive a proper welcome home after the war and came back to a debate of the rightness or wrongness of the war. Regardless, these Vietnam veterans should be able to have their stories heard and sacrifices honored. To give them the honor they deserve, I partner with Vietnam War Commemoration to thank Vietnam veterans for their service.

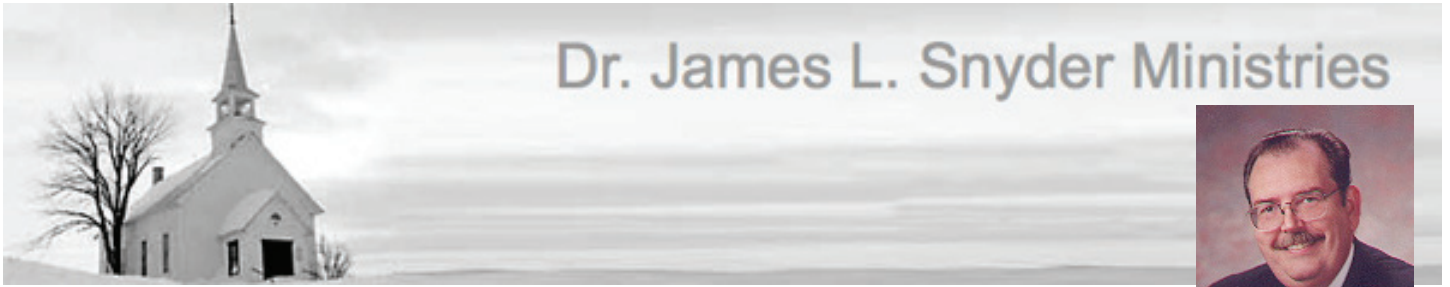
Throughout this summer, I've had the privilege to honor Vietnam-era veterans from all over the state of South Dakota. I shake their hands, hear their stories, and welcome them home. Each veteran is presented with a commemorative lapel pin, a lasting symbol of our nation's thanks. These veterans are honored in front of friends and family, making the event special for all involved. For many, this is the first welcome home and public recognition for their service they've ever received.

Each veteran I have met shares a different impactful story. They come from all walks of life, having served in all branches of the Armed Forces. Whether these veterans volunteered for the draft, earned high ranks and awards, served alongside family members, or served multiple tours—they all have one thing in common: protecting our freedom.

Over the past few years, I've recognized and honored more than 780 Vietnam veterans, and I want to continue to do so. I'll be hosting ceremonies around the state this month, so if you or someone you know served in the Vietnam war, you can nominate them to be recognized by visiting my website or calling my office at 605-275-2868.

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Dr. James L. Snyder Ministries



## One More Scam Call and I'm Going to Scream

Upon retirement, my life changed in few ways. I'm still as busy as before; I just don't get a paycheck for being busy. Nothing has changed that much.

The one thing that has changed is I schedule a nap every day. As most people know, a NAP is simply Navigating A Position. That position is level. At my age, I tell people that having these naps is essential; every day, I schedule a NAP at a particular time known only to myself.

It's important for me to keep this a secret so nobody knows when I'm doing it. I try to keep it from The Gracious Mistress of the Parsonage for obvious reasons. Usually, right after lunch, she goes to the store and picks up groceries. As soon as she closes the front door, I'm in my lazy chair, leaning back, ready to snooze away.

There is only one problem with this scenario. My phone is next to my lazy chair, in case anybody needs to reach me. The truth being said, since my retirement, nobody needs to get a hold of me. But you never know, and I can only hope. Habits are hard to break.

The other day I was in the middle of sawing some very important logs when a noise next to my chair frightened me. It was my phone. It took me a while to realize the phone was ringing, and I needed to answer. Who knows who's calling me?

Setting up, I cleared my throat and answered the phone. Wouldn't you know it was one of those phone scams? For some reason, the person on the other end knew my car warranty had just expired. For his information, that car warranty ran out 10 years ago, and it was a truck, not a car.

I wasn't too happy with this phone call, and I must confess that I let the person on the other end of the phone know how unhappy I was. It's good I don't know French.

That took me a while to settle down after that kind of phone call, but I soon drifted off into La-la-land, my favorite place.

It wasn't long before I heard the phone ring again, and without even thinking, I sat up and answered the phone. After all, why would anybody call me the second time? Was it another scam?

This time it had something to do with my Medicare. According to the person on the other end of the phone, he had an amazing offer for me to enhance my Medicare coverage. Being drowsy from sleeping, I didn't quite understand what he was talking about.

"According to our records," the person said most enthusiastically, "you qualify for an upgrade in your Medicare coverage."

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I wasn't a happy camper because my nap time is a fairly important part of my day, and how dare somebody interfere with that sacred time.

With a bit of anger, I asked, "Is there any extra coverage for mental insanity? I am about to go crazy."

The next thing I heard was a click on the phone.

My phone buzzed all afternoon, and I was about to lose my mind.

The Gracious Mistress of the Parsonage came home and noticed I was sitting up in my chair, fully awake. She just looked at me and then took her groceries into the kitchen.

Then, surprise, surprise, surprise, my phone rang again. I answered it, and a live person was on the other end of the phone. Just then, a thought came to me. I called my wife and said, "My dear, I think there's a thrift store owner on the phone and would like to talk to you."

She almost danced her way to me to pick up the phone. I must say I was dancing in my head when she came.

"Hello," she said enthusiastically, "I've been expecting your call. Thanks for calling."

Then there was a pause, and she said, "Who did you say you were?"

Another pause, and I heard her say, "You better never call me again." And she hung up the phone.

Looking at me with one of "her looks," I could see she wasn't very happy about it. She stood before me, staring a little bit, and then said, "Don't you ever do that again to me. Do you understand?"

What was I supposed to do? There was so much laughter within me that I didn't know if I could keep it from exploding. When she went back into the kitchen, I softly chuckled to myself. Then I heard, "You're not laughing, are you?"

"No, my dear," I said, "I was just thinking about a joke. Why was 6 afraid of 7? Because 7, 8, 9."

"No, you weren't," she said sarcastically, "and that's not even funny."

That gave me pause to think. Does it matter who is lying? Is a scammer's lie worse than my lie? I then thought about some verses of Scripture that addresses this.

Proverbs 12:22-23, "Lying lips are abomination to the Lord: but they that deal truly are his delight. A prudent man concealeth knowledge: but the heart of fools proclaimeth foolishness."

It's easy to think that my lying is not as bad as some scammer trying to hook me out of some money. Lying is lying, and I'm trying to process that. Lying is a serious business, no matter who does it.

## EARTHTALK ™

Dear EarthTalk: How are amphibians doing in the U.S. and around the world these days?

-- D. Victor, Philadelphia, PA

Amphibians, such as frogs, toads, salamanders and newts, live on both land and in water. Having emerged over 300 million years ago, today there are over 7,000 known species. However, they are perishing at an alarming rate. In 2004, about a third of amphibian species were threatened by extinction. Scientists have calculated that amphibian populations are decreasing at an annual rate of 3.79 percent in the U.S. alone.

Amphibians are crucial for ecosystem viability. They improve biodiversity and resilience in aquatic and terrestrial ecosystems by transferring energy and organic matter. Certain amphibians eat decomposers, allowing soil to retain nutrients longer. Tadpoles feed on algae, slowing algal blooms and subsequent eutrophication. Lizards, birds, fish and snakes rely on amphibians as a source of food. Certainly, the disappearance of amphibians will have serious repercussions throughout a wide range of ecosystems.

Amphibians typically have highly permeable skin that helps them breathe. Oxygen molecules dissolve into the skin's mucus membrane and surface blood vessels. Since their skin is so permeable, amphibians are very sensitive to their surroundings. As such they are considered an "indicator species" because they react so quickly when environmental factors change and can signal trouble for the wider environment.

There are many reasons why amphibian populations are declining, many of which are human-related. When people build roads and dams, amphibians may be separated from other members of their species. The infrastructure also interrupts migrating patterns and the flow of larvae in water. Water retention in rivers, streams and ponds is declining and shorelines are receding. Additionally, people exploit amphibians as pets or ingredients in medicinal/biological markets.

Many amphibians lay eggs in water, and toxins like road salts, pesticides, fertilizers, industrial wastes and plastics can penetrate the eggs' membranes and poison the developing larvae. Pollutants can also cause behavioral irregularities, lower reproductive success, and even cause death. Moreover, ozone layer erosion has let more of the sun's ultraviolet rays infiltrate the atmosphere. UV-B rays can kill amphibians directly and cause growth delays and immune dysfunction. These changes result in the mass mortality of eggs, larvae, and metamorphosing amphibians.

Since the mid-1900s, there has been a pandemic of the infectious chytrid fungus in over 700 amphibian species. The fungal spores move through water and stick in soil. When amphibians (notably frogs) come in contact with this fungus, it degrades the keratin layer of their skin, causing skin sloughing, lethargy, weight loss and death. Scientists are still exploring efficient ways to slow the spread of this lethal fungus.

Everyone can play a part in helping amphibians, from keeping pets indoors, reducing fertilizer and pesticide usage, covering your pool when not in use (to save amphibians from falling in). These are some of many ways that you can do your part to help these endangered critters out!future when the dust settles in this fight over regulations.



**Amphibians — frogs, toads, salamanders, newts — are in decline around the world and may be headed for extinction if we don't help them soon.** Credit: Pexels.



## SOUTH DAKOTA SEARCHLIGHT

<https://southdakotasearchlight.com>

### COMMENTARY

## Riding the tilt-a-whirl of ag land values

Records falling as sale prices top \$20,000 per acre

BRAD JOHNSON

The dizzy tilt-a-whirl of rising South Dakota agricultural land values may be slowing, but the challenge of keeping pace is enough to make people queasy.

Two recent reports, one in late July by Farm Credit Services of America (FCSA), and another in August by the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) provide the latest insight into this real estate market.

Farm Credit's July 18 report covering the first six months of 2023 said there are "signs that the real estate market is stabilizing" as the state's land values increased only 4.6% in the last six months.

Every six months, Farm Credit sends its real estate appraisers out to value the same "benchmark" farms to gauge market conditions.

"Year-over-year values rose 14 percent compared to 21 percent and 17.3 percent" for the same periods in 2020 and 2021, the report said.

USDA's 2023 Land Values Summary, released annually in early August, said South Dakota's statewide cropland value was up 12.9% from August 2022. Cropland values jumped 18.9% the prior year, and the report said values have jumped about 50% since 2020.

That's slightly higher than Farm Credit's five-year change of 42.4% and 10-year change of 44.1%.

A third report, South Dakota Agricultural Land Market Trends, 1991- 2023, produced by South Dakota State University, showed a five-year cropland value increase of 45.7%.

Pasture values increased 8.9% with a two-year increase of about 26.4%, the USDA said. SDSU's report had a 21.5% two-year increase.

Interestingly, Farm Credit's five-year crop increase of 42.4% was only slightly more than its 10-year change of 44.1%.

That's because land prices spiked in 2012 and 2013 when corn prices shot above \$7 a bushel for the first time.

During 2012 and 2013, land values jumped about 45%, according to SDSU's report.

Values then began a seven-year, 23% decline before the latest surge from 2021 to 2023.

SDSU's report said values then jumped 43% from the start of 2021 to 2023.

Strong commodity prices again drove the land value increases, along with record low interest rates. The Ukraine War is further inflating world crop prices as Russia effectively cut off the flow of crops responsible for feeding about 400 million people in Africa and Asia.

A rapid rise in interest rates, which rose to a 22-year high earlier this month, seems like it would slow land prices. But that does not seem to be the case.

"There is lots of cash on balance sheets and overall leverage is down significantly," said Tim Koch, executive vice president of business development for FCS America, in the organization's July press release. "So even if profit margins, on average, return to break-even levels, the overall financial strength of some producers will lead them to stay in the real estate market. We still could see instances of aggressive bidding for the right farm in the right location."

One of those was in Codington County between Watertown and Lake Kampeska. It recently was placed under contract for \$14,500 an acre, topping the county's previous high of \$12,500 an acre about six months earlier.

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Hamlin County also saw its first \$12,500-an-acre sale, and that land involved some pasture pushing crop acre values toward \$14,000 an acre. Numerous sales in the range of \$11,000 to \$14,000 an acre have occurred in Lake County and Brookings County, which also recently saw a sale at \$16,500 an acre. Another in Minnehaha County sold for \$21,500 an acre.

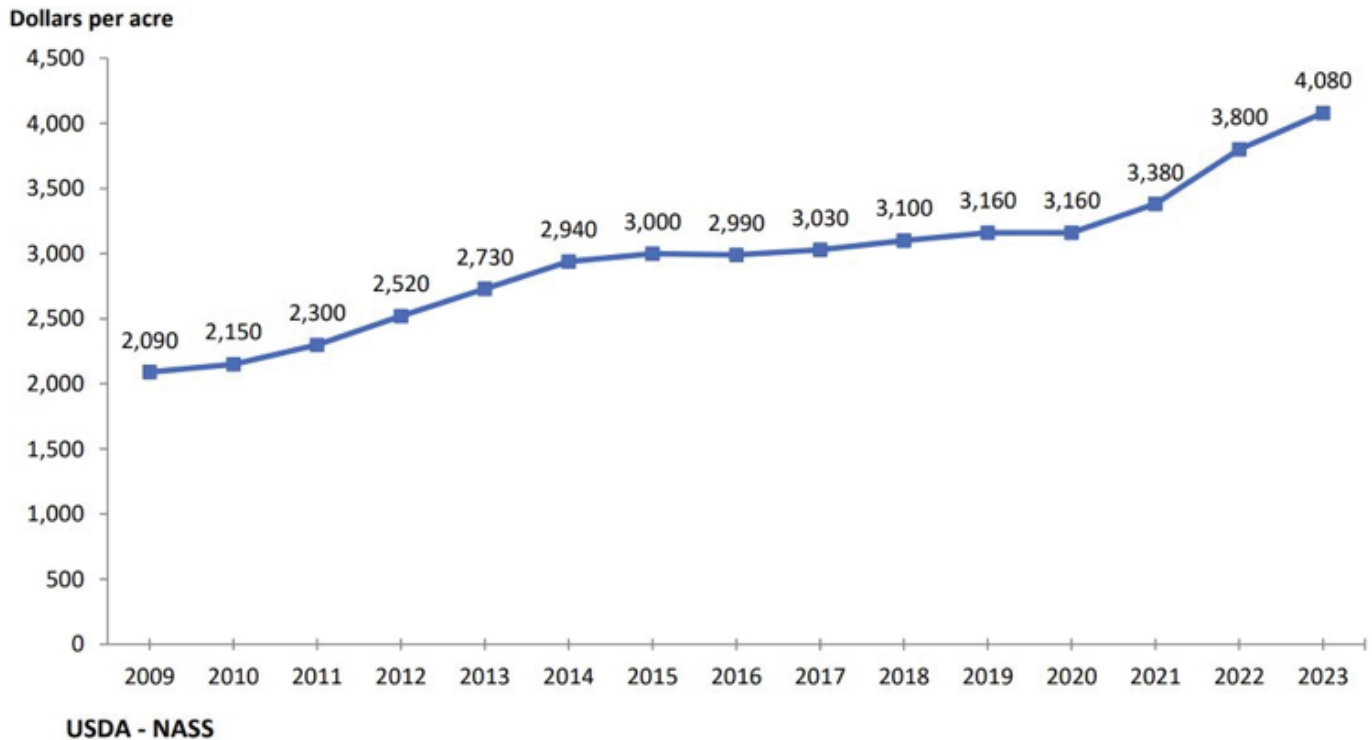
Where are prices headed?

"The other driver in real estate is farm profitability and the overall financial health of agriculture, which has been extremely strong," Koch said. "Profitability and optimism in agriculture have more than offset the negative pressures."

Auctioneers, Realtors and real estate appraisers all remain bullish, but eventually the tilt-a-whirl will stop, and riders will head for the Ferris wheel.


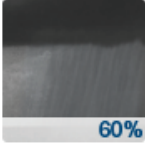





*Brad Johnson is a Watertown real estate appraiser, former newspaper reporter and editor, and longtime opinion columnist.*

## Average Farm Real Estate Value – United States: 2009-2023



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Sunday	Sunday Night	Monday	Monday Night	Tuesday	Tuesday Night	Wednesday
						
Showers	Showers Likely	Mostly Sunny	Mostly Clear	Sunny	Mostly Clear	Mostly Sunny
High: 67 °F	Low: 53 °F	High: 76 °F	Low: 54 °F	High: 83 °F	Low: 59 °F	High: 89 °F



## Shower and Storms Today- Tonight

August 13, 2023  
4:09 AM

### Key Points:

- Widespread showers and thunderstorms today through tonight.
- Some storms may produce small hail and gusty winds.
- Localized heavy rainfall possible.
- Rainfall amounts of a quarter to 1.25 inches possible.
  - Highest amounts over eastern South Dakota and western Minnesota.
- Much colder today with highs in the mid to upper 60s.

### Probability of Precipitation Forecast

	8/13 Sun						8/14 Mon				
	6am	9am	12pm	3pm	6pm	9pm	12am	3am	6am	9am	12pm
	Aberdeen	65	85	85	80	65	45	40	15	0	0
Britton	40	75	90	85	75	75	60	25	0	0	0
Brookings	55	65	70	65	65	70	60	55	35	30	10
Chamberlain	70	60	35	25	25	20	5	5	5	5	0
Clark	45	70	85	80	70	60	50	40	20	0	0
Eagle Butte	75	50	30	30	25	20	10	5	0	0	0
Ellendale	75	90	90	80	50	50	25	5	0	0	0
Eureka	95	90	75	55	40	30	15	0	0	0	0
Gettysburg	85	85	60	40	35	30	15	0	0	0	0
Huron	75	75	65	60	50	35	30	30	15	15	0
Kennebec	45	50	35	20	20	25	15	5	0	0	0
McIntosh	85	60	35	45	30	10	5	0	0	0	0
Milbank	35	50	80	85	90	95	75	50	20	5	5
Miller	55	75	70	50	50	40	20	10	5	0	0
Mobridge	95	85	55	50	40	30	10	0	0	0	0
Murdo	45	45	25	25	25	25	10	5	0	0	0
Pierre	60	70	40	30	25	25	10	5	0	0	0
Redfield	55	80	75	75	65	45	30	15	5	0	0
Sisseton	25	55	80	85	90	95	70	40	10	5	5
Watertown	40	65	85	85	75	80	70	50	20	5	0
Webster	40	65	85	80	75	75	70	45	15	0	0
Wheaton	15	40	75	85	90	95	60	40	10	5	5



National Weather Service  
Aberdeen, SD

A storm system crossing the area will bring widespread showers and thunderstorms. Some storms may produce gusty winds and small hail. Much colder temperatures are expected today, with highs in the mid to upper 60s.

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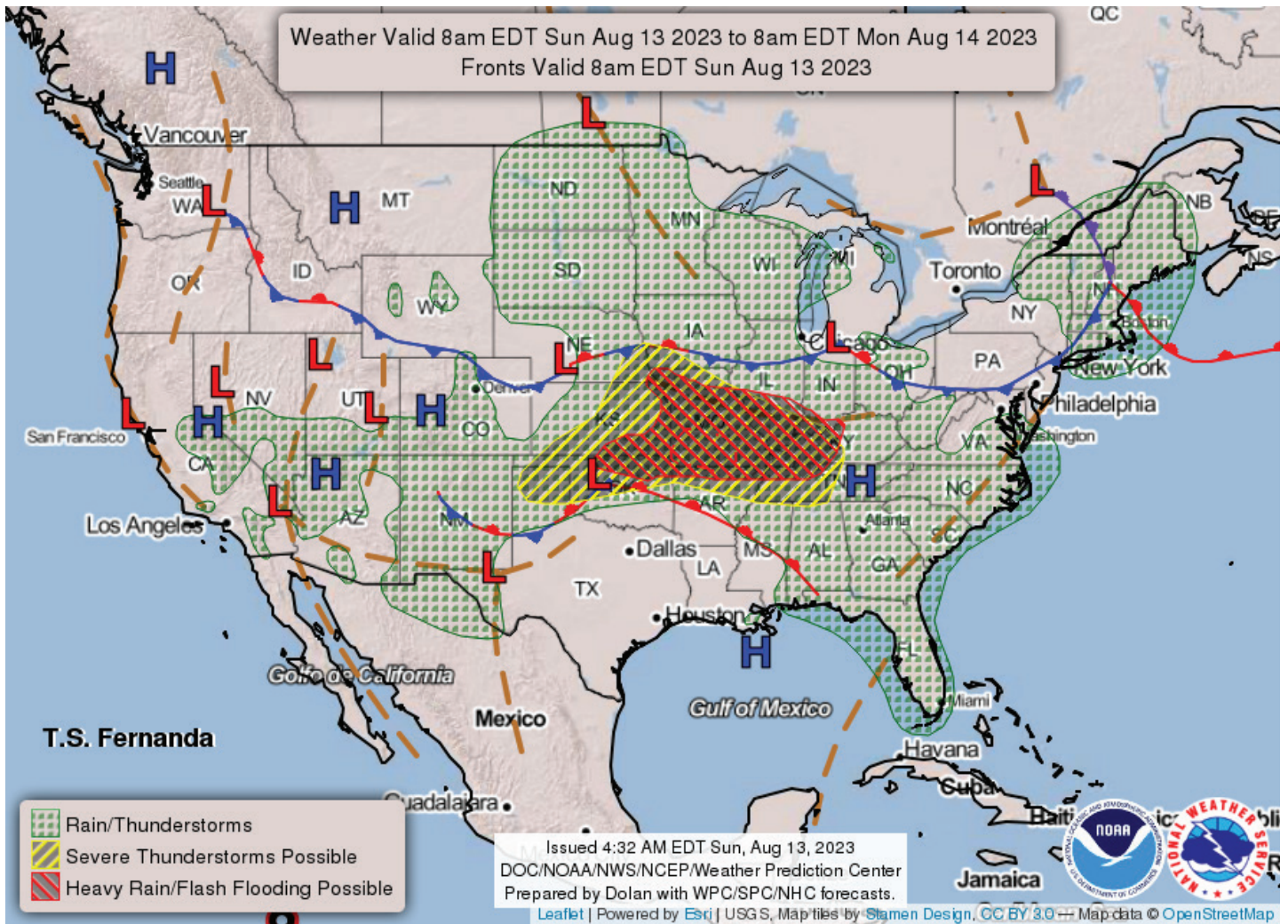
## Yesterday's Groton Weather

**High Temp: 81 °F at 5:38 PM**  
**Low Temp: 54 °F at 6:32 AM**  
**Wind: 14 mph at 1:00 PM**  
**Precip: : 0.00**

Day length: 14 hours, 15 minutes

## Today's Info

Record High: 112 in 1965  
Record Low: 35 in 1964  
Average High: 84  
Average Low: 57  
Average Precip in Aug.: 0.94  
Precip to date in Aug.: 3.27  
Average Precip to date: 15.04  
Precip Year to Date: 15.94  
Sunset Tonight: 8:45:13 PM  
Sunrise Tomorrow: 6:30:31 AM





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## Today in Weather History

August 13, 2000: A thunderstorm set numerous prairie fires in Harding County. Over a thousand acres burned by the end of the day.

1831: The Great Barbados Hurricane was an intense Category 4 hurricane that left cataclysmic damage across the Caribbean and Louisiana in 1831. From August 11 through the 13, Bermudians were amazed to see the sun with a decidedly blue appearance, giving off an eerie blue light when it shone into rooms and other enclosed places. Ships at sea as far west as Cape Hatteras reported that "their white sails appeared a light blue colour." A month later it was learned that the astounding blue sunlight had coincided with a terrible hurricane that caused 1,477 people to lose their lives. It was assumed that the hurricane was intensive enough to cause an unusual disturbance in the higher atmospheric strata, and refraction, diffraction or absorption of light rays, to produce the blue reflection. Because the sun appeared bluish-green, Nat Turner took this as the final signal and began a slave rebellion a week later on August 21.

1831 - A blue sun was widely observed in the southern states. The phenomena was believed to have pre-staged Nat Turner's slave uprising. (David Ludlum)

1919 - High winds and heavy rain struck the Middle Atlantic Coast Region. In New Jersey, winds gusted to 60 mph at Atlantic City, and nine inches of rain fell at Tuckerton. The wind and rain leveled crops and stripped trees of fruit causing several million dollars damage. (David Ludlum)

1980 - The afternoon high at New York City was just 89 degrees. But there were fifteen days of 90 degree heat during the month, their hottest August of record. (The Weather Channel)

1985 - Hail larger than golf balls, driven by 70 mph winds, moved down crops, stripped trees, and broke windows, near Logan KS. Road graders cleared three foot drifts of hail on Kansas Highway 9 east of Logan. (The Weather Channel)

1987: A succession of thunderstorms produced rainfall that was unprecedented in 116 years of precipitation records at Chicago, Illinois during an 18 hour period from the evening of the 13th to the early afternoon of the 14th. The resulting flash flood was the worst ever to strike the Chicago metropolitan area, causing three deaths and water damage that amounted to 221 million dollars. O'Hare International Airport received an event total of 9.35 inches of rain in 18 hours, shattering the previous 24-hour record of 6.24 inches. For about 24 hours, the airport was only accessible from the air as all roads were blocked by high water, including the Kennedy Expressway.

1987 - Thunderstorms deluged the Central Gulf Coast States with torrential rains. Thunderstorms in Mississippi drenched Marion County with up to 15 inches of rain during the morning hours, with 12.2 inches reported at Columbia. Floodwaters swept cars away in the Lakeview subdivision of Columbia when the the Lakeview Dam broke. Flash flooding caused more than three million dollars damage in Marion County. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1988 - A dozen cities in the northeastern U.S. reported record high temperatures for the date. Lansing MI reported a record 35 days of 90 degree weather for the year, Detroit MI reported a record 37 days of 90 degree heat for the year, and Williamsport PA reported a record 38 days of 90 degree weather for the year. (The National Weather Summary)

1989 - Thunderstorms developing in a tropical airmass over the northeastern U.S. soaked Connecticut and Massachusetts with four to eight inches of rain over the weekend, between the 11th and 13th of the month. Hartford CT received 7.70 inches of rain. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1991: Stockton, California received 0.05 inch of rainfall on this day. Since 1949, this is the only measured rainfall in Stockton on August 13th.

2003: A string of days in Paris France with temperatures from the 4th to the 12th above 95°F ends when the day's high drops to 90°F. During the long, hot summer which began 25 July and has registered several days above 100°F, an estimated 14,800 have died from heat-related causes, the French government admits.

2014: An official, New York State 24 hour precipitation record was set at Islip, NY on August 12-13 when 13.57" of rain fell.

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Daily Devotionals

## Seeds of Hope

### WHEN TIMES ARE THREATENING

A young boy was sitting on the roof of his home watching his father repair a leak in the shingles. Not realizing the steep pitch of the roof, he began to inch his way upward and suddenly started to slide downward. Realizing the danger of his situation, he shouted, "O God, help me I'm in trouble and I'm going to fall to my death!"

Suddenly his jeans became snagged on a nail and he stopped sliding. Looking upward he said, "Thank you God, I'm all right now!"

Who do you call upon when you are suddenly faced with a life-threatening situation? We often have a loved one whom we can call upon in a moment's notice. Most of us are blessed with a few faithful friends who respond immediately in times of disaster. But, when we are suddenly and without warning faced with what appears to be an imminent disaster, what are we to do?

Fortunately, our God has promised us that we will never face any adversity alone. Again and again, His Word assures us that He is ready, willing, able and wanting to rescue us when we are in trouble. He is always alert, awaiting our call and anxious to respond.

Prayer: Father, we are grateful for Your promise that we can always "call upon You in the day of trouble." Help us to trust in the greatness of Your goodness and grace In Jesus' Name, Amen.

Scripture For Today: Then call on me when you are in trouble, and I will rescue you, and you will give me glory. Psalm 50:15



We all need the encouragement, comfort, and peace that comes through God's grace. Our daily devotionals, known as Seeds of Hope, have been a means through which thousands of people have experienced this grace. Each devotional comes from God's Word and we pray this good "seed" finds good soil in your heart. Our aim is that the Seeds of Hope will be a great source of daily encouragement to you and that God will use them to draw you near to Him

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## 2023 Community Events

- 01/29/2023 Groton Robotics Pancake Feed, 10am-1pm, Community Center
- 01/29/2023 85th Carnival of Silver Skates 2pm & 6:30pm (Last Sunday of January)
- 01/31/2023-02/03/2023 Lion's Club Prom & Formal Dress Consignment Drop Off 6-9pm, Community Center
- 02/04/2023-02/05/2023 Lion's Club Prom & Formal Dress Consignment Sale 1-5pm, Community Center
- 02/25/2023 Littles and Me, Art Making 10-11:30am, Wage Memorial Library
- 03/25/2023 Spring Vendor Fair, 10am-3pm, Community Center
- 04/01/2023 Dueling Duo Baseball/Softball Fundraiser at the Legion Post #39 6-11:30pm
- 04/06/2023 Groton Career Development Event
- 04/08/2023 Lion's Club Easter Egg Hunt 10am Sharp at the City Park (Saturday a week before Easter)
- 04/22/2023 Firemen's Spring Social at the Fire Station 7pm-12:30am (Same Saturday as GHS Prom)
- 04/23/2023 Princess Prom 4:30-8pm (Sunday after GHS Prom)
- 05/06/2023 Lion's Club Spring Citywide Rummage Sale 8am-3pm (1st Saturday in May)
- 05/29/2023 Legion Post #39 Memorial Day Services (Memorial Day)
- 06/16/2023 SDSU Alumni and Friends Golf Tournament
- 06/17/2023 Groton Triathlon
- 07/04/2023 Couples Firecracker Golf Tournament
- 07/09/2023 Lion's Club Summer Fest/Car Show at the City Park 9am-4pm (Sunday Mid-July)
- 07/26/2023 GGA Burger Fundraiser Lunch at Olive Grove Golf Course
- 08/04/2023 Wine on Nine 6pm
- 08/10/2023 Family Fun Fest, 5:30 p.m. to 7:30 p.m.
- 08/11/2023 GHS Basketball Golf Tournament
- 09/09/2023 Lion's Club Fall Citywide Rummage Sale 8am-3pm (1st Saturday after Labor Day)
- 09/10/2023 Couples Sunflower Golf Tournament
- 10/14/2023 Pumpkin Fest at the City Park 10am-3pm
- 10/31/2023 Downtown Trick or Treat 4-6pm (working day on or closest to Halloween)
- 10/31/2023 United Methodist Church Trunk or Treat 5:30-7pm
- 11/23/2023 Community Thanksgiving at the Community Center 11:30am-1pm (Thanksgiving)
- 12/02/2023 Tour of Homes & Holiday Party
- 12/09/2023 Santa Claus Day at Professional Management Services 9-11am

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## The Groton Independent Printed & Mailed Weekly Edition

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## WINNING NUMBERS

### MEGA MILLIONS

WINNING NUMBERS:  
08.11.23

8 9 18 35 41 18

MegaPlier: 3x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:  
**\$36,000,000**

NEXT DRAW:

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

### LOTTO AMERICA

WINNING NUMBERS:  
08.12.23

3 16 26 29 30 5

All Star Bonus: 2x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:  
**\$7,850,000**

NEXT DRAW:

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

### LUCKY FOR LIFE

WINNING NUMBERS:  
08.12.23

11 25 29 30 42 5

TOP PRIZE:

**\$7,000/week**

NEXT DRAW: 16 Hrs 50 Mins 3 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

### DAKOTA CASH

WINNING NUMBERS:  
08.12.23

13 18 19 29 34

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:  
**\$20,000**

NEXT DRAW:

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

### POWERBALL

DOUBLE PLAY

WINNING NUMBERS:  
08.12.23

10 26 27 48 52 12

TOP PRIZE:  
**\$10,000,000**

NEXT DRAW:

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

### POWERBALL

WINNING NUMBERS:  
08.12.23

19 21 37 50 65 26

Power Play: 2x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:  
**\$215,000,000**

NEXT DRAW:

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

## News from the Associated Press

### **Skull found at Arizona preserve identified as belonging to missing Native American man**

PHOENIX (AP) — Authorities have identified a skull found by a hiker at an Arizona preserve as that of Jerole Tsinnijinnie, a Native American man who had been missing for more than three years, but the case remains under investigation as police and family members search for answers as to how he died.

His family did not know his whereabouts until last month after DNA testing matched him to the skull, which was discovered in January at the South Mountain Park and Preserve in Phoenix, The Arizona Republic reported Saturday. Police are investigating the case as a homicide.

Although the 28-year-old was an avid hiker, his family wonders whether he was killed there or elsewhere. His sister, Kaylene Tsinnijinnie, wonders whether he would still be alive if police had given his case more attention from the beginning.

She said the family had to mount an independent search that included homeless shelters and encampments.

"We had to do everything on our own," she told The Republic. "Nobody had this ability to think, to believe us that he was a great person. But he was worth looking for. He was worth finding. He was worth asking questions for."

"There's just a lot of possibilities and a lot of ways that you can get answers and I just didn't like that (investigators) didn't."

Phoenix police spokesperson Sgt. Robert Scherer said the investigation is ongoing but declined to answer specific questions about the case.

And after authorities made a composite sketch based on the skull, it was Tsinnijinnie's sister who phoned investigators inquiring whether the illustration was of her brother.

Authorities initially said the victim was believed to be a white or Hispanic male in his 20s and provided a description of his clothing. Tsinnijinnie was Diné — the Navajo word used by tribal members to refer to themselves.

Kaylene Tsinnijinnie said her younger brother loved Batman and online gaming and was committed to helping his family. He went missing only months before his youngest child was born, she said.

"He was a great dad. He loved all of his kids. He gave them all of his time. He took very good care of them," she said.

According to data from the National Missing and Unidentified Persons System, the counties in Arizona that appear to have the highest cases of missing Native Americans are Maricopa and Navajo counties, The Republic reported last year.

Phillip Francisco, a former Navajo Nation police chief, has said it's more common for tribal agencies to work closely with family members of missing people, while federal agencies have been reluctant in the past to provide families with information on investigations.

The U.S. government has pledged more resources for investigations and prosecutions. A special commission recently wrapped up a series of field hearings in several states on the alarming rate of disappearances and killings among Native Americans. The group is charged with coming up with recommendations on how to improve coordination across jurisdictions.

There were 9,575 missing Native American persons, according to the 2020 National Crime Information Center's Missing Person and Unidentified Person Statistics report.

## Polish government plans referendum asking if voters want 'thousands of illegal immigrants'

By VANESSA GERA Associated Press

WARSAW, Poland (AP) — Poland's ruling party wants to ask voters in a referendum whether they support accepting "thousands of illegal immigrants from the Middle East and Africa" as part of a European Union relocation plan, the prime minister said Sunday, as his conservative party seeks to hold onto power in an October parliamentary election.

Mateusz Morawiecki announced the referendum question in a new video published on social media. It indicated that his party, Law and Justice, is seeking to use migration in its election campaign, a tactic that helped it take power in 2015.

Poland is hosting more than a million Ukrainian refugees, who are primarily white and Christian, but officials have long made clear that they consider Muslims and others from different cultures to be a threat to the nation's cultural identity and security.

EU interior ministers in June endorsed a plan to share out responsibility for migrants entering Europe without authorization, the root of one of the bloc's longest-running political crises.

The Polish government wants to hold the referendum alongside the parliamentary election, scheduled for Oct. 15. Morawiecki said that the question would say: "Do you support the admission of thousands of illegal immigrants from the Middle East and Africa under the forced relocation mechanism imposed by the European bureaucracy?"

The video announcing the question includes scenes of burning cars and other street violence in Western Europe. A Black man licks a huge knife in apparent anticipation of committing a crime. Party leader Jaroslaw Kaczynski then says: "Do you want this to happen in Poland as well? Do you want to cease being masters of your own country?"

Leaders have announced two other questions in recent days. One will ask voters for their views on privatizing state-owned enterprises and the other will ask if they support raising the retirement age, which Law and Justice lowered to 60 for women and 65 for men.

The questions are set up to depict the opposition party, Civic Platform, as a threat to the interests of Poles. The pro-business and pro-EU party, which governed from 2007 to 2015, raised the retirement age during its time in power, favored some privatization and signaled a willingness to accept a few thousand refugees before it lost power.

The video takes aim directly at Civic Platform leader Donald Tusk, a former president of the European Council. "Tusk is the greatest threat to our security, he is the greatest threat to Poland's security," Morawiecki says. "Let's not let Tusk — as an envoy of the Brussels elites — demolish security in Poland."

Europe's asylum system collapsed eight years ago after well over a million people entered the bloc — most of them fleeing conflict in Syria — and overwhelmed reception capacities in Greece and Italy, in the process sparking one of the EU's biggest political crises.

The 27 EU nations have bickered ever since over which countries should take responsibility for people arriving without authorization, and whether other members should be obliged to help them cope.

Initially Poland was neither an entry country nor a destination country for migrants and refugees. It became a front-line state two years ago when migrants began crossing from Belarus, something European authorities view as an effort by the Russian ally to generate turmoil in Poland and other European countries.

Poland responded by building a large wall on its border. It has recently increased its military presence on the border fearing an uptick in migration and other possible instability.

As well as disagreements over migration, Law and Justice has long been in conflict with the EU over a perception by the bloc that the Warsaw government has been eroding democratic norms.

## As death toll from Maui fire reaches 93, authorities say effort to count the losses is just starting

By CLAIRE RUSH, JENNIFER SINCO KELLEHER and BEATRICE DUPUY Associated Press

LAHAINA, Hawaii (AP) — As the death toll from a wildfire that razed a historic Maui town reached 93, authorities warned Saturday that the effort to find and identify the dead was still in its early stages. It's already the deadliest U.S. wildfire for over a century.

Crews with cadaver dogs have covered just 3% of the search area, Maui Police Chief John Pelletier said. "We've got an area that we have to contain that is at least 5 square miles and it is full of our loved ones," noting that the death toll is likely to grow and "none of us really know the size of it yet."

He spoke as federal emergency workers picked through the ashen moonscape left by the fire that razed the centuries-old town of Lahaina. Teams marked the ruins of homes with a bright orange X to record an initial search, and HR when they found human remains.

Pelletier said identifying the dead is extremely challenging because "we pick up the remains and they fall apart ... When we find our family and our friends, the remains that we're finding is through a fire that melted metal." Two people have been identified so far, he said.

Dogs worked the rubble, and their occasional bark — used to alert their handlers to a possible corpse — echoed over the hot and colorless landscape.

"It will certainly be the worst natural disaster that Hawaii ever faced," Gov. Josh Green remarked Saturday as he toured the devastation on historic Front Street. "We can only wait and support those who are living. Our focus now is to reunite people when we can and get them housing and get them health care, and then turn to rebuilding."

At least 2,200 buildings were damaged or destroyed in West Maui, Green said, of which 86% were residential. Across the island, he added, damage was estimated at close to \$6 billion. He said it would take "an incredible amount of time" to recover.

The confirmed death toll was later raised to 93 from the total of 89 announced in a press conference with Green and other officials.

At least two other fires have been burning on Maui, with no fatalities reported thus far: in south Maui's Kihei area and in the mountainous, inland communities known as Upcountry. A fourth broke out Friday evening in Kaanapali, a coastal community north of Lahaina, but crews were able to extinguish it, authorities said.

Green said the Upcountry fire had affected 544 structures, of which 96% were residential.

Emergency managers in Maui were searching for places to house people displaced from their homes. As many as 4,500 people are in need of shelter, county officials said on Facebook early Saturday, citing figures from the Federal Emergency Management Agency and the Pacific Disaster Center.

He encouraged those with missing family members to go to the family assistance center.

"We need you to do the DNA test. We need to identify your loved ones," Pelletier said.

Those who escaped counted their blessings, thankful to be alive as they mourned those who didn't make it.

Retired fire captain Geoff Bogar and his friend of 35 years, Franklin Trejos, initially stayed behind to help others in Lahaina and save Bogar's house. But as the flames moved closer and closer Tuesday afternoon, they knew they had to get out. Each escaped to his own car. When Bogar's wouldn't start, he broke through a window to get out, then crawled on the ground until a police patrol found him and brought him to a hospital.

Trejos wasn't as lucky. When Bogar returned the next day, he found the bones of his 68-year-old friend in the back seat of his car, lying on top of the remains of the Bogars' beloved 3-year-old golden retriever Sam, whom he had tried to protect.

Trejos, a native of Costa Rica, had lived for years with Bogar and his wife, Shannon Weber-Bogar, helping her with her seizures when her husband couldn't. He filled their lives with love and laughter.

"God took a really good man," Weber-Bogar said.

The newly released death toll surpassed the toll of the 2018 Camp Fire in northern California, which left



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85 dead and destroyed the town of Paradise. A century earlier, the 1918 Cloquet Fire broke out in drought-stricken northern Minnesota and raced through a number of rural communities, destroying thousands of homes and killing hundreds.

The wildfires are the state's deadliest natural disaster in decades, surpassing a 1960 tsunami that killed 61 people. An even deadlier tsunami in 1946, which killed more than 150 on the Big Island, prompted development of a territory-wide emergency alert system with sirens that are tested monthly.

Hawaii emergency management records do not indicate the warning sirens sounded before fire hit the town. Officials sent alerts to mobile phones, televisions and radio stations, but widespread power and cellular outages may have limited their reach.

Fueled by a dry summer and strong winds from a passing hurricane, the wildfires on Maui raced through parched brush covering the island.

"It outpaced anything firefighters could have done in the early hours," U.S. Fire Administrator Lori Moore-Merrell said, adding that it moved horizontally, structure to structure and "incredibly fast."

"It was a low-to-the-ground fire. It was grass-fed by all evidence that we could observe today," she said.

The most serious blaze swept into Lahaina on Tuesday and destroyed nearly every building in the town of 13,000, leaving a grid of gray rubble wedged between the blue ocean and lush green slopes.

Maui water officials warned Lahaina and Kula residents not to drink running water, which may be contaminated even after boiling, and to only take short, lukewarm showers in well-ventilated rooms to avoid possible chemical vapor exposure.

Maui's firefighting efforts may have been hampered by limited staff and equipment.

Bobby Lee, president of the Hawaii Firefighters Association, said there are a maximum of 65 county firefighters working at any given time, who are responsible for three islands: Maui, Molokai and Lanai.

Green said officials will review policies and procedures to improve safety.

"People have asked why we are reviewing what's going on and it's because the world has changed. A storm now can be a hurricane-fire or a fire-hurricane," he said. "That's what we experienced, that's why we're looking into these policies, to find out how we can best protect our people."

Lahaina resident Riley Curran said he doubted that county officials could have done more, given the speed of the onrushing flames. He fled his Front Street home after seeing the oncoming fire from the roof of a neighboring building.

"It's not that people didn't try to do anything," Curran said. "The fire went from zero to 100."

More than a dozen people formed an assembly line on Kaanapali Beach Saturday to unload water, toiletries, batteries and other essentials from a catamaran that sailed from another part of Maui.

David Taylor, marketing director of Kai Kanani Sailing, which owns the boat, said many of the supplies were for hotel employees who lost their homes and were living with their families at their workplaces.

"The aloha still exists," he said as the group applauded when they finished unloading the boat. "We all feel it really intensely and everybody wants to feel like they can do something."

Caitlin McKnight, who also volunteered at an emergency shelter at the island's war memorial, said she tried to be strong for those who lost everything.

"It was evident that those people, those families, people of the Maui ohana, they went through a traumatic event," McKnight said, using a Hawaiian word for family. "You could just see it in their face."

## Mishmash of how US heat death are counted complicates efforts to keep people safe as Earth warms

By ANITA SNOW and KENDRIA LaFLEUR Associated Press

PHOENIX (AP) — Postal worker Eugene Gates Jr. was delivering mail in the suffocating Dallas heat this summer when he collapsed in a homeowner's yard and was taken to a hospital, where he died.

Carla Gates said she's sure heat was a factor in her 66-year-old husband's death, even though she's still waiting for the autopsy report. When Eugene Gates died on June 20, the temperature was 98 degrees Fahrenheit (36.6 Celsius) and the heat index, which also considers humidity, had soared over 110 degrees

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Fahrenheit (43.3 Celsius).

"I will believe this until the day I die, that it was heat-related," Carla Gates said.

Even when it seems obvious that extreme heat was a factor, death certificates don't always reflect the role it played. Experts say a mishmash of ways more than 3,000 counties calculate heat deaths means we don't really know how many people die in the U.S. each year because of high temperatures in an ever warming world.

That imprecision harms efforts to better protect people from extreme heat because officials who set policies and fund programs can't get the financial and other support needed to make a difference.

"Essentially, all heat related deaths are preventable. People don't need to die from the heat," said epidemiologist Kristie L. Ebi, who focuses on global warming's impact on human health as a professor at the University of Washington.

With a better count, she said, "you can start developing much better heat wave early warning systems and target people who are at higher risk and make sure that they're aware of these risks."

Currently, about the only consistency in counting heat deaths in the U.S. is that officials and climate specialists acknowledge fatalities are grossly undercounted.

"Deaths are investigated in vastly different ways based on where a person died," said Dr. Greg Hess, the medical examiner for Pima County, Arizona's second most populous county and home to Tucson. "It should be no surprise that we don't have good nationwide data on heat-related deaths."

Many experts say a standard decades-old method known as counting excess deaths could better show how extreme heat harms people.

"You want to look at the number of people who would not have died during that time period and get a true sense of the magnitude of the impact," Ebi said, including people who would not have suffered a fatal heart attack or renal failure without the heat.

The excess deaths calculation is often used to estimate the death toll in natural disasters, with researchers tallying fatalities that exceeded those that occurred at the same time the previous year when circumstances were average.

Counting excess deaths was used to calculate the human impact of a heat wave in Chicago that killed more than 700 people in July 1995, many elderly Black people who lived alone. Researchers also counted excess deaths during the COVID-19 pandemic to provide more complete information about deaths directly and indirectly related to the coronavirus.

But as things stand now, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention reports just 600 to 700 heat deaths annually in the United States. A study published last month in the journal *Nature Medicine* estimated more than 61,000 heat-related deaths last summer across Europe, which has roughly double the U.S. population but more than 100 times as many heat deaths.

Dr. Sameed Khatana, a staff cardiologist at the Philadelphia VA Medical Center and assistant professor at the University of Pennsylvania's Perelman School of Medicine, has said deaths in which heat contributed significantly to fatalities from causes like heart failure should also be considered.

Khatana participated in research published last year that counted excess deaths in all U.S. counties. The findings suggested that from 2008 to 2017 between 3,000 to 20,000 adult deaths from all causes listed on death certificates were linked to extreme heat. Heart disease was listed as the cause of about half of the deaths.

After the Pacific Northwest heat wave in summer of 2021, the Canadian province of British Columbia reported more than 600 deaths due to heat exposure while Oregon and Washington each initially reported a little more than 100 such fatalities.

"It's frustrating that for 90 years public health officials in the United States have not had a good picture of heat-related mortality because we have such a bad data system," said Dr. David Jones, a Harvard Medical School professor who also teaches in the epidemiology department at the Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health.

There is no uniformity among who does the counting across U.S. jurisdictions. Death investigations in

some places might be carried out by a medical examiner, typically a physician trained in forensic pathology. In other locales, the coroner could be an elected sheriff, such as the one in Orange County, California. In some small counties in Texas, a justice of peace might determine cause of death.

Utah and Massachusetts are among states that do not track heat-related deaths where exposure to extreme heat was a secondary factor.

The CDC, which is often several years behind in reporting, draws information on heat deaths from death certificate information included in local, state, tribal and territorial databases.

The CDC said in a statement that coroners and others who fill out death certificates "are encouraged to report all causes of death," but they may not always associate those contributing causes to an extreme heat exposure death and include the diagnostic codes for heat illnesses.

Hess, the Arizona coroner, said determining environmental heat was a factor in someone's death is difficult and can take weeks or even months of investigation including toxicological tests.

"If someone was shot in the head, it's pretty obvious what happened there," Hess said. "But when you find a body in a hot apartment 48 hours after they died, there is a lot of ambiguity."

Hess noted that Pima County this year began including heat-related deaths in its tally of environmental heat fatalities. Maricopa County, home to Phoenix, America's hottest big city, for years has included heat-related deaths. Clark County, Nevada, home to Las Vegas, now also considers deaths in which heat was a contributing factor.

Maricopa's Public Health Department counted 425 "heat associated" deaths last year, including those where heat was a secondary factor, such as a heart attack provoked by high temperatures.

It reports there were 59 heat-associated deaths confirmed this year through Aug. 5, with another 345 under investigation. The latest count follows the hottest month in Phoenix on record, and a record 31 consecutive days that hit 110 degrees Fahrenheit (43.3 Celsius) or higher.

Dallas, which regularly sees summer highs over 100 degrees Fahrenheit (37.7 Celsius), sweltered through an excessive heat warning this month and also grapples with oppressive humidity.

Carla Gates, whose mail carrier husband died, noted cities worldwide now must learn to deal with extreme weather. She said her spouse, with 36 years on the job, tried to protect himself by taking a chest filled with ice and several bottles of cold water on his rounds.

"Our climate has changed," she said. "And I don't think it's going back to how it was 20 years ago. So we're going to have to get used to it and we're going to have to make some adjustments."

Now she wants to honor her husband by pushing legislation to ensure people working outside are better protected from the heat. Gates noted that the day her husband died he was in an old mail truck without working air conditioning.

"I don't wish this on anyone, anyone to get a phone call that their loved one died working, doing something that they love in the heat," she said.

## Popular weight-loss drugs like Wegovy may raise risk of complications under anesthesia

By JONEL ALECCIA AP Health Writer

Patients who take blockbuster drugs like Wegovy or Ozempic for weight loss may face life-threatening complications if they need surgery or other procedures that require empty stomachs for anesthesia. This summer's guidance to halt the medication for up to a week may not go far enough, either.

Some anesthesiologists in the U.S. and Canada say they've seen growing numbers of patients on the weight-loss drugs who inhaled food and liquid into their lungs while sedated because their stomachs were still full — even after following standard instructions to stop eating for six to eight hours in advance.

The drugs can slow digestion so much that it puts patients at increased risk for the problem, called pulmonary aspiration, which can cause dangerous lung damage, infections and even death, said Dr. Ion Hobai, an anesthesiologist at Massachusetts General Hospital in Boston.

"This is such a serious sort of potential complication that everybody who takes this drug should know

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about it," said Hobai, who was among the first to flag the issue.

Nearly 6 million prescriptions for the class of drugs that include Wegovy and Ozempic were written between January and May in the U.S. for people who don't have diabetes, according to Komodo Health, a health care technology company. The drugs induce weight loss by mimicking the actions of hormones, found primarily in the gut, that kick in after people eat. They also target signals between the gut and the brain that control appetite and feelings of fullness, and by slowing how fast the stomach empties.

In June, the American Society of Anesthesiologists issued guidance advising patients to skip daily weight-loss medications on the day of surgery and hold off on weekly injections for a week before any sedation procedures. Dr. Michael Champeau, the group's president, said the action was based on anecdotal reports of problems — including aspiration — from around the country.

It's not clear how many patients taking the anti-obesity drugs may be affected by the issue. But because the consequences can be so dire, Hobai and a group of colleagues decided to speak out. Writing in the *Canadian Journal of Anesthesia*, they called for the drug to be stopped for even longer — about three weeks before sedation.

That accounts for how long semaglutide, the active medication in Wegovy, remains in the body, said Dr. Philip Jones, a Mayo Clinic anesthesiologist who is also deputy editor-in-chief of the journal.

"When 90% of it is gone, which is after three weeks, hopefully everything should go back to normal," Jones said.

Champeau and Jones both acknowledged there's not enough evidence to say for certain how long semaglutide should be held to make anesthesia safe. Many patients won't see providers far enough in advance to stop the drug three weeks before procedures, Champeau noted.

Aspiration occurs in one of every 2,000 to 3,000 operations that require sedation, and almost half of patients who aspirate during surgery develop a related lung injury. But case reports show recent patients on semaglutide had problems even when they stopped food as long as 20 hours before their procedures.

"There's nothing that says if you fast twice as long, it will be OK," Champeau said.

Among the several reports detailing potentially serious problems was one of Hobai's patients, a 42-year-old man in Boston who recently began taking Wegovy, had to be intubated and suffered respiratory failure that put him in intensive care. He aspirated food that remained in his stomach despite fasting for 18 hours.

In Chapel Hill, North Carolina, a 31-year-old woman on a low dose of Ozempic had fasted for 10 hours before a routine endoscopy prior to bariatric surgery last fall. The procedure had to be stopped because solid food remained in her stomach and she was at high risk for aspiration, the report said.

Since then, doctors have seen dozens of similar cases as use of the weight-loss medication has grown, said Dr. Elisa Lund, an anesthesiologist at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill School of Medicine. "It has exponentially increased," she said.

Hobai is completing a retrospective study of almost 200 patients taking semaglutide. While it'll be published later this year, the work so far appears to confirm a small study from Brazil, he said. In that study, about a quarter of patients taking semaglutide had residual food in their stomachs during procedures requiring sedation — even after stopping the drug for 10 days.

The American Society of Anesthesiologists advises doctors who are in doubt to treat patients who haven't paused the drug as if they have full stomachs, which can mean using different types of sedation protocols or delaying procedures, if possible. Jones added that research is urgently needed to update guidelines for doctors and patients.

Novo Nordisk, which makes Ozempic, Wegovy and similar drugs, said the firm's clinical trial and post-marketing safety data did not show that the medications led to aspiration. But the drugmaker noted that the medications are known to cause delayed emptying of the stomach and that the labels warn of possible gastrointestinal side effects.

Stopping the medications for three weeks can cause problems, too. Patients with diabetes will need another way to control their blood sugar and those seeking to lose weight may regain some, Hobai said.

Hobai suggests that people using Wegovy and similar drugs tell their doctors before sedation and discuss

the risks and benefits.

"If you're taking this drug and you need an operation, you will need to have some extra precautions," he said.

## **Niger's junta gains upper hand over regional bloc threatening military force, analysts say**

By SAM MEDNICK Associated Press

NIAMEY, Niger (AP) — One week after a deadline passed for mutinous soldiers in Niger to reinstate the country's ousted president or face military intervention, the junta has not acquiesced. No military action has been taken and the coup leaders appear to have gained the upper hand over the regional group that issued the threat, analysts say.

The West African regional bloc ECOWAS had given the soldiers that overthrew Niger's democratically elected President Mohamed Bazoum until last Sunday to release and reinstate him or they threatened military action. On Thursday, the bloc ordered the deployment of a "standby" force to restore constitutional rule in Niger, with Nigeria, Benin, Senegal and Ivory Coast saying they would contribute troops.

But it's unclear when, how or if the troops will deploy. The move could take weeks or months to set into motion, and while the bloc decides what to do the junta is gaining power, some say.

"It looks the putschists have won and will stay ... The putschists are holding all the cards and have cemented their rule," said Ulf Laessing, head of the Sahel program at the Konrad Adenauer Foundation.

ECOWAS is unlikely to intervene militarily and risk dragging Niger into civil war, he said, adding that ECOWAS and Western countries would instead likely press the junta to agree to a short transition period.

Europe and the United States will have little choice but to recognize the junta in order to continue the security cooperation in the region, Laessing said.

The July 26 coup is seen as a major blow to many Western nations, which saw Niger as one of the last partners in the conflict-riddled Sahel region south of the Sahara Desert that they could work with to beat back a growing jihadi insurgency linked to al-Qaida and the Islamic State group. The U.S. and France have more than 2,500 military personnel in the region and together with other European countries have invested hundreds of millions of dollars in military assistance and training Niger's forces.

There was still little clarity about what would happen days after ECOWAS announced the "standby" force deployment.

A meeting of the region's defense chiefs was postponed indefinitely. The African Union is expected to hold a meeting on Monday to discuss Niger's crisis. The group's Peace and Security Council could overrule the decision if it felt that wider peace and security on the continent was threatened by an intervention.

The delay of the defense chiefs' meeting to discuss the "standby" force shows that ECOWAS views the use of force as a last resort, said Nate Allen, an associate professor at the Africa Center for Strategic Studies.

"Given the likely challenges an intervention would face, (the use of force would) require a high degree of consensus and coordination not just within ECOWAS, but within the African Union and international community writ large," he said.

But those with ties to the junta say they are preparing for a fight, especially since the soldiers are unwilling to negotiate unless ECOWAS acknowledges its leader, Gen. Abdourahmane Tchiani, who overthrew the president, as the new ruler.

"ECOWAS is demanding that (the junta) immediately release president Bazoum and restore him as head of state. Is this a joke?" said Insa Garba Saidou, a local activist who assists Niger's new military rulers with their communications and says he is in direct contact with them. "Whether Bazoum resigns or not, he will never be Niger's president again."

As time drags on, there is mounting concern for Bazoum's safety, who has been under house arrest with his wife and son since the coup. Those close to him say his situation is deteriorating with no water, electricity and a lack of food. Niger's junta told a top U.S. diplomat that they would kill the deposed president if neighboring countries attempted any military intervention to restore his rule, two Western officials told

The Associated Press.

Most Nigeriens are trying to go about their lives as the standoff continues between the coup leaders and regional countries.

For the most part, the streets in the capital, Niamey, are calm with sporadic pockets of pro-junta demonstrations. On Friday hundreds of people marched toward France's military base demanding the French leave while waving Russian flags.

Mercenaries from the Russian-linked Wagner group already operate in a handful of other African countries and are accused of committing human rights abuses. Earlier this month during a trip to neighboring Mali, which is also run by a military regime and cooperates with Wagner, the junta reportedly asked the mercenaries for help.

But many Nigeriens don't have time for protests and are more focused on feeding their families.

The country of some 25 million people is one of the poorest in the world and the harsh travel and economic sanctions imposed by ECOWAS are taking a toll.

Moussa Ahmed, a food seller in Niamey, said the prices of food items such as cooking oil and rice have increased by 20% since the coup and there isn't enough electricity to power the fridges in his shop. Niger gets up to 90% of its power from neighboring Nigeria, which has cut off some of its supply.

Aid groups operating in the country that were grappling with the challenges of helping more than 4 million people who need humanitarian assistance say the crisis will exacerbate an already dire situation.

"We cannot overstate the impact on civilians, both in terms of humanitarian and protection needs, when military imperatives take precedence over civilian governance," said Jan Egeland, secretary general for the Norwegian Refugee Council.

Niger has the youngest and one of the poorest populations in the world and the sanctions and suspensions of development aid are expected to have a dramatic impact on living conditions for a country already under heavy strain, he said.

## **4 people dead and 1 missing after explosion destroys 3 structures in western Pennsylvania**

PLUM, Pa. (AP) — Four people were dead and a fifth was unaccounted for following a house explosion in western Pennsylvania that destroyed three structures and damaged at least a dozen others Saturday morning, authorities said.

Allegheny County officials said three people were taken to hospitals after the blast shortly before 10:30 a.m. in the borough of Plum, about 20 miles (32 kilometers) east of Pittsburgh.

Three people were transported to area hospitals, including one who was listed in critical condition and two who were treated and released. More than 20 firefighters were evaluated, many for heat exhaustion, authorities said.

The Allegheny County Medical Examiner's Office was expected to provide additional information about the deceased victims.

Emergency officials suspended operations Saturday night due to weather and concern for the safety of investigators. Crews were expected to resume working at the site on Sunday morning.

Emergency responders reported people trapped under debris after one house apparently exploded and two others were engulfed in flames, county spokesperson Amie Downs said.

Crews from at least 18 fire departments worked to douse the flames with the help of water tankers from Allegheny and Westmoreland counties, Downs said.

Officials told reporters at the scene they did not know exactly who was at home and who may have had visitors at the time of the explosion, so they could not provide an exact number of people considered missing.

The cause of the explosion is under investigation by Plum and county law enforcement and the county fire marshal's office. The state public utilities commission and local utilities also were at the scene.

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George Emanuele, who lives three houses down from the home that exploded, told the Tribune-Review that he and a neighbor went to the home before the fire got out of control, where they found a man laying in the backyard and dragged him away from the scene.

Rafal Kolankowski, who lives a few houses away, told the Pittsburgh Post-Gazette that the explosion broke the windows in his house and knocked him and his wife to the ground.

After recovering and checking on his son, Kolankowski went outside and a woman told him another woman had been upstairs and a man was in the basement. The other woman later emerged covered in white ash, but the individual in the basement had not yet exited, he said.

"It's just tragic, I mean, it looks like a war zone — it looks like a bomb hit our neighborhood and it's just unfortunate," Kolankowski said. "I was just with some of the neighbors yesterday, right, and now this happens."

Jeremy Rogers, who lives two doors down, told the paper he had been out shopping when he got an alert about a problem at his house and saw "all sorts of stuff flying around." His family was able to get out safely and he was allowed to go inside quickly to rescue his dog, although he could not locate the family's three cats.

## AP gets rare glimpse of jailed Hong Kong pro-democracy publisher Jimmy Lai

By LOUISE DELMOTTE Associated Press

HONG KONG (AP) — Jimmy Lai, a former newspaper publisher and one of Hong Kong's most prominent pro-democracy activists, spends around 23 hours a day in solitary confinement in a maximum-security facility while he awaits a trial that could send him to prison for life.

In exclusive photos taken by The Associated Press in recent weeks, the 75-year-old Lai can be seen with a book in his hands wearing shorts and sandals and accompanied by two guards at Stanley Prison. He looks thinner than when he was last photographed in February 2021.

Lai is allowed out for 50 minutes a day to exercise. Unlike most other inmates, who play football or exercise in groups, Lai walks alone in what appears to be a 5-by-10-meter (16-by-30-foot) enclosure surrounded by barbed wire under Hong Kong's punishing summer sun before returning to his unairconditioned cell in the prison.

The publisher of the now-defunct Apple Daily newspaper, Lai disappeared from public view in December 2020 following his arrest under a security law imposed by Beijing to crush a massive pro-democracy movement that started in 2019 and brought hundreds of thousands onto the streets. More than 250 activists have been arrested under the security law and vanished into the Hong Kong legal system.

Photographers used to be able to catch a glimpse of activists in remand at another detention center in Lai Chi Kok as they were taken to and from court. Authorities started blocking this view in 2021 by making the detainees walk through a covered pathway.

In a separate case, an appeals court is due to rule Monday on a challenge that Lai and six other activists have had filed against their conviction and sentencing on charges of organizing and taking part in an unauthorized assembly nearly four years ago. The others are Lee Cheuk-yan, Margaret Ng, Leung Kwok-hung, Cyd Ho, Albert Ho and Martin Lee.

Lai, a British national, is accused of colluding with foreign forces to endanger national security and conspiring to call for sanctions or blockades against Hong Kong or China. He also faces a charge of conspiracy to print seditious publications under a colonial-era law increasingly used to crush dissent.

He was scheduled to go on trial last December, but it was postponed to September while the Hong Kong government appealed to Beijing to block his attempt to hire a British defense lawyer.

"My father is in prison because he spoke truth to power for decades," Lai's son, Sebastien, said in a May statement to a U.S. government panel, the Congressional-Executive Commission on China.

"He is still speaking truth to power and refusing to be silenced, even though he has lost everything and he may die in prison," Sebastien Lai said. "I am very proud to be his son."

Lai is allowed two 30-minute visits by relatives or friends each month. They are separated by glass and communicate by phone.

In a separate case, he was sentenced in December to almost six years in prison on fraud charges.

In May, a court rejected Lai's bid to halt his security trial on grounds that it was being heard by judges picked by Hong Kong's leader. That is a departure from the common law tradition China promised to preserve for 50 years after the former British colony returned to China in 1997.

Lai, who suffers from diabetes and was diagnosed with high blood pressure in 2021 while in detention, is treated as a Category A prisoner, a status for inmates who have committed the most serious crimes such as murder.

## Lawsuit targets Wisconsin legislative districts resembling Swiss cheese

By DAVID A. LIEB and SCOTT BAUER Associated Press

MADISON, Wis. (AP) — If Wisconsin state Rep. Jimmy Anderson wants to visit residents in some of the northern neighborhoods he represents, he first must leave his own district — twice.

From his Fitchburg home in suburban Madison, Anderson must exit his 47th Assembly District, pass through the 77th District, reenter the 47th District, then head north through the 48th District to finally reach a cluster of homes assigned like a remote outpost to his district.

Unusual? Yes. Inconvenient? Yes.

Unconstitutional? Perhaps.

Though the Wisconsin Constitution requires legislative districts "to consist of contiguous territory," many nonetheless contain sections of land that are not actually connected. The resulting map looks a bit like Swiss cheese, where some districts are dotted with small neighborhood holes assigned to different representatives.

Wisconsin's nationally peculiar practice of detached districts is cited as one of several alleged violations in a recent lawsuit seeking to strike down current Assembly and Senate districts and replace them before the 2024 election.

Like similar cases in states ranging from North Carolina to Utah, the Wisconsin lawsuit also alleges partisan gerrymandering is illegal under the state constitution's guarantee of equal protection and free speech.

Though such claims have had mixed results nationally, Democrats hope the Wisconsin Supreme Court's new liberal majority will deliver a resounding rejection of gerrymandering that has given Republicans a lopsided legislative majority.

But the challenge to noncontiguous districts could provide judges a way to decide the case without ever addressing whether partisan gerrymandering is illegal.

"It could be that this gives the court a completely neutral basis for deciding the maps are no good," said Kenneth R. Mayer, a University of Wisconsin-Madison political science professor.

Wisconsin's Assembly districts rank among the most tilted nationally, with Republicans routinely winning far more seats than would be expected based on their average share of the vote, according to an Associated Press analysis. In other states, such as Nevada, Democrats have reaped a disproportionate advantage from redistricting.

Most states are guided by at least four traditional principles for reshaping state legislative districts after each decennial census. Those include districts being nearly equal in population, compact and contiguous and following the boundaries of cities and counties. "Contiguous" generally is understood to mean all parts of a district are connected, with some logical exceptions for islands.

In some states, mapmakers have gotten creative by using narrow strips of roads or rivers to connect otherwise distinct parts of a district. But few have gone so far as Wisconsin in treating contiguous as a loose synonym for "nearby."

Wisconsin's detached districts are "profoundly weird," said Justin Levitt, a professor at Loyola Marymount



ibility to perpetrate abuse," Levitt said.

## Alabama riverfront brawl videos spark a cultural moment about race, solidarity and justice

By AARON MORRISON, AISHA I. JEFFERSON and KIM CHANDLER Associated Press

MONTGOMERY, Ala. (AP) — As bystanders trained their smartphone cameras on the riverfront dock while several white boaters pummeled a Black riverboat co-captain, they couldn't have known the footage would elicit a national conversation about racial solidarity.

Yet, a week after multiple videos showing the now-infamous brawl and valiant defense of the outnumbered co-captain were shared widely on social media, it's clear the event truly tapped into the psyche of Black America and created a broader cultural moment.

Andrea Boyles, a sociology professor at Tulane University, said a long history of anti-Black racism and attacks and current events likely magnified the attack's impact and response.

"Especially at a time like now where we see an increase in anti-Black racism through legislation and otherwise, whether we're thinking about history, the banning of Black history and curriculum and all sorts of things across the state of Florida" and elsewhere, Boyles said. "So this is why it is on the forefront of people's minds. And folks are very much tuned in, Black people in particular."

Many see the Aug. 5 ordeal on the riverfront dock in Montgomery, Alabama's capital city steeped in civil rights history, as a long-awaited answer to countless calls for help that went unanswered for past Black victims of violence and mob attacks.

"We witnessed a white mob doing this to him," said Michelle Browder, an artist and social justice entrepreneur in Montgomery, describing the attack by boaters on the Black riverboat co-captain.

"I call it a mob because that is what it was, it was a mob mentality," she added. "It then became a moment because you saw Black people coming together."

After being inundated with images and stories of lethal violence against Black people, including motorists in traffic stops, church parishioners and grocery shoppers, the video from Montgomery struck a chord because it didn't end in the worst of outcomes for Black Americans.

"For Montgomery to have this moment, we needed to see a win. We needed to see our community coming together and we needed to see justice," Browder said.

Videos of the brawl showed the participants largely divided along racial lines. Several white men punched or shoved the Black riverboat co-captain after he took a separate vessel to shore and tried to move their pontoon boat. The white boaters' private vessel was docked in a spot designated for the city-owned Harriott II riverboat, on which more than 200 passengers were waiting to disembark.

The videos then showed mostly Black people rushing to the co-captain's defense, including a Black teenage riverboat crew member who swam to the dock. The videos also showed the ensuing brawl that included a Black man hitting a white person with a folding chair.

As of Friday, Alabama police had charged four white people with misdemeanor assault. The folding chair-wielding man turned himself in Friday and was charged with disorderly conduct.

Jim Kittrell, the captain of Harriott II, told The Daily Beast that he thought race might have been a factor in the initial attack on his co-captain, but the resulting melee was not a "Black and white thing."

"This was our crew upset about these idiots," Kittrell also told WACV radio station.

He later explained that several members of his crew, seen confronting the pontoon boat party after the riverboat docked, "felt they had to retaliate, which was unfortunate."

"I wish we could have stopped it from happening but, when you see something like that, it was difficult. It was difficult for me to sit there in the wheelhouse watching him being attacked," Kittrell told the station.

Kittrell told The Associated Press by phone that the city had asked him not to talk about the brawl.

Major Saba Coleman of the Montgomery Police Department said on Tuesday that hate crime charges were ruled out after the department consulted with the local FBI. But several observers noted the pres-

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ence of a hate motivation, or lack thereof, on the part of the pontoon boat party was not why the event resonated so strongly.

"All these individuals having smartphones and cameras have democratized media and information. In the past, it was a very narrow scope on what news was being reported and from what perspectives," NAACP President and CEO Derrick Johnson said.

The technology, Johnson added, "opened up an opportunity for America as a whole to understand the impact of racism, the impact of violence and the opportunity to create a narrative that's more consistent with keeping African Americans and other communities safe."

The riverfront brawl spawned a multitude of memes, jokes, parodies, reenactments and even T-shirts. "Lift every chair and swing," read one shirt in a play on "Lift Ev'ry Voice And Sing," the late-19th century hymn sometimes referred to as the Black national anthem.

Another meme likened the co-captain's toss of his hat into the air to sending the "bat signal," a reference to the D.C. Comics character Batman. One image of the scene captured from bystander video was altered to imitate Marvel Comics' Avengers characters assembling through magic portals on the dock to defend the Black co-captain.

Many observers on social media were quick to point out the significance of the city and location where the brawl took place. Montgomery was the first capital of the Confederacy and the riverfront is an area where enslaved people were once unloaded to be sold at auction. The area is a few blocks from the spot where Rosa Parks was arrested for disobeying bus segregation laws.

"Much of (the riverfront brawl reaction) is emblematic of the history of Montgomery," said Timothy Welbeck, the director of the Center for Anti-Racism at Temple University in Philadelphia.

"This is the home of the bus boycott; this is the home of intense, racialized segregation and various forms of resistance today," he said. "Even if there wasn't an explicit mention of race, many people saw a white man assaulting a Black man as a proxy for some of the racist behavior that they've seen before. It brought about a sense of solidarity and unified fate, too, in this particular moment."

Then there's the lingering trauma of seeing past Black victims of violence and mob attacks suffer without help or intervention. Here was the rare event in which bystanders not only chronicled the moment but were able to intervene and help someone they saw being victimized.

In other notable instances, such as George Floyd's murder by Minneapolis police, bystanders were restrained because the perpetrators were law enforcement officers. In a video of Floyd's encounter with police filmed by Black bystander Darnella Frazier, people can be heard pleading for the Black man's life as he gasped for air with a white officer's knee held to his neck.

Physically intervening in Minneapolis would have invited arrests and placed the would-be rescuers at risk for harm themselves.

Historically, lynching victims were often taken from their families as the Black community had to stand by mutely. Emmett Till's family members in Mississippi were haunted by their inability to stop the white men who kidnapped and killed him.

Bowder, the Montgomery artist, said the conversation needs to continue.

"I'm hoping for a hopeful message out of this," she said.

Katrina Hazzard, a Rutgers University professor in the Department of Sociology, Anthropology and Criminal Justice, said she has seen that hopeful message in the comments of support that have crossed racial and ethnic lines in identifying the aggressors and the right for people to defend themselves and the crewman.

"That's just been refreshing for me to see and for me to hear across the board," she said.

## Death toll from Maui wildfire reaches 89, making it the deadliest in the US in more than 100 years

By CLAIRE RUSH, BEATRICE DUPUY and JENNIFER SINCO KELLEHER Associated Press

LAHAINA, Hawaii (AP) — A raging wildfire that swept through a picturesque town on the Hawaiian island of Maui this week has killed at least 89 people, authorities said Saturday, making it the deadliest U.S. wildfire of the past century.

The new death toll Saturday came as federal emergency workers with axes and cadaver dogs picked through the aftermath of the blaze, marking the ruins of homes with a bright orange X for an initial search and HR when they found human remains.

Dogs worked the rubble, and their occasional bark — used to alert their handlers to a possible corpse — echoed over the hot and colorless landscape.

The inferno that swept through the centuries-old town of Lahaina on Maui's west coast four days earlier torched hundreds of homes and turned a lush, tropical area into a moonscape of ash. The state's governor predicted more bodies will be found.

"It's going to rise," Gov. Josh Green remarked Saturday as he toured the devastation on historic Front Street. "It will certainly be the worst natural disaster that Hawaii ever faced. ... We can only wait and support those who are living. Our focus now is to reunite people when we can and get them housing and get them health care, and then turn to rebuilding."

Maui Police Chief John Pelletier said two of the 89 victims have been identified so far, adding that identifying the dead is extremely challenging because "we pick up the remains and they fall apart."

"When we find our family and our friends, the remains that we're finding is through a fire that melted metal. We have to do rapid DNA to identify them. Every one of these 89 are John and Jane Does," he said. "We know we've got to go quick, but we've got to do it right."

At least 2,200 buildings were damaged or destroyed in West Maui, Green said, of which 86% were residential. Across the island, he added, damage was estimated at close to \$6 billion. He said it would take "an incredible amount of time" to recover."

At least two other fires have been burning in Maui, with no fatalities reported thus far: in south Maui's Kihei area and in the mountainous, inland communities known as Upcountry. A fourth broke out Friday evening in Kaanapali, a coastal community in West Maui north of Lahaina, but crews were able to extinguish it, authorities said.

Green said the Upcountry fire had affected 544 structures, of which 96% were residential.

Emergency managers in Maui were searching for places to house people displaced from their homes. As many as 4,500 people are in need of shelter, county officials said on Facebook early Saturday, citing figures from the Federal Emergency Management Agency and the Pacific Disaster Center.

Those who escaped counted their blessings, thankful to be alive as they mourned those who didn't make it.

Retired fire captain Geoff Bogar and his friend of 35 years, Franklin Trejos, initially stayed behind to help others in Lahaina and save Bogar's house. But as the flames moved closer and closer Tuesday afternoon, they knew they had to get out. Each escaped to his own car. When Bogar's wouldn't start, he broke through a window to get out, then crawled on the ground until a police patrol found him and brought him to a hospital.

Trejos wasn't as lucky. When Bogar returned the next day, he found the bones of his 68-year-old friend in the back seat of his car, lying on top of the remains of the Bogars' beloved 3-year-old golden retriever Sam, whom he had tried to protect.

Trejos, a native of Costa Rica, had lived for years with Bogar and his wife, Shannon Weber-Bogar, helping her with her seizures when her husband couldn't. He filled their lives with love and laughter.

"God took a really good man," Weber-Bogar said.

Bill Wyland, who lives on the island of Oahu but owns an art gallery on Lahaina's historic Front Street, fled on his Harley Davidson, whipping the motorcycle onto empty sidewalks Tuesday to avoid traffic-jammed roads as embers burned the hair off the back of his neck.

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Riding in winds he estimated to be at least 70 miles per hour (112 kilometers per hour), he passed a man on a bicycle who was pedaling for his life.

"It's something you'd see in a Twilight Zone, horror movie or something," Wyland said.

The newly released death toll surpassed the toll of the 2018 Camp Fire in northern California, which left 85 dead and destroyed the town of Paradise. A century earlier, the 1918 Cloquet Fire broke out in drought-stricken northern Minnesota and raced through a number of rural communities, destroying thousands of homes and killing hundreds.

The wildfires are the state's deadliest natural disaster in decades, surpassing a 1960 tsunami that killed 61 people. An even deadlier tsunami in 1946, which killed more than 150 on the Big Island, prompted development of a territory-wide emergency alert system with sirens that are tested monthly.

Hawaii emergency management records do not indicate the warning sirens sounded before fire hit the town. Officials sent alerts to mobile phones, televisions and radio stations, but widespread power and cellular outages may have limited their reach.

Fueled by a dry summer and strong winds from a passing hurricane, the wildfires on Maui raced through parched brush covering the island.

The most serious blaze swept into Lahaina on Tuesday and destroyed nearly every building in the town of 13,000, leaving a grid of gray rubble wedged between the blue ocean and lush green slopes.

Front Street, the heart of the historic downtown and Maui's economic hub, was nearly empty of life Saturday morning. An Associated Press journalist encountered one barefoot resident carrying a laptop and a passport, who asked where the nearest shelter was. Another, riding a bicycle, took stock of the damage at the harbor, where he said his boat caught fire and sank.

Maui water officials warned Lahaina and Kula residents not to drink running water, which may be contaminated even after boiling, and to only take short, lukewarm showers in well-ventilated rooms to avoid possible chemical vapor exposure.

The danger on Maui was well known. Maui County's hazard mitigation plan updated in 2020 identified Lahaina and other West Maui communities as having frequent wildfires and several buildings at risk. The report also noted West Maui had the island's second-highest rate of households without a vehicle and the highest rate of non-English speakers.

"This may limit the population's ability to receive, understand and take expedient action during hazard events," the plan stated.

Maui's firefighting efforts may have been hampered by limited staff and equipment.

Bobby Lee, president of the Hawaii Firefighters Association, said there are a maximum of 65 county firefighters working at any given time, who are responsible for three islands: Maui, Molokai and Lanai.

Green said officials will review policies and procedures to improve safety.

"People have asked why we are reviewing what's going on and it's because the world has changed. A storm now can be a hurricane-fire or a fire-hurricane," he said. "That's what we experienced, that's why we're looking into these policies, to find out how we can best protect our people."

Riley Curran said he fled his Front Street home after climbing up a neighboring building to get a better look. He doubts county officials could have done more, given the speed of the onrushing flames.

"It's not that people didn't try to do anything," Curran said. "The fire went from zero to 100."

Curran said he had seen horrendous wildfires growing up in California.

But, he added, "I've never seen one eat an entire town in four hours."

## As free press withers in El Salvador, pro-government social media influencers grow in power

By MEGAN JANETSKY Associated Press

SAN SALVADOR, El Salvador (AP) — Douglas Guzmán's TikTok feed was dotted with workout routines and videos showcasing his favorite parts of his country.

That changed about a year ago, as rights groups, civil society and even some officials criticized El Salvador's President Nayib Bukele for violating human rights in his crackdown on criminal gangs, and said that his unconstitutional bid for re-election would corrode the country's democracy.

Within days of Bukele announcing his bid for a second five-year term, Guzmán's feed was plastered with videos describing Bukele as the "future liberator of Latin America" and slick montages of the leader's "mega-prison" for accused gangsters.

Views on the social media influencer's videos skyrocketed. The 39-year-old member of Bukele's party said he found a new mission: counteracting negative press from independent media about his populist president.

"(Journalists) don't know anything. All they do is sit at their desks and watch as President Bukele ... makes a massive effort to save thousands of lives. But they don't see that because they've never cared about the lives of Salvadorans," Guzmán said. "That's why we're here. To show the true reality."

Guzmán is part of an expanding network of social media personalities acting as a megaphone for the millennial leader. At the same time Bukele has cracked down on the press, his government has embraced those influencers. As the president seeks to hold onto power, he has harnessed that flood of pro-Bukele content slowly turning his Central American nation into an informational echo chamber.

"A news organization doing an investigation can't compare to the sounding board that these influencers have because they flood your social media with the government's narrative," said Roberto Dubon, a communications strategist and congressional candidate for Bukele's former party, FMLN. "What you have is an apparatus to spread their propaganda."

Bukele, a 42-year-old leader often donning a backwards baseball cap, worked years in political advertising before social media became a key to his rise to power five years ago. Since, his approval ratings have soared to 90%, according to a June CID Gallup poll. Bukele's modern political messaging, charisma and brutal crackdown on the country's gangs only continue to win him fans domestically and abroad even in the midst of controversy.

By doing so, Bukele is using a playbook increasingly utilized by 21st century autocrats, said Seva Gunitsky, a political scientist at the University of Toronto.

Social media was once hailed as the ultimate democratic tool to organize protests, even revolutions, across the world. Now, governments from Russia to Uganda are now using it to control the narrative.

"They use this tool of liberation technology to actually prolong and strengthen their rule," Gunitsky said. Such governments use influencers because their content "doesn't look as much like propaganda and is more about shaping the narrative in more subtle ways."

Under Bukele, El Salvador constructed a sophisticated communications machine. It locked down access to information out of line with official messaging and hired teams of former journalists to produce blockbuster-quality videos showcasing security forces taking on the nation's gangs. The government also mimicked Russia, building an army of tech-savvy contractors – or "trolls" – to create fake social media accounts, spread falsities and harass critics.

At the same time his message of a strong-handed response to gang violence rippled across the region, gaining traction in other nations struggling with crime across Latin America and Caribbean.

With it, an "entire industry" has been born as influencers latch onto the president's image, said Oscar Picardo, director of investigations at El Salvador's Universidad Francisco Gavidia.

A study by Picardo's university and local investigative outlet Factum examined 69 pro-Bukele YouTube accounts, which collectively have more followers than the population of El Salvador. They found many accounts – which make money through view and subscriber counts – can earn up to tens of thousands

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University Law School in Los Angeles who created the All About Redistricting website.

Anderson's legislative district, for example, includes more than a dozen remote territories scattered around the Madison area that are disconnected from the district's main portion in Fitchburg, McFarland and Monona. That makes door-to-door canvassing particularly challenging for Anderson, who uses a wheelchair that must be repeatedly loaded and unloaded from a van.

The situation also is confusing for his remote constituents whose neighbors are represented by someone else, Anderson said.

"It just doesn't serve the people that live in those little bubbles to not have the same kind of community cohesion and interests being represented," he said.

Gabrielle Young, 46, lives in one of the "land islands" Anderson represents. But until she was contacted by lawyers filing the redistricting lawsuit, Young said she had no idea Anderson had to travel through another district to campaign in her neighborhood. Young agreed to serve as a plaintiff in the lawsuit alleging the disconnected districts violate the state constitution.

"I could have gone the rest of my life living here not realizing it was happening, but that doesn't make it OK," she said. "It's ridiculous."

Among other things, the lawsuit cites an 1892 case in which the Wisconsin Supreme Court stated districts "cannot be made up of two or more pieces of detached territory." Yet the practice proliferated over time, with 55 of the 99 Assembly districts and 21 of the 33 Senate districts now composed of disconnected portions, according to the lawsuit.

"Clearly, at some point, things sort of went awry," said Mark Gaber, senior director of redistricting at Campaign Legal Center, a Washington, D.C.-based group that helped bring the lawsuit.

"It seems pretty clear to me that you have to enforce the words as they are written," Gaber added.

That has not always been the case.

In 1992, a federal judicial panel considering a Wisconsin redistricting lawsuit essentially endorsed detached legislative districts. Wisconsin's Democratic-led Legislature and Republican governor had failed to agree on new districts following the 1990 census. The court was left to pick among various plans submitted by the parties. Republican plans proposed districts with literal contiguity, but the judges opted for a Democratic approach that did not.

The federal judges said legislative districts containing disconnected "islands" of land were similar to towns that had been legally permitted to annex noncontiguous areas.

"Since the distance between town and island is slight, we do not think the failure of the legislative plan to achieve literal contiguity a serious demerit," the judges wrote in 1992.

The political roles are reversed 30 years later. Republicans, who now control the Legislature, proposed Assembly and Senate maps with disconnected districts that the Wisconsin Supreme Court adopted last year. Democrats, who control the governor's office, are backing the legal challenge.

"The districts are constitutional because they are legally contiguous," Republican Assembly Speaker Robin Vos said in a statement to The Associated Press alluding to prior court rulings. He declined further comment.

Though contiguity requirements have a long national history in redistricting, they have not always been explicitly defined, thus leaving room for interpretation, said Micah Altman, a research scientist at Massachusetts Institute of Technology whose specialties include redistricting.

Criteria such as contiguous and compact districts must be balanced with other principles, such as distributing the population equally and not splitting municipalities and counties among districts, he said.

"Turning one knob on the system makes you have to turn down the other knob at least a bit," Altman said.

In the case of Anderson's district, the disconnected sections likely have not made much difference in the partisan composition of his voters. Anderson is a Democrat, and so are the majority of Madison-area voters.

But redistricting experts say there still is potential for politicians to rig the map to their favor by drawing remote sections of districts.

"When you allow mapmakers to draw districts that are noncontiguous, you give them even more flex-

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of dollars a month, far greater than El Salvador's average salary. That content is devoured both within El Salvador, and by many of the 2.3 million Salvadorans living in the United States.

The cluster of accounts pumped out nearly 32 hours of pro-Bukele content in a single day in May, the study found. Almost always mirroring government language, 90% of the videos analyzed contained false or misleading information.

One account, Noticias Cuscatlecas, may earn much as \$400,000 annually posting videos of violent attacks from alleged gang members layered over chilling music, UFG and Factum calculated.

The channel often concludes videos with the same message: "(Bukele) devised a plan to exterminate this cancer from society, and the incredible thing is that he is succeeding. Now the people no longer live in fear."

On TikTok, one video declares "God chose Bukele as president of El Salvador." On YouTube, personalities dressed as TV anchors attack human rights groups and journalists. They feature Bukele's critics bursting into flames while claiming their channel "brings you the latest news". Others sit down for an exclusive interview with the president.

In April, the president of El Salvador's congress Ernesto Castro announced he was opening the assembly to YouTubers and social media influencers to "inform with objectivity."

"The right to inform and be informed is a power not just in the hands of media companies," Castro wrote on Twitter.

Requests by the AP for interviews with Bukele and his cabinet throughout his more than four years in office have been declined or ignored. Two people with knowledge of the inner workings of Bukele's media machine declined to speak to the AP out of fear of the government.

For Guzmán and others, the access was empowering, enabling them to grow their audiences. Since, Guzmán has been offered access to other large events like the inauguration of Central American and Caribbean Games, something experts say Bukele used to show a friendly face to the world.

Press credentials hung around the TikToker's neck and he brimmed with pride in a government press box, standing among other selfie stick-wielding influencers.

"Us being here, accredited, I feel like I am a part of this," Guzmán said, eyes crinkling with a broad smile.

Around him, others took turns interviewing each other and bragged about how many people were connected to their feeds. One man wearing a Hawaiian shirt leapt over rows of bleachers to get a better signal. When Bukele walked on stage to give a speech, Guzmán and others chanted "Re-election!"

El Salvador's government is not the first to open its doors to social media personalities, but researchers and critics says the atmosphere created in El Salvador marks a particular risk as other leaders in the region seek to mimic Bukele.

Picardo, the UFG investigator, said such accounts post a deluge of content when the government is trying to publicize something, like the leader's experiment with Bitcoin, its gang crackdown or the Games.

The researcher warned their increasingly hostile tone acts as a harbinger for further deteriorating press freedoms, echoing State Department alarms of a "villainization" of journalists by Bukele.

Oscar Martínez's award-winning news organization El Faro is among those facing attacks and harassment for its intensive investigation of Bukele, including audio evidencing that Bukele's administration negotiated with gangs in order to dip violence.

The government opened a case against El Faro for tax evasion, something the news site called "completely baseless." Phones of dozens of journalists were hacked with Pegasus spyware, regularly used by governments to spy on opponents.

In April, El Faro announced it would move its center of operations to Costa Rica due to escalating harassment.

He worries their investigations is being drowned out by the flood of disinformation, and said if Bukele stays in power in the upcoming elections, it will put reporters in El Salvador "much more at risk."

"At that moment, Bukele is going to decide to get rid of any obstacle he has within the country, and the main obstacle he has right now is the free press," Martínez said.

## Record-breaking summit of K2 dogged by allegations that Western climbers left Pakistani man to die

By ZARAR KHAN and KIRSTEN GRIESHABER Associated Press

ISLAMABAD (AP) — An investigation has been launched into the death of a Pakistani porter near the peak of the world's most treacherous mountain, a Pakistani mountaineer said Saturday, following allegations that dozens of climbers eager to reach the summit had walked past the man after he was gravely injured in a fall.

The accusations surrounding events on July 27 on K2, the world's second-highest peak, overshadowed a record established by Norwegian climber Kristin Harila and her Sherpa guide, Tenjin. By climbing K2 that day, they became the world's fastest climbers, scaling the world's 14 highest mountains in 92 days.

Harila rejected any responsibility for the death of the porter, Mohammed Hassan, a 27-year-old father of three who slipped and fell off a narrow trail in a particularly dangerous area of K2 known as the bottleneck. In an Instagram post Friday, she wrote that she felt "angry at how many people have been blaming others for this tragic death" and that no one was at fault.

Harila was defending herself against allegations from two other climbers who were on K2 that day, Austrian Wilhelm Steindl and German Philip Flaemig. The pair had aborted their climb because of difficult weather conditions, but said they reconstructed the events later by reviewing drone footage.

The footage showed dozens of climbers passing a gravely injured Hassan instead of coming to his rescue, Steindl told The Associated Press on Saturday. He alleged that the porter could have been saved if the other climbers, including Harila and her team, had given up attempts to reach the summit.

Karrar Haidri, secretary of the Pakistan Alpine Club, a sports organization that also serves as the governing body for mountaineering in Pakistan, said an investigation into Hassan's death is underway. It is being conducted by officials in the Gilgit-Baltistan region, which has jurisdiction over K2, Haidri said.

Steindl, the Austrian climber, said the drone footage shows one man trying to rub Hassan's chest, trying to keep him warm and alive somehow. "You can see that the man is desperate," Steindl said.

"We know by now that this was his friend, also a Pakistani high altitude porter," Steindl said. "And what you also see in the drone footage is a line of 70 climbers marching towards the summit."

"There is a double standard here. If I or any other Westerner had been lying there, everything would have been done to save them," Steindl said. "Everyone would have had to turn back to bring the injured person back down to the valley."

Steindl also said that July 27 was the only day in this season on which conditions were good enough for mountaineers to reach the summit of K2, which explains why there were so many climbers eager to get to the top.

"I don't want to kind of directly blame anybody," Steindl said. "I'm just saying there was no rescue operation initiated and that's really very, very tragic because that's actually the most normal thing one would do in a situation like that."

Harila told Sky News that Hassan had been dangling from a rope, head down, after his fall at the bottleneck, which she described as "probably the most dangerous part of K2." She said that after about an hour, her team was able to pull him back onto the trail.

At some point, she and another person from her team decided to continue to the top while another team member stayed with Hassan, giving him warm water and oxygen from his own mask, the climber said.

Harila said she decided to continue on to the summit because her forward fixing team also ran into difficulties, without giving any details in the interview.

Asked about Hassan's gear, Harila said that he did not wear a down suit and he didn't have gloves, nor did he have oxygen. "We didn't see any sign of either a mask or oxygen tank," she said.

In Hassan's home village of Tisar, friends and neighbors visited the family, offering prayers of condolence.

A childhood friend, Basharat Hussain, said Hassan had been determined to provide opportunities for his children that he never had, including an education. "He used to say ... 'all my life I had to suffer, I had to work hard, I am working hard to give my children a good education,'" Hussain told AP.



Hussain said he was saddened by how his friend died. "I think this is the most dehumanizing event in my life," he said, adding that he hopes "it will not happen in the future."

Anwar Syed, the head of Lela Peak Expedition, the company that Hassan was working for, said he died about 150 meters (490 feet) below the summit. He said several people tried to help, providing oxygen and warmth, to no avail.

Syed said that because of the bottleneck's dangerous conditions, it would not be possible to retrieve Hassan's body and hand it to the family. He said his company had given money to Hassan's family and would continue to help, but did not elaborate.

Asked about Hassan's apparent lack of equipment, Syed said that the expedition company pays money to porters to buy gear and that Hassan was paid the agreed upon amount.

Steindl's fellow climber, Flaemig, alleged in an interview with the Austrian newspaper Der Standard that Hassan had no high-altitude experience. "He wasn't equipped properly. He did not have experience. He was a base camp porter and for the first time was picked to be a high-altitude porter. He wasn't qualified for this," Flaemig said.

Steindl visited Hassan's family and set up a crowd-funding campaign. After four days, donations reached close to 122,000 euros (almost \$140,000), exceeding the target of 120,000 euros.

"I saw the suffering of the family," Steindl told AP. "The widow told me that her husband did all this so that his children would have a chance in life, so that they could go to school."

## **Shippers warned to stay away from Iranian waters over seizure threat as US-Iran tensions high**

By JON GAMBRELL Associated Press

DUBAI, United Arab Emirates (AP) — Western-backed maritime forces in the Middle East on Saturday warned shippers traveling through the strategic Strait of Hormuz to stay as far away from Iranian territorial waters as possible to avoid being seized, a stark advisory amid heightened tensions between Iran and the U.S.

A similar warning went out to shippers earlier this year ahead of Iran seizing two tankers traveling near the strait, the narrow mouth of the Persian Gulf through which 20% of the world's oil passes.

While Iran and the U.S. now near an apparent deal that would see billions of Iranian assets held in South Korea unfrozen in exchange for the release of five Iranian-Americans detained in Tehran, the warning shows that the tensions remain high at sea. Already, the U.S. is exploring plans to put armed troops on commercial ships in the strait to deter Iran amid a buildup of troops, ships and aircraft in the region.

U.S. Navy Cmdr. Timothy Hawkins, a spokesman for the Mideast-based 5th Fleet, acknowledged the warning had been given, but declined to discuss specifics about it.

A U.S.-backed maritime group called the International Maritime Security Construct "is notifying regional mariners of appropriate precautions to minimize the risk of seizure based on current regional tensions, which we seek to de-escalate," Hawkins said. "Vessels are being advised to transit as far away from Iranian territorial waters as possible."

Separately, a European Union-led maritime organization watching shipping in the strait has "warned of a possibility of an attack on a merchant vessel of unknown flag in the Strait of Hormuz in the next 12 to 72 hours," said private intelligence firm Ambrey.

"Previously, after a similar warning was issued, a merchant vessel was seized by Iranian authorities under a false pretext," the firm warned.

The EU-led mission, called the European Maritime Awareness in the Strait of Hormuz, did not respond to a request for comment.

Hours later, the British military's United Kingdom Maritime Trade Operations, which also provides warnings to sailors in the Persian Gulf, issued its own alert.

"UKMTO have been made aware of an increased threat within the vicinity of Strait Of Hormuz," the warn-

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ing said. "All vessels transiting are advised to exercise caution and report suspicious activity to UKMTO."

Iran's state-run IRNA news agency cited this AP report without quoting any Iranian officials about it. Iran's mission to the United Nations did not respond to a request for comment.

The Strait of Hormuz is in the territorial waters of Iran and Oman, which at its narrowest point is just 33 kilometers (21 miles) wide. The width of the shipping lane in either direction is only 3 kilometers (2 miles). Anything affecting it ripples through global energy markets, potentially raising the price of crude oil. That then trickles down to consumers through what they pay for gasoline and other oil products.

There has been a wave of attacks on ships attributed to Iran since 2019, following the Trump administration unilaterally withdrawing America from the 2015 Iran nuclear deal and re-imposing crushing sanctions on Tehran.

Those assaults resumed in late April, when Iran seized a ship carrying oil for Chevron Corp. and another tanker called the Niovi in May.

The taking of the two tankers in under a week comes as the Marshall Island-flagged Suez Rajan sits off Houston, likely waiting to offload sanctioned Iranian oil apparently seized by the U.S.

Those seizures led the U.S. military to launch a major deployment in the region, including thousands of Marines and sailors on both the amphibious assault ship USS Bataan and the USS Carter Hall, a landing ship. Images released by the Navy showed the Bataan and Carter Hall in the Red Sea on Tuesday.

## **Damar Hamlin makes an early impact in returning to field in Bills' preseason game against Colts**

By JOHN WAWROW AP Sports Writer

ORCHARD PARK, N.Y. (AP) — Whatever jitters Bills safety Damar Hamlin might have been feeling went away midway through the first quarter on Saturday, when he first heard the play call: Blitz.

Four snaps into his first game in a competitive setting since a near-death experience on Jan. 2, Hamlin broke toward the line and stopped Indianapolis Colts running back Evan Hull for no gain on fourth-and-1 from the Buffalo 40.

"Yeah, man, it felt good. It for surely felt like a little weight off my shoulders," Hamlin said following Buffalo's 23-19 preseason-opening win. "Amazing. It just makes me feel like I'm back in that element."

What seemed unfathomable in those frightening first moments when Hamlin went into cardiac arrest and needed to be resuscitated on the field during a game at Cincinnati in January, is closer to approaching reality in the 25-year-old's bid to resume his playing career.

Hamlin showed no signs of hesitancy or trepidation in finishing with three tackles — the two others coming on consecutive snaps — in playing two-plus defensive series spanning the first and second quarters.

In doing so, he reached the latest and perhaps biggest milestone in a comeback that began with him returning to practice in May followed by enduring his first thud in the Bills' first padded session of training camp two weeks ago.

"What we just witnessed, to me, is remarkable," coach Sean McDermott said. "It's a true sign of a young man's courage and obviously everyone who helped him to get to this point. I know there was a football game going out there today, but I mean a truly remarkable display of courage and strength and faith."

Hamlin arrived at the stadium flashing his familiar heart sign and held out three fingers to signify his jersey number as he entered the tunnel. And not even a brief delay caused by a thunderstorm could douse his spirits.

Hamlin entered the game taking the field as part of Buffalo's kickoff coverage unit following James Cook's 8-yard TD run 3 1/2 minutes in. And he spent the second half watching along the sideline with his pads on while wearing running shoes.

At the final whistle, Hamlin sought out his mother, Nina, in the stands and presented her his game jersey even though he had initially promised it to former teammate and now Colts receiver Isiah McKenzie.

"That first jersey back, it had to go to Mom. Dude, I had to go to her. My mom was my strength, my everything, you know, through my entire life," Hamlin said. "But I'm for surely going to get Isaiah a jersey

this season.”

McKenzie is fine with having to wait.

More important to him was seeing how far Hamlin has come.

“It was awesome to see him progressing the way he’s progressing. Out there on the field now, doing his thing and playing the game he loves to play. It felt awesome to be out there with him,” McKenzie said. “One time I was on the pile, and me and him started laughing. It was pretty cool to see him smiling and enjoying himself.”

Hamlin has grown in confidence with each step he’s taken, starting with waking up from a medically induced coma in a Cincinnati hospital bed some two days after he collapsed, followed by being able to breathe on his own to eventually being cleared to resume playing in April, when he announced his comeback bid.

Asked what his next milestone might be, Hamlin kept his day-at-a-time focus by saying: “Practice tomorrow.”

And yet, the third-year player allowed himself to look ahead to traveling to his hometown of Pittsburgh next week for Buffalo’s game against the Steelers.

“I think it will probably be electric down there. I can’t wait,” he said.

After two more preseason games, the next hurdle will come on Aug. 29, when the Bills make their final cuts to establish their regular-season roster with Hamlin seeking to re-secure one of the backup spots behind returning starters Micah Hyde and Jordan Poyer.

“It’s kind of like proving it to myself and just accepting a challenge of just being able to go through something so tough and just to be able to come back and overcome that,” Hamlin said assessing his journey.

“And then just to prove to yourself that nothing can stop you from doing what you want to do and reaching the heights that you want to reach,” he added. “It’ll be a long road, long journey as far as the goals that I’ve got for myself in this game. But today was definitely a step in the right direction.”

## **Allies of Niger president overthrown by military are appealing to the US and others: Save his life**

By ELLEN KNICKMEYER and TRACY BROWN Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — After nearly three weeks of appealing to the United States and other allies for help restoring Niger’s president to power, friends and supporters of the democratically elected leader are making a simpler plea: Save his life.

President Mohamed Bazoum, leader of the last remaining Western-allied democracy across a vast stretch of Africa’s Sahara and Sahel, sits confined with his family in an unlit basement of his presidential compound, cut off from resupplies of food and from electricity and cooking gas by the junta that overthrew him, Niger’s ambassador to the United States told The Associated Press.

“They are killing him,” said the ambassador, Mamadou Kiari Liman-Tinguiri, a close associate who maintains daily calls with the detained leader. The two have been colleagues for three decades, since the now 63-year-old president was a young philosophy instructor, a teacher’s union leader, and a democracy advocate noted for his eloquence.

“The plan of the head of the junta is to starve him to death,” Liman-Tinguiri told the AP in one of his first interviews since mutinous troops allegedly cut off food deliveries to the president, his wife and his 20-year-old son almost a week ago.

“This is inhuman, and the world should not tolerate that,” the ambassador said. “It cannot be tolerated in 2023.”

On Saturday, the president’s captors allowed a doctor to visit the family for the first time, and brought some food, a presidential adviser told the AP. The adviser, who was not authorized to speak publicly and spoke on condition of anonymity, declined to give details.

Bazoum sits in the dark basement, the ambassador said. He answers the phone when a call comes in that he knows to be his friend or someone else he wants to speak to. The beleaguered president and his ambassador, whom junta members have declared out of a job, talk one or more times a day.

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Bazoum has not been seen out in public since July 26, when military vehicles blocked the gates to the presidential palace and security forces announced they were taking power. It is not possible to independently determine the president's circumstances. The United States, United Nations and others have expressed repeated concern for what they called Bazoum's deteriorating conditions in detention, and warned the junta they would hold it responsible for the well-being of Bazoum and his family.

Separately, Human Rights Watch said Friday it had spoken directly to the detained president and to others in his circle, and received some similar accounts of mistreatment.

However, an activist who supports Niger's new military rulers in its communications said the reports of the president's dire state were false. Insa Garba Saidou said he was in contact with some junta members but did not say how he had knowledge of the president's lot.

"Bazoum was lucky he was not taken anywhere," Saidou said. "He was left in his palace with his phone. Those who did that don't intend to hurt Bazoum."

Niger's military coup and the plight of its ousted leader have drawn global attention — but not because that kind of turmoil is unusual for West Africa. Niger alone has had about a half-dozen military takeovers since independence in 1960. Niger leaders have suffered in coups before, most notably when a military-installed leader was shot down in 1999 by the same presidential guard unit that instigated the current coup.

Niger's return to reflexive armed takeovers by disgruntled troops is reverberating in the U.S. and internationally for two key reasons. One is because Bazoum came to power in a rare democratic presidential election in the Africa's unstable Sahara and Sahel, in the only peaceful, democratic transfer of power that Niger has managed.

The United States alone has invested close to \$1 billion in Niger in recent years to support its democracy and deliver aid, in addition to building national forces capable of holding off north and west Africa's al-Qaida- and Islamic State-allied armed groups.

The U.S.-backed counterterror presence is the second key reason that Niger's coup is resonating. Americans have a 1,100-strong security presence and have built bases in Niger's capital and far north into its main outposts to counter West Africa's armed jihadist groups. The Biden administration has yet to call what has happened in Niger a coup, citing laws that would obligate the U.S. to cut many of its military partnerships with the country.

Niger's region is dominated by military or military-aligned governments and a growing number of them have entered security partnerships with Russia's Wagner mercenary groups.

The soldiers who ousted Bazoum have announced a ruling structure but said little publicly about their plans. U.S. Under Secretary of State Victoria Nuland met with Niger's junta members in the capital this week but called them unreceptive to her demands to restore Niger's democracy.

"They were quite firm about how they want to proceed, and it is not in support of the constitution of Niger," Nuland told reporters after.

The junta also told Nuland that Bazoum would die if the regional ECOWAS security bloc intervened militarily to restore democracy, U.S. officials told the AP.

Late this week, the ambassador shrugged that threat off, saying the junta is already on track to kill Bazoum by trapping his family and him with little more than a shrinking supply of dried rice and no means to cook it.

Secretary of State Antony Blinken has spoken several times with the detained president and expressed concern for his and his family's safety. The U.S. says it has cut some aid to the government and paused military cooperation. Blinken has expressed broad support for ECOWAS, whose diplomatic efforts have been spurned by the Niger junta and which has warned of military force as a last resort.

Blinken said in a statement Friday he was "particularly dismayed" that Niger's mutinous soldiers had refused to release Bazoum's family as a goodwill gesture. He gave no details.

While the junta adviser Saidou denied that the junta threatened to kill Bazoum if ECOWAS invaded, he said Bazoum's death would be inevitable if that happened.

"Even if the high officers of the junta won't touch Bazoum, if one gun is shot at one of Niger's borders

in order to reinstate Bazoum, I'm sure that there will be soldiers who will put an end to his life," he said. Bazoum told Human Rights Watch that family members and friends who brought food were being turned away, and that the junta had refused treatment for his young son, who has a heart condition.

Bazoum and his undetained allies want regional partners, the U.S. and others to intervene. With Bazoum vulnerable in captivity, neither he nor the ambassadors specify what they want the U.S. and other allies to do.

Bazoum is a member of Niger's tiny minority of nomadic Arabs, in a country of varying cultures rich in tradition. Despite his political career, Bazoum has retained his people's devotion to livestock, keeping camels that he dotes on, Liman-Tingui said.

For all his deprivations, the ambassador said, Bazoum remains in good spirits. "He is a man who is mentally very strong," he said. "He's a man of faith."

## How Vivek Ramaswamy is pushing — delicately — to win over Trump supporters

By SARA BURNETT Associated Press

VAIL, Iowa (AP) — Republican presidential hopeful Vivek Ramaswamy was more than 40 minutes into a town hall in rural Iowa when a woman in the crowd posed a pointed question. Or perhaps it was a suggestion.

"I know you want to be president," she said. "But would you consider being Trump's vice president?"

The query drew light laughter from attendees and a lengthy response from Ramaswamy. (The short answer: No.)

It also highlighted the central challenge facing the wealthy entrepreneur, who has risen from little-known newcomer to as high as third in some Republican primary polls since joining the race nearly six months ago. While voters are increasingly interested in Ramaswamy, it's former President Donald Trump who continues to be many conservatives' favorite.

With the first Republican primary debate in just over a week and the leadoff Iowa caucus five months away, he is delicately working to convince more voters that he could be their nominee and — as much as he says he respects Trump — would be a better 2024 candidate and president.

"The debate will be important, but I think also just continuing on the trajectory we've been on," Ramaswamy said after the town hall held in a cavernous welding company workshed in Vail, Iowa. He returns to Iowa on Saturday for the Iowa State Fair, a rite of passage for presidential candidates.

Ramaswamy described the months leading up to the first debate as "just the pre-season."

"So we're entering the regular season of this and I'm coming in with a running start," he said. "That's the way I look at it."

He says his strategy heading into the debate in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, is "speak the truth," pointing to a banner emblazoned with the word "TRUTH" that serves as his backdrop and has become a campaign theme. The word — in all capital letters and a font and that resembles Trump campaign signage — is emblazoned on placards, T-shirts and stickers.

Ramaswamy says he and others cannot trust the government because the government doesn't tell the truth. It was what motivated him, he says, to travel to the courthouse where Trump was to appear on charges earlier this month to announce he is suing the Justice Department and seeking all records the department has with information about why Trump was indicted.

Though such a lawsuit is unlikely to be successful before any GOP primary votes are cast, it was a move that struck a balance between defending Trump and drawing positive attention to his own candidacy, at least among the Republican primary electorate.

"That's what this campaign is already all about, speaking the hard truths, the truth that you might speak at the dinner table, but you don't feel free to speak in public," Ramaswamy told the Iowa audience. If he is elected, he said, people will speak those truths again, such as "God is real" and "reverse racism is racism."

Having just turned 38, Ramaswamy is the youngest person to be a major Republican presidential candi-

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date. Born in Ohio to immigrant parents from India, he earned a biology degree from Harvard University and then finished Yale Law School.

He made his fortune after starting a biotech company, last year founded an asset management firm and is the author of several books, including "Woke, Inc." His books helped Ramaswamy gain exposure in conservative circles, including on Fox News, as a critic of "ESG," or looking not just at profit in investments, but also at environmental, social and governance issues, such as a company's policies on climate. He bemoans that the United States has become a place full of "victims," and says the country has lost its purpose and its focus on faith, patriotism, hard work and family.

On the stump, Ramaswamy is able to wax on issues ranging from digital currency to his stance on Israel, the U.S. Constitution and the civil service rules regarding mass layoffs of federal employees — rules he says he understands better than any other candidate. He is proud of not needing a teleprompter, and his mix of policy specifics and smooth delivery has won over some voters.

"He's a great orator, he has a keen intellect and a lot of knowledge," said Margarite Goodenow, a retiree from Council Bluffs who said she is so far supporting Ramaswamy over Trump. She described the former president as "too toxic" — a position she held before he was indicted in multiple criminal cases — though Goodenow said she will support Trump if he is the nominee.

Ramaswamy says he can use his deep knowledge to accomplish what Trump couldn't and his other rivals wouldn't be able to — laying off 75% of the federal "bureaucracy" in his first term, including 50% in year one.

Some 20,000 members of the FBI would be let go as he dismantles the agency, he said. The remaining 15,000 frontline agents would go to work for what he says are more effective agencies, such as the U.S. Marshals Service, to focus on crimes such as child sex trafficking. He also said that by March 31, 2025, he would station the military along the U.S.-Mexico border — positioned every half-mile — to protect against illegal immigration and drugs like fentanyl entering the country.

Those proposals all brought cheers during his recent Iowa stops.

Kelly and Amy Pieper were among the nearly 200 people — hailing from more than eight counties, according to organizers — who turned out for the Ramaswamy town hall in in the northwest Iowa community of Vail, which has a population of fewer than 400. They liked that Ramaswamy would carry forward many of Trump's policies, but presents himself as more eloquent and optimistic.

"He gives you a sense of hope, not all doom and gloom," Kelly Pieper said.

"It's like he's got Trump ideals but is a more eloquent version. Not this crazy uncle talking," his wife, Amy Pieper, added. "That's what we need."

Not everyone is convinced he can pull it off, however, even if Iowa has been known to provide some surprises.

For Republicans, Pennsylvania Sen. Rick Santorum lodged an unexpected 2012 victory, though he later lost the GOP primary to Mitt Romney. On the Democratic side, it was then-Sen. Barack Obama whose 2008 defeat of Hillary Clinton threw that nomination battle into question. And in 2020, Pete Buttigieg, whose highest office was mayor of South Bend, Indiana, finished atop the field alongside Sen. Bernie Sanders. Joe Biden later won the nomination and defeated Trump.

That has set up the rare presidential race with a former office holder seeking reelection, making Trump a formidable opponent whose rallies attract thousands more people. Trump's closest challenger to be Republicans' nominee so far is Florida Gov. Ron DeSantis, who has consistently polled a distant second, with Ramaswamy trailing.

Voters at the Ramaswamy events consistently said they were deciding between the two alternatives to Trump. But like the woman who intimated that Ramaswamy could be Trump's running mate, Andrew Grove has his doubts about whether the first-time candidate can pull it off.

"His message is on spot. I just don't know if he has the support to take him over the top, over Trump and DeSantis," said Grove, 53. He added that DeSantis is "a proven leader" while Ramaswamy has not held public office.

Ramaswamy maintains that he is the only candidate in the GOP field who can deliver the landslide victory

that the country needs in 2024 — something akin to Ronald Reagan's wipeout of his 1984 rival — rather than the kind of tight race the nation saw in 2020. He says he is attracting support from young people and new donors that older candidates are not. Of his roughly 70,000 individual donors, he says, 40% of those making small-dollar contributions are giving to a Republican for the first time.

As for Trump, Ramaswamy responded to the question of being his running mate by speaking warmly of the former president. Ramaswamy was a "hardcore" supporter of the president in 2020, he said, adding that they talk "from time to time," had dinner together a few years ago and that if he becomes president, Trump probably would be his most useful adviser and mentor.

But he says the America First movement belongs not just to Trump but to "we the people." And he believes he can be more effective at accomplishing things Trump could not, saying a certain segment of the electorate automatically opposes Trump — through no fault of his own, he said.

"I'm not having that effect on people," Ramaswamy said.

He noted another key difference as he made his case to top the ticket.

"He's not the same person he was eight years ago," Ramaswamy said of Trump.

"I hope certainly and pray that my best days are ahead of me. And I think we might just want a U.S. president whose best days aren't behind him."

## **Biden's reelection bid faces vulnerabilities in wake of special counsel appointment**

By STEVE PEOPLES AP National Political Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — As he gears up for reelection, President Joe Biden is already facing questions about his ability to convince voters that the economy is performing well. There's skepticism about the 80-year-old president's ability to manage a second term. And on Friday, Biden faced a fresh setback when Attorney General Merrick Garland appointed a special counsel to probe his son, Hunter.

Biden's challenges pale in comparison with his predecessor and possible future rival, Donald Trump, who is facing three criminal indictments, with additional charges expected soon. But the appointment of the special counsel was nonetheless a reminder of the vulnerabilities facing Biden as he wages another election campaign in a deeply uncertain political climate.

There was little immediate sign that Garland's decision meaningfully changed Biden's standing within his party. If anything, it underscored the unprecedented nature of the next election. Rather than a battle of ideas waged on the traditional campaign trail, the next push for the presidency may be shaped by sudden legal twists in courtrooms from Washington to Delaware and Miami.

"Prior to Trump, this would be a big deal," New Hampshire Democratic Party Chair Ray Buckley said of Friday's announcement. "Now, I don't think it means anything. Trump has made everyone so numb to this stuff."

Referring to Trump's "Make America Great Again" slogan, Buckley added, "Because of how dismissive MAGA America is to the very real crimes of Trump and his family, it has numbed the minds of swing voters and Democratic voters or activists who would normally be fully engaged and outraged."

Polling has consistently shown that Democratic voters were not excited about Biden's reelection even before Garland's announcement.

Just 47% of Democrats wanted Biden to run again in 2024, according to an AP-NORC poll conducted in April. Democrats' enthusiasm for Biden's presidential campaign has consistently trailed behind Republicans' enthusiasm for Trump's: 55% of Republicans said they wanted Trump to run again in the AP-NORC poll. And Biden's approval rating in polling by Gallup stood at 41% on average over the last three months. Only Jimmy Carter notched a lower average rating in Gallup's polling at this point in his presidency, while ratings for Trump were about the same at 43%.

Garland announced Friday that he was naming David Weiss, the Trump-appointed U.S. attorney in Delaware, as the special counsel in the Hunter Biden investigation. It comes as plea deal talks involving tax

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and gun charges in the case Weiss had already been probing hit an impasse.

The appointment of a special counsel ensures that Trump will not stand alone as the only presidential candidate grappling with the fallout of a serious criminal investigation in the midst of the 2024 campaign season.

Of course, the cases are hardly equal in the context of the next presidential election.

There is no evidence that President Biden himself has committed any wrongdoing. Meanwhile, Trump has been charged in a plot to undermine democracy for his actions leading up to the Jan. 6, 2021 attack on the Capitol.

He's also facing separate charges for refusing to turn over classified documents after leaving the White House and financial crimes in New York related to a hush money case involving a porn star. And Georgia prosecutors are investigating whether Trump broke state laws by interfering in the 2020 election.

Still, Republicans were hopeful that the new special counsel may ultimately shift attention away from Trump's baggage while bolstering conservative calls to impeach the Democratic president, a proposal that has divided the GOP on Capitol Hill, which has long sought evidence linking Hunter Biden's alleged wrongdoings to his father.

Rep. James Comer of Kentucky, the Republican chair of the House Oversight Committee, has already obtained thousands of pages of financial records from various members of the Biden family through subpoenas to the Treasury Department and various financial institutions as part of a congressional probe. He released a statement Friday accusing Garland of "trying to stonewall congressional oversight."

Comer vowed "to follow the Biden family's money trail."

Trump, the overwhelming front-runner in the crowded Republican presidential nomination fight, used the opportunity to put his likely general election opponent on the defensive, referring to the "Biden crime family" and the "Biden cartel."

"If this special counsel is truly independent — even though he failed to bring proper charges after a four year investigation and he appears to be trying to move the case to a more Democrat-friendly venue — he will quickly conclude that Joe Biden, his troubled son Hunter, and their enablers, including the media, which colluded with the 51 intelligence officials who knowingly misled the public about Hunter's laptop, should face the required consequences," the Trump campaign said in a statement.

Back in New Hampshire, Buckley acknowledged that voters are not excited about Biden's reelection.

"But they're really not excited about Trump," he said. "There's a seriousness around this election. People can say they're not excited (about Biden). They can say, 'Oh, he shouldn't run again.' But the reality is that he's the only alternative to Trump."

Meanwhile, it's unclear how closely key voters are paying attention.

A Marquette Law School Poll conducted last month found that about three-quarters of Americans had heard about Hunter Biden's agreement to plead guilty to misdemeanor charges of tax evasion and a gun charge. Republicans were slightly more likely than Democrats to say they have heard "a lot" about the topic, with independents being much less likely to be paying attention.

Democratic strategist Bill Burton suggested the GOP's focus on the president's son would backfire.

"From a political standpoint, I think Republicans are stupid to spend so much time talking about the president's son," he said. "People are going to be voting on the economy. They're going to be voting on who's tougher on social media companies and national security."

Burton continued, "As a dad, I think it's pretty disgusting that you would attack someone's son like this."

## **In deadly Maui wildfires, communication failed. Chaos overtook Lahaina along with the flames**

By REBECCA BOONE, JENNIFER SINCO KELLEHER and AUDREY MCAVOY Associated Press

WAILUKU, Hawaii (AP) — In the hours before a wildfire engulfed the town of Lahaina, Maui County officials failed to activate sirens that would have warned the entire population of the approaching flames and instead relied on a series of sometimes confusing social media posts that reached a much smaller audience.



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Power and cellular outages for residents further stymied communication efforts. Radio reports were scarce, some survivors reported, even as the blaze began to consume the town. Road blocks then forced fleeing drivers onto one narrow downtown street, creating a bottleneck that was quickly surrounded by flames on all sides. At least 80 people have been confirmed dead so far.

The silent sirens have raised questions about whether everything was done to alert the public in a state that possesses an elaborate emergency warning system for a variety of dangers including wars, volcanoes, hurricanes and wildfires.

Hector Bermudez left his apartment at Lahaina Shores shortly after 4:30 p.m. Tuesday after the smell of smoke woke him up from a nap. He asked his neighbor if he was also leaving.

"He said, 'No, I am waiting for the authorities to see what they are going to do,'" Bermudez recounted. "And I said, 'No, no no, please go. This smoke is going to kill us. You have to go. Please. You gotta get out of here. Don't wait for nobody.'"

His neighbor, who is about 70 and has difficulty walking, refused.

Bermudez doesn't know if he survived.

Officials with Maui's Emergency Management Agency did not immediately respond Friday to questions about sirens and other communications issues.

Hawaii's Attorney General Anne Lopez said her office will be conducting a comprehensive review of decision-making and standing policies surrounding the wildfires.

"My Department is committed to understanding the decisions that were made before and during the wildfires and to sharing with the public the results of this review," she said in a statement Friday, adding that "now is the time to begin this process of understanding."

The Associated Press created a timeline of the wildfires, using information from multiple sources including the county's announcements, state and local Emergency Management Alerts and interviews with officials and survivors.

The timeline shows public updates on the fires were spotty and often vague, and much of the county's attention was focused on another dangerous, larger fire in Upcountry Maui that was threatening neighborhoods in Kula. It shows no indication that county officials ever activated the region's all-hazard siren system, and reveals other emergency alerts were scarce.

In the hours before the wildfires began, however, warnings about high winds were frequent and widely disseminated by the county and other agencies. A hurricane passing far to the south was expected to bring gusts of up to 65 mph (105 kph), residents were told on Monday.

The Upcountry fire started first, reported not long after midnight on Tuesday, and the first evacuations near Kula followed.

The fire near Lahaina started later, around 6:37 a.m. Tuesday. Some homes in Lahaina's most inland neighborhood were evacuated, but by 9:55 a.m. the county reported that the fire was fully contained. Still, the announcement included another warning that high winds would remain a concern for the next 24 hours.

The power also went out early that morning, leaving several thousand customers in the Lahaina/West Maui region and Upcountry without electricity. Several downed power lines required repair.

By 11 a.m., firefighting crews from several towns and the Hawaii Department of Lands had converged on the Upcountry fire, but wind gusts reaching 80 mph (129 kph) made conditions unsafe for helicopters. At 3:20 p.m., more Upcountry neighborhoods were evacuated.

The Lahaina fire, meanwhile, had escaped containment and forced the closure of the Lahaina Bypass road by 3:30 p.m. The announcement, however, didn't make it into a county fire update until 4:45 p.m. and didn't show up on the county Facebook page until nearly 5 p.m., when survivors say flames were surrounding the cars of families trapped downtown.

But while the Lahaina fire was spreading, Maui County and Hawaii Emergency Management Agency officials were making other urgent announcements — including a Facebook post about additional evacuations near the Upcountry fire and an announcement that the acting governor had issued an emergency proclamation.

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In the Upcountry evacuation Facebook post at 3:20 p.m., Fire Assistant Chief Jeff Giese shared an ominous warning.

"The fire can be a mile or more from your house, but in a minute or two, it can be at your house," Giese said.

Mike Cicchino lived below the Lahaina Bypass in one of Lahaina's more inland neighborhoods. He went to his house at 3:30 p.m. and minutes later realized his neighborhood was quickly being enveloped by flames.

He yelled to the neighbor kids to get their mom and leave. He ran inside to collect his wife and the dogs they were watching. Cicchino, along with others in the neighborhood, then jumped in their cars to leave. He listened for announcements on his car radio, but said there was essentially no information.

The government's social media attention turned from Upcountry back to Lahaina at 4:29 p.m., when Hawaii EMA posted on X (formerly Twitter) that the local Maui EMA had announced an immediate evacuation for an inland subdivision in Lahaina. Residents were directed to shelter at the Lahaina Civic Center on the north side of town.

Just before 5 p.m., Maui County shared a new Lahaina fire report on Facebook: "Flareup forces Lahaina Bypass road closure; shelter in place encouraged."

Many were already running from the flames. Lynn Robison evacuated from her apartment near the waterfront's Front Street at 4:33 p.m.

"There was no warning. There was absolutely none. Nobody came around. We didn't see a fire truck or anybody," Robison said.

Lana Vierra left her neighborhood about a mile (less than 2 kilometers) away around the same time. Her boyfriend had stopped by and told her he'd seen the approaching fire on the drive.

"He told me straight, 'People are going to die in this town; you gotta get out,'" she recalled. There had been no sirens, no alerts on her cellphone, she said.

But access to the main highway — the only road leading in and out of Lahaina — was cut off by barricades set up by authorities. The roadblocks forced people directly into harm's way, funneling cars onto Front Street.

"All the locals were pigeonholed into Lahaina in that corner there, and I felt like the county put us into a death trap," Cicchino said.

Nathan Baird and his family escaped by driving past a barricade, he told Canadian Broadcaster CBC Radio.

"Traffic was all over the place. Nobody knew where to go. They were trying to make everybody go up to the Civic Center and ... it just didn't make sense to me," Baird said. "I was so confused. At first, I was like, 'Why are all these people driving towards the fire?'"

Cicchino and his wife became trapped by walls of flame as Front Street burned. They ran for the ocean, spending hours crouching behind the sea wall or treading water in the choppy waves, depending on which area felt safest as the ever-changing fire raged.

At 5:20 p.m., Maui County shared another Lahaina fire update on Facebook: Evacuations in one subdivision were continuing, but access to the main highway was back open.

The U.S. Coast Guard's first notification about the fires was when the search and rescue command center in Honolulu received reports of people in the water near Lahaina at 5:45 p.m., said Capt. Aja Kirksy, commander of Coast Guard Sector Honolulu.

The boats were hard to see because of the smoke, but Cicchino and others used cellphones to flash lights at the vessels, guiding them in.

Cicchino helped load children into the Coast Guard boats, and at one point loaned his cellphone — which had been stashed in his wife's waterproof pouch — to a member of the guard so they could contact fire crews. He said the rescue took hours, and he and his wife were finally brought out of Lahaina around 1 a.m. Wednesday.

Maui County Facebook posts around 8:40 p.m. Tuesday urged residents in the surrounding area who weren't impacted by the fires to shelter in place, and said smoke was forcing more road closures. A commenter pointed out the communication problems just before 9 p.m. "You do realize that all communication

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to Lahaina is cut off and nobody can get in touch with anyone on that side," the commenter wrote.

Riley Curran, who fled his Lahaina home after climbing up a neighboring apartment building to get a better look at the fire, doesn't think there is anything the county could have done.

"It's not that people didn't try to do anything. It's that it was so fast no one had time to do anything," Curran said. "The fire went from 0 to 100."

But Cicchino said it all felt like the county wasn't prepared and government agencies weren't communicating with each other.

"I feel like the county really cost a lot of peoples' lives and homes that day. I felt like a lot of this could have been prevented if they just thought about this stuff in the morning, and took their precaution," he said. "You live in a fire zone. They have a lot of fires. You need to prepare for fires."

The all-hazard sirens are tested each month to ensure they are in working order. During the most recent test, Aug. 1, they malfunctioned in three separate incidents in three counties. Maui's siren tone was too short, so officials repeated the test later that day, successfully.

Karl Kim directs the National Disaster Preparedness Training Center, a University of Hawaii-based organization that develops training materials to help officials respond to natural disasters.

Kim said it's too soon to know exactly how the warning and alert system might have saved more lives in Lahaina, and noted that wildfires are often more challenging to manage than volcanic eruptions, tsunamis and even earthquakes because they are more difficult to detect and track over time.

"I think it's a wake-up call," he said. "We have to invest more in understanding of wildfires and the threats that they provide, which aren't as well understood."

## Russia downs 20 drones over Crimea following a spate of attacks on Moscow

By SUSIE BLANN Associated Press

KYIV, Ukraine (AP) — Russia thwarted an attack by 20 Ukrainian drones targeting Moscow-annexed Crimea overnight, the Russian Defense Ministry said Saturday.

Fourteen drones were shot down by Russian air defenses and a further six were jammed electronically, the ministry said in a Telegram post. No casualties or damage were reported. Kyiv officials neither confirmed nor denied Ukraine's involvement in the attacks.

As videos circulated on Russian social media Saturday appearing to show smoke rising above a bridge linking Russia to Crimea, the annexed peninsula's Moscow-appointed governor, Sergei Aksyonov, reported that Russian air defense had also prevented an attack there by shooting down two Ukrainian missiles.

The bridge was not damaged, he said, although traffic was briefly halted. An adviser to Aksyonov, Oleg Kryuchkov, claimed that "a smoke screen was put up by special services."

Russia's Foreign Ministry "strongly condemned" the attempted attack on the Crimean bridge. The ministry said in a statement that such "barbaric actions" by the Armed Forces of Ukraine "will not go unanswered."

Shortly after reporting the downing of the two Ukrainian missiles, Aksyonov said Russian air defense had shot down another missile over the Kerch Strait.

The bridge connecting Crimea and Russia across the Kerch Strait carries heavy significance for Moscow, both logistically and psychologically, as a key artery for military and civilian supplies and as an assertion of Kremlin control of the peninsula it illegally annexed in 2014.

Last week, a Ukrainian sea drone hit a Russian tanker near the bridge, while an attack on the bridge last month killed a couple and seriously wounded their daughter, leaving a span of the roadway hanging perilously. The damage appeared to be less severe than that caused by an assault in October, but it again highlighted the bridge's vulnerability.

The attempted drone and missile attacks follow three consecutive days of drone attacks on the Russian capital, Moscow. Firing drones at Russia, after more than 17 months of war, has little apparent military value for Ukraine but the strategy has served to unsettle Russians and bring home to them the conflict's consequences.

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Drone attacks have increased in recent weeks both on Moscow and on Crimea, which Russia annexed from Ukraine in 2014 — a move that most of the world considered illegal.

Elsewhere, Russia claimed Saturday it had regained control of the village of Urozhaine in Ukraine's easternmost Luhansk region in an overnight counterattack.

A 73-year-old woman was killed early Saturday morning in Russian shelling of Ukraine's northeastern Kharkiv region, according to regional Gov. Oleh Syniehubov.

Ukrainian internal affairs minister Ihor Klymenko said a police officer was killed and 12 people wounded when a guided Russian aerial bomb hit the city of Orikhiv in Ukraine's partially occupied southern Zaporizhzhia region. Four of the wounded were also police officers, he said.

In the neighboring Kherson province, regional Gov. Oleksandr Prokudin said that two people were wounded in Russian attacks on Saturday. A 70-year-old was wounded when a shell hit a residential building in the village of Ponyativka, while a man, 72, was hurt when a drone dropped explosives on the village of Odradokamyanka.

A 70-year-old man was wounded when a shell hit a residential building in the village of Ponyativka, while a 72-

Local officials said explosions rang out Saturday morning in the central Ukrainian city of Kryvyi Rih, Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy's hometown, but that there were no known casualties.

On Ukraine's Black Sea coast, the city of Odesa opened several beaches for the first time since Russia launched its full-scale invasion in February 2022.

Odesa Gov. Oleh Kiper said that six beaches were open, but he stressed that accessing beaches during air raid alerts was forbidden.

The strategic port and key hub for exporting grain has been subject to repeated missile and drone attacks — particularly since Moscow canceled a landmark grain deal last month amid Kyiv's grinding efforts to retake its occupied territories — while Russian mines have regularly washed up on the city's beaches.

## Developers have Black families fighting to maintain property and history

By JAMES POLLARD Associated Press/Report for America

PHILLIPS COMMUNITY, S.C. (AP) — The Rev. Elijah Smalls Jr. once grew okra, butter beans and other vegetables in the neighborhood where his family has lived near the South Carolina coast since not long after the Civil War. That was before new half-a-million-dollar homes in a nearby subdivision overwhelmed the drainage system.

Runoff meant for sewers now pools in the 80-year-old veteran's backyard, making gardening impossible.

Smalls and his relatives are among the many original families still living in historic settlement communities around Charleston. People who had been enslaved at Phillips Plantation bought patches of it to make their futures. Their descendants question whether the next generation can afford to stay.

"This is the only place I wanted to live and raise my family," said Fred Smalls, standing outside the home where his two sons grew up.

All along the South Carolina coast, land owned by the descendants of enslaved people is being targeted by developers looking to make money on vacation getaways and new homes. From Myrtle Beach south to Hilton Head, Black landowners who inherited property have been embroiled in disputes with investors looking to capitalize on rising real estate values.

State reforms approved in 2017 provided what supporters described as "shark repellent" — a law that made it harder for developers to strike deals below market prices with distant heirs who had long since moved away.

But skyrocketing property taxes are creating a growing burden as assessments rise. Younger family members may not qualify for homestead exemptions and other tax breaks. Elders worry that their family legacies — established by formerly enslaved ancestors who acquired land despite entrenched racism across the defeated South — are slipping away.

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Most of the hundreds who still live on the remaining 450 acres or so of Phillips Community trace their lineage to the founders. Residents enjoy the pace of the South Carolina Lowcountry in the settlement communities, where neighbors have long taken care of each other.

"If we don't take steps to protect them, we're going to lose them parcel by parcel," said Coastal Conservation League Executive Director Faith Rivers James.

Orange mesh fencing lines the dirt expanse of a new development site that encircles the ranch-style house where Josephine Wright has taken her stand. The 93-year-old woman is the matriarch of a family that has owned land on Hilton Head Island since Reconstruction.

"I'm being surrounded, really," Wright said recently in the Brooklyn accent she picked up before returning to her late husband's home 30 years ago in Jonesville Historic Gullah Neighborhood.

They wanted tranquility as his Parkinson's disease progressed. But gone is the lush greenery that once grew on 29 acres previously owned by other relatives bordering Wright's home. A Georgia-based developer, Bailey Point Investment, LLC, broke ground last summer on a 147-unit vacation rental complex there.

Managers of her family's trust failed to pay escalating tax bills. The land sold at a 2014 tax auction for just \$35,000 — a fraction of its current worth.

Then the investment company sued Wright, who owns her one acre separately. The company alleged that a corner of her screened-in porch, a shed and a satellite dish encroach on the construction project. A lawyer for the company did not return a call from The Associated Press.

She suspects they want to run her off, but she's not intimidated. NBA superstar Kyrie Irving and filmmaker Tyler Perry have lent their support. Town officials don't intend to issue building permits until the case is closed. She says other residents have thanked her for holding out.

She expected to spend these days in peace. Her small home remains the gathering spot for an extended family that includes 40 grandchildren, generations who she hopes will also enjoy the land.

"I just want to be able to live here in this sanctuary with a free mind," Wright said.

The first self-governed town of formerly enslaved people in the United States was located on Hilton Head Island. Wright's neighborhood gets its name from a Black Civil War veteran named Caesar Jones who had escaped enslavement and purchased more than 100 acres himself, finding refuge in marshland that had been dismissed by colonists as unsuitable for farming.

It's hardly undesirable today. The advent of air conditioning helped make coastal land more appealing. New highways improved access to the coast, where population increases have made South Carolina the 10th fastest-growing state during the past decade.

Those searching for land found easy targets in the Gullah Geechee community, owned by descendants of West Africans who were forced into slavery on rice, indigo and cotton plantations along the Atlantic coast. They developed their unique culture on isolated islands, but their separation from the U.S. legal system left them vulnerable to exploitation.

Developers took advantage in many cases of what's known as heirs' property — land transferred from generation to generation without a will and shared equally by part-owners whose numbers balloon with each branch in the family tree. South Carolina developers could buy a single heir's interest and wind up taking everything from outmatched families suddenly navigating an unwieldy system.

Heirs' property is under threat throughout the Black Belt. Roughly 5 million acres over 11 states worth almost \$42 billion collectively remains trapped in cloudy titles, according to the most conservative estimates from a 2023 study led by rural sociologist Ryan Thomson at Auburn University. It's a strain acutely felt by Black landowners given the Deep South's legacy of enslavement.

Some remaining owners are more determined than ever to stay.

Julia Campbell, 60, has spent two decades establishing a family tree to identify every heir with even the slimmest stake in the 25-acre John's Island land her family has held since the 19th century. The former member of a Charleston group established to protect Black cemeteries emphasized that the ground itself

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bears witness to history.

It's important for her to document — especially at a time when she said “some people want to close the book on us.”

“These people who could barely read or write were able to hold onto the property,” she said. “We should be able to hold onto it.”

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South Carolina's 2017 reforms stymied some predatory behavior, according to Josh Walden of the Center for Heirs' Property Preservation. The Charleston-based non-profit has helped clear titles for over 3,000 tracts worth some \$17.5 million since 2009, but his most modest estimates suggest about 40,000 tracts remain held in heirs' property across six coastal counties alone.

Risk persists for those facing heightened assessments that come with exurban gentrification.

“Obviously, people are still looking for land,” Walden said. “They're still approaching heirs' property owners asking if they'll sell their interests.”

The clamor for these lands is so feverish that even people with clear titles remain vulnerable. James calls it “the next frontier in preserving African American property.”

South Carolina tax law evaluates residential land at its highest usage — a boon to sellers but a burden for those who want to stay.

“They're not planning to take the money and run,” Phillips Community Association President Richard Habersham said of his neighbors. “They're planning to pass it down.”

James has proposed that state lawmakers ease growing pains by passing a new “cultural property preservation” tax exemption to provide incentives to support historic communities, just like existing credits help preserve historic buildings.

A statewide measure could resemble local efforts. One ordinance blocked a golf course on Gullah Geechee land on St. Helena Island. Last month, the Beaufort County Council rejected a developer's request to remove a 502-acre plot from a zoning district that bans gated communities and resorts in locations considered culturally significant. Other officials are soliciting feedback from Gullah Geechee and African American communities to identify historical sites in the Charleston area for preservation.

“Property is not just a commodity,” James said. “Property has a sentimental value that the law should recognize.”

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That value became more elusive for Queen Mary Davis when a housing development next door restricted her access to a family cemetery by requiring her to gain admission from security guards.

A formerly enslaved ancestor named Dennis Allen purchased the first patches of what is now the family's 31-acre property back in 1897. It's nestled in a Hilton Head neighborhood that is home to some of the largest Gullah extended families.

But Davis, 70, could soon lose nearly a third of it. The land is stuck in a cumbersome legal dispute with other heirs dating back to 2009. A judge has ordered that 11 acres be placed on the market for \$7 million. A previous deal fell apart after a North Carolina firm rescinded its \$7.5 million offer.

The situation is an egregious example of sagas that attorney Willie Heyward has seen all too often during a 37-year career largely focused on heirs' property. He's represented members on both sides of Davis' contentious case at various points, and says many families get mired in costly, yearslong court battles that ultimately diminish the returns for everyone.

This generation of heirs' property owners will be the last with numbers Heyward considers manageable — about 250 relatives is the most he's seen.

As family trees number thousands of people, any outcome other than land loss can become impractical — a “crushing” prospect for his elderly clients clinging to the last vestiges of their ancestry.

Relatives interested in selling have a legal right to pursue that option, and defending land becomes especially difficult when families aren't united. Heyward and James both want legislators to expand opportunities for mediation so resource-limited families don't rack up legal fees trying to protect their interests.

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What was once a vehicle for maintaining ownership has become an engine of its demise. "I see a very dark future on the horizon if something is not done," Heyward said.

Longtime residents report that Phillips Community sounds different nowadays. Traffic thrums along a busy road. The scuttle of fiddler crabs no longer accompanies walks to a nearby creek. Woods once filled with the calls of raccoon hunts have been replaced by a quiet subdivision.

And still more development looms. A private Charleston-based company has plans for several dozen houses in the center of the neighborhood, spreading closer to the 35 acres bought by the Smalls' great grandfather and largely kept within the bloodline since 1875. The Rev. Elijah Smalls Jr. said he's heard rumblings about new commercial enterprises entering the frenzy.

"If that comes in, that would definitely be the death of the community," he said.

Some of Smalls' neighbors may have left, but the pastor says he's not going anywhere. He built the brick house that sits right off Elijah Smalls Road. He can't start over at his age, and nearby homes cost too much anyway.

Fred Smalls isn't moving either. Wearing a black baseball cap with "ARMY" emblazoned in gold, he notes that many original members fought for their own freedom in the 128th Regiment of the U.S. Colored Infantry. Paintings of 19th century African American soldiers hang on his walls.

His Army service took him to Germany, Turkey, Alaska and Oklahoma. But he always knew he'd return.

## He's 'just Ken' but will the 'Barbie' movie change his popularity?

By WYATTE GRANTHAM-PHILIPS AP Business Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — On and off the big screen, it's Barbie's world and Ken is just living in it.

As reflected in Greta Gerwig's blockbuster movie that tackles the legacy Mattel's famous doll, Barbie has always been more popular than Ken. For every Ken doll sold today, there's generally eight to 10 Barbies sold, according to Jim Silver, a toy industry expert and CEO of review site of TTPM.

It's unclear if Warner Bros' "Barbie," which was also co-produced by Mattel, will increase Ken production and sales. But Silver noted that the movie "gave Ken more attention than Ken has received" in decades.

Ken was first introduced back in 1961, two years after Barbie hit store shelves. But he hasn't had nearly the same impact on the Barbieverse since.

"Barbie's world is about Barbie. And (to some), Ken may be an accessory of sorts," said Ed Timke, an assistant professor of advertising and public relations at Michigan State University, pointing to years of marketing that has, naturally, put Barbie at center stage.

The new attention around Ken following "Barbie's" release has also received pushback. Many note that the movie is about Barbie — not Ken — and that's where the spotlight should stay.

Still, the dynamic between the film's Barbie and Ken may get people to reflect some big questions about gender as well as Ken's own evolution over the years.

Who is Ken as a toy and how has he changed?

Ken's relationship to Barbie has been up for debate since the two hit the toy aisle together. While Mattel long-advertised Ken as Barbie's boyfriend — and even detailed their 2004 split and subsequent reconciliation seven years later — many also saw Ken as Barbie's best friend, and sometimes queer icon. One 1993 version of Ken in particular, Earring Magic Ken, became notably popular among LGBTQ consumers, the New York Historical Society notes. At the time, Mattel denied the Earring Magic Ken was queer and later pulled him from shelves.

Other popular versions of Ken ranged from the tuxedo-wearing 1984 Dream Date Ken, to 1978 Superstar Ken and 1979 Sun Malibu Ken, which became one of the doll's most iconic looks (as reflected in Ryan Gosling's character). While Ken has gone through far fewer career changes than Barbie, his resume boasts job titles like astronaut, barista, country western singer and doctor.

"A wonderful thing is that through play, children are free to have their dolls take on any type of role that they wish," said Ann Herzog, a clinical instructor of child life and family-centered care at Boston University.

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She also underlined the importance of diversity in toy collections and providing “open-ended play opportunities and not to endorse stereotypes that the Barbie collection and dolls in general are only specific to a particular gender.”

While children of all genders, including young boys, have played with Barbie and Ken over the years, Timke notes that “there’s definitely the gendering of marketing toward girls” for both figures, pointing to contrasts in advertising for products historically seen as “boy toys,” such as G.I. Joe. That legacy, as well as other socialization, still impacts who plays with certain toys today.

Still, Ken — like Barbie — has evolved over time and become more diverse, particularly after Mattel rolled out more skin tones, body types, hairstyles and more for Ken dolls in 2017. Some Kens also have prosthetic legs, wheelchairs and hearing aids. Increases in diverse representation — with similar changes seen since 2016 for Barbie — has boosted the dolls’ popularity and comeback sales, Silver said.

Will Barbie (and Ken) sales increase following the movie’s release?

Mattel did not respond to The Associated Press’ requests for data or comment on specific Ken and Barbie sales seen before and after “Barbie’s” July 21 release. But according to market research firm Circana, Barbie sales overall for the U.S. toy industry increased 40% in the last two weeks of July compared with the same period in 2022.

Circana doesn’t break out Ken from Barbie sales. Still, “I suspect that, with the movie, sales of Ken dolls will experience a strong lift in sales,” Juli Lennett, VP, U.S. toys industry advisor at Circana, wrote in an email to The Associated Press. Additional experts also expected a spike in interest, but weren’t sure about the long run.

Lennett did note that the top-selling “Barbie” movie item for those last two weeks of July was the Barbie Gingham Dress followed by the Ken Doll Set. Between those two items, Barbie outsold Ken nearly two to one, she said.

For the second quarter of 2023, which ended weeks before the movie’s release, worldwide sales of Barbie to retailers excluding adjustments actually fell 6%. Mattel executives told analysts that sales had improved in July, and it expects the movie will have a halo effect on the brand for years to come.

There was a carryover of inventory across the toy industry for the first half of the year, Silver explains, noting that record sales in the first years of the pandemic led to over-buying at the end of 2022. He predicts a rebound in Barbie sales heading into the holiday season, when toy spending is high and after “Barbie” eventually makes its way to streaming.

And of course, sales following “Barbie’s” release won’t be limited to the toy aisle. Other branded products are also gaining popularity from the film, including Ken-focused swag like “I am Kenough” sweatshirts and other “Ken-ergy” apparel, are currently for sale by Mattel, as well as from third-party sellers on sites like Amazon and Walmart.

## Today in History: August 13, East Germany seals the border

By The Associated Press undefined

Today in History

Today is Sunday, Aug. 13, the 225th day of 2023. There are 140 days left in the year.

Today’s Highlight in History:

On Aug. 13, 1961, East Germany sealed off the border between Berlin’s eastern and western sectors before building a wall that would divide the city for the next 28 years.

On this date:

In 1521, Spanish conqueror Hernando Cortez captured Tenochtitlan (teh-natch-teet-LAHN’), present-day Mexico City, from the Aztecs.

In 1792, French revolutionaries imprisoned the royal family.

In 1846, the American flag was raised in Los Angeles for the first time.

In 1889, William Gray of Hartford, Connecticut, received a patent for a coin-operated telephone.

In 1910, Florence Nightingale, the founder of modern nursing, died in London at age 90.



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In 1932, Adolf Hitler rejected the post of vice chancellor of Germany, saying he was prepared to hold out "for all or nothing."

In 1960, the first two-way telephone conversation by satellite took place.

In 1995, Baseball Hall of Famer Mickey Mantle died at a Dallas hospital of rapidly spreading liver cancer at age 63.

In 2003, Iraq began pumping crude oil from its northern oil fields for the first time since the start of the war.

In 2004, TV chef Julia Child died in Montecito, California, two days short of her 92nd birthday.

In 2011, seven people were killed when a stage collapsed at the Indiana State Fair during a powerful storm just before a concert was to begin.

In 2020, in an interview on Fox Business Network, President Donald Trump acknowledged that he was starving the U.S. Postal Service of money in order to make it harder to process an expected surge of mail-in ballots.

Ten years ago: Israel released 26 Palestinian inmates, many convicted in grisly killings, on the eve of long-stalled peace talks, angering families of those killed by the prisoners. Tompall Glaser, a country music singer, publisher and studio owner best known for his association with the outlaw movement against record labels, died in Nashville at age 79.

Five years ago: President Donald Trump dared New York Gov. Andrew Cuomo to challenge him in 2020, warning, "Anybody that runs against Trump suffers." A lawyer for longtime FBI agent Peter Strzok, who'd been removed from the Russia investigation over anti-Trump text messages, said Strzok had been fired by the agency.

One year ago: A man accused in a stabbing attack on Salman Rushdie pleaded not guilty to attempted murder and assault charges in what a prosecutor called a "pre-planned" crime, as the 75-year-old author of "The Satanic Verses" remained hospitalized, on a ventilator and unable to speak, with a damaged liver and severed nerves in an arm and an eye. Ukrainian officials said Russia's military shelled residential areas across Ukraine while their own fighters damaged the last working bridge over a river in occupied southern Ukraine, hurting Russia's ability to resupply its military.

Today's Birthdays: Former U.S. Surgeon General Joycelyn Elders is 90. Actor Kevin Tighe is 79. U.S. Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen is 77. Opera singer Kathleen Battle is 75. High wire aerialist Philippe Petit is 74. Hockey Hall of Famer Bobby Clarke is 74. Golf Hall of Famer Betsy King is 68. Movie director Paul Greengrass is 68. Actor Danny Bonaduce is 64. TV weatherman Sam Champion is 62. Actor Dawnn Lewis is 62. Actor John Slattery is 61. Actor Debi Mazar is 59. Actor Quinn Cummings is 56. Actor Seana Kofoed is 53. Country singer Andy Griggs is 50. Actor Gregory Fitoussi is 47. Country musician Mike Melancon (Emerson Drive) is 45. Actor Kathryn Fiore is 44. Arkansas Governor Sarah Huckabee Sanders is 41. Actor Sebastian Stan is 41. Actor Eme Ikwuakor (IK'-wah-ker) is 39. Pop-rock singer James Morrison is 39. Actor Lennon Stella is 24.