

# Groton Daily Independent

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## 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.

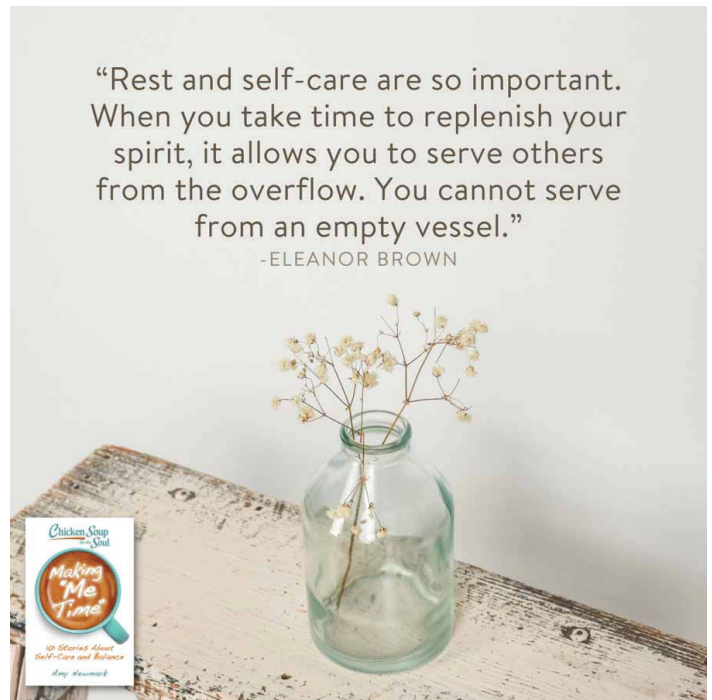
## Wednesday, Aug. 16

Senior Menu: Beef stew, biscuit, Waldorf salad, muffin, tomato juice.

United Methodist: Community Coffee Hour, 9:30 a.m.; Groton Ad Council, 7 p.m.

Groton CM&A: Kids' Club, Youth Group and Adult Bible Study begins at 7 pm

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



“Rest and self-care are so important. When you take time to replenish your spirit, it allows you to serve others from the overflow. You cannot serve from an empty vessel.”

-ELEANOR BROWN

## Thursday, Aug. 17

Senior Menu: Ham, au gratin potatoes, broccoli/cauliflower blend, fruit, cookie, whole wheat bread.

Boys Golf at Milbank, 10 a.m.

Emmanuel Lutheran: WELCA “Do Day”, 1:30 p.m.

## Friday, Aug. 18

Senior Menu: Chicken strips, tri-tators, peas and carrots, fruit, whole wheat bread.

Girls Soccer hosts Belle Fourche, 4 p.m.

Boys Soccer hosts Belle Fourche, 6 p.m.

Football hosts Aberdeen Roncalli, 7 p.m.

## Saturday, Aug. 19

Girls Soccer hosts St. Thomas More, 11 a.m.

Boys Soccer hosts St. Thomas More, 1 p.m.

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

Emmanuel Lutheran: Worship at Rosewood Court, 10 a.m.

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

### World in Brief

Administration revealed that July was the hottest month the planet has experienced since temperature record-keeping began 174 years ago.

Over 800,000 student loan borrowers may soon get relief after a lawsuit from two conservative groups that sought to block President Joe Biden's plan to cancel \$39 billion in debt was struck down by a federal judge.

An explosion at a gas station in Dagestan, one of Russia's autonomous republics, killed at least 30 people and injured dozens more.

Pedro Briones, a regional leader of Ecuadorian political party Citizen Revolution, has been killed six days ahead of the country's upcoming elections. His death comes just days after presidential candidate Fernando Villavicencio was assassinated at a political rally.

The woman at the center of a mushroom poisoning case that killed three of her family members in Australia claims she bought the mushrooms from two separate grocery stores.

Crypto exchange platform Binance has requested a protective order against the United States Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC), claiming the regulator's requests for information amounted to a "fishing expedition."

In the ongoing war in Ukraine, Russia lost 4,140 troops in Ukraine in the past week, according to a Monday update from the General Staff of Ukraine's Armed Forces. The news comes as Kyiv also reported multiple advances on the battleground over the weekend..

### TALKING POINTS

"I want to take a moment to mark a painful milestone. As you know, more than 300 nominations for our outstanding general and flag officers are now being held up in the United States Senate. That includes our top uniform leaders and our next chief of naval operations. Because of this blanket hold, starting today, for the first time in the history of the Department of Defense, three of our military services are operating without Senate-confirmed leaders. This is unprecedented, it is unnecessary, and it is unsafe," U.S. Secretary of Defense Lloyd Austin said.

"As residents continue to mourn the loss of their friends, their loved ones, their neighbors; the loss of their homes and their way of life, we know, and let them know, that we are mourning with them. Nothing can prepare you for what I saw during my time here, and nothing can prepare them for the emotional toll of the impact that this severe event has taken on them," FEMA Administrator Deanne Criswell said of the Maui wildfire victims.

"Here's what I'll say. Whatever you guys are reading in the news, just make sure you do your homework, alright? Because listen, there's no doubt that the media tries to twist a lot of things to look this way or that way. Meanwhile, we're the bad guys for, you know, wanting like, prayer in school, you know? We're the bad guys for that. So it makes no sense to me, just like a lot of you guys it probably doesn't make any sense to you either," Jason Aldean on criticism over his song, "Try That in a Small Town."

### What to Watch in the Day Ahead

President Joe Biden is visiting Milwaukee to discuss the economic impacts of the Inflation Reduction Act. Biden's visit is taking place just eight days before the city is due to host the GOP's first 2024 presidential primary debate.

The FIFA Women's World Cup semifinals kick off today at 4 a.m. ET in New Zealand as Spain takes on Sweden.

A grand jury in Fulton County indicted former President Donald Trump over his alleged attempts to overturn Georgia's 2020 presidential election results. Meanwhile in New York, the judge in Trump's hush money case has denied a request for recusal filed by Trump's legal team.

The death toll from Hawaii's wildfires has increased to 99 and is expected to climb higher as recovery efforts continue, Gov. Josh Green told CNN. Hundreds of people are still missing.

NASA and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration revealed that July was the hottest month the planet has experienced since temperature record-keeping began 174 years ago.

## Groton Area School ready to begin with new teachers, staff by Elizabeth Varin

Though some positions have yet to be filled, the Groton Area School District is looking to start the school year with a dozen new faces.

The school board reviewed 2023-2024 staff, and added six more at Monday evening's board meeting. The most recent hires include a replacement agriculture teacher and FFA advisor, a long-term music substitute teacher, new special education paraprofessional at the middle and high school and a kindergarten paraprofessional.

"I like where we are, all and all, with our staffing situation," said Superintendent Joe Schwan. "We're in good shape with the last minute situation. It's a good group."

School administrators have gotten creative to find solutions for a shortage of teachers in the state. One of those solutions involves hiring an agriculture industry professional to teach Groton students.

The board voted to hire Anna Dagal as the new agriculture teacher and FFA advisor. The position had previously been held by Adam Franken, who left for a pastor position.

Dagal has both her bachelor's degree in animal science and master's degree in animal science with a focus on ruminant nutrition from South Dakota State University. She currently does not have a teaching certificate, but will work with the district and department of education on getting certified.

"She didn't go to school to be a teacher," Schwan said. "But there seems to be interest there to be a possible long-term situation."

Previous ag teacher Franken has express willingness to "get anyone off on the right foot," and help the new teacher transition to the role, Schwan said.

Dagal's base salary totals \$49,350 with an additional \$5,483.33 for extra contract days and \$4,500 for the FFA advisor position. That totals \$59,333.33 for the 2023-2024 school year.

Another non-typical situation includes the hiring of Amy Warrington as long-term vocal music substitute teacher.

The district has not had any applicants for the position, Schwan said. In order to fill the spot in the interim, he proposed hiring Warrington as a long-term substitute and to work on getting a waiver so she could teach for the full school year if needed. A waiver is required for a long-term substitute position that lasts longer than 45 days. The teaching position will continue to be posted for potential applicants.

In addition to those two positions, the board approved hiring Chattarida Sukhmon as special education paraprofessional and Elizabeth Bahr as kindergarten paraprofessional, both at \$14.74 per hour. Robert Moorlach was hired as a morning-route bus driver for the Claremont area, with Mike Nehls working as the afternoon driver. Delbert Hinkelman was hired as bus driver for the Pierpont route.

The board also approved having two volunteer girls soccer coaches: Kaylin Kucker and Wyatt Locke. While positions were filled, the board also accepted the resignation and retirement letter from Jan Hoffman, a middle school and high school special education paraprofessional. Her last day will be Aug. 18.

In other action:

- With administrators hoping to adopt the district budget earlier, the board voted to approve the 2023-2024 budget and authorize the business manager to file a tax request with the county auditors. Superintendent Schwan added that there may be budget adjustments as the year goes on that would come before the school board.

- An open house is planned for the high school's new health science lab, which includes new state-of-the-art equipment bought with grant funding. The open house is scheduled for 4-8 p.m. Monday, Aug. 21. It will overlap with the sixth grade welcome walk, which takes place from 3:30-5:30 p.m. that afternoon, as well as the elementary school open house, which takes place from 4-6 p.m.

- Groton school officials plan to meet with Langford administrators to discuss a co-op for the football team next year. The meeting request is based on a letter Langford sent to both Groton and Britton, requesting discussion of co-op-ing with the Langford school football team.

- Local beef will be served to Groton Area school students. After the district put out a request for

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donations of animals to be processed and served to students, four have been donated. The first animal was taken in last week, and it is set to be ready when school starts, Schwan said.

- A couple of projects are nearing completion for the district. Work on the high school air conditioning project continues Tuesday morning, as contractors plan to coordinate and complete the start-up on the unit ventilators outside of the high school arena.

- The elementary school roofing project may be completed by the time school begins next week.

- The board approved changing the time of the Sept. 11 meeting from 7 p.m. to 6 p.m. that day. Homecoming coronation is also scheduled for that evening at 7:30 p.m., which prompted the board meeting change.

- Mid-August enrollment numbers show nearly 600 students at the district this year. That includes 171 high school students, 125 middle school students, 53 fifth graders, 49 fourth graders, 41 third graders, 46 second graders, 39 first graders, 51 kindergarteners and 18 junior kindergarteners.

- The school approved a bid to sell one acre of land that used to house a school site. The bid for the former site of the Oak Gulch School District came in at \$2,500 from Britton-based attorney Danny Smeins representing the Zimmerman family.



## Fliehs takes first at Sioux Valley Golf

Brevin Fliehs won by a single stroke over Flandreau's Kaden Bursheim at the Sioux Valley Golf meet held Monday at Volga. Fliehs shot a 38 in both rounds for a total score of 76. Carter Simon placed ninth with an 85, shooting a 42 and a 43. Logan Pearson shot a 47 and a 46 for a total score of 94 and Jace Johnson shot a 53 and a 42 for a total score of 95.

Flandreau won the team title with 337 while Roncalli took second with 343, Sioux Valley was third with 345, Groton was fourth with 349, Milbank fifth with 361 and Redfield sixth with 412.



**Brevin Fliehs receives his first place medal from Groton Area Coach Joel Guthmiller.** (Courtesy Photo Joel Guthmiller)



**Groton Area Boys Golf Team members are Logan Pearson, Carter Simon, Brevin Fliehs and Jace Johnson.** (Courtesy Photo Joel Guthmiller)

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## Groton City Council Meeting Agenda

August 15, 2023 – 7:00pm

City Hall – 120 N Main Street

(IF YOU WOULD LIKE TO CALL IN TO THIS MEETING, PLEASE MAKE PRIOR ARRANGEMENTS TO DO SO BY CALLING CITY HALL 605-397-8422)

- Approval of Agenda

- Public Comments - pursuant to SDCL 1-25-1

(Public Comments will offer the opportunity for anyone not listed on the agenda to speak to the council. Speaking time will be limited to 3 minutes. No action will be taken on questions or items not on the agenda.)

- Authorization to Purchase New Skidsteer
- Authorization to Purchase New PD Tahoe
- Airport Discussion – Darrell Hillestad
- Park Saferoom – Dean Marske from HKG Architects
- Park Saferoom Brick Donation
- Swimming Pool & Pickleball Court Fences
- 2020/21 Final Audit Report
- Authorization to Bid Groton Municipal Airport Land Lease
- Approval of Certificate of Substantial Completion – Maguire Iron
- TextMyGov
- July Finance Report
- Minutes
- Bills
- 2023 SDML Annual Conference – October 3-6, 2023 – Rapid City, SD – Douglas Heinrich
- Executive session personnel & legal 1-25-2 (1) & (3)
- Adjournment

## 2023 Sturgis Rally Final Vehicle Count

STURGIS, S.D. – Final vehicle traffic counts from the South Dakota Department of Transportation (SDDOT) for vehicles entering Sturgis for the 83rd Annual Sturgis Motorcycle Rally which ran from Aug. 4-13, 2023, have been tallied. The traffic counts 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

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

Up 3.7% from the previous five-year average

**Friday, Aug. 11: 45,661 vehicles entered**

Up 0.4% from the previous five-year average

**Saturday, Aug. 12: 33,278 vehicles entered**

Down 4.5% from the previous five-year average

**Sunday, Aug. 13: 19,884 vehicles entered**

Down 6.5% from the previous five-year average

**2023 – 10 Day Total: 458,161 Vehicles**

Down 8.1% from the previous five-year average 10 day total

Previous Five-Year Average – 10 Day Total: 498,282 Vehicles

## Deer Camp Available for First Time for Youth Deer Hunters

PIERRE, S.D. – Four first-time deer hunters will have the opportunity to participate in a managed youth deer hunt and camp on Dec. 8-10 at Brown's Lodge and Hunting Ranch in Gettysburg, S.D.

Missouri River Corridor Youth Hunt in partnership with the South Dakota Game, Fish and Parks (GFP) are hosting a free event that is open to first-time youth deer hunters between the ages of 10 and 15. Participants must be accompanied by a parent or guardian.

Participants will learn how to select the best ammunition and firearm for deer hunting, improve shooting and firearm safety, sight in a firearm, field dress, and properly care for meat. The youth hunters will be provided meals, snacks, lodging, deer licenses, guns, ammunition, safety equipment, transportation to and from hunting, binoculars, and assistance with field processing.

"This youth hunt was created for kids who don't have – or have never had – the opportunity to hunt," said Potter County Conservation Officer Kendyll DeRouchey. "We want to teach the kids about firearm safety and ethical hunting while giving them the opportunity to harvest their first deer. It'll be a unique experience they'll remember forever."

Each hunter will be paired with a knowledgeable and experienced guide. Participation is limited to four hunters. Applicants will be selected based on application responses. Successful applicants are required to attend a pre-hunt orientation meeting on the morning of Dec. 8. Hunting will take place on Gettysburg-area land on Dec. 9-10.

For more information and to apply for this opportunity, contact Kendyll DeRouchey at 605.730.1568 or [MRCYouthHunt@outlook.com](mailto:MRCYouthHunt@outlook.com). Application deadline is Sept. 15.



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## That's Life by Tony Bender

### Mischief on the midway

Who doesn't love a carnival? It's the season. The color, the commotion, the rides, and food so decadent it should come with a dose of insulin. If it's been invented, you'll find it at a food stand at the fair. Chocolate-covered pickles. Deep-fried anything. More powdered sugar than Al Pacino used in "Scarface."

Then there are the impossible games. Basketball hoops that would stymie Steph Curry and concrete-filled milk jugs that could withstand a Nolan Ryan heater in his prime.

The latter is a young man's game. Even when I was only a few years removed from Legion Baseball and still had a decent arm, I watched my fastballs ricochet away as if I was throwing at a brick wall.

The trick is to split the bottom jugs at the top, requiring control, acceleration, and divine intervention. I managed to do twice one day at Valley Fair, winning two giant teddy bears—one for my girlfriend and another for my buddy's girlfriend—much to his chagrin. Two throws. Two enormous teddy bears. And I was smart enough to quit then before I became mortal again.

There is no young man more viral than one strolling through the midway with his girlfriend holding a stuffed beast bigger than she is, let alone two. Glory days.

But my most glorious carnival experience came when I was much younger. Maybe the late 60's or early 70's when Ashley still hosted a summer carnival on Main Street. I'm guessing the statute of limitations has expired but there's a reason I've lived much of my life on one side or the other of the North Dakota-South Dakota border—to avoid extradition.

I kind of feel sorry for kids today. What passed for mischief back then would involve a special prosecutor nowadays. On prom night, the cops just made us throw the beer in the ditch. Which we retrieved later. Growing up in a small town, we were never arrested. Just yelled at.

In this era we still might be doing hard time for the grade school criminality I'm about to confess. I won't reveal the names of my un-indicted co-conspirators since some of them are now in positions of authority. Far be it from me to ruin a political career. Even if there's the possibility of a mayoral pardon. Let me assure you that none of those involved are now school board presidents or in law enforcement.

My cohort—it wasn't my cousin Rodney—and I were watching them set up the carnival that morning when I idly peeked into a garbage can by the post office. Oh my. Pure gold. We rushed home to get a couple grocery bags to retrieve the loot. Pristine ride tickets! Word spread like wildfire. Instantly, we were the most popular kids in town. Modern day Robin Hoods. Heroes. We huddled in the alley and divided up hundreds of tickets. I'm guessing we had at least a half dozen accomplices.

So we rode every ride dozens upon dozens of times. Even the lame ones. The operators thought at first that we must be spoiled rich kids but by the second day, you could tell they'd caught on. We'd get a knowing smile, a wink, and they just let us go. I think they were amused by these modern day Tom Sawyer rascals sticking it to The Man. Enablers. Aiding and abetting.

By the third day, some of our gang members were dry-heaving dizzily from the Tilt-A-Whirl. At some point it stopped being fun and became a mission to use all of the tickets. (We never did.) A test of endurance. We went in more circles than the federal government. We wobbled aboard the rides and wobbled off with induced cases of vertigo, our insides rearranged.

You know in the movie "The Right Stuff" when the astronauts train on the "Vomit Comet?" It was like that. Maybe worse. I think we missed our calling.

By then, carnival management had caught on. The ride operators began tearing up the tickets so the scam could never be repeated. I suppose all good (bad?) things must come to an end. Frankly, it was a relief when it did. We were exhausted.

We reminisce from time to time—me and my friends whose identities I will take to the grave—and it always involves wry smiles as we shake our heads and wonder how we got away with it.



## SOUTH DAKOTA SEARCHLIGHT

<https://southdakotasearchlight.com>

### **At least 11 die in motorcycle accidents before and during Sturgis rally**

**BY: SEARCHLIGHT STAFF - AUGUST 14, 2023 2:29 PM**

Three more people died in motorcycle crashes over the weekend as the annual Sturgis Motorcycle Rally ended, bringing the total number of traffic deaths officially and unofficially connected with this year's rally to at least 11.

The rally began Aug. 4 and ended Sunday. Traffic counters recorded roughly 458,000 vehicles in Sturgis, which was down about 8% from the previous five-year average.

#### Latest deaths

The latest death happened Sunday afternoon when a Harley Davidson three-wheeled "trike" was traveling south on Neck Yoke Road in Pennington County and left the road for an unknown reason, according to the Highway Patrol. The trike hit the ditch and went airborne. The 66-year-old female passenger was separated from the trike and suffered fatal injuries. The 78-year-old male driver, who was not thrown from the trike, suffered minor injuries. Neither was wearing a helmet.

The Highway Patrol did not officially associate that death with the rally, because the agency's cutoff for its annual Rally Daily Information report was 6 a.m. Sunday, just hours before the accident. The agency also excludes accidents outside western South Dakota; thus, the Patrol's official count of rally traffic deaths is only five.

Meanwhile, the two recent fatal accidents that were included in the rally report happened Friday evening, the Highway Patrol said.

A Harley Davidson was traveling west on U.S. Highway 14 when it left the road, entered the ditch and tipped over. The 73-year-old male driver was separated from the motorcycle and was not wearing a helmet. He was pronounced dead at the scene.

The other accident happened at a rural intersection about 15 miles west of Rapid City. A 2014 Harley Davidson was traveling north when the driver tried to brake for a deer, locked up the brakes and left the road. The 62-year-old male driver, who was not wearing a helmet, was separated from the motorcycle and was pronounced dead at the scene.

#### **Earlier deaths**

The other three deaths officially associated with the rally happened on:

Aug. 10, when a 61-year-old male motorcycle driver went the wrong way on Interstate 90 and collided head-on with an SUV

Aug. 6, when a 54-year-old female motorcycle passenger was pronounced dead at the scene of a multi-vehicle collision, and a 41-year-old male motorcycle driver was pronounced dead at the scene after he failed to negotiate a curve and tumbled into a ditch.

At least five more people on motorcycles were killed in the days before the Highway Patrol's Rally Daily Information reporting began:

A 64-year-old Sisseton man died Aug. 4 when his motorcycle crashed into a ditch near Midland.

A 70-year-old Nebraska man died Aug. 3 when he failed to negotiate a curve with his Honda motorcycle on U.S. Highway 183 about 20 miles south of Colome.

A 68-year-old Virginia man died Aug. 2 when he failed to maintain his lane of travel on his motorcycle, crossed onto the I-90 median and was separated from his bike.

A 65-year-old Michigan man died July 31 when he failed to negotiate a curve in Custer State Park.

An 18-year-old man from Kansas who was not wearing a helmet died July 30 after he drove off a curve

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west of Lead and struck an embankment on his Indian Super Chieftain motorcycle.

## More crimes and stats

The Highway Patrol reported one officer-involved shooting during the rally, in which one person was injured. That shooting is under investigation by the state Division of Criminal Investigation.

U.S. Attorney Alison Ramsdell announced during the rally that the South Dakota Division of Criminal Investigation, the South Dakota Internet Crimes Against Children Task Force, U.S. Homeland Security Investigations, Ellsworth Air Force Base Office of Special Investigations, the Pennington County Sheriff's Office, and the Rapid City Police Department conducted a joint sex-trafficking operation. It resulted in five men, all from Rapid City or Box Elder, being arrested and charged for attempted sexual exploitation of a minor or attempted enticement of a minor using the internet.

The Highway Patrol also reported these final 2023 rally statistics:

Drunken-driving arrests: 120 (down from 148 last year).

Drug arrests: 401 (up from 251 last year).

Total citations: 1,479 (up from 1,430 last year).

Total warnings: 4,296 (down from 5,288 last year).

Cash seized: \$2,005 (down from \$4,335 last year).

Injury accidents: 64 (up from 50 last year).

## COMMENTARY

### Wildland firefighter pay gains could go up in smoke

GREGORY MCNAMEE

At any given moment during this smoky summer of 2023, hundreds of wildfires were blazing in the United States — more than 850 as of late July, according to the nonprofit Fire, Weather & Avalanche Center. Most of those wildfires ignited in the forests of the American West.

Fires were also burning by the thousands in Canada, creating a pall of particulate-dense smoke that blotted out views of the Chicago skyline and the Washington Mall. Those fires are expected to burn well into fall.

This hellish aspect lends weight to historian Stephen Pyne's conclusion that we live now in an age of fire called the "Pyrocene."

Assembled to combat these blazes is a massive army of wildland firefighters. Some are volunteers, some are prison work crews earning time credited against their sentences. Some are municipal firefighters dispatched to the woods.

Some 11,300 of them are federal firefighters, called "forestry technicians," who work under the aegis of the Department of Agriculture and the Department of the Interior.

For all of them, it's exhausting work. Wildland firefighters typically log 16-hour days for weeks at a time, burning 4,000 to 6,000 calories a day while carrying heavy backpacks.

It's punishing labor and always dangerous. Barely a year has gone by in the last quarter-century that has not seen at least 15 wildland firefighter deaths, the victims not just of flames and smoke but also of heat exhaustion, vehicle accidents, air crashes, falling trees and heart attacks.

Often, they don't die alone. In June 2013, 19 "Hotshots" burned to death in a horrific Arizona wildfire, the third-greatest loss of wildland firefighters in U.S. history.

Yet despite the hardships and the history, a mandated pay raise in June 2021, spurred by President Joe Biden, brought the minimum wage for federal wildland firefighters up to a mere \$15 an hour.

Firefighters of my acquaintance seldom cite money as a motivator for their work. They fight fires in the spirit of public service, while in some rural communities, as a young Apache firefighter told me, "It gives us something to do."

But firefighters, like everyone else, must shoulder rents and mortgages and groceries, and a paycheck of less than \$3,000 a month just doesn't cut it.

Enter a temporary order from President Biden raising that base pay rate by 50 percent. Put in place in August 2022, and retroactive to the previous October as part of a hotly contested package of infrastructure-

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funding policies, the pay raise was funded only until Sept. 30, 2023, after which pay for wildland firefighters drops back to 2020 levels.

Wildland firefighters lobbied for Biden's pay raise to be made permanent, but they made few inroads. That was until they finally found an ally in Arizona's Sen. Kyrsten Sinema. Now an independent, Sinema allied with Republican Sens. John Barrasso of Wyoming and Steve Daines of Montana, and Democratic Sens. Joe Manchin of West Virginia and Jon Tester of Montana, to introduce the bipartisan Wildland Firefighter Paycheck Protection Act. It would fund permanent pay increases.

By late June of 2023, their bill had passed out of committee by a vote of 10 to 1, the only no vote coming from Republican Sen. Rand Paul of Kentucky. When it reaches the Senate floor, it will be open to debate and a full vote.

There, however, the politicians are likely to squabble, especially on the House side. Larger issues loom, too, such as the need to revise policy so that forests are better managed to improve the conditions that now foster massive wildfires. Those conditions are the product of a "wise use" regime that saw forests as profitable tree farms and not as living systems. The Forest Service also had a decades-long policy of dousing all wildfires as early as possible.

While Washington deliberates, and while a more comprehensive bill compensating wildland firefighters struggles to gain traction, fires continue to burn in the outback. Without a pay raise, federal officials fear, some firefighters will walk away from a risky and insultingly low-paying job.

Wildland firefighters are needed right now. They will be needed even more in a future of climbing temperatures and widespread drought causing even more massive wildfires.

We can only hope that we will have the firefighters to confront them.

*Gregory McNamee is a contributor to Writers on the Range, [writersontherange.org](http://writersontherange.org), an independent nonprofit dedicated to spurring lively conversation about the West. He is an author and journalist in Tucson.*

## Harvest projection includes 21% more corn, 14% more soybeans in SD

BY: SEARCHLIGHT STAFF - AUGUST 14, 2023 3:54 PM

The U.S. Department of Agriculture's latest forecast predicts South Dakota farmers will harvest 21% more corn and 14% more soybeans this year.

The corn harvest projection is 798 million bushels. The increase is attributed to farmers harvesting 10% more corn acres, reaching 5.5 million, and an expected yield of 145 bushels per acre, up 13 from last year's 132.

The soybean harvest is projected to rise by 14% to 221 million bushels. The number of soybean acres harvested is expected to increase by 4%, and the USDA expects a yield of 42 bushels per acre, an increase from 38 in 2022.

Winter wheat production is expected to drop 32%, while spring wheat production is forecasted to decrease 38%. Oat harvests are predicted to fall 18% from 2022 levels.

Wheat and oat acres are relatively unchanged, but yield projections are down significantly from last year.

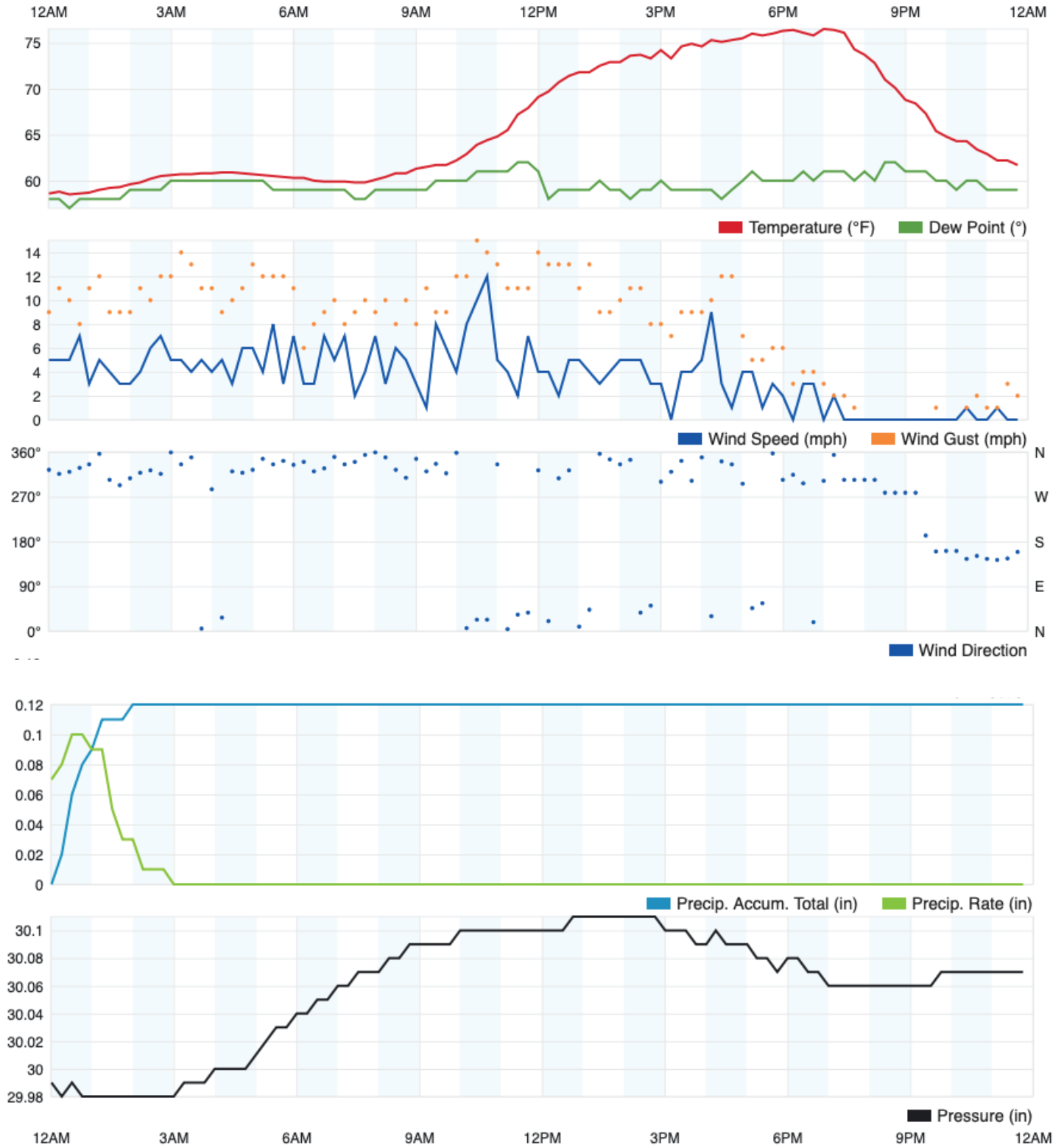
On the other hand, sorghum for grain production is set to surge 31% from last year, largely because farmers are projected to harvest 14% more sorghum acres, and because of bigger yields.

The USDA also forecasts a 12% increase in alfalfa hay from 2022. However, all other hay is expected to decline 4%, mainly due to an 8% decrease in hay acreage.

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## Yesterday's Groton Weather









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Today	Tonight	Wednesday	Wednesday Night	Thursday	Thursday Night	Friday
						
Sunny	Mostly Clear	Sunny then Mostly Sunny and Breezy	Mostly Clear and Breezy	Sunny	Clear	Sunny and Breezy
High: 84 °F	Low: 60 °F	High: 90 °F	Low: 55 °F	High: 76 °F	Low: 57 °F	High: 89 °F

## Warm and Dry then Cooler

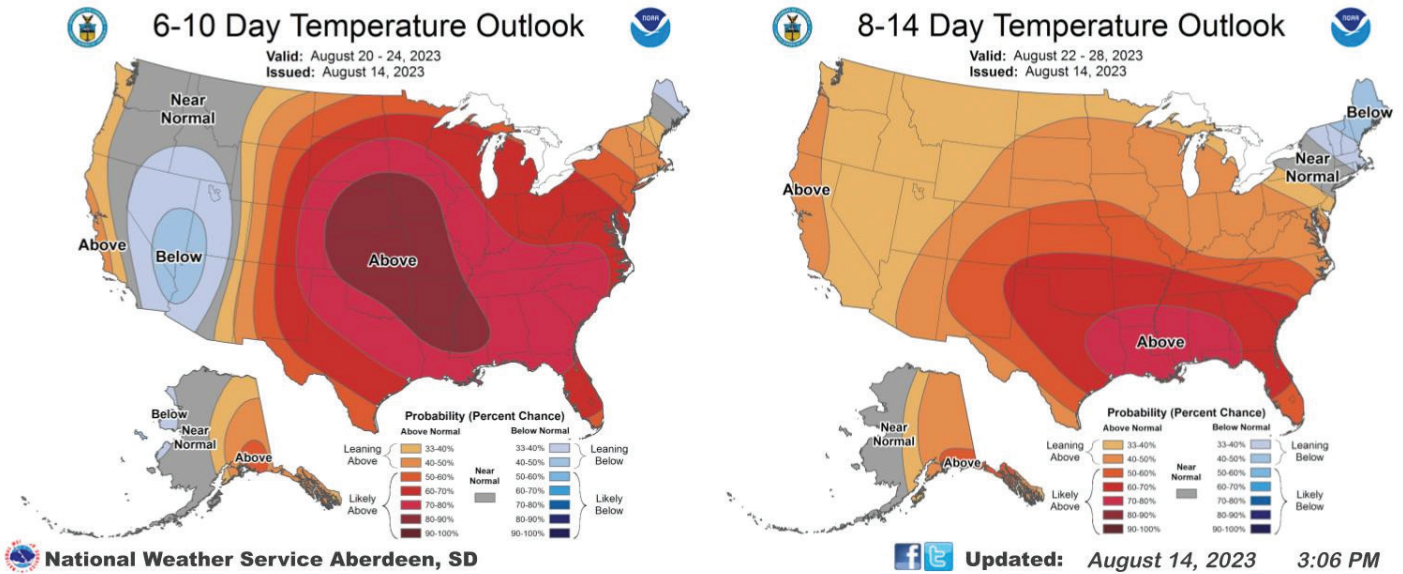
<p><u>Today</u></p>  <p>82 to 90°F</p>	<p><u>Wednesday</u></p>  <p>86 to 99°F</p> <p>More clouds north</p>	<p><u>Thursday</u></p>  <p>74 to 80°F</p>
---	--	--



As we move into the second half of August, we will see a warming trend and a drier pattern. The only relief in sight is Thursday when temperatures will be around to slightly below normal for this time of year. Otherwise, expect temperatures in the 80s to near 100.

## Ready For Some Heat?

The large-scale weather pattern will change to favor **hotter than normal temperatures**, on the whole, beginning Friday (August 18th), and lasting through much of the rest of August across c/ne SD and wc MN. **The maps below** show the probability (percent chance) for this. Normal highs from mid to late August range between ~78° & 86°F.



A change in the jet stream flow pattern is forecast by the end of the week. Looks like the vast majority of the second half of August is going to be unseasonably hot!



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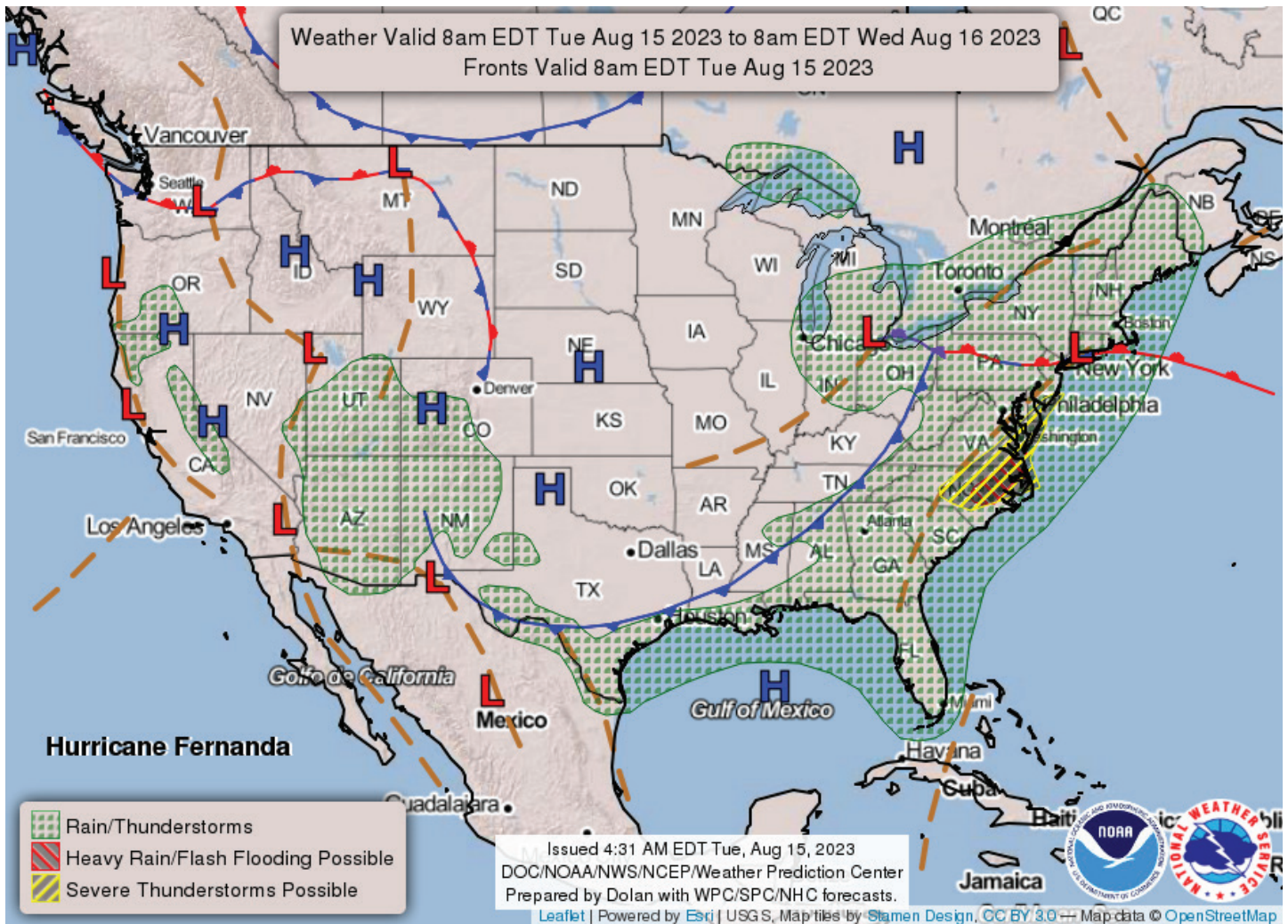
## Yesterday's Groton Weather

**High Temp: 77 °F at 7:07 PM**  
**Low Temp: 58 °F at 12:00 AM**  
**Wind: 15 mph at 10:23 AM**  
**Precip: : Corrected Storm Total: 2.65**

Day length: 14 hours, 10 minutes

## Today's Info

Record High: 111 in 1937  
Record Low: 42 in 1895  
Average High: 83  
Average Low: 57  
Average Precip in Aug.: 1.08  
Precip to date in Aug.: 5.92  
Average Precip to date: 15.18  
Precip Year to Date: 18.59  
Sunset Tonight: 8:42:01 PM  
Sunrise Tomorrow: 66:32:57 AM



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## Today in Weather History

August 15, 1886: A tornado moved northeast from 5 miles southwest of Newark in Marshall County, through town and into North Dakota. Only three buildings were reportedly undamaged at Newark, and a bartender at a saloon was killed. Three people died in two homes on adjoining farms 2 miles southwest of town. A saddle from a Newark stable was carried for a half mile. In North Dakota, houses and barns were damaged along the Wild River. This tornado was estimated as an F3.

August 15, 1987: On this day the largest hailstone was reported in Brown County. The size of the hailstone as 4.5 inches in diameter, and fell on the southwest corner of Warner. This storm also produced F1 tornado that touchdown about 2 miles southwest of Warner. An estimated wind gust of 60 mph was also reported about 2 miles NNW of Stratford.

August 15, 2011: Slow moving thunderstorms across parts of northern Roberts County produced anywhere from 4 to 8 inches of rainfall resulting in flash flooding. The town of New Effington was affected with many roads along with several homes flooded. Sandbagging took place to keep the water from the school. Highway 127 from New Effington to Hammer was flooded in several spots. The floodwaters remained for several days afterward with several roads flooded.

1787: Tornadoes were reported in Connecticut, Rhode Island, Massachusetts, and New Hampshire. Wethersfield, Connecticut was hard hit by the tornado outbreak. There, a woman and her family were caught in the open. She and her son were killed. Clothes from the family farm were carried three miles away. This event is regarded to be the most significant tornado outbreak in early New England history.

1946 - Saint Louis, MO, was deluged with a record 8.78 inches of rain in 24 hours. (The Weather Channel)

1967 - The sundance fire in northern Idaho was started by lightning. Winds of 50 mph carried firebrands as much as ten miles in advance to ignite new fires, and as a result, the forest fire spread twenty miles across the Selkirk Mountains in just twelve hours, burning 56,000 acres. The heat of the fire produced whirlwinds of flame with winds up to 300 mph which flung giant trees about like matchsticks. (David Ludlum)

1983: Hurricane Alicia formed on this day and was the costliest tropical cyclone in the Atlantic since Hurricane Agnes in 1972. It struck Galveston and Houston, Texas directly, causing \$2.6 billion (1983 USD) in damage and killing 21 people. This storm was the worst Texas hurricane since Hurricane Carla in 1961. Also, Alicia was the first billion-dollar tropical cyclone in Texas history.

1987 - Thunderstorms developing ahead of a sharp cold front produced severe weather in the Upper Midwest during the afternoon and evening hours, with Minnesota and eastern South Dakota hardest hit. A thunderstorm in west central Minnesota spawned a tornado at Eagle Lake which killed one person and injured eight others. A thunder- storm in eastern South Dakota produced softball size hail at Warner. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1988 - Thirty five cities in twenty states in the north central and northeastern U.S. reported record high temperatures for the date, including Lamoni IA and Baltimore MD, where the mercury hit 105 degrees. Temperatures 100 degrees or above were reported in twenty-two states. Pierre SD was the hot spot in the nation with a high of 114 degrees. Bluefield WV reported eight straight days of record heat. (The National Weather Summary)

1989 - Evening thunderstorms in eastern New Mexico produced wind gusts to 66 mph at Clovis. Evening thunderstorms in West Texas produced baseball size hail around Hereford, Dimmitt, Ware and Dalhart. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)



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Daily Devotionals

## Seeds of Hope

### WINNING AND TRYING

It was his first attempt to win a trophy for swimming. He was successful and won first place. After receiving his prized possession, his mother said, "I'm so happy for you. I never won a trophy."

"Mom," he asked, "did you ever try?"

God created each of us to succeed. But we can never succeed at anything until we try something. And whenever we want to accomplish anything, we need a good place to begin. We find that "place" in the first words of the Bible: "In the beginning - GOD."

Beginning with God means that before we try to do anything we seek His will. God promised Joshua great success. He told him that no one would be able to stand their ground against him, promising, that "I will not fail you or abandon you" as long as you live. But with His promise He gave him a warning: "study the Book of the Law continually- obey it and only then will you succeed."

The promise that God gave to Joshua works for us, too. However, God places the same limits on our success as He did Joshua's: "Study My Word continually, obey it, and only then you will succeed." If we begin with God's Word, we will end with God's blessings. Surely, that is the definition of success!

Prayer: Lord, help us to realize and remember that success is all about You and never about us. May we be faithful to Your Word and then enjoy Your blessings! In Jesus' Name, Amen.

Scripture For Today: Study this Book of Instruction continually. Meditate on it day and night so you will be sure to obey everything written in it. Only then will you prosper and succeed in all you do. Joshua 1:1-9



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 17 Hrs 3 Mins 39  
DRAW: Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

### LOTTO AMERICA

WINNING NUMBERS:  
08.14.23

1 26 31 33 50 8

All Star Bonus: 5x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:  
**\$8,000,000**

NEXT 1 Days 16 Hrs 18  
DRAW: Mins 39 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

### LUCKY FOR LIFE

WINNING NUMBERS:  
08.14.23

6 25 37 39 47 7

TOP PRIZE:  
**\$7,000/week**

NEXT 16 Hrs 33 Mins 39  
DRAW: Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

### DAKOTA CASH

WINNING NUMBERS:  
08.12.23

13 18 19 29 34

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

NEXT 1 Days 16 Hrs 33  
DRAW: Mins 39 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

### POWERBALL

DOUBLE PLAY

WINNING NUMBERS:  
08.14.23

2 23 42 61 68 26

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

NEXT 1 Days 17 Hrs 2  
DRAW: Mins 39 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

### POWERBALL

WINNING NUMBERS:  
08.14.23

32 34 37 39 47 3

Power Play: 2x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:  
**\$236,000,000**

NEXT 1 Days 17 Hrs 2  
DRAW: Mins 39 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

## News from the Associated Press

### Number of dead from Maui wildfires reaches 99, as governor warns there could be scores more

By CLAIRE RUSH, JENNIFER SINCO KELLEHER and CHRISTOPHER WEBER Associated Press  
LAHAINA, Hawaii (AP) — The number of deaths caused by the Maui wildfires stood at 99 Monday, a figure that is likely to increase as search crews comb neighborhoods where flames moved as fast as a mile a minute.

The blazes that consumed most of the historic town of Lahaina are already the deadliest in the U.S. in more than a century. The cause was under investigation.

Gov. Josh Green said the search will take time and asked for space to do it properly. "For those people who have walked into Lahaina because they really wanted to see, know that they're very likely walking on iwi," he said at a news conference on Maui, using the Hawaiian word for "bones."

In an interview with CBS aired earlier Monday, Green estimated searchers will find the remains of 10 to 20 people per day until they finish their work. "And it's probably going to take 10 days. It's impossible to guess, really," he said.

As cellphone service has slowly been restored, the number of people missing dropped to about 1,300 from over 2,000, Green said.

Twenty cadaver dogs and dozens of searchers are making their way through blocks reduced to ash. As of Monday, they had searched about 25% of the area, up from just 3% over the weekend, said Maui Police Chief John Pelletier.

Meanwhile, some state officials say there is a shortage of water available for firefighters, and they blame a recent ruling by an environmental court judge. It's part of a long-running battle between environmentalists and private companies over the decadeslong practice of diverting water from East Maui streams that started during Hawaii's sugar plantation past.

Green said there are people fighting over access to water to fight fires. "We have a difficult time on Maui and other rural areas getting enough water for houses, for our people, for any response," he said.

Green said the attorney general's office is reviewing decisions related to the fires.

Hawaiian Electric Co. Inc., Maui's power provider, will cooperate with the state and do its own investigation, President and CEO Shelee Kimura said.

It's not clear whether the utility's equipment played any role in igniting the flames. Hawaiian Electric has faced criticism for not shutting off power as strong winds buffeted a parched area under high risk for fire.

Kimura said many factors go into a decision to cut power, including the impact on people who rely on specialized medical equipment. She also noted that shutting off power in the fire area would have knocked out water pumps.

"Even in places where this has been used, it is controversial and it's not universally accepted," she said.

As the utility worked to fully restore power, evacuees were expected to begin moving into hotels Monday evening. Green said that 500 hotel rooms were being made available for displaced locals and an additional 500 rooms will be set aside for workers from the Federal Emergency Management Agency who are aiding in the recovery.

In addition, FEMA has started to provide \$700 to displaced residents to cover the cost of food, water, first aid and medical supplies, agency administrator Deanne Criswell said Monday. The money is in addition to whatever amount residents qualify for to cover the loss of homes and personal property.

"We're not taking anything off the table, and we're going to be very creative in how we use our authorities to help build communities and help people find a place to stay for the longer term," Criswell said. More than 3,000 people have registered for federal assistance, according to FEMA, and that number was expected to grow.

On the water-supply issue, the deputy head of the U.S. Fire Administration, Tonya Hoover, said she did

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not have details on the island's current water supply. She said the head of her agency has been meeting with firefighters, including one who was badly hurt and hospitalized.

The Biden administration is seeking \$12 billion more for the government's disaster relief fund as part of its supplemental funding request to Congress.

Authorities had required anyone traveling into the disaster areas to get a police-issued placard, but that was suspended Monday due to overwhelming demand. Lahaina resident Kevin Eliason said when he was turned away, the line of cars with people waiting to get a placard had grown to at least 3 miles (4.8 km) long.

"It's a joke," Eliason said. "It's just crazy. They didn't expect, probably, tens of thousands of people to show up there."

The blaze that swept into centuries-old Lahaina last week destroyed nearly every building in the town of 13,000. That fire has been 85% contained, according to the county. Another blaze known as the Upcountry fire has been 60% contained, officials said.

"There's very little left there," Green said of Lahaina in a video update Sunday, adding that "an estimated value of \$5.6 billion has gone away."

Even where the fire has retreated, authorities have warned that toxic byproducts may remain, including in drinking water, after the flames spewed poisonous fumes. And many people simply have no home to return to.

The Red Cross said 575 evacuees were spread across five shelters on Monday, including the War Memorial Gymnasium in Wailuku. Among the visitors was Oprah Winfrey, who told Hawaii News Now that she delivered personal hygiene products, towels and water in recent days.

Winfrey, a part-time Maui resident, warned that news crews will eventually depart from the destruction and the world will move on. But she said that "we're all still going to be here trying to figure out what is the best way to rebuild. ... I will be here for the long haul, doing what I can."

As firefighters battled the flames, a flurry of court actions were lodged last week over access to water. On Wednesday morning, Judge Jeffrey Crabtree issued an order temporarily suspending water caps he imposed for 48 hours. He also authorized water distribution as requested by Maui fire officials, the county or the state until further notice if the judge could not be reached.

But that wasn't enough for the state attorney general's office, which later filed a petition with the state Supreme Court blaming Crabtree for a lack of water for firefighting. The state asked the court not to let Crabtree alter the amount of water to be diverted or to put a hold on his restrictions until the petition is resolved.

The judge "substituted his judgment for that of the agency," the petition said, referring to the Board of Land and Natural Resources. "As a result, there was not enough permitted water to ... battle the wildfires."

Wayne Tanaka, executive director of the Sierra Club, said Monday that the attorney general's office exaggerated the effect of water diversion caps on firefighting.

"It's a shameless exploitation of this horrible tragedy," he said. "The central Maui reservoirs are of no use to west Maui, where most of the devastation is ongoing."

He said he's concerned the state is out to help a private company monopolize water.

Representatives for former sugar plantation land owner Alexander & Baldwin and the East Maui Irrigation Company did not immediately respond to an email seeking comment. A spokesperson for the Board of Land and Natural Resources said it does not comment on pending litigation.

The attorney general's office said in a statement Monday that Alexander & Baldwin uses water for wetting the ground for preventative fire suppression, and that Crabtree's previous orders affect only the central Maui area water supply and "does not directly affect the water situation for Lahaina."

The main focus of the petition "is that administrative review is more appropriate than having the court monitor this type of activity," the statement said.

Fueled by a dry summer and strong winds from a passing hurricane, the flames on Maui raced through parched brush. One fire moved as fast as a mile (1.6 kilometers) every minute, according to Green.

"With those kinds of winds and 1,000-degree temperatures, ultimately all the pictures that you will see



will be easy to understand," the governor said.

## Massive explosion at gas station in Russia's Dagestan kills 30, injures scores more

MOSCOW (AP) — A massive explosion at a gas station in Russia's southern republic of Dagestan killed 30 people and injured scores more, Russian officials said Tuesday.

Russia's Emergency Ministry reported Tuesday that a total of 105 people were injured, and 30 of them died.

Three of those killed were children, Dagestan's governor Sergei Melikov said.

The explosion took place Monday night on the outskirts of Makhachkala, the region's capital. A fire started at a car repair shop and spread to a nearby gas station, prompting a blast, Russia's state news agency RIA Novosti reported, citing the country's Emergency Ministry. The subsequent fire raged on the area of 600 square meters (yards), the report said.

Some of those injured will be airlifted to Moscow for treatment, according to the report.

Russian authorities have begun a criminal investigation.

Families of the victims will receive 1 million rubles (about \$10,000) each, Dagestan's authorities said, and those injured — 200,000-400,000 rubles (about \$2,000-\$4,000).

Tuesday in Dagestan has been declared the day of mourning.

Across Russia, in western Siberia, another blast killed two people and wounded five more on Monday night. The explosion occurred at an oil mine in the Khanty-Mansiysk region late in the evening, local authorities said.

## Russia's central bank makes huge interest rate hike to try to prop up falling ruble

By DASHA LITVINOVA Associated Press

TALLINN, Estonia (AP) — Russia's central bank on Tuesday made a large interest rate hike of 3.5 percentage points, an emergency move designed to fight inflation and strengthen the ruble after the country's currency reached its lowest value since early in the war with Ukraine.

The decision to bring the key rate to 12% was announced after a meeting of the bank's board of directors was called a day earlier as the ruble declined. The fall comes as Moscow increases military spending and Western sanctions weigh on its energy exports.

The Russian currency passed 101 rubles to the dollar on Monday and lingered there Tuesday, losing more than a third of its value since the beginning of the year and hitting the lowest level in almost 17 months.

The central bank says demand has exceeded the country's ability to expand economic output, increasing inflation and affecting "the ruble's exchange rate dynamics through elevated demand for imports."

"Consequently, the pass-through of the ruble's depreciation to prices is gaining momentum and inflation expectations are on the rise," the bank said in a statement.

President Vladimir Putin's economic adviser, Maksim Oreshkin, on Monday blamed the weak ruble on "loose monetary policy" in an op-ed, adding that central bank has "all the tools necessary" to stabilize the situation and that he expects normalization shortly.

By raising borrowing costs, the central bank is trying to fight price spikes as Russia imports more and exports less, especially oil and natural gas, with defense spending going up and sanctions taking a toll. Importing more and exporting less means a smaller trade surplus, which typically weighs on a country's currency.

Inflation reached 7.6% over the past three months, the central bank said. It also made a big rate hike of 1% last month, saying inflation was expected to keep rising and the fall in the ruble is adding to the risk. Its next meeting on interest rates is planned for Sept. 15.

After Western countries imposed sanctions on Russia over the invasion of Ukraine in February 2022,

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the ruble plunged as low as 130 to the dollar, but the central bank raised its key interest rate to as high as 20% in the days afterward and enacted capital controls that stabilized the currency's value. It has cut rates in the months since.

## **A rights group says it can't get access to detained officials in Niger**

By SAM MEDNICK Associated Press

NIAMEY, Niger (AP) — Human rights activists in Niger say they have been unable to gain access to top political officials detained after mutinous soldiers ousted the democratically elected president nearly three weeks ago.

After soldiers ousted President Mohamed Bazoum on July 26, they also arrested several former ministers and other political leaders, but requests to see them and check on their wellbeing have gone unanswered, Ali Idrissa, executive secretary of a local human rights group, the Network of Organizations for Transparency and Analysis of Budgets, told The Associated Press.

The junta has also been holding Bazoum, his wife and son under house arrest in their compound in the capital. Those close to Bazoum say his electricity and water have been cut off and he's running out of food. The junta says it plans to prosecute Bazoum for "high treason" and undermining state security. If convicted, he could face the death penalty, according to Niger's penal code.

In a television broadcast Sunday evening junta spokesperson Col. Maj. Amadou Abdramane, said it was treating the detained officials humanely and that Bazoum had regular access to medical visits and no health concerns had been raised. It did not immediately respond to questions about whether rights organizations would be granted access.

In recent days the junta has been sending mixed signals about how open it is to resolving the region's crisis peacefully.

The West African regional bloc, ECOWAS has threatened military force if Bazoum is not released and reinstated and has activated a standby force to restore order in Niger. The junta, which had initially rebuffed attempts at dialogue and refused to allow mediation teams into the country, said it was open to speaking with the bloc.

But on Monday evening, in another statement on state television, spokesperson Abdramane said it was recalling the Nigerien ambassador from neighboring Ivory Coast, one of the bloc's 15 members, in response to President Alassane Ouattara's "eagerness" to use military intervention against Niger "with the aim of preserving interests that no longer correspond to those of present-day Niger."

A meeting with the African Union Peace and Security Council took place Monday to discuss Niger's crisis, but there has been no news on the outcome. The council could overrule the West African bloc's decision if it thought an intervention threatened wider peace and security on the continent.

Niger, an impoverished country of some 25 million people was seen by many Western nations as the last democratic partner in the Sahel region south of the Sahara desert that countries could work with to beat back a growing jihadi insurgency linked to al-Qaida and the Islamic State group. The United States and France have approximately 2,500 military personnel in Niger who train its forces and in the case of France conducted joint operations.

Coups are rampant in the region, and neighboring Burkina Faso and Mali have each had two apiece since 2020, but they didn't incur the same international condemnation and pressure as with Niger.

"For ECOWAS and Western countries, this coup was seen as one too many. ... So far, however, the hard-line response seems to be having the opposite effect, and further entrenching the military regime," said Hannah Rae Armstrong, an independent consultant on the Sahel.

## **A strong tropical storm is lashing parts of Japan and disrupting holiday travel**

By MARI YAMAGUCHI Associated Press

TOKYO (AP) — A strong tropical storm lashed central and western Japan with heavy rain and high winds Tuesday, causing flooding and power blackouts and paralyzing air and ground transportation while many people were traveling for a Buddhist holiday week.

The storm weakened from Typhoon Lan early in the morning and made landfall near Cape Shionomisaki in the central prefecture of Wakayama, according to the Japan Meteorological Agency. On Tuesday afternoon, it was just south of Fukuchiyama city and had sustained winds of up to 90 kph (55 mph) as it headed north. It was then expected to veer east toward Hokkaido over waters between Japan and the Korean Peninsula, the JMA said.

NHK public television said 20 people, many of them elderly, were injured in five prefectures near the storm's path — Hyogo, Osaka, Kyoto, Shiga and Wakayama.

The storm caused rivers to overflow, damaged some buildings and paralyzed traffic. In Maizuru in northern Kyoto prefecture, a flooded river sent muddy water flowing into some houses. In Nara, just south of Kyoto, scaffolding on one building collapsed, and a partial wall collapse at a train station in Tsuruhashi halted local train services.

Local municipalities advised more than 230,000 residents to take shelter in safer buildings such as community centers.

Up to 35 centimeters (13.7 inches) of rainfall was forecast in the Tokai region in central Japan through Wednesday morning. The JMA urged residents in the area to avoid unessential outings and warned of potential mudslides, flooding and thunderstorms.

More than 50,000 homes were without power in nine prefectures in the central and western regions earlier Tuesday, but electricity had been restored to three-quarters of them by late afternoon.

The storm hit Japan in the middle of the Bon Buddhist holiday week, affecting many Japanese who were traveling to visit their families and relatives, as transportation and event operators in the storm's predicted path decided to suspend services through Tuesday.

Central Japan Railway Co. said Shinkansen bullet train operations between Nagoya in central Japan and Okayama in western Japan were suspended Tuesday, and service between Tokyo and Nagoya was reduced. Expressways in the region were also closed, and hundreds of domestic flights were canceled on Tuesday.

Representatives from 10 prefectures canceled their plans to attend an annual memorial marking the Aug. 15 end of World War II. Games scheduled to be played Tuesday in Japan's hugely popular annual high school baseball tournament, held at Koshien stadium in Hyogo prefecture, were postponed to Wednesday.

## **As the Black Sea becomes a battleground, one Ukrainian farmer doesn't know how he'll sell his grain**

By SAMYA KULLAB Associated Press

KYIV, Ukraine (AP) — Victor Tsvyk harvested 4,800 tons of wheat this month, but after Russia exited a wartime deal that allowed Ukraine to ship grain to the world, he has no idea where his produce will go. Or how his beloved farm will survive.

Tsvyk, who normally exported up to 90% of his harvest from the southern port of Odesa, faces a crisis: His yield is 20% higher compared with last year, which would have been a boon in times of peace, but in war, exorbitant logistics costs and Russia's blockage of the ports has made shipping grain too expensive for him.

Tsvyk is one of thousands of Ukrainian farmers facing a similar dilemma.

"It's too painful to talk about," the 67-year-old said when asked how he envisions the future.

Last month, Russia pulled out of the deal that the U.N. and Turkey brokered to provide protection for ships carrying Ukrainian grain through the Black Sea. Moscow has since stepped up attacks on Ukrainian

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ports and grain infrastructure while Ukraine has hit one of Russia's own ports, leading wheat and corn prices to zigzag on global markets.

While countries worldwide press for a restoration of the grain deal and fighting intensifies in the Black Sea, Ukraine's farmers are left wondering how they will stay in business and provide the food that is critical to people in developing nations struggling with hunger.

Tsvyk doesn't know what he will do with his harvest or how he will keep paying his 77 workers.

"What could I feel in this situation? It is a great sorrow for everyone," he said.

His vast farm in Shurivka, 120 kilometers (75 miles) from Kyiv, produces not only wheat but also fine goat's cheeses and juices. Goats munch on hay, and workers toil around the clock, turning milk into cheese, kefir and yogurt drinks that are bottled and sent off to be sold across Ukraine.

While four of Tsvyk's employees have left to join the fight, the ones that remain have harvested and stored his wheat and are now seeding his many acres of land, preparing for the next season.

The tinge of uncertainty hangs heavy. Grain is the farm's main source of income, and the now-blocked Odesa port was the key gateway to trade with the world.

Tsvyk's products went as far as India and poverty-stricken countries in North Africa, he says. Now, with the only other options being more costly road, rail and river routes through Europe that have stirred push-back from neighboring countries, his grain will likely sit in storage depots, costing him tens of thousands of dollars in losses.

Last year, Tsvyk was left with 1,500 tons of grain he was unable to sell. This year, he is scared he may not be able to sell any.

It means many farmers are simply not planting as much: corn and wheat production in agriculture-dependent Ukraine is down nearly 40% this year from prewar levels, analysts say.

The soaring cost to transport wheat eroded Tsvyk's income last year. Every step in the supply chain has increased in price because of the risks associated with the war, leading some farmers to turn to other products, such as sunflower oil, to squeeze out some profit.

Oleksandr Sivogorlo, Tsvyk's trusted agronomist, said that profit or no profit, the land can't be neglected.

"There are some limited routes (for export) through the Danube (River), but it's very limited," Sivogorlo said. Plus, Russia has targeted Ukrainian ports on the Danube, raising uncertainty about their use.

The farm is conducting barter schemes with suppliers, where some of their crop is exchanged for better fertilizer to produce higher-quality wheat next year, he said.

Tsvyk also will produce different products he knows he can sell without incurring exorbitant costs, such as sunflower and rapeseed oil, and lessen his reliance on grain exports.

"We cover our losses with these products," Sivogorlo said. "And what will be with our wheat crops — hard to say at this point, it all depends on export."

These are strategies Tsvyk has resorted to in times of desperation to keep the farm afloat. But he doesn't expect to make a profit — breaking even is the best he can hope for.

Even that's better than other farmers he knows who are losing money this year.

## **South Korea's Yoon calls for strong security cooperation with US, Japan ahead of Camp David summit**

By HYUNG-JIN KIM Associated Press

SEOUL, South Korea (AP) — South Korea's president called for deeper security cooperation with the U.S. and Japan to address North Korean nuclear threats, saying Tuesday that his upcoming summit with the U.S. and Japanese leaders at Camp David will "set a new milestone in trilateral cooperation."

It will be the first time for the leaders of the three countries to gather entirely for a trilateral summit, rather than on the sidelines of international meetings. This suggests they are serious about boosting their ties in the face of North Korea's advancing nuclear arsenal and China's increasingly assertive foreign policy.

In their summit Friday at the U.S. presidential retreat in Maryland, President Joe Biden, South Korean President Yoon Suk Yeol and Japanese Prime Minister Fumio Kishida are expected to announce plans for



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expanded military cooperation on ballistic missile defenses and technology development, according to two senior Biden administration officials.

"The ROK (Republic of Korea)-U.S.-Japan summit to be held at Camp David in three days will set a new milestone in trilateral cooperation contributing to peace and prosperity on the Korean Peninsula and in the Indo-Pacific region," Yoon said in a televised speech in Seoul on Tuesday.

Yoon's speech marked the 78th anniversary of Korea's liberation from Japan's 35-year colonial rule in 1945. Past South Korean presidents commonly used Liberation Day speeches to ask Japan to make fresh apologies over its colonial wrongdoing. But Yoon, a conservative who has pushed to resolve the historical grievance as a way to boost Seoul-Washington-Tokyo cooperation, didn't do so and rather explained again why improved ties with Japan were needed.

Yoon said the seven rear bases provided to the U.S.-led U.N. Command by Japan serve as "the greatest deterrent" that keeps North Korea from invading South Korea. He said a North Korean invasion would trigger an immediate, automatic intervention by the U.N. Command and that the bases in Japan have the necessary land, sea and air capabilities.

"As partners that cooperate on security and the economy, Korea and Japan will be able to jointly contribute to peace and prosperity across the globe while collaborating and exchanging in a future-oriented manner," Yoon said.

Yoon said the significance of Seoul-Washington-Tokyo security cooperation is growing on the Korean Peninsula and in the region.

"In order to fundamentally block North Korea's nuclear and missile threats, the Republic of Korea, the United States and Japan must closely cooperate on reconnaissance assets and share North Korea's nuclear weapons and missiles data in real time," Yoon said.

When they met at the margins of a regional conference in Cambodia in November, Yoon, Biden and Kishida said they intended to share North Korea missile warning data in real time to improve each country's ability to detect and assess the threat posed by incoming missiles. In June, their defense ministers said they recognized efforts to activate such a data-sharing mechanism before the end of the year.

Worries about North Korea's nuclear program has grown since the North openly threatened to use nuclear weapons in conflicts with its rivals and conducted about 100 missile tests since the start of last year. Many of the missiles tested were nuclear-capable weapons that place both South Korea and Japan within striking distance and could potentially reach the U.S. mainland. South Korea and Japan together host about 80,000 U.S. troops.

In response to North Korea's torrid run of missile tests, the United States and South Korea have expanded their military drills and resuming some trilateral training involving Japan. That has infuriated North Korea, which views U.S.-led military exercises on and near the Korean Peninsula as an invasion rehearsal. North Korean officials say U.S. moves to bolster military cooperation with South Korea and Japan are pushing the North to reinforce its own military capability.

During his recent tour of munitions factories, North Korean leader Kim Jong Un ordered officials to drastically increase production of missiles and build "an overwhelming military force" to "surely annihilate" its enemies, state media reported Monday.

South Korea, the U.S. and Japan have held a trilateral leaders' meeting a total of 12 times since they had their first such a summit in 1994, but all of them were held on the sidelines of international conferences, according to South Korea's presidential office.

This week's first stand-alone trilateral summit at Camp David comes as ties between Seoul and Tokyo have eased significantly in recent months. In March, Yoon took a major step toward resolving bilateral wrangling over colonial-era Korean forced laborers, despite vehement opposition at home by some victims and his liberal rivals. Yoon has argued Seoul and Tokyo share challenges like the intensifying U.S.-China strategic rivalry and global supply chain problems as well as the North Korean nuclear program.

**States that protect transgender health care now try to absorb**



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## demand

By JEFF McMILLAN and HANNAH SCHOENBAUM Associated Press

States that declared themselves refuges for transgender people have essentially issued an invitation: Get your gender-affirming health care here without fearing prosecution at home.

Now that bans on such care for minors are taking effect around the country — Texas could be next, depending on the outcome of a court hearing this week — patients and their families are testing clinics' capacity. Already-long waiting lists are growing, yet there are only so many providers of gender-affirming care and only so many patients they can see in a day.

For those refuge states — so far, California, Connecticut, Colorado, Illinois, Massachusetts, Maryland, Minnesota, New Jersey, New Mexico, Washington and Vermont, plus Washington, D.C. — the question is how to move beyond promises of legal protection and build a network to serve more patients.

"We're trying our best to make sure we can get those kids in so that they don't experience an interruption in their care," said Dr. Angela Kade Goepferd, medical director of the gender health program at Children's Minnesota hospital in the Twin Cities. "For patients who have not yet been seen and would be added to a general waiting list, it is daunting to think that it's going to be a year or more before you're going to be seen by somebody."

Appointment requests are flooding into Children's from all over the country — including Texas, Montana and Florida, which all have bans. Requests have grown in a year from about 100 a month to 140-150. The program hopes to hire more staff to meet demand, but it will take time, Goepferd said.

More than 89,000 transgender people ages 13 to 17 live in states that limit their access to gender-affirming care, according to a research letter published in late July in the Journal of the American Medical Association, though not all trans people choose or can afford gender-affirming care.

Rhys Perez, a transmasculine and nonbinary 17-year-old, is preparing to move this month from Houston to Los Angeles to start college. The teen, who said they're "escaping Texas in the nick of time," said California's protection for gender-affirming care was one of the main factors in their decision on where to go for college.

Perez has just begun their search for a provider in Southern California but already has encountered several clinics with waits for an initial consultation between nine and 14 months. They were disappointed to learn they likely could not begin hormone replacement therapy until their sophomore year.

"Hormones and stuff, that was never something my family fully understood or supported, really," Perez said. "I figured it was best to wait until I move for college, but now it's frustrating to know I'm going to have to wait even longer."

"I wish I could start college as fully me," they said.

Initial sanctuary laws or executive orders were an emergency step to protect transgender people and their families from the threat of prosecution by more than 20 states that have restricted or banned such health care, advocates say. They generally do not contain provisions to shore up health systems, but advocates say that needs to be the next step.

"That's what we're hoping to set up over the next year to two years, is making sure that not only are we making this promise of being a refuge for folks, but we're actually living up to that and ensuring that folks who come here have access to care when they need it," said Kat Rohn, executive director of the LGBTQ+ advocacy group OutFront Minnesota.

Those efforts will likely need to involve legislators, governors, large employers, Medicaid plans and boards of medicine, said Kellan Baker, executive director of the Whitman-Walker Institute, the policy and education arm of a clinic with the same name in Washington, D.C.

"I would hope that it would be a comprehensive effort, that everyone at every level enacting these shield laws is aware that it's not just about making a promise of access on paper, but that it needs to be backed up by the availability of providers," Baker said.

Texas Gov. Greg Abbott, a Republican, became the first governor to order the investigation of families of transgender minors who receive gender-affirming care, and legislators this year passed a ban on such care.

Whether that law takes effect on Sept. 1 will be decided by a state judge in Austin, who is hearing

arguments Tuesday and Wednesday in a lawsuit filed by families and doctors seeking a temporary injunction. The lawsuit argues the bill violates parental rights and discriminates against transgender teens. It is unclear when the judge will rule.

Ginger Chun, the education and family engagement manager at the Transgender Education Network of Texas, said she was in contact last year with about 15 families with trans family members. This year already, she has talked to about 250 families, who are asking about everything from clarification on legislation to looking for ways to access care. Those who are looking for care outside Texas are encountering waiting lists.

The research published in JAMA found that Texas youths' average travel time to a clinic for gender-affirming care increased from just under an hour to over 7 1/2 hours.

"It's like a daily, ever-changing process to figure out where people can access care," Chun said.

Minnesota state Rep. Leigh Finke, a Democrat who sponsored a bill to protect gender-affirming care, predicts "thousands" of people will travel to the state for care within two years. She's also seeking solutions to the provider shortage and expects to take a closer look when the next legislative session begins in February.

"I'm not sure what as a legislature we can do to increase the number of people who provide a certain kind of medical care," said Finke, a transgender woman who represents part of the Twin Cities area. "I'm not sure as a policymaker what the mechanisms are to say we need more of one kind of specific health care provider, assuming that those exist. I'm certainly going to be interested in looking at them."

The number of providers nationwide is limited, and for many, it's not their full-time job. Minnesota, for instance, is home to 91 providers, according to a search on the website of the World Professional Association for Transgender Health. The state has 29,500 transgender people 13 and older, according to the Williams Institute, an LGBTQ+ think tank at the UCLA School of Law.

Dr. Katy Miller, the medical director of adolescent medicine for Children's Minnesota, estimates "probably at least hundreds of families" are moving to the Twin Cities for gender-affirming care.

"People are going to kind of extraordinary lengths, like pulling kids out of school, moving," Miller said.

In many ways, the quest for gender-affirming care parallels that of abortion access, for which people also cross state borders, sometimes under threat of prosecution. The main difference with gender-affirming care is that treatment is ongoing, generally for the rest of a person's life, so permanent access is key.

Anticipating long waits, some parents preemptively sought out gender-affirming care providers for a child, like Minnesota activist Kelsey Waits. Her 10-year-old transgender child, Kit, got into the system at a hospital that could eventually provide blockers or hormones so that they wouldn't have to start puberty without a doctor's support.

"A lot happens in puberty in one year," Waits said. "Just the stress of that on a family — the kids, the parents who are trying to find care for their child — it's a lot."

## Trump and 18 allies charged in Georgia election meddling as former president faces 4th criminal case

By KATE BRUMBACK and ERIC TUCKER Associated Press

ATLANTA (AP) — Donald Trump and 18 allies were indicted in Georgia on Monday over their efforts to overturn his 2020 election loss in the state, with prosecutors using a statute normally associated with mobsters to accuse the former president, lawyers and other aides of a "criminal enterprise" to keep him in power.

The nearly 100-page indictment details dozens of acts by Trump or his allies to undo his defeat, including beseeching Georgia's Republican secretary of state to find enough votes for him to win the battleground state; harassing a state election worker who faced false claims of fraud; and attempting to persuade Georgia lawmakers to ignore the will of voters and appoint a new slate of electoral college electors favorable to Trump.

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In one particularly brazen episode, it also outlines a plot involving one of his lawyers to tamper with voting machines in a rural Georgia county and steal data from a voting machine company.

"The indictment alleges that rather than abide by Georgia's legal process for election challenges, the defendants engaged in a criminal racketeering enterprise to overturn Georgia's presidential election result," Fulton County District Attorney Fani Willis, whose office brought the case, said at a late-night news conference.

Other defendants include former White House chief of staff Mark Meadows; Trump's personal attorney Rudy Giuliani; and a Trump administration Justice Department official, Jeffrey Clark, who advanced the then-president's efforts to undo his election loss in Georgia. Multiple other lawyers who devised legally dubious ideas aimed at overturning the results, including John Eastman, Sidney Powell and Kenneth Chesebro, were also charged.

Willis said the defendants would be allowed to voluntarily surrender by noon Aug. 25. She also said she plans to ask for a trial date within six months and that she intends to try the defendants as a group.

The indictment bookends a remarkable crush of criminal cases — four in five months, each in a different city — that would be daunting for anyone, never mind someone like Trump who is simultaneously balancing the roles of criminal defendant and presidential candidate.

It comes just two weeks after the Justice Department special counsel charged him in a vast conspiracy to overturn the election, underscoring how prosecutors after lengthy investigations that followed the Jan. 6, 2021 riot at the U.S. Capitol have now, two-and-a-half years later, taken steps to hold Trump to account for an assault on the underpinnings of American democracy.

The Georgia case covers some of the same ground as Trump's recent indictment in Washington, D.C., including attempts he and his allies made to disrupt the electoral vote count at the U.S. Capitol on Jan. 6, 2021. But its sprawling web of defendants — 19 in total — stands apart from the more tightly targeted case brought by special counsel Jack Smith, which so far only names Trump as a defendant.

In charging close Trump aides who were referenced by Smith only as unindicted co-conspirators, the Georgia indictment alleges a scale of criminal conduct extending far beyond just the ex-president.

The charging document, in language conjuring up the seedy operations of mob bosses and gang leaders, accuses the former president of the United States, the former White House chief of staff, Trump's attorneys and the former mayor of New York as members of a "criminal organization" who were part of an "enterprise" that operated in Georgia and other states.

The indictment capped a chaotic day at the courthouse caused by the brief but mysterious posting on a county website of a list of criminal charges that were to be brought against the former president. Reuters, which published a copy of the document, said the filing was taken down quickly.

A Willis spokesperson said in the afternoon that it was "inaccurate" to say that an indictment had already been returned but declined to comment further on a kerfuffle that the Trump legal team rapidly jumped on to attack the integrity of the investigation.

Trump and his allies, who have characterized the investigation as politically motivated, immediately seized on the apparent error to claim that the process was rigged. Trump's campaign aimed to fundraise off it, sending out an email with the since-deleted document embedded.

In a statement after the indictment was issued, Trump's legal team said "the events that have unfolded today have been shocking and absurd, starting with the leak of a presumed and premature indictment before the witnesses had testified or the grand jurors had deliberated and ending with the District Attorney being unable to offer any explanation."

The lawyers said prosecutors presenting their case "relied on witnesses who harbor their own personal and political interests — some of whom ran campaigns touting their efforts against the accused."

Many of the 161 acts by Trump and his associates outlined in the Georgia indictment have already received widespread attention. That includes a Jan. 2, 2021, call in which Trump urged Secretary of State Brad Raffensperger to "find" the 11,780 votes needed to overturn his election loss. That call, prosecutors said, violated a Georgia law against soliciting a public official to violate their oath.

It also charges Trump with making false statements and writings for a series of claims he made to Raffens-

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perger and other state election officials, including that up to 300,000 ballots “were dropped mysteriously into the rolls” in the 2020 election, that more than 4,500 people voted who weren’t on registration lists and that a Fulton County election worker, Ruby Freeman, was a “professional vote scammer.”

Giuliani, meanwhile, is charged with making false statements for allegedly lying to lawmakers by claiming that more than 96,000 mail-in ballots were counted in Georgia despite there being no record of them having been returned to a county elections office, and that a voting machine in Michigan wrongly recorded 6,000 votes for Biden that were actually cast for Trump. A lawyer who has represented him declined to comment.

Also charged are individuals prosecutors say helped Trump and his allies on the ground in Georgia influence and intimidate election workers.

One man, Stephen Cliffgard Lee, was charged by prosecutors for allegedly traveling to Freeman’s home “with intent to influence her testimony.” Freeman and her daughter Shaye Moss testified to Congress last year about how Trump and his allies latched onto surveillance footage from November 2020 to accuse both women of committing voter fraud — allegations that were quickly debunked, yet spread widely across conservative media.

Both women, who are Black, faced death threats for several months after the election.

The indictment also accuses Powell and several co-defendants of tampering with voting machines in Coffee County, Georgia, and stealing data belonging to Dominion Voting Systems, a producer of tabulation machines that has long been the focus of conspiracy theories.

According to evidence made public by the congressional committee investigating the Jan. 6 riot, Trump allies targeted Coffee County in search of evidence to back their theories of widespread voter fraud, allegedly copying data and software.

Besides the two election-related cases, Trump faces a separate federal indictment accusing him of illegally hoarding classified documents as well as a New York state case charging him with falsifying business records.

As indictments mount, Trump — the leading Republican candidate for president in 2024 — often invokes his distinction as the only former president to face criminal charges. He is campaigning and fundraising around these themes, portraying himself as the victim of Democratic prosecutors out to get him.

Republican allies once again quickly rallied to Trump’s defense. “Americans see through this desperate sham,” House Speaker Kevin McCarthy wrote on X, the platform formerly known as Twitter.

## Texas wants Planned Parenthood to repay millions of dollars

By PAUL J. WEBER Associated Press

AUSTIN, Texas (AP) — Texas wants Planned Parenthood to give back millions of dollars in Medicaid reimbursements — and pay far more in fines on top of that — in a lawsuit that appears to be the first of its kind brought by a state against the largest abortion provider in the U.S.

A hearing was set for Tuesday in front of U.S. District Judge Matthew Kacsmaryk, who earlier this year put access to the most common method of abortion in the U.S. in limbo with a ruling that invalidated approval of the abortion pill mifepristone.

The case now before him in America’s biggest red state does not surround abortion, which has been banned in Texas since the U.S. Supreme Court overturned *Roe v. Wade* last year. But Planned Parenthood argues the attempt to recoup at least \$17 million in Medicaid payments for health services, including cancer screenings, is a new effort to weaken the organization after years of Republican-led laws that stripped funding and imposed restrictions on how its clinics operate.

At issue is money Planned Parenthood received for health services before Texas removed the organization from the state’s Medicaid program in 2021. Texas had begun trying to oust Planned Parenthood four years earlier and is seeking repayment for services billed during that time.

“This baseless case is an active effort to shut down Planned Parenthood health centers,” said Alexis McGill Johnson, president of Planned Parenthood Federation of America.

Texas brought the lawsuit under the federal False Claims Act, which allows fines for every alleged im-



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utilizing a little area in the roadway, you're able to create a whole new experience for people that are going to dine out, people that are walking around."

"I think it creates, when done properly, a much more livable, much more vibrant streetscape than simply keeping or using it just for parking," Rigie said.

Leif Arntzen, a member of the Coalition United for Equitable Urban Policy, could not disagree more. He and his group are adamantly opposed to the expansion of sidewalk dining into the roadbeds. They said the city should be doing an impact study on neighborhoods before taking any moves toward making it permanent.

"For residents, it's less curb space, less sidewalk space, less roadbed space, less space to get up and down the block, less quiet, less emergency access, it's just less," he said. "It's more for one industry, less for everybody else."

Mathias Van Leyden, owner of LouLou bistro in Manhattan's Chelsea neighborhood, is sympathetic to those who are put off by makeshift structures, some of which have been abandoned around the city, and painted over with graffiti or otherwise vandalized.

But not his, Van Leyden said, pointing out that he invested a significant amount into a outdoor shed that has windows, is decorated and comes portable.

"Some people are not doing it right, they're the ones who are making us look bad," he said.

Even with the requirement to remove the sheds for the winter months, he's happy to see the city agreeing to keep streetside dining.

"We're happy that New York's moving in the direction," he said. It's "a bit more European, where we have people sitting outside, makes the street a little more lively."

Valarie Marrs isn't sold. She was sitting in a restaurant's street shed in the East Village recently and called the pop-up structures "terrible."

"They litter up the street so badly, they take away from the aesthetics of the streets," she said. "They're trash magnets, they're just awful."

Sitting next to her, Daniel Laitman disagreed. "I like them," he said. "If it's too hot inside from the ovens, it's a cool space — and if it's not that hot, then it's like a breeze coming in from everywhere."

Maulin Mehta, New York director for the Regional Plan Association, an organization that advocates around infrastructure and other issues and which supports alternative uses of city streets, considered the City Council legislation for a permanent program to be a step forward.

"I think there's a way to get this right. And now that we actually have this framework in place, the legislation, we can start thinking about the future program," Mehta said.

He said, "It gives us a chance to sort of move beyond the emergency crisis and really think about the future for our streets and sidewalks."

## Political leader in Ecuador is killed less than a week after presidential candidate's assassination

By REGINA GARCIA CANO Associated Press

GUAYAQUIL, Ecuador (AP) — The unprecedented violence shaking Ecuador claimed the life of another political leader Monday, bringing the number of politics-related slayings within the last four weeks to three, including that of a presidential candidate.

The fatal shooting of Pedro Briones, a local leader of Revolución Ciudadana, the party of former President Rafael Correa, was confirmed by Luisa González, the frontrunner in Sunday's special presidential election and member of the same party.

The shooting happened in the northern province of Esmeraldas. Details were not immediately available.

"Ecuador is experiencing its bloodiest era," González tweeted. "A heartfelt hug to the family of colleague Pedro Briones, fallen by the hands of violence."

The killing of Briones, who was a political leader in a rural area of San Mateo de Esmeraldas, came

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less than a week after the South American country was rocked by the assassination in broad daylight of presidential candidate Fernando Villavicencio, who had a famously tough stance on organized crime and corruption. Villavicencio was killed at the end of a political rally in Quito, the capital, despite having a security detail that included police and bodyguards.

Their slayings followed the July 26 fatal shooting of the mayor of Manta, Ecuador's third largest city. Agustín Intriago, 38, had recently been re-elected to a term that began in May.

Thousands of people have been killed over the past three years in Ecuador as the country has transformed into a major drug trafficking hub and cartel-aided local gangs battle for control of the streets, prisons and drug routes. Crime and violence have dominated the discussions around Sunday's election.

In an interview with The Associated Press, González said she revamped her security detail following Villavicencio's killing but continued to refuse to wear a bulletproof vest, arguing that she is a Christian woman.

"I have faith in God; he is the one who takes care of us," she said.

Should she become president, she said she plans to take a tough stance on crime, cleaning up police forces, increasing control along the country's borders, and investing in equipment for law enforcement.

González criticized the government of President Guillermo Lasso for lacking control inside detention facilities, which she said prisoners and organized crime have turned into their productive and recreational centers.

At least 400 inmates have died since 2021 during various riots.

On Saturday, authorities moved the leader of one of the country's most powerful gangs, Los Choneros, into a maximum-security prison. Villavicencio had accused the group and its leader, Adolfo Macías, alias "Fito," whom he linked to Mexico's Sinaloa cartel, of threatening him and his campaign team days before the assassination.

The gang boss was moved out of a jail with lighter security into a maximum-security prison in the same large complex of detention facilities in the port city of Guayaquil. The transfer occurred after about 4,000 soldiers and police officers raided the jail where Macías was being held and seized weapons, ammunition and explosives.

In response, jail inmates on Monday protested and hung signs demanding Macías be transferred back.

"We want peace return Fito," read one of the signs visible from the road outside the complex, which dozens of police officers and members of the armed forces guarded after supporters of Macías arrived on motorcycles to protest his relocation.

Authorities have not disclosed a motive for Villavicencio's killing. An Ecuadorian judge on Friday ordered preventive detention for six Colombian men described by authorities as being suspected of involvement in the slaying. The FBI is assisting in the investigation.

Authorities did not immediately release details of Briones' slaying.

The country's National Police tallied 3,568 violent deaths in the first six months of this year, far more than the 2,042 reported during the same period in 2022. That year ended with 4,600 violent deaths, the country's highest in history and double the total in 2021.

## **Arraignment set for Mar-a-Lago property manager in Trump's classified documents case**

FORT PIERCE, Fla. (AP) — The property manager of Donald Trump's Mar-a-Lago estate is set for an arraignment Tuesday in Florida in a case accusing the former president of illegally hoarding classified documents.

The hearing was postponed last week because the property manager, Carlos De Oliveira, had not secured a Florida-based attorney.

Trump waived his right to appear alongside De Oliveira, and valet Walt Nauta, last Thursday, and the judge accepted a not guilty plea the former president made in court papers. Nauta also pleaded not guilty.

De Oliveira's failure to finalize local counsel marked the latest delay in the case, which is scheduled to go to trial in May. Trump's lawyers have made clear they want to push the trial date back. A Florida-based

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attorney appeared with De Oliveira in court on Thursday but had not been retained on the case.

Attorneys for Trump, De Oliveira and Nauta left the federal courthouse in Fort Pierce last Thursday without commenting to reporters about the case.

An updated indictment brought by special counsel Jack Smith late last month accuses Nauta and De Oliveira of scheming with the Republican former president to try to delete Mar-a-Lago surveillance video sought by investigators.

They are facing charges that include conspiracy to obstruct justice in the case stemming from secret government documents found at the Palm Beach club after Trump left the White House in 2021.

Nauta and Trump were charged in June and previously pleaded not guilty, but a new indictment added more charges and De Oliveira to the case. While De Oliveira made an initial appearance in July, he didn't enter a plea because he hadn't retained local counsel.

Trump was already charged with dozens of felony counts, and the indictment added new counts of obstruction and willful retention of national defense information.

It's one of four different criminal cases Trump is facing this year as he tries to reclaim the White House in 2024. Monday night he was indicted in a case out of Fulton County, Georgia, over alleged efforts by him and his Republican allies to illegally meddle in the 2020 election in that state.

Trump has denied any wrongdoing and has characterized all the cases against him as politically motivated.

## **Biden heads to battleground Wisconsin to talk about the economy a week before GOP debate**

By FATIMA HUSSEIN Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — In a show of preemptive counterprogramming, President Joe Biden on Tuesday travels to Wisconsin to highlight his economic policies in a state critical to his reelection fortunes, just a week before Republicans descend on Milwaukee for the party's first presidential debate of the 2024 campaign.

His trip comes on the eve of the anniversary of the Inflation Reduction Act, major economic legislation that he signed into law with great ceremony — although polls show most people know little about it or what it does.

Wisconsin is among the handful of critical states where Biden needs to convince voters that his policies are having a positive impact on their lives, and he is expected to visit frequently to make his case.

Biden plans to tour a clean energy manufacturing firm in Milwaukee to talk up provisions of the law that spends hundreds of millions of dollars to boost domestic manufacturing and clean energy, lower health care costs and crack down on wealthy tax cheats.

Administration officials say the trip is meant to recognize the effects of the law, which passed Congress on party-line votes.

"The president and his team are excited to bring that message to the American people throughout the week," White House press secretary Karine Jean-Pierre said Monday.

Critics of the legislation say provisions of the law could end up increasing inflation. Former Treasury Secretary Larry Summers said during a virtual Peterson Institute for International Economics event in July that while he supported the IRA, the Biden administration's overall economic agenda is "increasingly dangerous."

"I am profoundly concerned by the doctrine of manufacturing-centered economic nationalism that is increasingly being put forth as a general principle to guide policy," Summers said.

Vice President Kamala Harris and top Cabinet officials will be fanning out across the country this week to talk about the Inflation Reduction Act and its provisions. Biden has scheduled an anniversary event at the White House on Wednesday.

The president's stop in Wisconsin comes shortly before Republicans hold their first presidential primary debate in Milwaukee on Aug. 23. Former President Donald Trump — the leading Republican candidate in polls so far — has yet to say whether he will boycott or hold a competing event.

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Charles Franklin, director of the Marquette Law School Poll, said the trip could help Biden win support from independents, who make up about 10% of voters in the state.

"What he really needs to do is get independents in the state to like him a bit better," Franklin said. "Coming and talking about his achievements, about factories that are working with American jobs — all of that is a good reason to come to speak to those folks in the state who are not partisans."

"Because Democrats are already behind him," Franklin said, and "Republicans are almost certainly not going to cross over."

Democratic gains helped decide a critical state Supreme Court race this spring that moved Wisconsin's highest court under liberal control for the first time in 15 years.

Republicans, though, will compete aggressively in the state, selecting Milwaukee as the site of their 2024 national nominating convention.

The 2020 Democratic convention was supposed to be held in Milwaukee too, but it largely unfolded virtually because of the coronavirus pandemic.

Biden is one of a string of administration officials making stops across the U.S. this week to promote the legislation's anniversary.

Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen on Monday spoke in Las Vegas at an International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers union hall about "the early results of bold federal action through the IRA" and the administration's climate agenda.

"The IRA is driving economic growth, expanding economic opportunity and bolstering our resilience," she said.

## **They were alone in a fight to survive. Maui residents had moments to make life-or-death choices**

By CLAIRE GALOFARO, MATT SEDENSKY and CLAIRE RUSH Associated Press

LAHAINA, Hawaii (AP) — The smoke was starting to blot out the sun. Winds were howling, and heat bore down as flames licked the trees on the horizon. The power had been out all day, so Mike Cicchino thought he'd drive to the hardware store for a generator. He turned off his street, and in an instant, his Lahaina neighborhood seemed to spiral into a war zone.

"When I turned that corner, I see pandemonium," he said. "I see people running and grabbing their babies and screaming and jumping in their cars."

It was around 3:30 p.m. Tuesday when Cicchino and his neighbors began a desperate fight for their lives. They had just moments to make decisions that would determine whether they lived or died in a race against the flames — a harrowing, narrow window of time in one of the most horrifying and lethal natural disasters the country has seen in years.

There were no sirens, no one with bullhorns, no one to tell anyone what to do: They were on their own, with their families and neighbors, to choose whether to stay or to run, and where to run to — through smoke so thick it blinded them, flames closing in from every direction, cars exploding, toppled power lines and uprooted trees, fire whipping through the wind and raining down.

Authorities have confirmed that nearly 100 people died — already making it the deadliest U.S. wildfire in more than a century — and they expect that number to rise.

Just 10 minutes before Cicchino made that turn away from his street, Maui fire officials had issued an ominous warning. The Lahaina brush fire had sparked that morning, but authorities reported it was contained. Now, officials said, erratic wind, challenging terrain and flying embers made it hard to predict the fire's path and speed. It could be a mile away, Fire Assistant Chief Jeff Giese said, "but in a minute or two, it can be at your house."

Cicchino did a U-turn, ran into his house and told his wife they needed to leave: "We need to go! We need to get out of here now!"

They ran to the car with five dogs and called police, and a dispatcher said to follow the traffic. Access



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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 Cicchino and the line of cars onto Front Street.

A few blocks away, Kehau Kaaui said the wind was so intense it tore the roof from her neighbor's home. It felt like tornado after tornado was slicing down her street.

"It roared," she said. "It sounded like an airplane landing on our street."

Within moments, she said, the smoke that had been blocks away suddenly engulfed them. It darkened from gray to black, day seemed to turn to night.

Kaaui couldn't even see buildings anymore. Something was exploding; it sounded like fireworks. She ran inside. She couldn't think — she just grabbed her dog and some clothes, never imagining she would not see her house or anything in it ever again.

Around 4 p.m., she got into her car. Traffic crawled, people were dragging uprooted trees out of the road with their bare hands. Debris whipped in the wind and banged on the car. Danger seemed to come from every direction.

Kaaui would have driven to Front Street, but a stranger walking by told her to go the other way. She wishes now she could thank him, because he might have saved her life.

On gridlocked Front Street, people were panicking, crying, screaming, honking.

Bill Wyland grabbed his computer, passport and Social Security card and stuffed them into a backpack. He got on his Harley Davidson and drove on the sidewalk.

"I could feel the heat burning in my back. I could pretty much feel the hair is burning off the back of my neck," said Wyland, who owns an art gallery on the street.

At one point, he passed a man on a bicycle madly pedaling for his life. Some were abandoning cars and fleeing on foot. The smoke was so thick, so toxic, some said they vomited.

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

The street was so jammed, he thinks if he'd taken his car instead, he would have died or been forced into the ocean. The people sitting in their cars saw black smoke ahead.

"We're all driving into a death trap," Mike Cicchino thought. He told his wife: "We need to jump out of this car, abandon the car, and we need to run for our lives."

They got the dogs out. But it was impossible to know which way to run.

"Behind us, straight ahead, beside us, everywhere was on fire," Cicchino said. It had been less than 15 minutes since he left his house, and he thought it was the end. He called his mother, his brother, his daughter to tell them he loved them.

The black smoke was so thick they could see only the white dogs, not the three dark ones, and they lost them.

Propane tanks from a catering van exploded.

"It was like a war," Cicchino said. They could tell how close the fire was coming based how far away the cars sounded when they erupted.

"The cars sounded like bombs going off," Donnie Roxx said. "It was dark, it was 4 o'clock in the afternoon, and it looked like midnight."

A seawall separates the town from the ocean, and Roxx realized he and his neighbors were confronting a horrific decision: stay on burning land or go to the water. The sea was churning and treacherous even for strong swimmers, as the wind kicked up the waves.

"Do you want to get burned or take your chances and drown?" he asked himself. He jumped over the wall.

So did dozens of others, including Mike Cicchino and his wife.

Others came to realize they needed to flee — but not because officials told them. Some heard from friends and neighbors, others just had a feeling.

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

She left her apartment near Front Street around 4:30. About a mile away, Lana Vierra's boyfriend stopped by her home and said he'd seen the fire raging toward them.

"He told me straight, 'People are going to die in this town; you gotta get out,'" she recalled. So she did.

proper payment. Planned Parenthood says that could result in a judgement in excess of \$1 billion.

It is not clear when Kacsmayk will rule.

The lawsuit was announced last year by Republican Texas Attorney General Ken Paxton, who is now temporarily suspended from office pending the outcome of his impeachment trial next month over accusations of bribery and abuse of office.

Spokespersons for the office did not return a message seeking comment Monday. Last year, Paxton said it was "unthinkable that Planned Parenthood would continue to take advantage of funding knowing they were not entitled to keep it."

Jacob Elberg, a former federal prosecutor who specialized in health care fraud, described Texas' argument as weak.

He called the False Claims Act the government's most powerful tool against health fraud. Cases involving the law in recent years have included a health records company in Florida and a Montana health clinic that submitted false asbestos claims.

Elberg said it is "hard to understand" how Planned Parenthood was knowingly filing false claims at a time when it was in court fighting to stay in the program and Texas was still paying the reimbursements.

"This just isn't what the False Claims Act is supposed to be about," said Elberg, faculty director at Seton Hall Law School's Center for Health & Pharmaceutical Law.

Planned Parenthood has roughly three dozen health clinics in Texas. One has closed since the Supreme Court ruling last year that allowed Texas to ban abortion.

## **NYC outdoor dining sheds were a celebrated pandemic-era innovation. Now, there's a new set of rules**

By DEEPTI HAJELA Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — Outdoor dining was a part of the pandemic that many people actually liked — made possible by streetside dining sheds that popped up around New York City and allowed many restaurants to stay in business when they couldn't have diners inside.

Some sheds were simple — wooden structures with basic cutouts for light, a few tables, the occasional plastic sheeting to keep out rain and snow. Other restaurants got more into it — choosing decor to match the restaurant's interiors and adding heaters, plants and plush seating.

As New York City has moved out from under its pandemic-era regulations, how to handle the new landscape of outdoor dining structures has been a growing question. While many still like the sheds and restaurants want to keep them, others say there is no longer a need for them. Some have raised concerns like increased noise and congestion, loss of street space, and argued that some are dilapidated, abandoned structures that are eyesores.

City officials have now taken steps toward making outdoor dining a permanent part of the New York City streetscape, but with conditions. Earlier this month the New York City Council passed legislation that would create a system allowing businesses to set up dining sheds on city streets for April through November and to remove them in the winter months.

Sidewalk dining would still be allowed year-round, as it was pre-pandemic. Now, it's allowed in more parts of the city.

Just like the mix of feelings about the sheds themselves, there has been a wide range of reactions to the new system, though details are still being hammered out. The processes — for permitting, fees and licensing — as well as design requirements, still need to be decided. Full compliance is slated to go into effect in November 2024.

Many restaurants would have preferred to see street dining allowed permanently, but are glad to see it will still be possible for most of the year, said Andrew Rigie, executive director of the New York City Hospitality Alliance, a trade group for the city's restaurants and nightlife venues.

"Of all the doom and gloom in the pandemic, one of the bright spots was outdoor dining," he said. "By

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Anne Landon was chatting with others in her senior apartment complex. She said she felt a sudden blast of hot air that must have been more than 100 degrees. She ran to her unit and grabbed her purse and her 15-pound dog, La Vida.

"It's time to get out! Let's get out!" she shouted to neighbors as she rushed to her car.

She'd already packed a rolling duffel bag in her car, just in case. She didn't know where to go. She stopped and asked an officer, who didn't know what to tell her, except to wish to her luck.

Debris was flying through the air. She ran into people she barely knew but recognized. They told her to come with them to their home. They got stuck in a dead stop in the traffic, so they abandoned the car. She put the dog on top of her rolling suitcase and dragged it down Front Street, to the beach.

Downtown's historic wooden buildings were burning. The splintering lumber broke apart and flew through the wind, still flaming.

"The sky was black, and the wind was blowing, and the embers were going over us. We didn't know if we'd have to jump in the water," she said. "I was terrified, absolutely horrified — so, so scared."

But a path through the smoke cleared for just a moment, and police came shouting for them to go north. They ran.

Many others remained trapped on the beach.

Mike Cicchino and his wife took off their shirts, dunked them in water and tried to cover their faces. Cicchino ran up and down the seawall, shouting his lost dogs' names. He saw dead bodies slumped next to the wall. "Help me," people screamed. Elderly and disabled people couldn't make it over the wall on their own. Some were badly burned, and Cicchino lifted as many as he could. He ran until he vomited from the smoke, his eyes nearly swollen shut.

For the next five or six hours, they moved back and forth between sea and shore. They crouched behind the wall, trying to get as low as they could. When flames fell from the sky, they dunked themselves into the water. Their surviving dogs' fur was singed.

It was so surreal, Cicchino thought he must be dreaming.

"My mind kept going back to: This has got to be just a nightmare. This cannot be real. This cannot actually be happening," he said. "But then you realize you're burning. I'm feeling pain, and I don't feel pain in nightmares."

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 to rescue some, mostly children. Fire trucks eventually came and drove them out, through the flames.

Those who survived are haunted by what they endured.

Cicchino jolts awake at night from dreams of dead people, dead dogs. Two of his dogs remain missing. He agonizes over the decisions he made: Could he have saved more people? Could he have saved the dogs?

Anne Landon was practically catatonic. She imagines her neighbors who didn't make it out and wonders if she might have been able to help them. She was covered in ash but couldn't bring herself to shower.

Her dog wouldn't eat for two days.

## Texas woman who helped hide US soldier Vanessa Guillén's body sentenced to 30 years in prison

By ACACIA CORONADO Associated Press

AUSTIN, Texas (AP) — A Texas woman was sentenced Monday to 30 years in prison for helping dispose of the body of a U.S. soldier, whose 2020 killing sparked a movement of women speaking out about sexual abuse in the military and led to changes in how they can report it.

Cecily Aguilar is the only suspect arrested in the death of Vanessa Guillén, who was killed at Fort Cavazos, formerly known as Fort Hood, near Killeen, Texas. Aguilar was 24 years old when she pleaded guilty in

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November at a federal court in Waco, Texas, to one count of accessory to murder after the fact and three counts of making a false statement.

The sentence came after hours of testimony from attorneys, experts and Guillén's family. It was the maximum punishment Aguilar could receive, said Jaime Esparza, the U.S. attorney for the Western District of Texas.

"Our hope is that today's sentence brings a sense of relief and justice to the Guillén family, who have endured such pain throughout these past few years," Esparza said.

Aguilar aided boyfriend Army Spc. Aaron Robinson, 20, of Calumet City, Illinois, in dismembering and disposing of Guillén's body in a rural, wooded area near the base, according to federal and state authorities. Robinson died by suicide on July 1, 2020, the day Guillén's remains were found.

"We finally have closure in this case," said attorney Natalie Khawam, who represents Guillén's family.

A psychologist called as a witness for the defense testified Monday that Aguilar has reactive attachment disorder, meaning she did not form healthy emotional bonds with her parents or caregivers. Dr. Jon Matthew Fabian said the condition wouldn't keep Aguilar from knowing right or wrong.

Attorney Lewis Gainor, who represents Aguilar, did not immediately respond to an emailed request for comment.

Guillén was declared missing in April 2020, when her family said they did not hear from her for an unusual amount of time after she was called in for a shift in the military base's armory room.

According to a criminal complaint, Aguilar said she and Robinson — who authorities accuse of bludgeoning Guillén to death at the base — disposed of her body by mutilating it and hiding the remains in nearby woods.

Two weeks after Guillén's body was found, Aguilar pleaded not guilty to conspiracy charges. Later, a judge dismissed her legal team's attempt to throw out her confession because she said she had not been read her Miranda rights at the time her statement was taken.

Guillén's family has said they believe she was sexually harassed during her time at the Texas military base. While Army officials have said they do not believe Robinson harassed Guillén, they admitted in a report a year later that Guillén was harassed by another soldier at the base.

Following Guillén's death, her family's claims that she was harassed and assaulted at the Texas base ignited a movement on social media of former and active service members who shared their experiences at military bases throughout the country using the hashtag #IAmVanessaGuillen.

Then-U.S. Army Secretary Ryan McCarthy said during a visit to the Texas base that it had one of the highest rates of murder, sexual assault and harassment in the Army, later adding that the patterns of violence were a direct result of "leadership failures."

State and federal lawmakers passed legislation in 2021 honoring Guillén that removed some authority from commanders and gave survivors more options to report abuse and harassment. Army officials disciplined 21 commissioned and non-commissioned officers in connection with Guillén's death.

## Islamic State group still has thousands in Syria and Iraq and poses Afghan threat, UN experts say

By EDITH M. LEDERER Associated Press

UNITED NATIONS (AP) — The Islamic State group still commands between 5,000 and 7,000 members across its former stronghold in Syria and Iraq and its fighters pose the most serious terrorist threat in Afghanistan today, U.N. experts said in a report circulated Monday.

The experts monitoring sanctions against the militant group, also known by its Arab acronym Daesh, said that during the first half of 2023 the threat posed by IS remained "mostly high in conflict zones and low in non-conflict areas."

But the panel said in a report to the U.N. Security Council that "the overall situation is dynamic," and despite significant losses in the group's leadership and reduced activity in Syria and Iraq, the risk of its



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resurgence remains.

"The group has adapted its strategy, embedding itself with local populations, and has exercised caution in choosing battles that are likely to result in limited losses, while rebuilding and recruiting from camps in the northeast of the Syrian Arab Republic and from vulnerable communities, including in neighboring countries," the experts said.

The Islamic State group declared a self-styled caliphate in a large swath of territory in Syria and Iraq that it seized in 2014. It was declared defeated in Iraq in 2017 following a three-year battle that left tens of thousands of people dead and cities in ruins, but its sleeper cells remain in both countries.

Despite sustained counter-terrorism operations, Daesh continues to command between 5,000 and 7,000 members across Iraq and Syria, "most of whom are fighters," though it has reduced its attacks deliberately "to facilitate recruiting and reorganization," the experts said.

In northeast Syria, approximately 11,000 suspected Daesh fighters are being held in facilities of the Kurdish-led Syrian Democratic Forces, which have played a prominent role in the fight against IS, the panel said. The fighters include more than 3,500 Iraqis and approximately 2,000 from almost 70 nationalities, it said.

Northeast Syria is also the site of two closed camps – al-Hol and Roj – where the experts said some 55,000 people with alleged links or family ties to IS are living in "dire" conditions and "significant humanitarian hardship."

Approximately two-thirds of the population are children including over 11,800 Iraqis, nearly 16,000 Syrians and over 6,700 youngsters from more than 60 other countries, the experts said.

The panel quoted one unnamed country as saying Daesh has maintained its "Cubs of the Caliphate" program, recruiting children in the overcrowded al-Hol camp. In addition, more than 850 boys, some as young as 10, were in detention and rehabilitation centers in the northeast, the experts said.

In Afghanistan, the panel said U.N. members assess the Islamic State group poses the most serious terrorist threat to the country and the wider region. IS has reportedly increased its operational capabilities and now has an estimated 4,000 to 6,000 fighters and family members in Afghanistan, it said.

In Africa, on a positive note, the experts said the deployment of regional forces in Mozambique's Cabo Delgado province disrupted the IS affiliate, and regional countries estimate it now has 180-220 male fighters with battlefield experience, down from 280 previously.

In the east, the experts said several countries expressed concern that terrorist groups like Daesh could exploit political violence and instability in conflict-wracked Sudan.

And some countries assess that the Daesh affiliate in Africa's Sahel "has become increasingly autonomous and had played a significant role in the escalation of violence in the region, alongside other terrorist groups," they said, pointing to increased IS attacks on several fronts in Mali and to a lesser extent in Burkina Faso and Niger.

## Utah man accused of threatening president pointed gun at agents, FBI says

By SAM METZ Associated Press

SALT LAKE CITY (AP) — The Utah man accused of making violent threats against President Joe Biden before a trip to Salt Lake City last week pointed a handgun at FBI agents attempting to arrest him, the agency said on Monday.

Craig Robertson, a 75-year-old Air Force veteran, was killed during a raid on his home in Provo last Wednesday, hours before Biden arrived. FBI agents went to his home early in the morning to arrest him for three felonies, including making threats against the president and agents who had been investigating him for months, according to court records unsealed after the raid.

"Robertson resisted arrest and as agents attempted to take him into custody, he pointed a .357 revolver at them," FBI spokesperson Sandra Barker said in a statement Monday.

Two law enforcement sources — who spoke to The Associated Press last week on the condition of anonymity to discuss details of an ongoing investigation — said Robertson was armed at the time of the shooting. Monday's statement provides additional details about Robertson's weapon and that he pointed it at officers. The FBI did not respond to questions about whether Robertson shot at agents or if agents were wearing body cameras while attempting to arrest Robertson.

Robertson's daughter, Shanda Robertson, said she had no comment at this time. In a statement last week, his family rebuffed the idea that he could have hurt anyone.

For months, Robertson had been making threats against high-profile Democrats, including key players in the legal proceedings against former President Donald Trump, Vice President Kamala Harris and Biden. The threats grew more specific in the lead-up to the president's visit, with Robertson threatening on social media to wear a camouflage "ghillie suit" and "dust off the M24 sniper rifle" to "welcome" the president.

Those threats followed months of Robertson posting photographs on social media of various firearms, which he called "eradication tools," along with threats against public officials. The posts painted a markedly different picture of Robertson than how some neighbors described him, as a caring, religious man.

Several neighbors said Robertson — a homebound, overweight man who used a cane to walk — wasn't shy about his right-wing political beliefs. But they questioned whether he posed a credible enough threat to the president to justify the raid.

They said FBI agents arrived early in the morning to attempt an arrest of Robertson. Several who knew Robertson said his home and the two sheds behind it contained large caches of firearms, which he modified as a post-retirement hobby.

Katie Monson, Robertson's next-door neighbor, said last week that she saw agents attempt to breach his front door with a battering ram before driving a tactical vehicle onto his lawn, close enough to pierce his front window.

She subsequently heard an exchange of shots before tactical officers dragged Robertson onto the sidewalk to wait for emergency medical personnel. FBI investigators spent the rest of the day clearing the home and photographing evidence.

The FBI also said on Monday that its inspection division would continue to review the shooting. FBI investigations into shootings involving agents typically take months.

## **Testimony from Sam Bankman-Fried's trusted inner circle will be used to convict him, prosecutors say**

By LARRY NEUMEISTER Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — Testimony from FTX founder Sam Bankman-Fried's "trusted inner circle" of former executives at his collapsed cryptocurrency empire will be used to prove at an October trial that he misappropriated billions of dollars from his investors to fuel his businesses, make illegal campaign contributions and enrich himself, prosecutors said Monday.

Prosecutors made the assertions in papers filed in Manhattan federal court, where Bankman-Fried is charged with defrauding investors in his businesses and illegally diverted millions of dollars' worth of cryptocurrency from customers using his FTX exchange. He has pleaded not guilty.

The court filing, in which prosecutors describe evidence they plan to present to jurors, came three days after Bankman-Fried was sent to a federal jail in Brooklyn to await trial by Judge Lewis A. Kaplan, who said there was probable cause to believe he had tried to tamper with witness testimony at least twice since his December arrest.

It also came on the same day that prosecutors filed a streamlined indictment that contains the seven charges Bankman-Fried faces at the Oct. 2 trial — but there's no longer a campaign finance charge for now, though it could go to trial later if they are found to conform with the terms of an extradition treaty with the Bahamas.

Still, prosecutors said in the latest indictment that Bankman-Fried misappropriated customer money to help fund over \$100 million in political contributions in advance of the 2022 election. The indictment said

he sought to “maximize FTX’s political influence” and use “these connections with politicians and government officials to falsely burnish the public image of FTX as a legitimate exchange.”

Late Monday, Bankman-Fried’s lawyers filed their own court papers related to trial evidence. In them, they asked that the trial judge exclude evidence about the FTX bankruptcy, the solvency of FTX and its affiliated trading platform, Alameda Research, and their ability to pay customers back.

They also asked that the judge ban prosecutors from telling jurors that Bankman-Fried resigned from FTX. They said they may oppose the prosecution’s plans to introduce evidence related to severed or withdrawn counts, such as the campaign finance charge.

Before Friday, Bankman Fried, 31, had been living with his parents in Palo Alto, California, after signing a \$250 million personal recognizance bond following his extradition from the Bahamas last December.

Prosecutors recently sought his detention, saying he had tried to intimidate his former girlfriend, Caroline Ellison — the onetime CEO of Alameda Research — by releasing some of her writing to a journalist.

On Monday, the government said they would rely on testimony from Ellison, FTX co-founder Gary Wang and former FTX engineering chief Nishad Singh to show jurors “the unlawful conduct directed and undertaken by the defendant.”

All three have pleaded guilty to criminal charges in cooperation agreements with the government that could earn them leniency at sentencing.

Prosecutors said they “formed the defendant’s trusted inner circle during the course of the conspiracy” and their testimony will be supplemented by multiple former employees of Alameda and FTX along with several victims, including customers, lenders and investors.

Other evidence will consist of financial records, Google documents and spreadsheets, and private communications, they added.

A spokesperson for Bankman-Fried declined comment on Monday.

Meanwhile, the judge on Monday granted a request by defense lawyers that their client be supplied his daily prescribed medications for depression and attention deficit/hyperactivity disorder.

## Young environmental activists prevail in first-of-its-kind climate change trial in Montana

By MATTHEW BROWN and AMY BETH HANSON Associated Press

HELENA, Mont. (AP) — Young environmental activists scored what experts described as a ground-breaking legal victory Monday when a Montana judge said state agencies were violating their constitutional right to a clean and healthful environment by allowing fossil fuel development.

The ruling in this first-of-its-kind trial in the U.S. adds to a small number of legal decisions around the world that have established a government duty to protect citizens from climate change.

If it stands, the ruling could set an important legal precedent, though experts said the immediate impacts are limited and state officials pledged to seek to overturn the decision on appeal.

District Court Judge Kathy Seeley found the policy the state uses in evaluating requests for fossil fuel permits — which does not allow agencies to look at greenhouse gas emissions — is unconstitutional.

It marks the first time a U.S. court has ruled against a government for violating a constitutional right based on climate change, said Harvard Law School Professor Richard Lazarus.

“To be sure, it is a state court not a federal court and the ruling is based on a state constitution and not the U.S. Constitution, but it is still clearly a major, pathbreaking win for climate plaintiffs,” Lazarus wrote in an email.

The judge rejected the state’s argument that Montana’s emissions are insignificant, saying they were “a substantial factor” in climate change. Montana is a major producer of coal burned for electricity and has large oil and gas reserves.

“Every additional ton of GHG (greenhouse gas) emissions exacerbates plaintiffs’ injuries and risks locking in irreversible climate injuries,” Seeley wrote.

However, it’s up to the Montana Legislature to determine how to bring the state’s policies into compliance.

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That leaves slim chances for prompt changes in a fossil fuel-friendly state where Republicans dominate the statehouse.

Only a few states, including Pennsylvania, Massachusetts and New York, have constitutions with similar environmental protections.

"The ruling really provides nothing beyond emotional support for the many cases seeking to establish a public trust right, human right or a federal constitutional right" to a healthy environment, said James Huffman, dean emeritus at Lewis & Clark Law School in Portland.

State officials had tried to derail the case and prevent it from going to trial through numerous motions to dismiss the lawsuit.

Claire Vlases was 17 years old when she became a plaintiff in the case. Now 20 and working as a ski instructor, she said climate change hangs over every aspect of her life.

"I think a lot of young people feel really helpless, especially when it comes to the future," Vlases said, adding that she expects Montana lawmakers to respect the state's constitution and abide by the court's decision.

"Hopefully this is one for history," she said.

Emily Flower, spokesperson for Montana Attorney General Austin Knudsen, decried the ruling as "absurd" and said the office planned to appeal. She criticized Seeley for allowing the plaintiffs to put on what Flower called a "taxpayer-funded publicity stunt."

"Montanans can't be blamed for changing the climate," she said. "Their same legal theory has been thrown out of federal court and courts in more than a dozen states. It should have been here as well."

Attorneys for the 16 plaintiffs, ranging in age from 5 to 22, presented evidence during the two-week trial that increasing carbon dioxide emissions are driving hotter temperatures, more drought and wildfires and decreased snowpack.

The plaintiffs said those changes were harming their mental and physical health, with wildfire smoke choking the air they breathe and drought drying out rivers that sustain agriculture, fish, wildlife and recreation. Native Americans testifying for the plaintiffs said climate change affects their ceremonies and traditional food sources.

The state argued that even if Montana completely stopped producing CO<sub>2</sub>, it would have no effect on a global scale because states and countries around the world contribute to the amount of CO<sub>2</sub> in the atmosphere. A remedy has to offer relief, the state said, or it's not a remedy at all.

Seeley said the state's attorneys failed to give a compelling reason for why they were not evaluating greenhouse gas emissions. She rejected the notion that Montana's greenhouse gas emissions are insignificant and noted that renewable power is "technically feasible and economically beneficial," citing testimony from the trial indicating Montana could replace 80% of existing fossil fuel energy by 2030.

Since its founding, Our Children's Trust has raised more than \$20 million to press its lawsuits in state and federal court. No previous attempts reached trial.

Carbon dioxide, which is released when fossil fuels are burned, traps heat in the atmosphere and is largely responsible for the warming of the climate. This spring, carbon dioxide levels in the air reached the highest levels they've been in over 4 million years, the National Oceanic Atmospheric Administration said earlier this month.

July was the hottest month on record globally and likely the warmest that human civilization has seen, according to scientists.

## **Video shows Texas US Rep. Ronny Jackson berating officers after being wrestled to ground at rodeo**

By JAKE BLEIBERG and PAUL J. WEBER Associated Press

DALLAS (AP) — Police video released Monday shows U.S. Rep. Ronny Jackson of Texas being taken to the ground by officers, profanely berating them and threatening to report them to the governor during an altercation at a rodeo last month.



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In body camera video, the former White House physician can be seen approaching a group of people surrounding a 15-year-old girl who authorities have said was having seizures. The two-term Republican congressman later has what looks like an argument with one of the people attending to the teenager before she is put on a stretcher.

Shortly afterward, Jackson is wrestled to the ground by at least two officers. The 31-minute video, which has sound in only some portions, shows officers turning Jackson facedown and putting him in handcuffs before helping him to his feet.

"I'm going to call the governor tomorrow and I'm going to talk to him about this (expletive), because this is (expletive) ridiculous," Jackson can later be heard telling a state trooper, his voice raised.

State police released the video footage days after Jackson defended his actions in a post on social media. Kate Lair, a spokesperson for Jackson, reiterated the congressman's comments in a statement Monday in which she said he was prevented from providing medical care to the teenager due to "overly aggressive and incompetent actions" by officers.

"Congressman Jackson, as a trained ER physician, will not apologize for sparing no effort to help in a medical emergency, especially when the circumstances were chaotic and the local authorities refused to help the situation," Lair said. Chris and Jodi Jordan said they were at the rodeo in White Deer, a small town outside the Panhandle city of Amarillo, and witnessed some of what happened. They said Jackson was trying to help the girl before medics arrived and that the deputies were needlessly rough in pulling him away.

"We were just appalled," said Chris Jordan, 48, of Hereford. "The slamming to the ground I didn't understand whatsoever."

The Jordans said that after the incident they discussed talking to news reporters about what they had seen with an aide to Jackson. The congressman's office referred The Associated Press to the couple.

Shortly after the encounter, Carson County Sheriff Tam Terry talked with Jackson by phone. According to the sheriff's written report, Jackson repeatedly told Terry that there needed to be consequences for the deputies who had handcuffed him. After Terry responded that he didn't need to be threatened, Jackson said that "he would pull hell and high water and come and 'bury me in the next election,'" the sheriff wrote.

Jackson was elected in 2020 after gaining notoriety for his over-the-top pronouncements about then-President Donald Trump's health while serving as a top White House physician. A year later, the Department of Defense inspector general released a scathing report about Jackson's conduct while on the job at the White House.

The report concluded that Jackson made "sexual and denigrating" comments about a female subordinate, violated the policy on drinking alcohol on a presidential trip and took prescription-strength sleeping medication that prompted worries from his colleagues about his ability to provide proper medical care.

Jackson denied the allegations and said at the time that the report was a "political hit job."

## Six former Mississippi officers plead guilty to state charges for torturing two Black men

By MICHAEL GOLDBERG Associated Press/Report for America

BRANDON, Miss. (AP) — Six white former Mississippi law officers pleaded guilty on Monday to state charges for torturing two Black men in a racist assault. All six had recently admitted their guilt in a connected federal civil rights case.

In the gruesome crimes committed by men tasked with enforcing the law, federal prosecutors saw echoes of Mississippi's dark history, including the 1964 killing of three civil rights workers after a deputy handed them off to the Ku Klux Klan. Locally, the sheriff whose deputies committed the crimes this year called it the worst case of police brutality he had ever seen.

Prosecutors say some of the officers nicknamed themselves the "Goon Squad" because of their willingness to use excessive force and cover up attacks including the assault that ended with a deputy shooting one victim in the mouth.

In January, the officers entered a house without a warrant and handcuffed and assaulted the two men

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with stun guns, a sex toy and other objects. The officers mocked them with racial slurs throughout a 90-minute torture session, then devised a cover-up that included planting drugs and a gun, leading to false charges that stood against the victims for months.

Their conspiracy unraveled after one officer told the sheriff he had lied, leading to confessions from the others. The charges against the victims weren't dropped until June after federal and state investigators got involved, according to their attorney.

The men include five former Rankin County sheriff's deputies — Brett McAlpin, Hunter Elward, Christian Dedmon, Jeffrey Middleton and Daniel Opdyke — and a former police officer from the city of Richland, Joshua Hartfield, who was off duty during the assault.

Elward pleaded guilty to aggravated assault for shooting his handgun in the victim's mouth in what authorities called a "mock execution," thinking the weapon would dry fire without a bullet in the chamber.

They appeared Monday in jumpsuits with the names of the jails covered by tape.

They agreed to sentences recommended by state prosecutors ranging from five to 30 years, although the judge isn't bound by that. Time served for the state convictions will run concurrently with the potentially longer federal sentences they'll receive in November.

The victims — Michael Corey Jenkins and Eddie Terrell Parker — arrived together to Monday's hearing and sat in the front row, just feet from their attackers' families. They were embraced by Monica Lee, the mother of Damien Cameron, a Black man who died in Elward's custody in 2021.

"I enjoyed the view of seeing the walk of shame. Head down, the disgust everybody felt for them and that they feel for themselves," Parker said after the officers were led away in shackles. "I hope this is a lesson to everybody out there: Justice will be served."

The charges followed an Associated Press investigation in March that linked some of the officers to at least four violent encounters since 2019 that left two Black men dead. In addition to Jenkins' lasting injuries, another Black man also accused them of shoving a gun inside his mouth. The Justice Department launched a civil rights probe in February.

All six of the former officers pleaded guilty to state charges of obstruction of justice and conspiracy to hinder prosecution. Dedmon and Elward, who kicked in a door, also admitted to home invasion.

After details of the case became public, some residents pointed to a police culture they said gives officers carte blanche to abuse their power.

Rankin County's majority-white suburbs have been a destination for white flight out of the capital, Jackson, which is home to one of the highest percentages of Black residents of any major U.S. city.

The officers warned Jenkins and Parker to "go back to Jackson or 'their side' of the Pearl River," the federal charging documents say.

Jenkins and Parker were targeted because a white neighbor complained that two Black men were staying at the home with a white woman, court documents show.

Parker was a childhood friend of the homeowner, Kristi Walley, who was at the hospital at the time. She's been paralyzed since she was 15, and Parker was helping care for her.

"He's a blessing. Every time I've needed him he's been here," Walley said in a February interview. "There were times I've been living here by myself and I didn't know what I was going to do."

Parker and Jenkins have left Mississippi and aren't sure they will ever return for a long stay.

Jenkins still has difficulty speaking because of his injuries. The gunshot lacerated his tongue and broke his jaw before exiting his neck. He can only eat soft foods easily and has recurrent nightmares.

"As far as justice, I knew we were going to get it," Jenkins has said. "But I thought it was maybe going to take longer."

Other consequences remain to be determined.

Lee claims Elward and a current deputy not linked to the Jenkins assault killed her son. A grand jury declined to indict Elward after he punched Cameron and shocked him with a stun gun, but a Rankin County judge ruled Wednesday that Lee's claims of excessive force could move forward against him, and Lee said the FBI told her they're reviewing the case.

Separately, Carvis Johnson, the Black man who said another deputy pointed a gun into his mouth, filed

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a federal lawsuit from behind bars alleging that McAlpin beat him during an arrest and told him to stay out of Rankin County.

Jenkins and Parker, meanwhile, are seeking \$400 million in damages in their federal civil rights lawsuit against Rankin County.

Rankin County Sheriff Bryan Bailey applauded the investigations that led to the guilty pleas.

"I believe today's guilty pleas show the community that our system of checks and balances is effective," Bailey said in a statement after the hearing. "An unbiased and impartial investigation into these former officers uncovered their criminal actions."

Bailey had acknowledged his lax body camera policy failed. After the officers pleaded guilty, he promised to change it.

Malik Shabazz, one of Jenkins and Parkers' attorneys, said Bailey is "directly responsible for the vicious acts of his subordinates."

Court documents unsealed by federal prosecutors suggest only some members of the Goon Squad participated in the illegal raid. There are other Rankin County deputies "known to the United States Attorney," the documents say.

"We would certainly hope that they continue to investigate the Goon Squad and other outstanding claims that may exist against these officers, as well as other officers," said Trent Walker, another attorney for Jenkins and Parker.

## 'No Labels' movement says it could offer independent presidential ticket in 2024

By GARY D. ROBERTSON Associated Press

RALEIGH, N.C. (AP) — A national political movement that could offer an independent presidential ticket in 2024 as an alternative to major-party nominees said Monday it has now won ballot access in 10 states, after North Carolina election officials formally granted official status to a "No Labels" affiliate.

The State Board of Elections voted 4-1 on Sunday to recognize the No Labels Party as an official North Carolina party following a successful petition effort. It joins four other recognized parties with which voters can now choose to be registered and field candidates.

The new North Carolina party is linked to a national No Labels effort that lists a wide array of mostly centrist political leaders backing it. They include ex-North Carolina GOP Gov. Pat McCrory, U.S. Sen. Joe Manchin, D-W.Va., and former Connecticut Sen. Joe Lieberman, a former Democrat who became an independent.

No Labels is poised to offer an independent ticket for president and vice president if Democrats and Republicans "select unreasonably divisive presidential nominees." North Carolina, usually considered a battleground state, has 16 electoral votes at stake.

The other states are Alaska, Arizona, Arkansas, Colorado, Florida, Nevada, Oregon, South Dakota and Utah.

Reaching 10 states is "a historic victory for Americans who have said loud and clear they want more choices at the ballot box. The spirit of democracy is winning in America today," civil rights leader Benjamin Chavis, a North Carolina native and national co-chair of No Labels, said in a news release Monday.

There is no named ticket yet for No Labels. Group leaders have said it would stand down if there's no clear path to victory next year. But some Democrats are worried that won't happen, leading unintentionally to the election of Republican Donald Trump. National left-leaning groups have been working to derail the group's presidential ambitions.

North Carolina law says that to be recognized, a party must collect signatures from registered voters equal to 0.25% of the total number of people who voted in the last election for governor in 2020, or just under 13,900 signatures. State election officials agreed that No Labels provided over 14,800 signatures and met a requirement that at least 200 signatures each come from three congressional districts.

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The other official North Carolina parties are the Democratic, Republican, Green and Libertarian parties. Voters also can register as unaffiliated, which represents the largest bloc in the state.

Board Chair Alan Hirsch and member Jeff Carmon, both Democrats, joined Republicans Four Eggers and Kevin Lewis in voting for the official recognition. Democratic member Siobhan O'Duffy Millen voted no.

The official recognition followed questions seeking more information on No Labels, particularly its affiliation with the national movement and whether it truly met the definition of a party.

The board also was interested in whether the party's signature collectors properly informed signers of the "general purpose and intent" of the party, as state law requires.

No Labels presented affidavits from collectors stating that they were instructed to share in part it was a party "to bring all the parties together to get things done in Washington through a unity ticket" and that the petition "allows a third party to run candidates in the presidential election."

But Millen said the evidence wasn't strong enough and questioned whether the No Labels Party of North Carolina met the party definition.

She pointed to media reports quoting national No Labels leaders saying they wouldn't field candidates up and down ballots and that operations would end after the November 2024 elections.

"It seems to me that North Carolina law does not adequately address this novel situation" when the goal of such a group is to secure a spot in one election instead of becoming an ongoing party, Millen said.

While the national No Labels group is organized under a section of federal tax law in which it now doesn't have to disclose its donors, the state affiliate would have to follow state campaign finance disclosure rules, as the other recognized parties must do.

Eggers, who made the motion to recognize the No Labels Party, said he shared some of Millen's concerns. But he said there appeared to be no dispute that the party met the numerical signature threshold and the standard to meet "general purpose and intent" requirement was quite low.

## **Argentine peso plunges after rightist who admires Trump comes first in primary vote**

By DANIEL POLITI Associated Press

BUENOS AIRES, Argentina (AP) — The Argentine peso plunged Monday after an anti-establishment candidate who admires former President Donald Trump came first in primary elections that will help determine the country's next president.

Javier Milei rocked Argentina's political establishment by receiving the biggest share of primary votes for presidential candidates in the October general election to decide who leads a nation battered by economic woes.

Milei, 52, wants to replace the peso with the dollar, and says that Argentina's Central Bank should be abolished. He has said that climate change is a lie and has characterized sex education as a ploy to destroy the family. He has also said that the sale of human organs should be legal.

Gun ownership is severely restricted in Argentina. Milei proposes the "deregulation of the legal market" for weapons and "the protection of its legitimate and responsible use by the citizens," according to his party's electoral platform.

Argentina's government decided to devalue the local currency by 20% early Monday morning after the surprising Sunday showing. Two mainstream political coalitions have traded power for a decade in Argentina. The country is now the latest where voters have picked an outsider candidate to express anger against the status quo.

Operators were watching nervously Monday as the value of the peso also decreased in the parallel, or blue, market, dropping 12% by early afternoon.

Milei said the government was trying to blame his victory for the depreciation of the currency.

"One of the things the government is trying to convey is that devaluation and all these things are our fault," Milei said in an interview Monday with cable news channel LN+.

The drop in the value of the peso means that already-high inflation will accelerate, making getting to



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the end of the month even harder for ordinary people.

"The more the dollar rises, the more expensive things become," Marta Gisela Barrera, a 29-year-old urban recycler who has trouble buying enough food for her four children, said on Monday morning. "I don't know what's going to happen anymore."

Argentina requires that citizens vote, with a symbolic financial penalty for not voting, and 69 percent of the country's 35 million voters went to the polls, each choosing candidates for positions ranging from local councilman to president. It marked the lowest participation for presidential primaries since the current system was set up in 2009.

The major parties had contested races to be its presidential candidate. Milei was uncontested, and got a few points more than the candidates of parties that have dominated Argentine politics.

After doing much better than expected, the upstart candidate with long sideburns and shaggy hair who gained notoriety and a rockstar-like following by angrily ranting against the "political caste" is now a real contender for the presidency.

"We've had 40 years of failures, don't tell me this time will be different. The central problem is that the solution to the problem is in the hands of the same problem, which is the politicians," Milei said in the LN+ interview.

In Brazil, Jair Bolsonaro was president from 2019 to 2022, and had a similar anti-left and anti-social justice orientation. Right-wing populists are also making inroads with a tough-on-crime message, most notably in El Salvador, where the popularity of President Nayib Bukele has soared amid a crackdown on gangs that has led to human-rights abuses.

If he were to win "my allies would be the United States and Israel," Milei said, adding he would move Argentina's embassy in Israel from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem, following in Trump's footsteps.

With around 97% of polling locations reporting, Milei had around 30% of the total vote, according to official results. The candidates in the main opposition coalition, United for Change, were at 28% and the governing Union for the Homeland coalition had 27%.

In order to win the vote in two months, Milei would have to increase his share of the nation's votes by 15%, a high hurdle even in a nation where voters tend to favor candidates they see as winners.

If one candidate doesn't receive 45% of the vote, they would need 40% and a 10-point lead over the second-place candidate. Otherwise the race would go to a November runoff between the top two.

Celebrating in his election headquarters, Milei vowed to bring "an end to the parasitic, corrupt and useless political caste that exists in this country."

"Today we took the first step toward the reconstruction of Argentina," he said. "A different Argentina is impossible with the same people as always."

In Buenos Aires on Monday, Milei's supporters seemed most excited about someone new coming into the scene.

"We always end up going back to the other party, then the other comes back, and it's a cycle that keeps us in the same situation," Clara Costa, a 54-year-old administrative assistant, said.

Milei has been a lawmaker in the lower house of Argentina's Congress since 2021.

Argentina is struggling with annual inflation over 100%, rising poverty and a rapidly depreciating currency, and Milei first attracted wider support by calling for the country to replace the peso with the U.S. dollar.

Milei would need Congress to support that and that would be highly unlikely. As a result, he has said he would push for a referendum or a non-binding popular vote on the issue, although it's also unclear if he would be able to push that through without the support of lawmakers.

Asked about the vote in Argentina, Mexican President Andrés Manuel López Obrador stated that inflation and economic crises "always benefit the right and conservatism, which is somewhat what's happening in Argentina," and he mentioned the case of Hitler. He immediately made clear he wasn't making a direct comparison between the two but said it was "important to remember" that "inflation actually helped" Hitler rise to power.

Bolsonaro's lawmaker son, Eduardo Bolsonaro, celebrated the results, characterizing them on social media

as “an excellent start to what could be the real change that Argentina needs.” Days before the primaries, former President Bolsonaro published a short video wishing Milei luck in the election.

The main opposition coalition, United for Change, moved more to the right as former Security Minister Patricia Bullrich, who made toughness on crime a centerpiece of her campaign, handily beat a more centrist contender.

In the currently governing coalition, Union for the Homeland, the more business friendly candidate — Economy Minister Sergio Massa — easily beat a leftist contender but still took an overall beating from voters frustrated over the poor state of the economy, finishing in third place for total votes.

At Milei’s electoral headquarters, party leaders were ecstatic while people celebrated outside, expressing optimism that their candidate’s support would only grow in the run-up to October.

“I like his ideas about freedom,” said Orlando Sánchez, 26, a retail worker. “If criminals walk around with guns on their belts, why can’t an ordinary citizen have one lawfully and with the proper documentation? People are clearly tired of politics, being constantly lied to.”

## Michael Oher, former NFL tackle known for ‘The Blind Side,’ sues to end Tuohys’ conservatorship

By TERESA M. WALKER AP Pro Football Writer

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (AP) — Michael Oher, the former NFL tackle known for being the inspiration for the movie “The Blind Side,” filed a petition Monday in a Tennessee probate court accusing Sean and Leigh Anne Tuohy of lying to him by having him sign papers making them his conservators rather than his adoptive parents nearly two decades ago.

In the petition filed Monday in Shelby County Probate Court, Oher asks for the conservatorship to be terminated along with asking for a full accounting of the money earned off the use of his name and story. He also asks to be paid what he is due along with interest.

He accuses the Tuohys of enriching themselves at his expense by continuing to “falsely and publicly” represent themselves as his adoptive parents “to the date of the filing of this petition.”

“Oher discovered this lie to his chagrin and embarrassment in February of 2023, when he learned that the Conservatorship to which he consented on the basis that doing so would make him a member of the Tuohy family, in fact provided him no familial relationship with the Tuohys,” according to the petition.

Oher, who has never been a fan of the movie about his life, also asks in the petition that the Tuohys be sanctioned and required to pay both compensatory and punitive damages determined by the court.

Steve Farese, a lawyer for the Tuohys, told The Associated Press they will file an answer to the allegations in court but declined to comment further. He was among three attorneys served on behalf of the Tuohys on Monday.

Leigh Anne Tuohy did not immediately respond to an email sent via her personal website. Her husband told The Daily Memphian the conservatorship was done to satisfy the NCAA as Oher considered Tuohy’s alma mater Mississippi for college.

Sean Tuohy said he and his wife would end the conservatorship if that’s what Oher wants.

“We’re devastated,” Tuohy said. “It’s upsetting to think we would make money off any of our children. But we’re going to love Michael at 37 just like we loved him at 16.”

The movie was nominated for an Oscar, and Sandra Bullock won the Academy Award for her portrayal of Leigh Anne Tuohy.

Oher accuses the Tuohys of never taking legal action to assume custody from the Tennessee Department of Human Services before he turned 18. The conservatorship paperwork was filed months after Oher turned 18 in May 2004.

He moved in with the Tuohys just before his senior year of high school and says he was told to call them “Mom” and “Dad.” Oher says in the petition he was encouraged to call the attorney who filed the conservatorship paperwork “Aunt Debbie” Branan.

Oher also alleges the Tuohys had him sign paperwork almost immediately after he moved in as part of

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the adoption process. Oher says he was “falsely advised” that it would be called a conservatorship because he was already 18 but the intent was adoption.

“At no point did the Tuohys inform Michael that they would have ultimate control of all his contracts, and as a result Michael did not understand that if the Conservatorship was granted, he was signing away his right to contract for himself,” according to the petition.

A book based on Oher’s life was released in September 2006. The author, Michael Lewis, was described in the petition as a childhood friend of Sean Tuohy’s. The petition alleges Oher’s conservators began contract negotiations for movie rights.

The petition alleges a deal was reached to pay the Tuohys, plus children Sean Jr. and Collins, \$225,000 plus 2.5% of future defined net proceeds hinging on Oher’s signature. A contract titled “Life Story Rights Agreement” was “purportedly signed by Michael Oher” and dated April 20, 2007, according to the petition.

The petition says Oher believes the signature is similar to his own but that he “at no time ever willingly or knowingly signed this document and that nobody ever presented this contract to him with any explanation that he was signing such a document.”

In the petition, Oher asks for a full accounting of his assets and how they were used considering his life story produced millions of dollars and he received nothing for the rights to something that would not have existed without him.

Oher was the 23rd overall pick in the 2009 draft out of Mississippi, and he spent his first five seasons with the Baltimore Ravens. He wound up playing eight NFL seasons, including 2014 when he started 11 games for the Tennessee Titans. Oher finished his career with two years in Carolina.

He started 110 games and won a Super Bowl with the Ravens. He also finished second in the voting to Percy Harvin of Minnesota for The Associated Press NFL Offensive Rookie of the Year after starting all 16 games his first season at right tackle.

Oher, who turned 37 in May, last played in 2016. He was released in 2017 by Carolina.

Nearly two years ago, supporters cheered when Britney Spears was freed from her conservatorship. The ruling came after Spears publicly demanded the end of the arrangement, which had prevented her from making her own medical, financial and personal decisions since 2008.

Spears’ high-profile battle put a spotlight on efforts that advocates across the United States have launched raising questions that such strict controls result in more harm than protection.

## **EXPLAINER: Why is a police raid on a newspaper in Kansas so unusual?**

By DAVID BAUDER and JIM SALTER Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — Tensions between public officials and the press are hardly unusual. To a large extent, it’s baked into their respective roles.

What’s rare in a democratic society is a police raid on a news organization’s office or the home of its owner. So when that happened late last week, it attracted the sort of national attention that the town of Marion, Kansas, is hardly used to.

The Marion Police Department took computers and cellphones from the office of the Marion County Record newspaper on Friday, and also entered the home of Eric Meyer, publisher and editor. The weekly newspaper serves a town of 1,900 people that is about 150 miles (241 kilometers) southwest of Kansas City, Missouri.

Within two days, the raid drew the attention of some of the nation’s largest media organizations, including The Associated Press, The New York Times, CNN, CBS News, the New Yorker and the Gannett newspaper chain.

**WHAT PROMPTED THIS ACTION?**

Police said they had probable cause to believe there were violations of Kansas law, including one pertaining to identity theft, involving a woman named Kari Newell, according to a search warrant signed by Marion County District Court Magistrate Judge Laura Viar.

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Newell is a local restaurant owner — and no big fan of the newspaper — who had Meyer and one of his reporters thrown out of an event being held there for a local congressman.

Newell said she believed the newspaper, acting on a tip, violated the law to get her personal information to check the status of her driver's license following a 2008 conviction for drunk driving. Meyer said the Record decided not to write about it, but when Newell revealed at a subsequent city council meeting that she had driven while her license was suspended, that was reported.

Meyer also believes the newspaper's aggressive coverage of local issues, including the background of Marion Police Chief Gideon Cody, played a part in the raid.

## HOW UNUSUAL IS THIS?

It's very rare. In 2019, San Francisco police raided the home of Bryan Carmody, an independent journalist, seeking to find his source for a story about a police investigation into the sudden death of a local public official, according to the Reporters Committee for Freedom of the Press. San Francisco paid a settlement to Carmody as a result of the raid.

Police have confiscated material at newspapers, but usually because they are seeking evidence to help investigate someone else's crime, not a crime the journalists were allegedly involved in, said Clay Calvert, an expert on First Amendment law at the American Enterprise Institute. For example, when police raided the offices of James Madison University's student newspaper in 2010, they seized photos as part of a probe into a riot.

The Marion raid "appears to have violated federal law, the First Amendment, and basic human decency," said Seth Stern, advocacy director for the Freedom of the Press Foundation. "Everyone involved should be ashamed of themselves."

## COULD THIS BE LEGAL?

The First Amendment to the U.S. Constitution asserts that Congress shall make no law "abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press."

Things get murkier when you get into specifics.

Journalists gathering material for use in possible stories are protected by the federal Privacy Protection Act of 1980. For one thing, police need a subpoena — not just a search warrant — to conduct such a raid, according to the Reporters Committee for Freedom of the Press.

Cody acknowledged this, in an email to The Associated Press, but he said there is an exception "when there is reason to believe the journalist is taking part in the underlying wrongdoing."

Gabe Rottman, lawyer for the Reporters Committee, said he's not sure Cody's reason for believing the so-called suspect exception applies here. In general, it does not apply to material used in the course of reporting, like draft stories or public documents that are being used to check on a news tip.

The search warrant in this case was "significantly overbroad, improperly intrusive and possibly in violation of federal law," the Reporters Committee said in a letter to Cody that was signed by dozens of news organizations.

## WHY DOES THIS MATTER SO MUCH TO JOURNALISTS?

It's important to speak out in this case "because we're just seeing in way too many countries around the world that democracy is being eroded bit by bit," said Kathy Kiely, Lee Hills chair of Free Press Studies at the University of Missouri School of Journalism.

Anger toward the press in the United States, often fueled by politicians, has grown in recent years, leading to concern about actions being taken to thwart news coverage.

In April, an Oklahoma sheriff was among several county officials caught on tape discussing killing journalists and lynching Black people. Oklahoma Attorney General Gentner Drummond later said there was no legal grounds to remove McCurtain County Sheriff Kevin Clardy.

In June, two reporters for the Asheville Blade newspaper in North Carolina were found guilty of misdemeanor trespassing. The Freedom of Press Foundation said the reporters were arrested while covering a police sweep of a homeless encampment and arrested for being in the park after its 10 p.m. closing.

## WHAT SUPPORT IS THERE FOR THE POLICE ACTION?



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Not everyone in Kansas was quick to condemn the raid.

Jared Smith, a lifelong Marion resident, said the newspaper is too negative and drives away businesses, including a day spa run by his wife that recently closed. He cited repeated stories in the Record about his wife's past — she had once modeled nude for a magazine years ago.

"The newspaper is supposed to be something that, yes, reports the news, but it's also a community newspaper," Smith said. "It's not, 'How can I slam this community and drive people away?'"

Meyer disputed Smith's description of how the newspaper handled his wife's past and said the newspaper did not target her.

The Kansas Bureau of Investigation issued a statement Sunday stating that Director Tony Mattivi "believes very strongly that freedom of the press is a vanguard of American democracy." But the statement added that search warrants are common at places like law enforcement offices and city, county and state offices.

"No one is above the law, whether a public official or a representative of the media," the statement read.

Meyer said the agency has not contacted him or anyone at the newspaper.

"I don't know what they've been told, but they haven't talked to us," he said. "They've heard one side of the story and haven't heard the other one."

## Georgia begins quest for 3rd straight championship as No. 1 in AP Top 25. Michigan, Ohio State next

By RALPH D. RUSSO AP College Football Writer

Georgia will begin its drive for an unprecedented college football championship three-peat as the No. 1 team in The Associated Press preseason Top 25.

The Bulldogs received 60 of 63 first-place votes in the poll released Monday to easily outpoint No. 2 Michigan, which received two first-place votes and has its best preseason rankings since being No. 2 in 1991. The Wolverines' Big Ten rival, Ohio State, is No. 3 with one first-place vote.

Two more Southeastern Conference teams join Georgia in the top five. Alabama is No. 4, the Crimson Tide's lowest preseason ranking in more than a decade, and LSU starts at No. 5, its best preseason ranking since 2016.

The Bulldogs have won the last two national titles while going 29-1, but this will be only the second time in program history they have been preseason No. 1. The first was in 2008.

Georgia started the 2021 season No. 5, before going on to win its first national title since 1980. The Bulldogs followed up with a perfect season in 2022 after being preseason No. 3.

The Bulldogs have had 25 players drafted by NFL teams the last two years, including quarterback Stetson Bennett and All-America defensive tackle Jalen Carter this past April. Coach Kirby Smart has built a program to rival Nick Saban's Alabama dynasty so voters are now giving Georgia the Crimson Tide treatment.

Alabama had been preseason No. 1 each of the last two seasons, and five of the previous seven. Clemson was preseason No. 1 in the other two seasons, making Georgia the first team other than the Tide or Tigers to be preseason No. 1 since Ohio State in 2015.

Alabama is also the last team to win back-to-back major college football national championships, doing so in 2011 and '12.

No team has won three straight national titles during the AP poll era, which dates to 1936. For the record, Minnesota, the first official AP champion, was retroactively crowned champion for the 1934 and '35 seasons by a couple of organizations.

Coach Bernie Bierman's Gophers from long ago are the closest thing major college football has to a three-peat.

"We have not addressed that with them," Smart said during SEC media days of chasing college football history. "We've certainly looked at some three-peat scenarios of teams like the Bulls and different sports teams that they might actually know about. No offense to the Minnesota 1935 team, but I don't know if it's going to resonate with my audience."

The Bulldogs are reloading on the defensive front and at quarterback, but do not lack for stars. Tight

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end Brock Bowers is one of the nation's best players; linebacker Jamon Dumas-Johnson was a second-team All-American; and center Sedrick Van Pran anchors one of the country's most talented offensive lines.

Rounding out the top 10 is Southern California at No. 6, which is the Trojans' best preseason ranking since 2017, followed by Penn State, Florida State, Clemson and Washington.

The Seminoles are back in the preseason rankings for the first time since 2018, and in the top 10 for the first time since 2017.

## STARTING ON TOP, STAYING ON TOP

Beware, 'Dawgs.

Since the AP preseason poll started in 1950, 11 teams that started No. 1 also finished No. 1. Only two of those have occurred since 2000: Southern California in 2004 and Alabama in 2017.

"The threat for us is complacency," Smart said. "The first thing you have to do is acknowledge that it's a threat. Like if you acknowledge the complacency is a threat, it's the first step towards stomping it out."

## TIDE'S OUT ... OF THE TOP THREE

For most schools, a preseason No. 4 ranking would feel pretty good.

For Alabama, it feels like a sign of decline. The last time the Crimson Tide had a lower preseason ranking was 2009. That was Year 3 for Saban in Tuscaloosa, and Alabama went on to win the first of six national championships during his unprecedented run.

This preseason poll is the first since 2015 in which the Tide did not receive at least one first-place vote.

The Tide did run its record streak of top-five preseason rankings to 15. Next best in poll history is 11 for Florida State in 1990-2000. Ohio State has had 11 top-five preseason rankings since 2009.

## CONFERENCE CALL

Over the last three years, schools have been redrawing the conference maps.

This year, the Big 12 has four new members, the American Athletic Conference has six and Conference USA has four.

The really flashy moves come in 2024.

This season will be the last with Texas and Oklahoma in the Big 12 ( before moving to the SEC ) and maybe the last with a Pac-12 at all. USC, UCLA, Oregon and Washington will play in the Big Ten next year while Arizona, Arizona State, Colorado and Utah move to the Big 12 as major college football moves toward sprawling super conferences.

Heading into this season the breakdown by conference of teams in the Top 25:

SEC — 6 (Nos. 1, 4, 5, 12, 22, 23).

Big Ten — 5 (Nos. 2, 3, 7, 19, 25).

Pac-12 — 5 (Nos. 6, 10, 14, 15, 18).

Big 12 — 4 (Nos. 11, 16, 17, 20).

ACC — 3 (Nos. 8, 9, 21).

American Athletic — 1 (No. 24).

Independent — 1 (No. 13).

If sorted by next season's conference alignment the breakdown looks like this:

SEC — 8 (Nos. 1, 4, 5, 11, 12, 20, 22, 23).

Big Ten — 8 (Nos. 2, 3, 6, 7, 10, 15, 19, 25).

Big 12 — 3 (Nos. 14, 16, 17).

ACC — 3 (Nos. 8, 9, 21).

Pac-12 — 1 (No. 18 - counts Oregon State as a Pac-12 team).

American Athletic — 1 (No. 24)

Independent — 1 (No. 13).

## Judge in Donald Trump's hush-money case denies bias claim, won't step aside

By MICHAEL R. SISAK Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — The judge in Donald Trump's Manhattan hush-money criminal case has rejected the former president's demand to step aside, denying defense claims that he's biased against the Republican front-runner because he's given cash to Democrats and his daughter is a party consultant.

New York Judge Juan Manuel Merchan acknowledged in a ruling late Friday that he made several small donations to Democratic causes during the 2020 campaign, including \$15 to Trump's Democratic rival Joe Biden, but said he is certain of his "ability to be fair and impartial."

Removing himself from the case "would not be in the public interest," Merchan wrote. His six-page ruling echoed a state court ethics panel's recent opinion that endorsed his continued involvement in the Trump case.

The decision on recusal was entirely up to Merchan. He previously rejected a similar request when Trump's company, the Trump Organization, was on trial last year for tax fraud.

Trump lawyer Susan Necheles declined comment. The Manhattan district attorney's office, which is prosecuting the case and said in court papers that it wanted Merchan to remain on the case, also declined comment.

Trump's hush-money trial — one of three pending criminal cases against him — is scheduled to start March 25, overlapping with the 2024 presidential primary season as he seeks a return to the White House. A federal judge last month denied Trump's request to move the case out of Merchan's state courtroom and into federal court. Trump is appealing the ruling that he failed to meet a high legal bar for changing jurisdiction.

Trump pleaded not guilty in April in Manhattan to 34 felony counts of falsifying business records. The charges relate to hush-money payments made during the 2016 campaign to bury allegations that he had extramarital sexual encounters. He has denied wrongdoing.

Separately, Trump is also charged in federal court in Florida with illegally hoarding classified documents at his Mar-a-Lago estate and impeding investigators and in federal court in Washington, D.C., in connection to efforts to overturn the results of his 2020 election loss in the run-up to the violent riot by his supporters at the U.S. Capitol.

Trump's lawyers wanted Merchan off the case in part because his daughter, Loren, is a political consultant whose firm has worked for some of Trump's Democratic rivals and because, they contend, he acted inappropriately by involving himself in plea negotiations last year for Trump's longtime finance chief, Allen Weisselberg. Merchan said he previously rejected that argument when asked to exit the Trump Organization case.

Trump's lawyers also raised concerns about the political donations, asking Merchan to explain three contributions totaling \$35 that were made to Democratic causes in his name during the 2020 election cycle. Merchan, in his ruling, said the "donations at issue are self-evident and require no further clarification" and pointed to the ethics panel's conclusion that such small-dollar contributions wouldn't require recusal.

"These modest political contributions made more than two years ago cannot reasonably create an impression of bias or favoritism in the case before the judge," the panel wrote.

Merchan, a state court judge in New York, sought input from the Advisory Committee on Judicial Ethics after Trump's April 4 arraignment, as news outlets started reporting on his political contributions and Trump — pointing to the daughter's work — complained that he's "a Trump-hating judge" with a family full of "Trump haters."

The ethics panel, in its May 4 opinion, concluded that a judge in Merchan's situation "may continue to preside in the matter provided the judge believes he/she can be fair and impartial."

Trump's lawyers sought Merchan's recusal on May 31, arguing in court papers that the hush-money case is "historic and it is important that the People of the State of New York and this nation have confidence that the jurist who presides over it is impartial."

Matthew Colangelo, a senior counsel to Manhattan District Attorney Alvin Bragg, countered that Trump's recusal motion was the latest in a "prolific history of baselessly accusing state and federal judges around the country of bias."

Loren Merchan is the president and chief operating officer of Authentic Campaigns, a political consulting firm that has worked on campaigns for prominent Democrats including Biden, Vice President Kamala Harris, House Minority Leader Hakeem Jeffries and California Gov. Gavin Newsom.

Judge Merchan, citing the ethics panel's finding that his daughter's work had no bearing on his impartiality, said in his ruling that Trump's lawyers had "failed to demonstrate that there exists concrete, or even realistic reasons for recusal to be appropriate, much less required on these grounds."

## **Biden administration urges colleges to pursue racial diversity without affirmative action**

By COLLIN BINKLEY AP Education Writer

New guidance from the Biden administration on Monday urges colleges to use a range of strategies to promote racial diversity on campus after the Supreme Court struck down affirmative action in admissions.

Colleges can focus their recruiting in high minority areas, for example, and take steps to retain students of color who are already on campus, including by offering affinity clubs geared toward students of a certain race. Colleges can also consider how an applicant's race has shaped personal experience, as detailed in students' application essays or letters of recommendation, according to the new guidance.

It also encourages them to consider ending policies known to stunt racial diversity, including preferences for legacy students and the children of donors.

"Ensuring access to higher education for students from different backgrounds is one of the most powerful tools we have to prepare graduates to lead an increasingly diverse nation and make real our country's promise of opportunity for all," Attorney General Merrick Garland said in a statement.

The guidance, from the Justice and Education departments, arrives as colleges across the nation attempt to navigate a new era of admissions without the use of affirmative action. Schools are working to promote racial diversity without provoking legal action from affirmative action opponents.

Students for Fair Admission, the group that brought the issue to the Supreme Court through lawsuits against Harvard and the University of North Carolina, sent a letter to 150 universities in July saying they must "take immediate steps to eliminate the use of race as a factor in admissions."

In its guidance, the Biden administration offers a range of policies colleges can use "to achieve a student body that is diverse across a range of factors, including race and ethnicity."

It also offers clarity on how colleges can consider race in the context of an applicant's individual experience. The court's decision bars colleges from considering race as a factor in and of itself, but nothing prohibits colleges from considering "an applicant's discussion of how race affected the applicant's life," the court wrote.

How to approach that line without crossing it has been a challenge for colleges as they rework admissions systems before a new wave of applications begin arriving in the fall.

The guidance offers examples of how colleges can "provide opportunities to assess how applicants' individual backgrounds and attributes — including those related to their race."

"A university could consider an applicant's explanation about what it means to him to be the first Black violinist in his city's youth orchestra or an applicant's account of overcoming prejudice when she transferred to a rural high school where she was the only student of South Asian descent," according to the guidance.

Schools can also consider a letter of recommendation describing how a student "conquered her feelings of isolation as a Latina student at an overwhelmingly white high school to join the debate team," it says.

Students should feel comfortable to share "their whole selves" in the application process, the administration said. Previously, many students had expressed confusion about whether the court's decision blocked them from discussing their race in essays and interviews.

The administration clarified that colleges don't need to ignore race as they choose where to focus their



recruiting efforts. The court's decision doesn't forbid schools from targeting recruiting efforts toward schools that predominately serve students of color or low-income students, it says.

Countering a directive from Students for Fair Admissions, the new guidance says colleges can legally collect data about the race of students and applicants, as long as it doesn't influence admissions decisions.

Echoing previous comments from President Joe Biden, the guidance urges colleges to rethink policies that tend to favor white, wealthy applicants. "Nothing in the decision prevents an institution from determining whether preferences for legacy students or children of donors, for example, run counter to efforts to promote equal opportunities for all students," the guidance said.

At the same time, the Justice and Education departments warned that they're ready to investigate if schools fail to provide equal access to students of all races, adding that the administration "will vigorously enforce civil rights protections."

The guidance arrives as colleges work to avoid the type of diversity decline that has been seen in some states that previously ended affirmative action, including in California and Michigan. Selective colleges in those states saw sharp decreases in minority student enrollment, and some have struggled for decades to recover.

## Trump assails judge in 2020 election case after she warned him not to make inflammatory remarks

By MICHELLE L. PRICE Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — Donald Trump is assailing the federal judge overseeing the election conspiracy case against him, days after she warned him not to make inflammatory statements about the case.

The former president made posts Monday on his social media network calling U.S. District Judge Tanya Chutkan "highly partisan" and "VERY BIASED & UNFAIR!" because of her past comments in a separate case overseeing the sentencing of one of the defendants charged in the Jan. 6, 2021, riot at the U.S. Capitol.

Chutkan in a hearing Friday imposed a protective order in the case limiting what evidence handed over by prosecutors the former president and his legal team can publicly disclose. She warned Trump's lawyers that his defense should be mounted in the courtroom and "not on the internet."

Trump posted about the case online anyway, firing off about the judge.

A spokesperson for special counsel Jack Smith declined to comment Monday.

Prosecutors sought the protective order after calling attention to another earlier post on Trump's social media platform, in which he said he would be "coming after" those who "go after" him. The prosecutors said improper sharing of evidence could have a "harmful chilling effect on witnesses."

Chutkan said that if anyone makes "inflammatory" statements about the case, she would be inclined to move more quickly to trial to prevent any intimidation of witnesses or contamination of the jury pool.

The judge agreed with Trump's defense team on a looser version of a protective order barring the public release only of materials deemed sensitive, like grand jury material. But prosecutors consider most of the evidence in the case to be sensitive, and she largely sided with the government on what will get that label and protections.

Protective orders are standard in criminal cases to protect the disclosure of sensitive information that could impact the trial.

In his social media post Monday, Trump quoted from remarks Chutkan made in a 2022 sentencing hearing for Christine Priola, an Ohio woman who pleaded guilty last year to obstructing Congress' certification of Biden's electoral victory - one of the same charges Trump is facing.

"The people who mobbed that Capitol were there in fealty, in loyalty, to one man -- not to the Constitution, of which most of the people who come before me seem woefully ignorant; not to the ideals of this country, and not to the principles of democracy," Chutkan said, according to a transcript of the October 2022 hearing. "It's a blind loyalty to one person who, by the way, remains free to this day."

Trump has indicated his legal team will ask Chutkan to recuse herself from the case, which judges are supposed to do when their "impartiality might reasonably be questioned."

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But David Weinstein, a former federal prosecutor, said Chutkan's comment won't help Trump's case that he needs a new judge.

"I understand why he's trying to twist her words and use them against her, but I don't think it crosses the line," said Weinstein, now a white collar criminal defense attorney.

Weinstein said Trump appears to be trying to "egg her on into doing something that's going to give him the grounds to file a motion to recuse."

"She has to careful not to take the bait," he said.

Prosecutors with special counsel Smith's team have asked the judge to set a Jan. 2 trial date, which is less than two weeks before Iowa's first-in-the-nation caucuses. That prompted other angry posts online from Trump last week.

Trump and his lawyers claimed prosecutors' proposed protective order that sought to prevent the public release of all evidence they provide the defense would violate his First Amendment rights of free speech. And the Republican has vowed to keep talking about the case—and his other legal challenges—as he campaigns again for the White House.

Trump spoke about the case while he was campaigning at the Iowa State Fair over the weekend, declining to tell reporters whether he would comply with the protective order. He said, "The whole thing is a fake — it was put out by Biden, because they can't win an election the fair way."

Trump, in another post Monday, wrote of Chutkan: "She obviously wants me behind bars. VERY BIASED & UNFAIR!"

Chutkan, a former assistant public defender who was nominated to the bench by President Barack Obama, was confirmed to the bench with Republican support in a 95-0 vote in the Senate in 2014.

She has been one of the toughest punishers of rioters who stormed the Capitol. federal judges in Washington have sentenced nearly 600 defendants for their roles in the attack, which was fueled by Trump's baseless claims that the 2020 presidential election was stolen by fraud.

The case cited in Trump's post, however, is one where Chutkan actually imposed a sentence that was lighter than prosecutors sought. She sentenced Priola to 15 months in prison. Federal prosecutors had asked for 18 months.

## Argentine peso plunges after shaggy-haired rightist who admires Trump comes first in primary vote

By DANIEL POLITI Associated Press

BUENOS AIRES, Argentina (AP) — The Argentine peso plunged Monday after a shaggy-haired 52-year-old anti-establishment candidate who admires former President Donald Trump came first in primary elections that will help determine the country's next president.

Javier Milei rocked Argentina's political establishment Sunday by receiving the biggest share of primary votes for presidential candidates in the October general election to determine who leads a nation battered by economic woes.

Milei wants to replace the peso with the dollar, and says that Argentina's Central Bank should be abolished, and that he thinks climate change is a lie. He has characterized sex education as a ploy to destroy the family and has said that he believes the sale of human organs should be legal and it should be easier for Argentines to own handguns.

Argentina's government decided to devalue the local currency by 20% early Monday morning after the surprising Milei showing that turned Argentina into the latest country where voters have chosen an outsider candidate to express anger against the status quo. Two mainstream political coalitions have traded power for a decade in Argentina.

Operators were watching nervously Monday as the value of the peso also decreased in the parallel, or blue, market, dropping 12% by early afternoon.

Argentina requires that citizens vote, and 69 percent of the country's 35 million voters went to the polls, each choosing candidates for positions ranging from local councilman to president.

The major parties had contested races to be its presidential candidate. Milei was uncontested, and got

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a few points more than the candidates of parties that have dominated Argentine politics.

After doing much better than expected, the upstart candidate who gained notoriety and a rockstar-like following by angrily ranting against the "political caste" is now a real contender for the presidency.

With around 97% of polling locations reporting, Milei had around 30% of the total vote, according to official results. The candidates in the main opposition coalition, United for Change, were at 28% and the current governing coalition, Union for the Homeland, had 27%.

In order to win the vote in two months, Milei would have to increase his share of the nation's votes by 15%, a high hurdle even in a nation where voters tend to favor candidates they see as winners.

If one candidate doesn't receive 45% of the vote, they would need 40% and a 10-point lead over the second-place candidate. Otherwise the race would go to a November runoff between the top two.

Celebrating in his election headquarters, Milei vowed to bring "an end to the parasitic, corrupt and useless political caste that exists in this country."

"Today we took the first step toward the reconstruction of Argentina," he said. "A different Argentina is impossible with the same people as always."

Milei has been a lawmaker in the lower house of Argentina's Congress since 2021.

Argentina is struggling with annual inflation over 100%, rising poverty and a rapidly depreciating currency, and Milei first attracted wider support by calling for the country to replace the peso with the U.S. dollar.

"I'm very happy, we're looking for a change. We're tired of living like this," Franco Lesertessur, 19, said as he celebrated outside Milei's election headquarters in downtown Buenos Aires. "All the countries that have been dollarized ended up moving forward and stopped having inflation."

The main opposition coalition, United for Change, moved more to the right as former Security Minister Patricia Bullrich, who made toughness on crime a centerpiece of her campaign, handily beat a more centrist contender.

In the currently governing coalition, Union for the Homeland, the more business friendly candidate — Economy Minister Sergio Massa — easily beat a leftist contender but still took an overall beating from voters frustrated over the poor state of the economy, finishing in third place for total votes.

At Milei's electoral headquarters, party leaders were ecstatic while people celebrated outside, expressing optimism that their candidate's support would only grow in the run-up to October.

"I like his ideas about freedom. His ideas don't scare me. People are free to choose what they want," said Orlando Sánchez, 26, a retail worker. "If criminals walk around with guns on their belts, why can't an ordinary citizen have one lawfully and with the proper documentation? People are clearly tired of politics, being constantly lied to."

## **A throng of interfaith leaders to focus on combating authoritarianism at global gathering in Chicago**

By DAVID CRARY AP National Writer

More than 6,000 people representing scores of religions and belief systems are expected to convene in Chicago starting Monday for what organizers bill as the world's largest gathering of interfaith leaders.

For the Parliament of the World's Religions, the week-long event marks a return to its roots — the organization was founded in Chicago in 1893. In the past 30 years, it has convened six times, most recently in Toronto in 2018.

Past gatherings have drawn participants from more than 80 nations. This week's speakers and presenters will represent Christianity, Islam, Judaism, Buddhism, Baha'i, Hinduism, Jainism, Zoroastrianism, Sikhism, Indigenous religions, paganism and other beliefs.

This year's theme is "A Call to Conscience: Defending Freedom and Human Rights," with a focus on combating authoritarianism around the world. Topics on the agenda include climate change, human rights, food insecurity, racism and women's rights.

"We will take a stand for the rights we're all at risk of losing," said the Rev. Stephen Avino, the organiza-

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tion's executive director.

Scheduled speakers include U.N. Secretary General António Guterres, former U.S. House Speaker Nancy Pelosi, Illinois Attorney General Kwame Raoul and actor Raiin Wilson, a member of the Baha'i faith. The keynote speaker will be Chicago Mayor Brandon Johnson.

Illustrative of the parliament's diversity, its program chair for this week's event is Phyllis Currott, a Wiccan priestess who as an author and lawyer has advocated for the legal rights of witches.

In a pre-conference statement, she assailed authoritarianism as "the most dangerous crisis confronting all of us today."

"This existential, expanding and global scourge is manifesting in tyrants and strongmen who commit crimes against humanity, suppress essential freedoms, subvert democracies and murder the truth with lies," she said. "They are fostering hate and the resurgence of antisemitism and Islamophobia, misogyny and racism."

Numerous cultural and educational events are taking place to complement the speeches and discussions, starting with a Parade of Faiths on Sunday that celebrated Chicago's diversity. Local faith, spiritual and cultural communities joined the parade, some accompanied by music and dance highlighting their history and traditions.

Among the upcoming events is "Guns to Garden Tools," featuring a blacksmith who will demonstrate how he melts down firearms to create gardening tools.

The parliament has no formal powers of any sort. And for all its diversity and global scope, it is not ideologically all-encompassing. Its participants, by and large, share a progressive outlook; conservative Catholics, evangelicals and Muslims — among others — have not embraced the movement.

Gene Zubovich, a history professor at the University of Buffalo, wrote about the 2018 Toronto gathering for the online news journal Religion & Politics.

"The Parliament can come off as an echo chamber of progressive faith traditions," he wrote. "Given the many religious tensions across the world, the real challenges of interfaith dialogue, and the self-selected crowd at Toronto, the universalist rhetoric could sound a little hollow."

However, he credited the the interfaith movement for its evolution over the decades.

"Its leadership is much more diverse and inclusive," he wrote. "Its politics is attentive to Indigenous issues, women's rights, and climate change."

Cardinal Blase Cupich, the Catholic archbishop of Chicago, is among the scheduled speakers this week. He has been urging Catholics in the archdiocese to engage in the event, saying it is in harmony with key priorities of Pope Francis.

The gathering "is an opportunity to live out the Holy Father's teaching that a core part of our identity as Catholics involves building friendship between members of different religious traditions," Cupich said in a message to the archdiocese last month. "Through our sharing of spiritual and ethical values, we get to know one another."

## **David McCormick is gearing up for a Senate run in Pennsylvania. But he lives in Connecticut**

By BRIAN SLODYSKO Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — David McCormick had a clear explanation for why his fellow Republican, Dr. Mehmet Oz, lost a critical Pennsylvania Senate seat last year: Voters viewed the daytime television celebrity as an interloper from New Jersey with limited ties to the state he hoped to represent.

"People want to know that the person that they're voting for 'gets it,'" McCormick, who narrowly lost to Oz in a GOP primary, said in March when asked to offer a postmortem of the general election defeat. "And part of 'getting it' is understanding that you just didn't come in yesterday."

As Republicans aim to gain the one seat they need to retake the Senate in next year's elections, McCormick is a top recruit. And before his anticipated campaign, he's working to avoid Oz's fate, frequently noting



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his upbringing in Pennsylvania, his ownership of a home in Pittsburgh and a family farm near Bloomsburg.

"I live in Pennsylvania," McCormick said during a March appearance on Texas Sen. Ted Cruz's podcast.

But the reality is more complex. While McCormick does own a home in Pittsburgh, a review of public records, real estate listings and footage from recent interviews indicates he still lives on Connecticut's "Gold Coast," one of the densest concentrations of wealth in America. The former hedge fund CEO rents a \$16 million mansion in Westport that features a 1,500-bottle wine cellar, an elevator and a "private waterfront resort" overlooking Long Island Sound.

The trappings of a wealthy enclave, well outside Pennsylvania, offer a jarring contrast with the political identity McCormick has sought to cultivate, which emphasizes his upbringing buck hunting, his Army service and his desire to serve his home state.

Whether voters care will be tested anew should McCormick formally launch a campaign to unseat three-term Democratic Sen. Bob Casey in the 2024 election, which will help determine partisan control of the chamber. Recent Senate history suggests that even favorite sons can be stung when loose ties to home become a campaign issue.

Chris Borick, a professor of political science at Muhlenberg College in Allentown, said McCormick has "more legitimate connections to Pennsylvania than Mehmet Oz." But he questioned the decision to spend significant time out-of-state, particularly given the decisive role that residency played in the 2022 matchup between Oz and Democratic Sen. John Fetterman.

"He spent a big chunk of time working for Wall Street and living in Connecticut," Borick said of McCormick. "There's nothing wrong with that choice — unless you want to be a U.S. senator from Pennsylvania."

He added, "As someone who is aware that he is going to have to confront this, it's questionable to not really devote yourself."

A spokeswoman for McCormick, Elizabeth Gregory, declined to make him available for an interview and would not say how much of his time he spends at his Connecticut mansion, which also boasts a spa, pool and heated pavilion nestled in an area that real estate listings describe as a "summer playground of America's wealthiest families."

"Dave has called Pennsylvania home for 30 years and served our country outside of Pennsylvania for an additional 13," she said. "It's the place he mailed letters back to when he served in Iraq and the place where three of his daughters were born."

She said, "While he maintains a residence in Connecticut as his daughters finish high school, Dave's home is in Pittsburgh and for the last 10 years he has owned a working farm in his hometown of Bloomsburg, which has been in the family for decades."

McCormick was raised in that Susquehanna River town, where his father was a local college president. Political ads emphasize a biography of high school sport, hunting and trimming Christmas trees on his family's farm.

His career since leaving Pennsylvania has been considerably more gilded.

After graduating West Point, McCormick served as an officer in the Gulf War and later earned a doctorate from Princeton. During the heady days of the dot-com bubble, McCormick was CEO of the internet auctioneering house FreeMarkets — amassing wealth as he steered the Pittsburgh-based company to a nearly \$500 million acquisition deal in 2004.

He served several years in President George W. Bush's administration, including a stint as a top deputy to then-Treasury Secretary Hank Paulson. Afterward, he joined the upper executive ranks of the global hedge fund behemoth Bridgewater Associates, eventually climbing to CEO. In 2022, McCormick and his wife, Dina Powell McCormick, a former Goldman Sachs executive, held a net worth that ranged between \$95.7 million and at least \$196.7 million, and included homes in Dallas and the Colorado Rockies, according to an analysis of a candidate financial disclosure he filed with the Senate last year.

Once McCormick set his sights on the U.S. Senate, he began to make some well-timed adjustments.

Three months before launching his first Senate run in January 2022, McCormick sold his family's \$6.5 million home in Fairfield, Connecticut. That was followed by the \$2.8 million purchase of a stately Tudor-style home in Pittsburgh's Squirrel Hill North neighborhood, records show.

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Around the same time, the Connecticut mansion, which he now lists as his home address in some public documents, was taken off the rental market.

McCormick has also not received a homestead tax exemption on his Pittsburgh home, a tax break reserved for an individual's primary place of residence. He voted in a Pennsylvania election for the first time in 16 years during the 2022 Republican primary, when he was on the ballot, voting records show.

When McCormick delivered his concession speech after losing to Oz by just over 900 votes, he was unequivocal about where he lived.

"We're not going anywhere. This is my home. This is our home," McCormick said. "This is where my dreams were launched, and this is where we plan to have a future."

Meanwhile, his children continued to attend a \$53,000-a-year Connecticut private school where one is still enrolled, according to the school's website.

In January, as McCormick started to eye another run, he shed his \$13.4 million condo on Manhattan's Upper East Side. A document signed by McCormick that was filed in connection with the sale was notarized in Westport, Connecticut, and lists the nearby beachfront home as his address.

This spring, McCormick participated in a series of virtual interviews from the kitchen of his Westport home. Distinguishing features in the background match pictures that were posted publicly before the McCormicks moved in.

A \$5,000 campaign contribution made in late March also lists the beachside house as McCormick's home.

McCormick's wealth, which he can channel into his political aspirations, makes him an attractive potential candidate to the Republican Washington establishment, which is cheering him to run again.

But it also presents an opportunity for Democrats, who are likely to seize on his ties to Wall Street in what is expected to again be one of the most competitive Senate matchups in the country.

"This is all dress up," said J.B. Poersch, the head of Senate Democrats TV spending campaign arm. "Covering up for the years that he spent as a hedge fund-monger appears to be just as important as pretending that he fits in."

## Today in History: August 15, Woodstock music festival opens

By The Associated Press undefined

Today in History

Today is Tuesday, Aug. 15, the 227th day of 2023. There are 138 days left in the year.

Today's Highlight in History:

On Aug. 15, 1969, the Woodstock Music and Art Fair opened in upstate New York.

On this date:

In 1057, Macbeth, King of Scots, was killed in battle by Malcolm, the eldest son of King Duncan, whom Macbeth had slain.

In 1769, Napoleon Bonaparte was born on the island of Corsica.

In 1914, the Panama Canal officially opened as the SS Ancon crossed the just-completed waterway between the Pacific and Atlantic oceans.

In 1935, humorist Will Rogers and aviator Wiley Post were killed when their airplane crashed near Point Barrow in the Alaska Territory.

In 1944, during World War II, Allied forces landed in southern France in Operation Dragoon.

In 1945, in a pre-recorded radio address, Japan's Emperor Hirohito announced that his country had accepted terms of surrender for ending World War II.

In 1947, India became independent after some 200 years of British rule.

In 1961, as workers began constructing a Berlin Wall made of concrete, East German soldier Conrad Schumann leapt to freedom over a tangle of barbed wire.

In 1971, President Richard Nixon announced a 90-day freeze on wages, prices and rents.

In 1989, F.W. de Klerk was sworn in as acting president of South Africa, one day after P.W. Botha resigned as the result of a power struggle within the National Party.

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In 1998, 29 people were killed by a car bomb that tore apart the center of Omagh (OH'-mah), Northern Ireland; a splinter group calling itself the Real IRA claimed responsibility.

In 2003, bouncing back from the largest blackout in U.S. history, cities from the Midwest to Manhattan restored power to millions of people.

Ten years ago: President Barack Obama scrapped plans for joint military exercises with Egypt, where spiraling violence in and around Cairo was claiming hundreds of lives. A powerful car bomb ripped through a crowded southern Beirut stronghold of Hezbollah, killing at least 27 people.

Five years ago: President Donald Trump revoked the security clearance of ex-CIA Director John Brennan in an unprecedented act of retribution against a vocal critic; Trump later told The Wall Street Journal that Brennan was among those he held responsible for the Russia investigation. In a speech blasting Trump and his "Make America Great Again" slogan, New York Gov. Andrew Cuomo said America "was never that great," and wouldn't be great until all Americans share true equality. (Cuomo would later say that his words had been "inartful," and that "America has always been great.") A suicide bomber struck a private education center in a Shiite neighborhood of the Afghan capital, killing 34 young men and women; the Islamic State group claimed responsibility.

One year ago: Prosecutors in Atlanta told lawyers for Rudy Giuliani that he was a target of their criminal investigation into possible illegal attempts by then-President Donald Trump and others to interfere in the 2020 general election in Georgia. It was the latest step as the probe edged closer to the former president. An Iranian government official denied that Tehran was involved in the stabbing of author Salman Rushdie. But the spokesman for Iran's Foreign Ministry sought to justify the attack, saying Iran did not "consider anyone deserving reproach, blame or even condemnation, except for himself and his supporters." Legendary college coach Pete Carril, who led Princeton to 11 appearances in the NCAA basketball tournament, died at age 92.

Today's Birthdays: Actor Jim Dale is 88. Actor Pat Priest is 87. Retired Supreme Court Justice Stephen Breyer is 85. U.S. Rep. Maxine Waters, D-Calif., is 85. Musician Pete York (Spencer Davis Group) is 81. Author-journalist Linda Ellerbee is 79. Songwriter Jimmy Webb is 77. Rock singer-musician Tom Johnston (The Doobie Brothers) is 75. Actor Phyllis Smith is 74. Britain's Princess Anne is 73. Actor Tess Harper is 73. Actor Larry Mathews is 68. Actor Zeljko Ivanek (ZEHL'-koh eh-VAHN'-ehk) is 66. Actor-comedian Rondell Sheridan is 65. Rock singer-musician Matt Johnson (The The) is 62. Movie director Alejandro Gonzalez Inarritu (ihn-YAH'-ee-tu) is 60. Philanthropist Melinda Gates is 59. Country singer Angela Rae (Wild Horses) is 57. Actor Peter Hermann is 56. Actor Debra Messing is 55. Actor Anthony Anderson is 53. Actor Ben Affleck is 51. Singer Mikey Graham (Boyzone) is 51. Actor Natasha Henstridge is 49. Actor Nicole Paggi is 46. Christian rock musician Tim Foreman (Switchfoot) is 45. Actor Emily Kinney is 39. Figure skater Jennifer Kirk is 39. Latin pop singer Belinda is 34. Actor Courtney Hope is 34. Rock singer Joe Jonas (The Jonas Brothers) is 34. Actor-singer Carlos PenaVega is 34. Actor Jennifer Lawrence is 33.