

Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, Aug. 22, 2023 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 059 ~ 1 of 57

- [1- Upcoming Events](#)
- [2- Newsweek Bulletin](#)
- [3- SD NewsWatch: South Dakota rejects federal food funding despite 25,000 children going hungry](#)
- [8- Kory is turning 40](#)
- [9- South Dakota Democratic Party Names Shane Merrill Interim Chair](#)
- [9- Roberts County Fatal Crash](#)
- [10- Obit: Ruth Pray](#)
- [10- Single Lane Closures Planned for Northbound Interstate 29 in Brookings](#)
- [11- Adult Mosquito Control](#)
- [12- SD SearchLight: Medical marijuana cards surpass 11,500](#)
- [13- SD SearchLight: Noem says National Guard deployment to southern border will begin next month](#)
- [14- SD SearchLight: Democratic voter registration falls behind 'other' category in South Dakota](#)
- [14- SD SearchLight: Summit adjusts proposed pipeline route in North Dakota](#)
- [16- Weather Pages](#)
- [20- Daily Devotional](#)
- [21- 2023 Community Events](#)
- [22- Subscription Form](#)
- [23- Lottery Numbers](#)
- [24- News from the Associated Press](#)

Tuesday, Aug. 22

Senior Menu: Chicken fried steak, mashed potatoes and gravy, oriental blend vegetables, fruit, frosted brownie, whole wheat bread.

Faculty In-Service

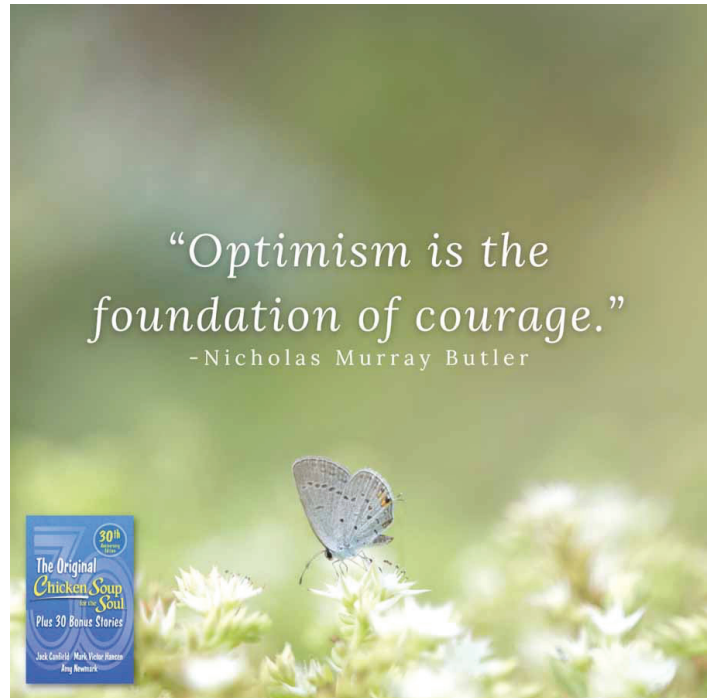
Northeast Conference Boys Golf at Redfield, 10 a.m.

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: Bible Study, 10 a.m.

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



Wednesday, Aug. 23

FIRST DAY OF SCHOOL

School Breakfast: Cereal.

School Lunch: Pizza crunchers, cooked carrots.

Senior Menu: Chicken cordon bleu hot dish, broccoli with carrots, pears, chocolate pudding, whole wheat bread.

United Methodist: Community Coffee Hour, 9:30 a.m.

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

Thursday, Aug. 24

School Breakfast: Breakfast pizza.

School Lunch: Chicken strips, fries.

Senior Menu: Salisbury steak, mashed potatoes, carrots, apricots, whole wheat bread.

Volleyball hosts Hamlin, 6 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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Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, Aug. 22, 2023 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 059 ~ 2 of 57

The Bulletin by Newsweek

World in Brief

Tropical Storm Hilary drained the southwestern U.S. with record rains and flash flooding, with showers expected throughout Tuesday. The storm weakened to a post-tropical cyclone as it headed north, triggering flood warnings for millions of people in multiple states.

President Joe Biden was met with anger from some residents as he arrived in Maui, Hawaii, where he told survivors that the nation would "do everything possible to help you recover." At least 114 people have died, and nearly 1,000 are still missing.

Florida Gov. Ron DeSantis promised his supporters that he would "crack down" on federal prosecutors if elected president next year "to make sure they're enforcing the laws and upholding the civil rights of their citizens."

American sprinter Sha'Carri Richardson ran the 100 meters in 10.65 seconds to win her first-ever world title at the 2023 track and field world championships in Budapest, Hungary on Monday.

Former Prime Minister Thaksin Shinawatra returned to Thailand after more than 15 years in self-imposed exile and ahead of a vote that will determine the country's next leader. He was sentenced to eight years in prison over corruption convictions.

Wagner Group leader Yevgeny Prigozhin posted his first video to social media since leading a mutiny against Moscow in late June, claiming he is in Africa to fight against "ISIS and al-Qaeda." Prigozhin's location could not be independently verified.

In the ongoing war in Ukraine, Kyiv on Monday reported gains in the tactically important village of Robotyne days after announcing it had liberated Urozhaine from Russian forces, as its counteroffensive against Moscow continues..

TALKING POINTS

"I think it's going to be monumentally important that there be cameras, at the very least, in the Fulton County courtroom, and I also think that it's going to be something that Donald himself is going to regret. I think his legal team has asked for cameras in the federal courtroom, and I think pretty quickly they're going to find out that that's really not something they wanted, after all," former President Donald Trump's niece, Mary Trump, said during a recent appearance on MSNBC's The Katie Phang Show.

"Lauri is my neighbor. She owned two shops called Mag Pi. She put up pride flags to show her support for love in all its forms. She was not gay. She was an ally. A wife, a mother, a friend. Still, hate walked in with a gun and killed her," film and television writer Katherine Fugate wrote of Laura Ann Carleton, the woman who was fatally shot over a Pride flag she had outside her business in Cedar Glen, California.

"How can I not worry, this is largely a matter of life. It's all very hard. But, nothing, I hope that we can manage, that the leadership of Roskosmos will have a desire, even a conscious need to repeat this experiment," Russian scientist and astronomer Mikhail Marov said after being hospitalized following Russian spacecraft Luna-25's crash on the surface of the moon..

WHAT TO WATCH IN THE DAYS AHEAD

The 2023 BRICS Summit begins in South Africa. Brazilian President Luiz Lula da Silva, Chinese President Xi Jinping, Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi, and South African President Cyril Ramaphosa meet in person. Russian President Vladimir Putin will attend virtually amid an international arrest warrant against him.



**SOUTH DAKOTA
NEWS WATCH**

Inform. Enlighten. Illuminate.

South Dakota rejects federal food funding despite 25,000 children going hungry

Bart Pfankuch

South Dakota News Watch

At a time when an estimated 25,000 South Dakota children struggle with hunger, the state decided against applying for a federal program that would have provided \$7.5 million to feed low-income kids this summer.

The federal funding was available through a program called Pandemic Electronic Benefits Transfer (P-EBT). It would have helped an estimated 63,000 South Dakota children receive healthy food during summer 2023.

The U.S. Department of Agriculture funding effort began during the height of the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020. Congress recently approved it as a permanent program.

The extension was seen as a victory for families and groups that advocate policies to keep children fed. Rather than requiring families or children to travel to specific meal sites to get food, the P-EBT program provides payment cards to families so they can purchase eligible healthy foods at any participating store at any time.

The offices of Gov. Kristi Noem and South Dakota Department of Education told News Watch the state is not applying because summer meal programs are already offered and it's too challenging to administer the program.

That decision drew the ire of Sioux Falls advocate Cathy Brechtelsbauer, who has fought hunger for decades as leader of the organization Bread for the World.

"Our kids in South Dakota are missing out on \$7.5 million worth of food, and it's not like they're necessarily getting it someplace else," she said. "This is like taking food away from kids, and I hope we don't want to be that kind of state."

South Dakota is one of seven states that did not apply.

Noem spokesman Ian Fury did not provide News Watch an interview with the governor but did send an email with a statement.

"Federal money often comes with strings attached, and more of it is often not a good thing," Fury wrote. "Because of South Dakota's record low unemployment rate, our robust existing food programs, and the administrative burden associated with running this pro-



Students at East Middle School in Rapid City have lunch in the school cafeteria. With high inflation and expiration of a federal free student meal program, some students are having a harder time getting the nutrition they need to succeed in school. (Photo: Bart Pfankuch, South Dakota News Watch)



Ian Fury

Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, Aug. 22, 2023 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 059 ~ 4 of 57

gram, we declined these particular federal dollars.”

When asked to explain the administrative challenges surrounding the program, Department of Education spokeswoman Nancy Van Der Weide said the state found it difficult to obtain enough information about children to administer the program effectively, even though the state did participate in Pandemic EBT in 2020 and 2021. DOE and the Department of Social Services were responsible for applying to the program.

“Implementing the program was difficult because South Dakota is a state that prioritizes local control more than most states,” Van Der Weide, who also declined an interview request, wrote to News Watch in an email.

“Because of this, information about individual students is not shared to state government entities en masse. This made it very difficult for the state government to get enough details to adequately administer the program.”



Rapid City middle-school teacher Bill Egan examines his supply of snacks and Lunchables that he gives to students who can't afford to eat at school or who need a snack for any reason in this News Watch file photo. (Photo: Bart Pfankuch, South

Dakota News Watch)



The children who attend the Boys & Girls Club of Standing Rock help tend to a summer garden where they learn about, and also consume, healthy vegetables. (Photo: Courtesy Boys & Girls Club of Standing

Rock)

Brechtelsbauer was shocked that the state was rejecting federal money based on perceived challenges in administering the program.

“That just blows my mind,” she said. “How can we think like that when we’re talking about kids needing food? Why can’t we handle things as well as 43 other states?”

Thousands of meals provided each summer

Van Der Weide pointed out that the South Dakota Summer Food Service Program provided children with more than 303,000 meals and about 20,500 snacks at 83 disbursement sites during summer 2022.

That federally funded summer meal program is part of a larger ecosystem of efforts to get food to children during the summer, including by statewide organizations such as Feeding South Dakota and local efforts run by Boys & Girls Clubs and other charitable organizations.

And yet, according to Feeding South Dakota, about 24,750 South Dakota children, or about 11% of the school-aged population, remained “food insecure” in the state in 2022.

The group defines food insecurity as “the consistent lack of food to have a healthy life because of your economic situation.”

Feeding South Dakota provided about 8,800 meals to children in Sioux Falls and Rapid City through its backpack program over 10 weeks this summer. It also offered food to needy people in 91 other communities through monthly visits

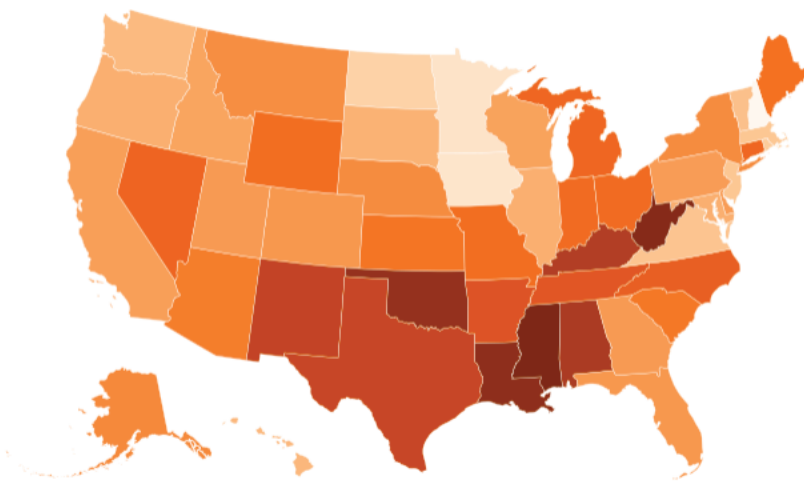
Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, Aug. 22, 2023 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 059 ~ 5 of 57

Household food insecurity rates by state, 2018-2020

Hover or tap on each state to see specific data.

5  20



Source: [Food Resource and Action Center](#) • Graphic: Michael Klinski/SDNewsWatch



by its mobile food unit, according to Stacey Andernacht, communications director for the nonprofit.

Van Der Weide did not answer a question posed by News Watch about whether the state would apply for P-EBT funding in coming years.

Hunger higher in rural and reservation areas

Finding the money to afford healthy food, at a time when prices for food and fuel are on the rise, is difficult everywhere but especially challenging in rural and reservation areas of the state, Andernacht told News Watch in an email.

"Rural communities do experience a higher food insecurity rate for many reasons – there are few grocery stores, transportation can be an issue, employment opportunities are less, and the logistics of getting food to these communities comes at a higher expense," she wrote.

The increased federal funding for summer meals and provision of free meals to all public school students during the pandemic were effective at reducing hunger and food insecurity across the state, Andernacht said. Losing access to another food provision program could increase the hardship on South Dakota families struggling to make ends meet, she said.

When free meals for all public school students ended in fall 2022, the agency saw a 20% rise in usage of its mobile food pantries, which served roughly 13,000 families each month from July 2022 to June 2023, Andernacht said.

Students who qualify as low-income can still receive free or reduced-price meals at school. But the end of the pandemic free meal program caused many non-qualifying South Dakota children to go without meals at school or fall into arrears in trying to pay.

"We hear from those using our programs that without those pandemic-era benefits, and with the increasing inflation they are finding it difficult to afford household needs such as housing, utilities, and medication and also put food on their tables," she wrote.

South Dakota received \$80 million for food during COVID

South Dakota did participate in the Pandemic EBT food program in 2020 and 2021, when the program provided funding for meals during both school and non-school periods, according to federal records.

In spring 2020 the state received about \$13.4 million and provided services to an estimated 47,000 students. In the 2020-21 school year, the state received about \$36 million and served around 46,000 students in schools and daycares, records show. And in summer 2021, South Dakota received about \$30 million and served around 79,000 students.

But the state did not participate in the program in summer 2022 or 2023, which has placed a greater burden on families and children already trying to fight off hunger, said Kelsey Boone, a policy analyst at the Food Research & Action Center, a group that battles hunger among adults and children.

"The general trends we've seen in the country, especially after emergency allotment nationwide ended, there has been an increase in food insecurity and decreasing allotments families get," Boone said in an

Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, Aug. 22, 2023 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 059 ~ 6 of 57



Marcella Yellow Hammer of McLaughlin, S.D., is shown in a family snapshot with her grandchildren. Yellow Hammer runs the Boys & Girls Club of Standing Rock and also cares for some of her grandchildren at her home. (Photo: Courtesy Marcella Yellow Hammer)

interview with News Watch.

Due to inflation and other ongoing transportation and financial hardships, it has become even more difficult for families to feed their children outside of the traditional school year, Boone said.

"On the child nutrition side of things, summer is the hungriest time of year for students," she said. "Not having enough access to food is detrimental to physical health, development and well-being. And in the summer, it also leads to learning loss. Pandemic EBT has been a great burst of nutrition during the summer months, which is very beneficial to enhancing learning and growth."

Flexibility to get food easier and helps beyond SNAP

The P-EBT program is also beneficial because it allows for flexible spending for qualifying low-income families beyond what they may receive in Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program benefits, Boone said. Furthermore, she said, the P-EBT program aids people who make slightly too much income

to qualify for SNAP, formerly known as food stamps.

For families on SNAP, it gives them an extra cushion to be able to buy adequate food for the month," Boone said. "For families that aren't on SNAP, it still gives them a bit of extra wiggle room so they can go out and buy maybe an extra loaf of bread or something to tide them over."

Tribal governments were not able to apply for Pandemic EBT funding but will be eligible under the new, expanded summer P-EBT program, Boone said.

"Expanding this program to those areas is going to be a game-changer for a lot of these individuals living on reservations and in rural communities," she said.

"Having the availability of a nutrition benefit on an EBT card is going to be a lot easier and less of a burden on families than having to travel to a meal site."

Pockets of poverty remain in rural South Dakota

Marcella Yellow Hammer knows firsthand the challenges that families in north-central South Dakota deal with in keeping their children fed.

Yellow Hammer, 76, runs the Boys & Girls Club of Standing Rock, a youth services facility that provides a safe place for youth in the McLaughlin area to have opportunities for education, recreation and — during the summer — a healthy breakfast or lunch.

For 10 weeks during the summer, the club serves meals to any child 18 and under who shows up during designated meal periods, Yellow Hammer said. Children are served milk, a fruit or vegetable and a healthy protein because many are unable to get a good meal at home.

"This is a very poverty-stricken area," she said of the region just west of the Missouri River that is home to part of the Standing Rock Indian Reservation. "It's one of the counties that has the greatest level of poverty in our homes."

According to the U.S. Census, Corson County has the second-lowest median household income in South Dakota at roughly \$38,000 a year. About 45% of the county population is under 18 years of age, and 42% of the population lives in poverty, the 2022 Census showed.

Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, Aug. 22, 2023 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 059 ~ 7 of 57

Single parents, hungry children

This summer, the club's summer meals program has attracted up to 30 children a day, and yet the community need remains far from met, Yellow Hammer said.

"These parents are single mothers, single dads, single grandmothers, and many are not working," she said.

During the school year, the club can serve food to children in first through sixth grades, though sometimes mothers bring in infants who are able to eat solid food to make sure they are fed.

Yellow Hammer said the free meals become even more important the further away families get from the 10th of each month, when they typically receive their reissued monthly food stamps.

The COVID-19 pandemic created even greater challenges to keeping children fed because more than 120 daily meals had to be cooked on a single residential stove and dropped off at individual homes each day, Yellow Hammer said.

Some children in the area suffer and may go hungry because their parents or caretakers are dealing with their own problems and do not prepare their children to leave the home to get a meal or are unable to provide them transportation to the club, she said.

Some children are allowed to stay up late and sleep well into the day, forcing them to miss meal times at the club, Yellow Hammer said.

When pandemic-era food funding was curtailed in 2022, Yellow Hammer said, all the difficulties in keeping low-income children in the area fed were compounded. Any federal funding the state could have qualified for would have helped families in the area served by the club, she said.

"Many of our families are out of food before the 10th of the month," Yellow Hammer said. "I know one woman who told me, 'My kids come to the Boys & Girls Club because if they stayed home, they wouldn't have anything to eat, so they come to the club and get a meal, and I'm very thankful for it.'"

— This article was produced by South Dakota News Watch, a non-profit journalism organization located online at sdnewswatch.org.



Two children play a game at the Boys & Girls Club of Standing Rock in McLaughlin. The club provides a safe place for children to hang out and also to get healthy meals during the summer. (Photo: Courtesy Boys & Girls Club of Standing Rock)



ABOUT BART PFANKUCH

Bart Pfankuch, Rapid City, S.D., is the content director for South Dakota News Watch. A Wisconsin native, he is a former editor of the Rapid City Journal and also worked at newspapers in Florida. Bart has spent more than 30 years as a reporter, editor and writing coach.

Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, Aug. 22, 2023 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 059 ~ 8 of 57

Kory is turning 40

Come join in on the fun

Saturday, August 26, 2023

At 4:00 at the Other Place Bar in Andover, SD



South Dakota Democratic Party Names Shane Merrill Interim Chair

Ft. Pierre, South Dakota- At a special SCC meeting in Ft. Pierre this past Saturday, Shane Merrill was named the South Dakota Democratic Party's interim chair. "I look forward to working with other members to build a stronger South Dakota Democratic Party." -Shane Merrill Interim Chair.

Shane is a farmer from Parker, SD. He has been an active Democrat since the age of 18. Shane got his start working on the Stephanie Herseth- Sandlin campaign as well as the Tom Jones for State House campaign. He became active with the Turner County Democrats and was soon elected vice chair. In 2014, Shane ran for city council in Parker. At age 22, he was elected the youngest council member in Parker's history. Two years later, Shane ran for state senate, a race he narrowly lost.

Shane has continued to be an active member of the South Dakota Democratic Party serving two terms on the party executive board. He was awarded the Richard Kneip Young Democrat Award in 2022 for his work in grassroots organizing. "We are excited to have Shane lead our organization." -Larry Olsen SDDP Treasurer.

Roberts County Fatal Crash

What: Two Vehicle Fatal crash

Where: 13379 Whipple Road, 15 miles south of Sisseton, S.D.

When: 11:16 a.m., Saturday, Aug 19, 2023

Driver No. 1: Male, 31, minor injuries

Vehicle No. 1: 2014 Chevrolet Equinox

Driver No. 2: Female, 37, fatal injuries

Vehicle No. 2: 2012 John Deere Gator

ROBERTS COUNTY, S.D.- One person has died from injuries sustained in a two-vehicle crash Saturday, 15 miles south of Sisseton, S.D.

The names of the persons involved have not been released pending notification of family members.

Preliminary crash information indicates a 2014 Chevrolet Equinox was traveling northbound on Whipple Road. A 2012 John Deere Gator was traveling north on Whipple road and turned on their blinker to turn left into an approach. The Equinox went to pass the Gator and the front passenger side of the Equinox struck the front driver side of the Gator as it was turning.

The 31-year-old male driver of the Chevrolet Equinox received minor injuries.

He was not wearing a seatbelt.

The 37-year-old female driver of the Gator was taken to Coteau des Prairies hospital. She passed away due to injuries from the crash on Sunday evening.

She was not wearing a seatbelt.

South Dakota's Highway Patrol is investigating the crash. All information released so far is only preliminary.

The Life of Ruth Pray



Mass of Christian Burial for Ruth Pray will be 10:30 a.m., Thursday, August 24th at St. Elizabeth Ann Seton Catholic Church, Groton. Father Gregory Tschakert will officiate. Burial will follow in Union Cemetery, Groton under the direction of Paetznick-Garness Funeral Chapel, Groton.

Visitation will be held for one hour prior to services.

Ruth was born on December 16, 1927 at Shawno, Wisconsin to Harry and Rose (Skarlupka) Kienast. She attended Pembroke country school in Wetonka and later Central High School in Aberdeen. Ruth was united in marriage with Robert Pray, Sr. on December 19, 1946 in Groton. They lived on a farm in Putney Township until their retirement in 1995.

Ruth was a member of St. Elizabeth Ann Seton Catholic Church, where she served as President of the Altar Society. She also belonged to the Groton Legion Auxiliary, Aberdeen Moose Lodge and Groton Senior Citizens. Ruth loved to garden, play cards and work in her yard. She enjoyed bird watching, especially finches and purple martins.

Celebrating her life are her children, Jeanette (Dave) Radcliffe of Spirit Lake, Iowa, Jill (Ronald) Krueger of Groton, Robert, Jr. (Laurie) Pray of Groton, 9 grandchildren, 22 great-grandchildren and 8 great-great-grandchildren.

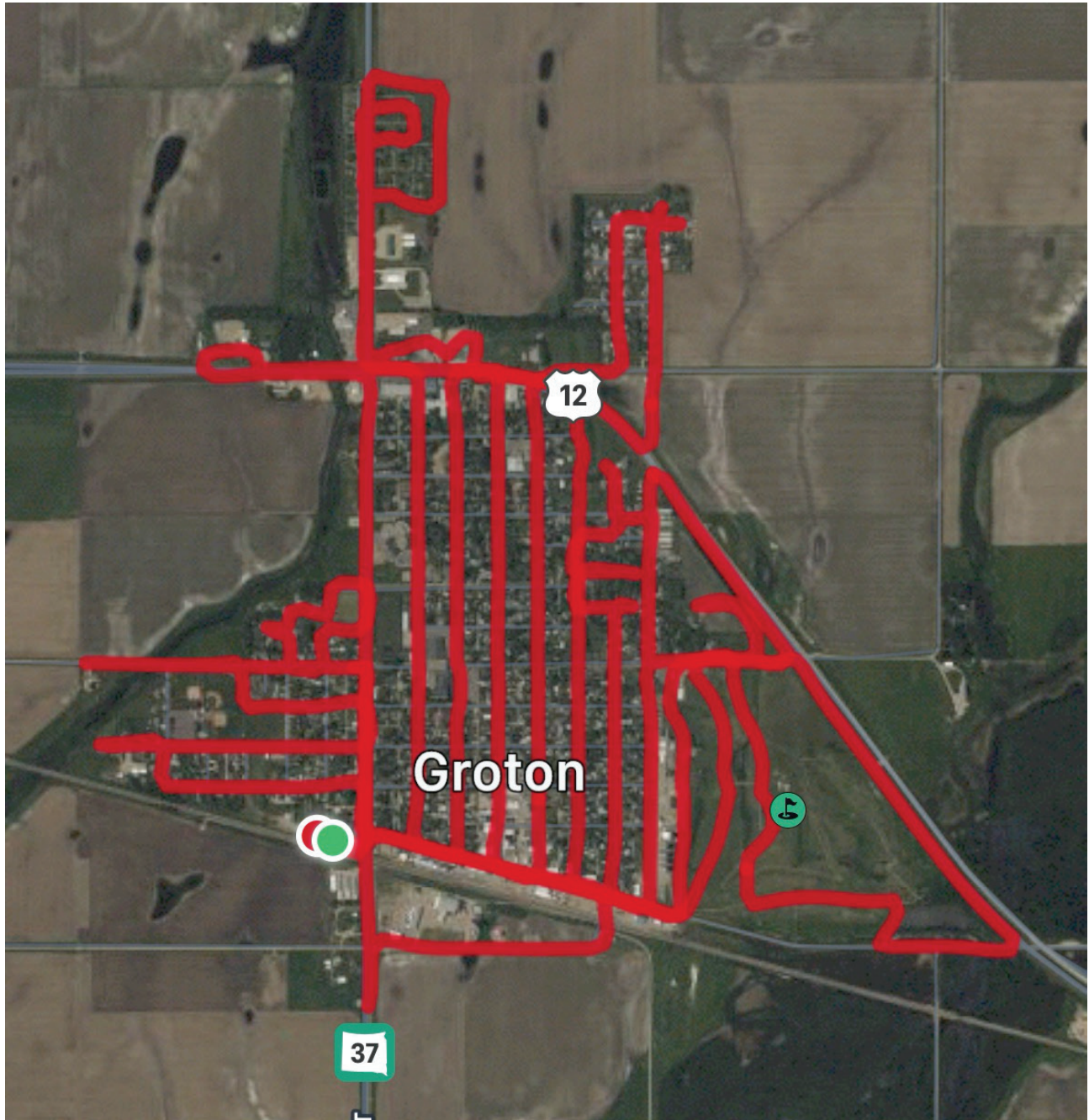
Preceding her in death were her parents, her husband, one sister, Carol Thomas, her brother, Henry Kienast, seven half sisters, and one grandchild.

Casketbearers will be her grandsons: Troy Janisch, Todd Janisch, Jeremy Krueger, Bryce Krueger, Chad Pray and Charlie Pray.

Single Lane Closures Planned for Northbound Interstate 29 in Brookings

BROOKINGS, S.D. – On Wednesday, Aug. 23, 2023, construction crews plan to implement a single lane closure in the northbound lanes of Interstate 29 near exit 130, immediately adjacent to the Brookings 20th Street Interchange. Construction crews will begin installing traffic control to close the driving lane for an anticipated period of two weeks. Crews will then switch the closure to the I-29 northbound passing lane for an additional period of two weeks. During the month-long closure, crews will be working on repairing concrete pavement panels.

A speed reduction of 65 mph will be in effect on I-29 through the single lane closure zone with a reduction to 45 mph when work is being completed directly adjacent to the roadway. A formal width restriction will not be in place, but motorists should be aware that a maximum of 22 feet of lateral space will be available between the guardrail and traffic control directly beneath the bridge structure on I-29.



Adult Mosquito Control

Adult Mosquito Control was conducted Monday evening in Groton. Five gallons of Evolver 4x4 was used. Wind was ENE at 10-15 mph. Temperature was in the 80s.



SOUTH DAKOTA SEARCHLIGHT

<https://southdakotasearchlight.com>

Medical marijuana cards surpass 11,500

Pop-up clinics remain top concern for oversight committee

BY: MAKENZIE HUBER - AUGUST 21, 2023 5:45 PM

More than 11,500 South Dakotans hold medical marijuana cards two years after medical cannabis became legal in South Dakota.

That's well ahead of projections made by the state when the program first started in 2021, said Jennifer Seale, the state Department of Health's medical cannabis program administrator. The state began issuing cards in November 2021 after South Dakotans voted to legalize medical marijuana in 2020.

Originally, the state had anticipated 6,000 cardholders by 2024, Seale told members of the Medical Marijuana Oversight Committee in Pierre on Monday. The committee is made up of legislators and other appointees who review the state-run medical marijuana program and make recommendations to improve it.

"We've doubled the amount that we were projecting to see in three years within two years," Seale said.

She added that the most common reasons or conditions South Dakotans cite when seeking medical marijuana cards include cancer, chronic pain, seizures, multiple sclerosis and severe muscle spasms.

New cards made up the bulk of the medical marijuana program's revenue in fiscal year 2023, which was \$1.37 million. But that revenue stream is uncertain, Seale said, once the number of medical marijuana cards plateaus or reaches a "saturation point."

Controversial pop-up clinics are one of the main ways South Dakotans are accessing medical marijuana cards, presenters told the committee. Pop-up clinics were highlighted as a problem at a previous committee meeting in October 2022, resulting in failed bills including one that would have limited medical marijuana clinics to certain facilities.

Rep. Fred Deutsch, R-Watertown, introduced the bills during the 2023 legislative session, which ended in March. On Monday, he recounted his experience obtaining a medical marijuana card in April, citing a lack of confidentiality because he could hear conversations between patients and the provider, and poor provider-patient relationship-building when he sat for his appointment. The appointment was not through Deutsch's primary care physician, but rather a nurse practitioner he hadn't met previously.

Deutsch also said the appointment lacked a thorough examination to determine if he needed the card. The appointment lasted less than 10 minutes, he added.

The committee plans to tackle the issue again — either through bills or recommendations to the Legislature.

Ideas include preventing people invested in the marijuana industry from running pop-up clinics, requiring continued medical education to issue cards, and capping the number of cards a provider can issue in a day.

While the fee for a medical marijuana card is \$75, pop-up clinics can charge a larger sum for the appointment. Deutsch said he paid about \$170 for his appointment.

Currently, there is no cap on the number of cards a provider can issue. The change would remove any "monetary incentive" to operate pop-up clinics, said Sen. Erin Tobin, R-Winner, who chairs the committee.

"You really just have good medicine after that if they're doing it because they believe in patients and trying to make them healthy," Tobin said, "and not necessarily because of a huge check at the end of the day when they fly home."

The committee also discussed other issues, including parolees currently being allowed to use medical marijuana when other drugs, such as alcohol, are off limits. Some on the committee said that circumvents the court's intention to keep parolees from using drugs or alcohol. The committee will revisit pop-up clinics

and other issues at its next meeting.

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

Noem says National Guard deployment to southern border will begin next month

BY: JOSHUA HAIAR - AUGUST 21, 2023 5:40 PM

Gov. Kristi Noem said during a press conference Monday that a previously announced South Dakota National Guard deployment to the border will begin Sept. 1.

Noem made the comments during a livestreamed appearance at the border with fellow Republican governors Greg Abbott of Texas, Kim Reynolds of Iowa, Jim Pillen of Nebraska and Kevin Stitt of Oklahoma. The governors reiterated their support for Texas' Operation Lone Star, an effort to strengthen border protections beyond the actions taken by the federal government.

Noem said the Biden administration's mismanagement of the border is allowing illegal drugs to flow across. "What we're literally witnessing is a warzone," Noem said. "I recognize what we are facing, that this really is a war. It's a war for our country and our federal laws and our constitution. They are threatening our sovereignty and the cartels are out for blood."

A Biden administration spokesperson responded to South Dakota Searchlight by saying border encounters this July were lower than in July 2022.

"This administration has led the largest expansion of lawful pathways in decades and we are committed to building a humane, safe, and orderly immigration system," the spokesperson said in an email. "Individuals who do not use the lawful pathways we've made available will continue to be presumed ineligible for asylum and they will be subject to prompt removal, a minimum five-year ban on reentry, and potential criminal prosecution."

The spokesman criticized actions by Abbott, including the placement of buoys in a waterway, which the spokesperson said "make it hard for the men and women of Border Patrol to do their jobs of securing the border, and put migrants and border agents in danger."

In June, Noem disclosed plans to send at least 50 South Dakota National Guard members to the border to assist Texas. She plans to pay for the deployment with state emergency and disaster funds. A previous South Dakota National Guard deployment to the border was funded partly by a private donor, and another previous deployment that was requested by the federal government was federally funded.

On Monday, Noem drew attention to challenges South Dakota faces, alleging that cartels sending drugs across the nation's southern border are operating freely on tribal reservations in the state. South Dakota's jurisdictional limitations, she said, hinder the state's ability to intervene.

"The vast majority of the drugs in the Midwest are coming right through South Dakota on these reservations that I cannot do anything about," Noem said. "The cartels are set up in South Dakota, too. That's what this country needs to realize."

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

Democratic voter registration falls behind 'other' category in South Dakota

BY: SEARCHLIGHT STAFF - AUGUST 21, 2023 3:32 PM

Historic shifts in South Dakota voter registration have culminated in a milestone: The number of voters registered as independents or without a political affiliation has surpassed the number of Democrats.

Independent and non-politically affiliated voters (those who leave the political affiliation blank when they first register) have been growing steadily in number since the 1990s. Meanwhile, Democratic registered voters have been in a steep decline since 2008.

Recently, for the first time, Democratic numbers dipped below the "other" category — the combined number of voters registered either as independent or with no affiliation.

According to the South Dakota Secretary of State's Office, there are a combined 151,177 independent and non-politically affiliated registered voters in the state. There are 150,887 Democrats.

Republicans continue to be the largest political party in the state and recently surpassed the 300,000 registered-voter threshold. The number of registered Republicans in the state stands at 304,047, and Republicans hold every office that's elected on a statewide basis.

Libertarians constitute the third largest political party in the state. They have 2,967 registered voters.

As Democrats deal with declining voter registration numbers, they're also suffering inner-party strife. They removed their state party chairperson Saturday, following the resignation of the party's executive director over allegations of a hostile work environment and alleged violations of the state party constitution.

Summit adjusts proposed pipeline route in North Dakota

BY: JARED STRONG - AUGUST 21, 2023 2:11 PM

Summit Carbon Solutions would build its proposed carbon dioxide pipeline farther away from North Dakota's capital city, according to a new route that is meant to assuage commissioners who denied the company a permit this month.

The state is an important part of Summit's project, which would transport captured carbon dioxide from more than 30 ethanol plants in five states to North Dakota for underground sequestration. It includes more than 2,000 miles of pipe. The North Dakota permit denial prompted opponents in Iowa to call for a hold on the Iowa Utilities Board's permit proceedings.

Summit's proposed adjustment would shift the pipeline farther north of Bismarck — the second-most-populous city in the state — in response to concerns that it has the potential to impede the city's growth.

That change would lengthen the pipeline path by about seven miles. The initial proposal spanned about 320 miles in the state.

The company also modified the route in several places to avoid landowners who don't want the pipeline on their properties.

Summit on Friday asked the North Dakota Public Service Commission to reconsider its Aug. 4 denial of a siting permit for the company. The three-member commission said the evidence it considered did not show "the project will produce minimum adverse impacts upon the welfare of the citizens of North Dakota," according to its written decision.

The permit denial was an aberration for the state, which is one of the largest oil producers in the country. The commission has not rejected any other pipeline siting permits in at least nine years, said Victor Schock, director of public utilities for the commission.

"I don't recall the last time we rejected a pipeline permit," he said.

The commission's last siting permit denial for a utility project was in 2019, Schock said. That was for a wind farm.

It was Summit's insistence that the record of evidence was complete for its application — and that no further hearings were required — that led some of its information to be excluded from full consideration,

Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, Aug. 22, 2023 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 059 ~ 15 of 57

Schock said.

"The problem is that the record isn't complete until you get the evidence entered and then allowed for cross examination," he said.

The company's motion for reconsideration and the information that accompanies it seeks to remedy that. The motion calls for a one-day hearing "for the limited purpose of presenting witness testimony."

The commission had noted there were deficiencies in the record of evidence pertaining to cultural sites, public wildlife areas, geologically unstable areas and landowner impacts.

Schock said the company's motion for reconsideration is allowed by state rules, but "I can't speak to whether the commission will grant the petition or not. We will certainly need to review what the appropriate next step is."

Schock is not a member of the commission but rather part of the commission's staff who helps facilitate the process. If the commissioners deny the reconsideration request, Summit can appeal in state court or file a new application with the commission.

The commission's denial of the permit was about 10 months after Summit applied.

State regulators in Iowa and South Dakota are poised to hold final hearings for the company's permits. Iowa's starts on Tuesday, and South Dakota's begins Sept. 11.

"With the Iowa Utilities Board hearings starting this week, the South Dakota Public Utilities Commission hearings starting next month, and the filing of the petition for reconsideration in North Dakota, we believe our project will still, if approved, move into construction in the first half of 2024," the company said.

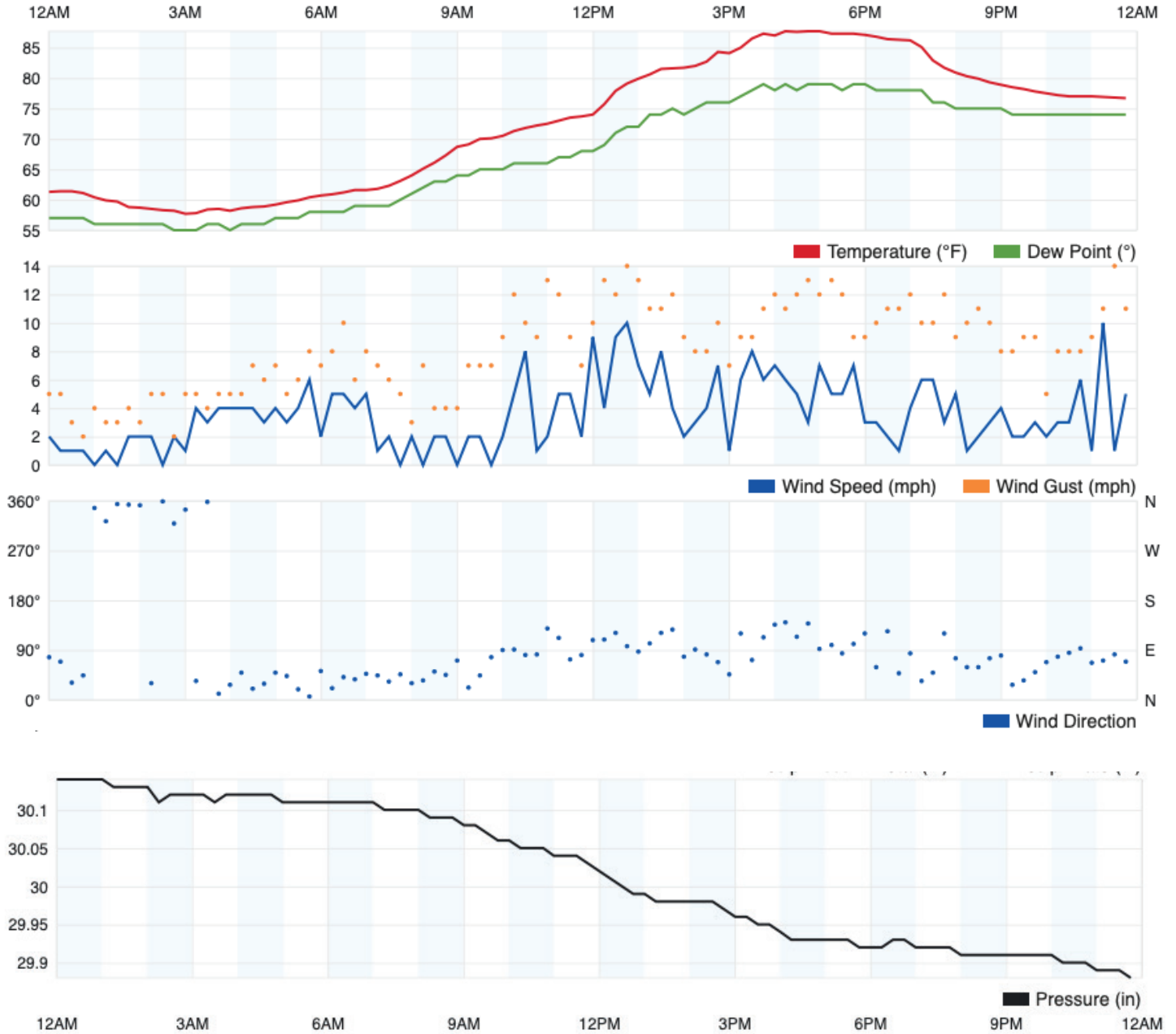
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Jared Strong is the senior reporter for the Iowa Capital Dispatch. He has written about Iowans and the important issues that affect them for more than 15 years, previously for the Carroll Times Herald and the Des Moines Register. His investigative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

Groton Daily Independent

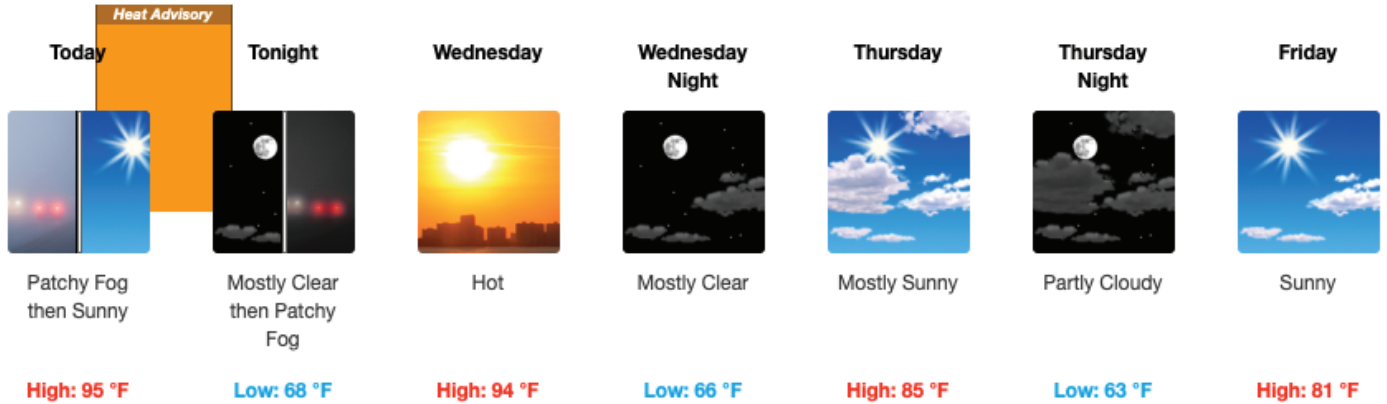
Tuesday, Aug. 22, 2023 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 059 ~ 16 of 57


Yesterday's Groton Weather Graphs



Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, Aug. 22, 2023 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 059 ~ 17 of 57











Hot Today & Wednesday

Heat Advisory Today: 1pm - 9pm CDT

August 22, 2023
3:40 AM



Seasonal for late in the Week & the Weekend

<i>Today</i>	<i>Wed</i>	<i>Thurs</i>	<i>Friday</i>	<i>Sat</i>
				
<i>Highs:</i> 90-105° 90-102° 85-92° 77-85° 74-80°				
<i>Max Heat Index:</i> 100-118° 95-106°				

Dangerous heat and humidity across the region today, use precautions if engaged in outdoor activities this afternoon. Similar conditions persist into Wednesday before we see more seasonal temperatures later in the week.

Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, Aug. 22, 2023 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 059 ~ 18 of 57

Yesterday's Groton Weather

High Temp: 88 °F at 4:52 PM

Low Temp: 58 °F at 3:06 AM

Wind: 15 mph at 12:21 PM

Precip: : 0.00

Day length: 13 hours, 50 minutes

Today's Info

Record High: 105 in 1971

Record Low: 36 in 1904

Average High: 82

Average Low: 55

Average Precip in Aug.: 1.59

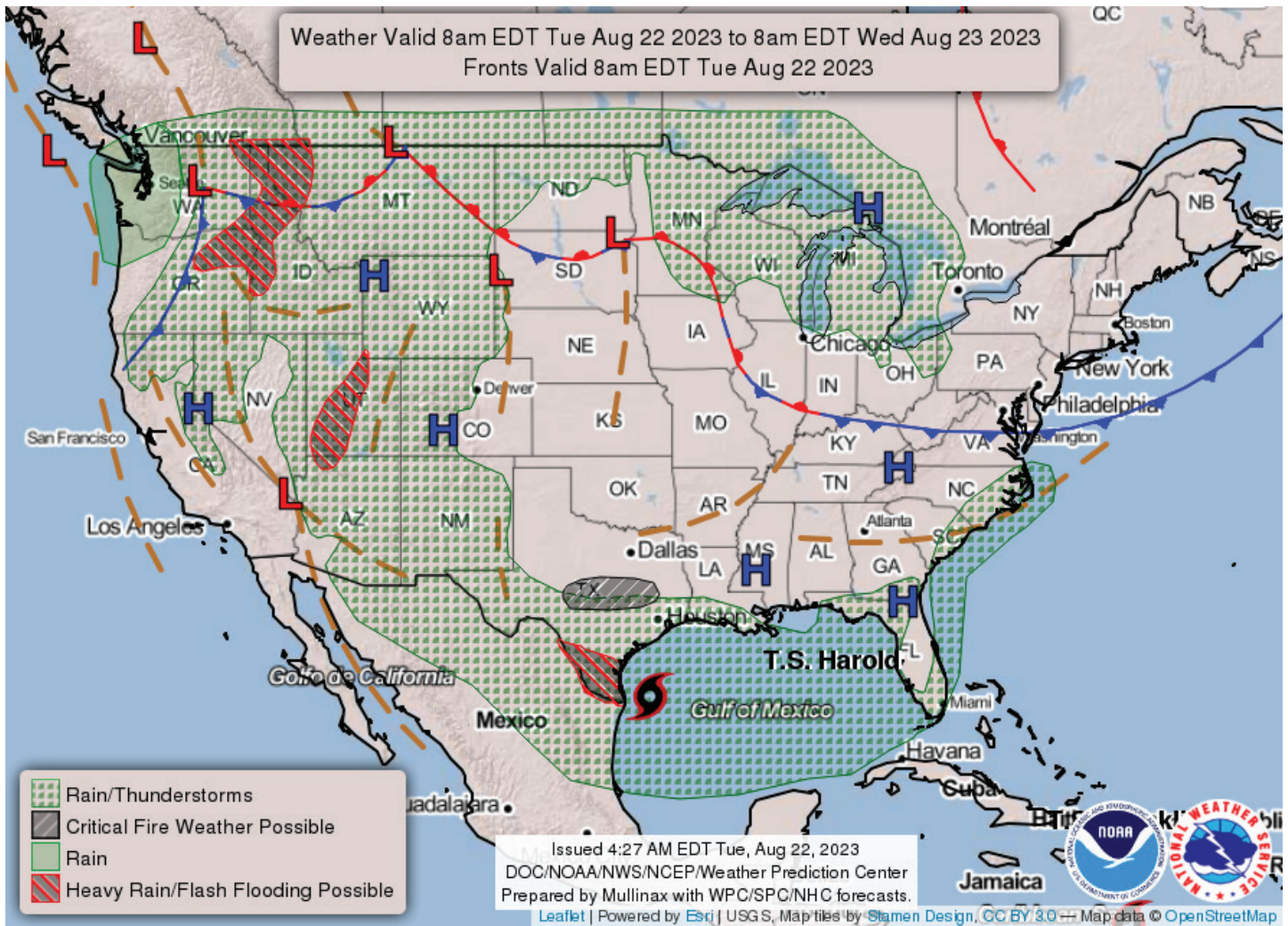
Precip to date in Aug.: 5.92

Average Precip to date: 15.69

Precip Year to Date: 18.59

Sunset Tonight: 8:30:17 PM

Sunrise Tomorrow: 6:41:30 AM



Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, Aug. 22, 2023 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 059 ~ 19 of 57

Today in Weather History

August 22, 1985: Intense thunderstorms moved from near Shadehill Reservoir in northwest South Dakota late in the evening of the 21st, to northern Brown County after sunrise on the 22nd. These thunderstorms produced high winds, large hail, rain, and lightning. Considerable crop and property damage were caused mainly by the strong winds and hail. Winds gusts ranged from 55 mph at Mobridge to 60 mph in and around Akaska. Winds of 70 mph were reported at Onaka and Faulkton. The strongest wind gust was reported in Hoven with a peak gust of 72 mph. Widespread damage was reported throughout the area. Many mobile homes, storage sheds, silos, and roofs were damaged or destroyed. Nine miles south and four miles west of Keldron, over two inches in diameter hail fell for 40 minutes, breaking windows and piling in ditches to a depth of four feet. These intense thunderstorms also produced brief heavy rainfall ranging from three-quarters of an inch to over four inches.

August 21, 2011: The Missouri River at Pierre, Fort Pierre, and Chamberlain/Oacoma fell throughout August as releases on the Oahe Dam were slowly decreased. The Missouri River at Chamberlain/Oacoma fell below flood stage on August 22nd. The extensive damage to homes and roads began to surface as the water receded. The river continued to fall into September.

1816 - The growing season for corn was cut short as damaging frosts were reported from North Carolina to interior New England. (David Ludlum)

1893: Four hurricanes are observed in the Atlantic Ocean at the same time. Over a century would pass, 1998 before four hurricanes would again rage together in the Atlantic.

1923 - The temperature at Anchorage, AK, reached 82 degrees, a record for August for the location which was later tied on the 2nd in 1978. (The Weather Channel)

1987 - A cold front lowered temperatures 20 to 40 degrees across the north central U.S., and produced severe thunderstorms in Ohio and Lower Michigan. An early morning thunderstorm near Sydney MI produced high winds which spun a car around 180 degrees. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1988 - Afternoon highs of 88 degrees at Astoria, OR, and 104 degrees at Medford, OR, were records for the date, and the number of daily record highs across the nation since the first of June topped the 2000 mark. (The National Weather Summary)

1989 - Evening thunderstorms in the central U.S. produced golf ball size hail at May City IA, and wind gusts to 66 mph at Balltown IA. Lightning struck a barn in Fayette County IA killing 750 hogs. Evening thunderstorms in Montana produced wind gusts to 70 mph at Havre. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1992 - Hurricane Andrew makes landfall in Southern Florida as a Category 5 storm with wind gusts estimated in excess of 175 m.p.h. Estimated damages exceeded \$20 billion, more than 60 people were killed and approximately 2 million people were evacuated from their homes. (University of Illinois WW2010)

1994: Hurricane John, about 345 miles south of Hilo, Hawaii had winds of 175 mph and pressure at 920 millibars or 27.17 inches of mercury, making it one of the strongest hurricanes ever in the Central Pacific. The 31-day existence made John the longest-lasting tropical cyclone recorded in both the Pacific Ocean and worldwide, surpassing both Hurricane Tina's previous record in the Pacific of 24 days in the 1992 season and the 1899 San Ciriaco hurricane's previous world record of 28 days in the 1899 Atlantic season. John was also the farthest-traveling tropical cyclone in both Pacific Ocean and worldwide, with distance traveled of 7,165 miles, out-distancing previous record holders Hurricane Fico in the Pacific of 4,700 miles in the 1978 season and Hurricane Faith worldwide of 6,850 miles in the 1966 Atlantic season.

2003: The Okanagan Mountain fire reaches its destructive peak, destroying 250 homes. Nearly 40,000 residents have been evacuated or are on evacuation alert. The Okanagan Mountain Park Fire is estimated to be 17,000 hectares and continues to grow.

Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, Aug. 22, 2023 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 059 ~ 20 of 57

Daily Devotionals

Seeds of Hope

DOING WHAT'S RIGHT!

It was a dream come true. Robert Gonzales had practiced hard and worked long hours to become the racquetball champion. Finally, the day came when he made it to the pro circuit and had an opportunity to play for the championship.

At match point, he made a powerful shot into the front wall. The referee and linesman said it was good, and he was declared the winner. However, he stunned the crowd. He shook his head back and forth while talking to the referee and said, "That shot hit the floor first, and therefore I am not the winner."

Sitting quietly after the match, a reporter asked, "Why? Why did you admit that the ball hit the floor first?"

"Because it was the only thing I could do to maintain my integrity," came the answer. "I can win another match, but I could never regain my integrity."

Few things in life are as fragile as our integrity. It is our code of conduct, the very standard by which we live our lives and maintain our reputation.

However, there is more. Our reputation is who others think we are. But our character is who God knows us to be. Others may never realize that we have compromised our integrity. But God knows. And, ultimately, finally, He is our judge and the one who keeps our record.

Prayer: Father, may we maintain our integrity by remaining close to You by reading Your Word and spending time in prayer. Help us guard our integrity for Your sake. In Jesus' Name, Amen.

Scripture For Today: Don't leave me to the mercy of my enemies, for I have done what is just and right. Psalm 119:121



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

Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, Aug. 22, 2023 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 059 ~ 21 of 57

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

Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, Aug. 22, 2023 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 059 ~ 22 of 57

The Groton Independent Printed & Mailed Weekly Edition

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Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, Aug. 22, 2023 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 059 ~ 23 of 57



WINNING NUMBERS

MEGA MILLIONS

WINNING NUMBERS:
08.18.23

10 20 29 44 66 11

MegaPlier: 3x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:
\$33,000,000

NEXT 16 Hrs 59 Mins 41
DRAW: Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

LOTTO AMERICA

WINNING NUMBERS:
08.21.23

7 10 26 40 50 3

All Star Bonus: 5x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:
\$8,680,000

NEXT 1 Days 16 Hrs 14
DRAW: Mins 40 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

LUCKY FOR LIFE

WINNING NUMBERS:
08.21.23

2 12 15 28 43 10

TOP PRIZE:
\$7,000/week

NEXT 16 Hrs 29 Mins 41
DRAW: Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

DAKOTA CASH

WINNING NUMBERS:
08.19.23

4 8 19 26 27

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:
\$20,000

NEXT 1 Days 16 Hrs 29
DRAW: Mins 41 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

POWERBALL

DOUBLE PLAY

WINNING NUMBERS:
08.21.23

1 13 19 49 66 7

TOP PRIZE:
\$10,000,000

NEXT 1 Days 16 Hrs 58
DRAW: Mins 41 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

POWERBALL

WINNING NUMBERS:
08.21.23

3 4 12 22 28 16

Power Play: 2x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:
\$313,000,000

NEXT 1 Days 16 Hrs 58
DRAW: Mins 41 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

News from the Associated Press

More hearings begin soon for Summit's proposed CO2 pipeline. Where does the project stand?

By JACK DURA Associated Press

BISMARCK, N.D. (AP) — Public utility regulators in Iowa will begin a hearing Tuesday on a proposed carbon dioxide pipeline for transporting emissions of the climate-warming greenhouse gas for storage underground that has been met by resistant landowners who fear the taking of their land and dangers of a pipeline rupture.

Summit Carbon Solutions' proposed \$5.5 billion, 2,000-mile pipeline network would carry CO2 from 34 ethanol plants in five states to North Dakota for storage deep underground — a project involving carbon capture technology, which has attracted both interest and scrutiny in the U.S.

North Dakota regulators earlier this month denied a siting permit for Summit's proposed route in the state, citing myriad issues they say Summit didn't appropriately address, such as cultural resource impacts, geologic instability and landowner concerns. On Friday, Summit petitioned regulators to reconsider.

Other similar projects are proposed around the country, including ones by Navigator CO2 Ventures and Wolf Carbon Solutions, which would also have routes in Iowa.

Here is what to know about Summit's project as more proceedings begin.

WHAT IS CARBON CAPTURE?

Carbon capture entails the gathering and removal of planet-warming CO2 emissions from industrial plants to be pumped deep underground for permanent storage.

Supporters view the technology as a combatant of climate change. But opponents say carbon capture and storage isn't proven at scale and could require huge investments at the expense of cheaper alternatives such as solar and wind power, all at a time when there is an urgent need to phase out all fossil fuels.

Carbon capture also is viewed by opponents as a way for fossil fuel companies to claim they are addressing climate change without actually having to significantly change their ways.

"I think there's a recognition even in the fossil fuel industry that, whether you like it or not and agree or not, (climate change) is a reality you're going to deal with from a regulatory standpoint, and you'd better get out in front of it or you're going to get left behind," said Derrick Braaten, a Bismarck-based attorney involved in issues related to Summit's project.

New federal tax incentives have made carbon capture a lucrative enterprise. The technology has the support of the Biden administration, with billions of dollars approved by Congress for various carbon capture efforts.

High-profile supporters of Summit's project include North Dakota Republican Gov. Doug Burgum, a presidential candidate who has hailed the state's underground CO2 storage ability as a "geologic jackpot," and oil magnate Harold Hamm, whose company last year announced a \$250 million commitment to Summit's project.

"Carbon capture and storage is going to be more and more important every day as we go forward in America," Hamm has said.

WHAT IS HAPPENING IN THE FIVE STATES?

The Iowa Utilities Board begins its public evidentiary hearing Tuesday in Fort Dodge, a hearing "anticipated to last several weeks," according to a news release. The board's final decision on Summit's permit request will come sometime after the hearing.

Minnesota's Public Utilities Commission has a hearing set for Aug. 31 in which the panel "will make decisions about the scope of environmental review" regarding Summit's permit application for its pipeline in two counties, said Charley Bruce, an energy facilities planner with the commission.

A Summit attorney recently indicated to Minnesota that North Dakota regulators' decision to deny a permit will not affect the company's plans, including for other proposed routes in southern Minnesota.

Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, Aug. 22, 2023 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 059 ~ 25 of 57

The South Dakota Public Utilities Commission is set to begin its evidentiary hearing for the project on Sept. 11 and expects to make a final decision by Nov. 15.

Nebraska has no state-level regulatory authority for CO2 pipelines. Summit is working with counties individually in Nebraska.

Counties don't approve or deny a route, but can institute ordinances' setbacks for land-use purposes that can dictate where a pipeline may go, and can enter into road haul agreements and road crossing permits, said Omaha-based attorney Brian Jorde. He represents more than 1,000 landowners opposed to CO2 pipeline projects in four states.

Summit hasn't hit "an insurmountable legal obstacle" in North Dakota regulators' denial "because they literally said 'try again,'" Braaten said.

"If they get over themselves I think that they could do it and get approved, but I think they certainly shot themselves in the foot and they're making it much harder in those other states because they're going to come in with those commissioners there looking at them with a certain level of skepticism because you literally just got denied a permit in North Dakota," he said.

WHY ARE LANDOWNERS OPPOSED?

Landowners have raised concerns about the pipeline breaking, as well as eminent domain, or the taking of private land for the project, with compensation.

Eminent domain laws vary state by state, said Jorde, who represents hundreds of people Summit has sued in South Dakota to take their land for its pipeline.

"When you have the power of eminent domain like a hammer over a landowner's head, you can intimidate them into doing things they wouldn't otherwise do, which is sign easements, which Summit then turns around and says, 'Look at all these "voluntary" easements we have. Look at all the "support" we have,' which is completely false," Jorde said.

Summit has submitted eminent domain requests to the Iowa board. A Summit spokesperson did not specifically address the company's intentions related to eminent domain when asked by the AP.

"Our team remains incredibly encouraged that Iowa landowners have signed voluntary easement agreements accounting for nearly 75% of the proposed pipeline route," spokesperson Sabrina Ahmed Zenor said in an email. "This overwhelming level of support is a clear reflection that they believe like we do that our project will ensure the long-term viability of the ethanol industry, strengthen the agricultural marketplace for farmers, and generate tens of millions of dollars in new revenue for local communities across the Midwest."

WHAT ABOUT UNDERGROUND STORAGE?

Summit submitted a draft application for underground storage to a three-member state panel which Burgum chairs and includes the attorney general. The timeline for a hearing and decision by the panel is unclear.

Last year, Summit and Minnkota Power Cooperative agreed to "co-develop" CO2 storage facilities in central North Dakota. Their agreement gives Summit access to Minnkota's storage site and sets a framework for jointly developing more CO2 storage nearby.

Minnkota is pursuing Project Tundra, a project to install carbon capture technology at a coal-fired power plant.

Braaten views Summit's Minnkota partnership as a backup plan, to "piggyback on a sure thing," he said.

A North Dakota landowners group is suing over the state's process for allowing CO2 and gas storage on private land, and land survey laws.

Braaten said the lawsuit, which would affect the permitting of a Summit storage site in North Dakota, is not directed at Summit but is tied to longtime legal battles related to landowner rights.

Charges dismissed in high-speed attempted murder case near Bismarck

BISMARCK, N.D. (AP) — All charges have been dismissed in the case of a woman accused of trying to kill a motorcyclist on a highway near Bismarck in 2019.

Court documents indicate the moves came after suspect Dazechnae Willis underwent a mental health evaluation that Burleigh County State's Attorney Julie Lawyer said determined Willis was "actively mentally ill at the time of the offenses suffering from bipolar disorder with psychosis to an extent that her mental illness interfered with her ability to understand the harmful nature of her conduct," the Bismarck Tribune reported.

Willis had faced felony charges of intentional murder, aggravated assault with a dangerous weapon, and reckless endangerment. She could have been sentenced to decades in prison if convicted.

Willis was driving an SUV with her two young children inside when she struck motorcyclist Kelsey Schaefer, who was thrown under the tandem axles of a semitrailer and suffered multiple injuries, including a serious brain injury, authorities said. Willis and her children were not injured.

A North Dakota Highway Patrol trooper testified last year that she was going 107 mph and accelerating just before the crash, with no signs she hit her brakes.

Willis wasn't charged until 2021 "due to the complex nature of the investigation and getting records to determine appropriate charges," Lawyer previously said.

District Judge Bonnie Storbakken last year ordered Willis to undergo a psychological evaluation.

Lawyer in March moved to dismiss the attempted murder charge against Willis "for the reason that due to the information provided in the mental health evaluation, the state does not believe it would be able to prove intent."

Willis in March changed her plea on the two lesser felonies to not guilty because of a lack of criminal responsibility. The judge soon afterward found Willis not guilty on those charges for that reason. She ordered Willis committed to a treatment facility and said the court would retain jurisdiction for up to five years. The two lesser charges were formally dismissed in early August.

Willis' status is unclear.

Texas moves large floating barrier on US-Mexico border closer to American soil

By VALERIE GONZALEZ and PAUL J. WEBER Associated Press

AUSTIN, Texas (AP) — Texas has moved a floating barrier on the U.S.-Mexico border closer to American soil as the Biden administration and Mexico protest the wrecking ball-sized buoys that Republican Gov. Greg Abbott authorized in the name of preventing migrants from entering the country.

The repositioning comes ahead of a hearing Tuesday that could decide whether the buoys remain. Texas began installing the bright-orange buoys on the Rio Grande in July and the state was quickly sued by the Justice Department, which argues the barrier could impact relations with Mexico and pose humanitarian and environmental risks.

During a trip Monday to the border city of Eagle Pass, where the buoys are located, Abbott said the barrier was moved "out of an abundance of caution" following what he described as allegations that they had drifted to Mexico's side of the river.

"I don't know whether they were true or not," Abbott said.

It is not clear when U.S. District Judge David Ezra of Austin might rule on the barrier.

In the meantime, Abbott's sprawling border mission known as Operation Lone Star continues to face numerous legal challenges, including a new one filed Monday by four migrant men who were arrested by Texas troopers after crossing the border.

The four men include a father and son and are among thousands of migrants who since 2021 have been arrested on state trespassing charges in Texas. Most have either had their cases dismissed or entered

Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, Aug. 22, 2023 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 059 ~ 27 of 57

guilty pleas in exchange for time served. But the four men continued to remain in a Texas jail for two to six weeks after they should have been released, according to the lawsuit filed by the Texas ACLU and the Texas Fair Defense Project.

Instead of a Texas sheriff's office allowing the jails to release the men, the lawsuit alleges, they were transported to federal immigration facilities where they were then sent to Mexico.

"I think a key point of all that, which is hard to grasp, is also that because they're building the system as they go, the problems flare up in different ways," said David Donatti, an attorney for the Texas ACLU.

Officials in both Kinney and Val Verde counties, which have partnered with Abbott's operation, are named in the lawsuit. A representative for Kinney County said Monday he did not believe anyone had yet reviewed the suit. A representative for Kinney County did not immediately return an email seeking comment.

The complaint also alleges that there were at least 80 others who were detained longer than allowed under state law from late September 2021 to January 2022.

Abbott was joined at the border on Monday by the Republican governors of Iowa, Oklahoma, Nebraska and South Dakota, all of whom have sent their own armed law enforcement and National Guard members to the border.

___ Gonzalez reported from McAllen, Texas.

A judge will consider if Texas can keep its floating barrier to block migrants crossing from Mexico

By PAUL J. WEBER Associated Press

AUSTIN, Texas (AP) — A federal judge on Tuesday will consider whether Texas can keep a floating barrier on the U.S.-Mexico border as both the Biden administration and Mexico push to remove Republican Gov. Greg Abbott's latest hardline measure to deter migrants from crossing.

The scheduled hearing in Austin comes days after Texas, which installed the water barrier on the Rio Grande in July near the border city of Eagle Pass, repositioned the wrecking ball-sized buoys closer to U.S. soil. Texas is being sued by the Justice Department, which argues the barrier could impact relations with Mexico and pose humanitarian and environmental risks.

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___ Associated Press writer Valerie Gonzalez in McAllen, Texas, contributed to this report.

Real estate tycoon Srettha Thavisin secures votes to become Thailand's 30th prime minister

By JINTAMAS SAKSORNCHAI Associated Press

BANGKOK (AP) — Srettha Thavisin from the populist Pheu Thai party secured enough votes in parliament to become the country's 30th prime minister Tuesday, hours after former Prime Minister Thaksin Shinawatra returned from years of self-imposed exile and began an eight-year prison sentence.

While the vote was still ongoing, Srettha's supporters celebrated a victory that appeared to end months of post-election uncertainty in which the winning progressive Move Forward Party was blocked from taking power by conservative senators.

Srettha, a real estate tycoon, will lead a coalition of 11 parties assembled by Pheu Thai that includes two pro-military parties affiliated with outgoing Prime Minister Prayuth Chan-ocha. Move Forward was excluded from the coalition. Critics called the new government a betrayal of the election results, but Pheu Thai leaders defended it as a necessity for ending the political deadlock and creating reconciliation.

As the election runner-up, Pheu Thai received the chance to form a government after Move Forward's candidate, Pita Limjaroenrat, repeatedly failed to get enough votes from conservative lawmakers because of his party's proposed reform of a law that forbids defamation of the royal family. Critics say the law, which carries a penalty of up to 15 years in prison, has been widely abused as a political weapon.

Pheu Thai then excluded Move Forward, saying its stance on changing the royal defamation law had made it impossible to rally enough support from other parties and the Senate. Both houses of Parliament vote together for the prime minister under the military-implemented constitution, in an arrangement designed to protect conservative military-backed rule.

Pheu Thai said it would control eight Cabinet posts and nine deputy Cabinet posts. The military-backed parties — Palang Pracharath and United Thai Nation — are to receive two Cabinet posts and two deputy posts each. Pheu Thai has not identified the ministries that each party will control.

It said the coalition agreed to support Pheu Thai's platform of boosting the economy, increasing the minimum wage and ending mandatory conscription. They will also support the continued legalization of medical marijuana and work to amend the constitution to make the country "become more democratic," while not touching the royal defamation law, Pheu Thai said.

The parliamentary vote came hours after divisive ex-Prime Minister Thaksin Shinawatra returned to Thailand after years of self-imposed exile to face criminal charges after being ousted in a 2006 military coup.

Pheu Thai is the latest in a string of parties affiliated with Thaksin. The military coup that ousted him triggered years of upheaval and division that pitted a mostly poor, rural majority in the north that supports Thaksin against royalists, the military and their urban backers.

Thaksin was convicted in absentia in several criminal cases that he said were politically motivated, and he could face prison time unless he receives a royal pardon. Many have speculated that the party embraced its former enemies in an effort to reduce or cancel Thaksin's prison sentence, something the party denies.

THIS IS A BREAKING NEWS UPDATE. AP's earlier story follows below.

BANGKOK (AP) — Former Thai Prime Minister Thaksin Shinawatra began an eight-year prison sentence Tuesday after returning from years of self-imposed exile, while his allies in parliament faced a vote on their bid to form a government together with military parties that have been their rivals for decades.

It was an emotional day for supporters of the 74-year-old billionaire, who won the loyalty of millions with populist policies that directed attention, and funding, to the country's largely rural, often impoverished, north.

Hundreds of people gathered outside of the airport hours ahead of Thaksin's 9 a.m. arrival, donning red

Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, Aug. 22, 2023 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 059 ~ 29 of 57

clothes and holding sign with welcoming messages. They sang and chanted in anticipation, then raised a raucous cheer when he appeared at the terminal door.

"I feel fulfilled that I traveled here today to pick him up. If possible I want to hug him. Everyone has tears, tears coming out of their eyes," said Makawan Payakkae, a 43-year-old from Maha Sarakham province, in Thailand's northeast.

Meanwhile, voting began in Parliament on the Thaksin-linked Pheu Thai Party's bid to form an 11-party government that would include two parties allied with its former military adversaries, following a stalemate that has lasted more than three months.

Pheu Thai has been heavily criticized by some supporters for backtracking on a pre-election pledge not to work with pro-military parties, and many have speculated that the party embraced its former enemies in an effort to reduce or cancel Thaksin's prison sentence, something the party denies.

Thaksin and parties backed by him struggled with the military for years. Thaksin left Thailand 15 years ago, following a 2006 coup that cut short his second term as prime minister and sparked years of upheaval. A Pheu Thai government led by Thaksin's sister Yingluck Shinawatra was ousted in 2014 by then-army chief Prayuth Chan-ocha, who is now the outgoing prime minister after voters largely rejected military-linked parties in May.

Pheu Thai came in second in the elections, but got a chance to form a government after the surprise winner Move Forward Party was repeatedly rejected by conservative senators appointed by a previous military government.

Move Forward's reform agenda appealed deeply to many Thais, particularly younger voters who were disenchanted by nearly a decade of military-backed rule, but was seen as a threat by the country's conservative elites.

Pheu Thai officials have said that working with pro-military parties is necessary to break the political deadlock and seek reconciliation after decades of deep political division.

The Pheu Thai's coalition holds 314 seats in the 500-member House of Representatives, and would be led by former property developer Srettha Thavisin as prime minister. Srettha is not a member of parliament and does not appear to be in the chamber for the vote.

Srettha will also need support from the non-elected Senate to win the combined parliamentary vote. Both houses of Parliament vote together for the prime minister under the military-implemented constitution, in an arrangement designed to protect conservative military-backed rule.

Before his return earlier Tuesday, Thaksin has said his decision to return has nothing to do with the Pheu Thai party's bid for power, but many observers suspect that the divisive former leader is betting that a friendly government will be able to cut his sentence short.

"Thaksin's plans to return to Thailand were postponed after the election results were announced — this implies a strong connection between the election, formation of coalitions, and selection of the prime minister on one hand, and Thaksin's personal agenda on the other," said Napon Jatusripitak, a political science researcher and visiting fellow at Singapore's ISEAS-Yusof Ishak Institute.

Less than a week before the May elections, Thaksin announced plans to return before his birthday in July, but they were repeatedly delayed.

Napon said Thaksin's decision to return now suggests that "he has received assurances that he will not have to serve a prison sentence in full."

Deputy Prime Minister Wisanu Krea-ngam of the outgoing military-linked government has said that Thaksin can request a royal pardon like any other inmate, and could receive special consideration because of his age.

After walking out of the airport, Thaksin prostrated himself before a portrait of Thailand's king and queen and left a flower wreath. He spent a moment greeting supporters and the media waiting in front of the terminal, but did not speak.

Thaksin's convoy went from the airport to the Supreme Court, where a special body that handles criminal cases against former officeholders confirmed an eight-year sentence given to him in absentia for corruption, which he has dismissed as politically motivated. He then went directly to Bangkok's main prison.

Correctional officers at Bangkok Remand Prison said in a news conference that following a medical check, Thaksin had been categorized as “vulnerable” due to his age and chronic conditions affecting his heart and lungs, including high blood pressure, and he will be held in isolation and monitored at all hours due to safety and health concerns.

Thaksin’s daughter Paetongtarn Shinawatra, a key figure in Pheu Thai, posted family photos with Thaksin in the middle on Facebook with a message thanking people who went to the airport to welcome her father, saying “me and my family are very grateful.”

Maui confronts the challenge of finding more than 800 missing people after the deadly wildfires

By AUDREY McAVOY, CLAIRE RUSH and JENNIFER SINCO KELLEHER Associated Press

LAHAINA, Hawaii (AP) — Two weeks after the deadliest U.S. wildfire in more than a century swept through the Maui community of Lahaina, authorities say more than 800 people remain unaccounted for — a staggering number that presents huge challenges for officials who are trying to determine how many of those perished and how many may have made it to safety but haven’t checked in.

Something similar happened after a wildfire in 2018 that killed 85 people and destroyed the town of Paradise, California. Authorities in Butte County, home to Paradise, ultimately published a list of the missing in the local newspaper, a decision that helped identify scores of people who had made it out alive but were listed as missing. Within a month, the list dropped from 1,300 names to only a dozen.

“I probably had, at any given time, 10 to 15 detectives who were assigned to nothing but trying to account for people who were unaccounted for,” Butte County Sheriff Kory Honea said in a phone interview. “At one point the local editor of our newspaper ... said, ‘Hey, if you give me the names, I will print them.’ And at that point it was like, ‘Absolutely. Anything that we can do to help out.’”

But Maui authorities have opted not to publicize their list because it’s unclear whether privacy rules would prevent them from doing so, said Adam Weintraub, spokesman for the Hawaii Emergency Management Agency. There are also concerns about further traumatizing families of those who are now listed as missing but may turn out to be dead, he added.

As of Monday, there were 115 people confirmed dead, according to Maui police.

“The names of, and any information related to the missing individuals, will not be published or be made publicly available at this time,” a Maui County spokesperson said via text message.

There are also widely varying accounts of the tally of the missing. Hawaii Gov. Josh Green said Sunday on the CBS News show “Face the Nation” that more than 1,000 remained unaccounted for. Maui Mayor Richard Bissen said in a pre-recorded video on Instagram that the number was 850. And during President Joe Biden’s tour of the devastation on Monday, White House homeland security adviser Liz Sherwood-Randall put it between 500 and 800.

The American Red Cross said it generates its own list — separate from law enforcement — of people who are unaccounted for through requests made to its call center and information gathered by its field teams, spokesperson Daniel Parra said. The organization has also entered into a data-sharing agreement with federal, state and local government agencies to help with reunifications.

So far the American Red Cross has successfully completed roughly 2,400 requests seeking reunification or welfare updates, out of the more than 3,000 it has received, Parra said. A completed request means the organization was able to locate a missing person or verify someone’s status in a medical facility, for example, among other things.

To find people, the organization cross-checks names with emergency shelter registration lists, calls hospitals to see if the person was admitted as a patient and combs through social media, among other steps, Parra said. When an individual is located, the organization provides their status to the person seeking information about them — with the individual’s consent — and closes the case in its system.

Social outreach like this will be crucial as identifying human remains after wildfires — and confirming whether those who are unaccounted for are deceased — can be an arduous, lengthy process. Fire experts

Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, Aug. 22, 2023 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 059 ~ 31 of 57

say it's possible some bodies were cremated in the Lahaina fire, meaning there may be no bones left to identify through DNA tests.

"Those are easy when destruction is modest," said Vyto Babrauskas, president of fire safety research consulting firm Fire Science and Technology Inc. "If you go to the extreme of things — if turned to ash — you're not going to be able to identify anything."

Babrauskas added that damage from debris removal and excavation can also make recovery efforts difficult.

"This is such an extreme disaster," he said. "It is so rare to need this kind of tallying and identification."

Honea, the Butte County sheriff, said it took weeks to complete the search for remains in Paradise and his detectives worked 16-hour days to narrow the list of the missing. Today there is only one person who still remains unaccounted for, and Honea said he has reason to believe that person was not in town the day of the fire.

"We had this Excel spreadsheet with the people's names and any of the different information we had," he said. "We'd then start working the cases similar to the way you work any other case to try to locate somebody."

That included visiting people's last known residences, contacting telecommunications companies to see whether they had used their cell phones, and reaching out by email and social media.

"We were able to identify them through basically good old fashioned detective work," Honea said.

Scuba instructor Tim Ferguson, whose home north of Lahaina was spared, was elated to hear about a friend who managed to flee the flames with their family, including a 2-week-old baby, a 3-year-old toddler and their two dogs. They lost their home but are safe.

He thought it would be good if authorities published a list of the missing the way Paradise did but said that might be of limited use now because cell service is still spotty in Lahaina. Everyone uses their cell-phone to communicate, he said.

"There are so many of those who won't have that ending. I don't know how we come back from that," Ferguson said.

The situation on Maui is still evolving rapidly, but those who have lived through similar tragedies and never learned of their loved ones' fate are also following the news and hurting for the victims and their families.

Nearly 22 years later, almost 1,100 victims of the 9/11 terror attacks, which killed nearly 3,000, have no identified remains.

Joseph Giaccone's family initially was desperate for any physical trace of the 43-year-old finance executive, who worked in the World Trade Center's North Tower, brother James Giaccone recalled. But over time, he started to focus instead on memories of the flourishing man his brother was.

If his remains were identified and given to the family now, "it would just reinforce the horror that his person endured that day, and it would open wounds that I don't think I want to open," Giaccone said Monday as he visited the 9/11 memorial plaza in New York.

"So I am OK with the way it is right now."

A major wildfire in northeastern Greece has forced the evacuation of villages and a city hospital

By COSTAS KANTOURIS Associated Press

ALEXANDROUPOLIS, Greece (AP) — A massive wall of flames raced through forests toward a port city in northeastern Greece overnight, prompting authorities to evacuate another eight villages and a city hospital as firefighters battled dozens more wildfires across the country on Tuesday.

Gale-force winds and high summer temperatures have hampered the efforts of hundreds of firefighters backed by dozens of water-dropping aircraft as they tackle wildfires breaking out across Greece.

The fire risk level for several regions, including the wider Athens area, was listed as "extreme" for the second day Tuesday. Authorities have banned public access to mountains and forests in those regions until at least Wednesday morning and ordered military patrols.

Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, Aug. 22, 2023 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 059 ~ 32 of 57

On Monday, the blazes left two people dead and two firefighters injured in northern and central Greece. About 65 of the more than 100 patients in the Alexandroupolis hospital in northeastern Greece were transported to a ferry boat docked in the city's port as the country's largest wildfire currently burning out of control entered its fourth day. Others were taken to other hospitals in northern Greece.

The flames turned the sky over the city and across the region red, hiding the sun as choking smoke and swirling flecks of ash filled the air.

A school, several homes and a cemetery were damaged in two villages near Alexandroupolis, where more than 200 firefighters were battling the flames, supported by four airplanes and three helicopters. Dozens more houses were damaged by another wildfire in the Kavala region, local authorities said, while a separate fire in the Evros border region was burning through forest in a protected national park.

The coast guard evacuated 14 people by sea overnight from a nearby coastal area to the port of Alexandroupolis.

A new fire broke out in the Aspropyrgos area on the western fringes of the Greek capital Tuesday morning, prompting authorities to issue evacuation orders for two villages in the area.

Romania sent 56 firefighters and Cyprus send two water-dropping aircraft to help fight the wildfire in Alexandroupolis, while French firefighters helped tackle a separate fire on the island of Evia.

Greece suffers destructive wildfires every summer. Its deadliest wildfire killed 104 people in 2018, at a seaside resort near Athens that residents had not been warned to evacuate. Authorities have since erred on the side of caution, issuing swift mass evacuation orders whenever inhabited areas are under threat.

Last month, a wildfire on the resort island of Rhodes forced the evacuation of some 20,000 tourists. Days later, two air force pilots were killed when their water-dropping plane crashed while diving low to tackle a blaze on Evia. Another three wildfire-related deaths have been recorded this summer.

Pakistan mounts efforts to rescue 6 children and 2 men trapped in a chairlift

PESHAWAR, Pakistan (AP) — Pakistani emergency workers launched a rescue operation to try and save six children and two men trapped in a chairlift after one of its cables snapped off on Tuesday, leaving it dangling high above ground in the country's northwest.

The chairlift was installed across a river canyon, connecting villages in Battagram district in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province. It was used by local villagers to cross the river and shorten the distance to nearby schools, government offices and other businesses.

Taimoor Khan, a spokesman for the disaster management authority, said the chairlift had been dangling 350 meters (1,150 feet) above ground for six hours before a helicopter was dispatched to the site to try and pluck the eight out of the chairlift.

Pakistan's caretaker Prime Minister Anwaar-ul-Haq Kakar ordered the helicopter rescue, Khan said.

Many villagers in Pakistan's mountainous regions use such chairlifts to shorten distances and travel and an unspecified number of people die or are injured each year in incidents involving the poorly maintained chairlifts.

Ten people were killed when a cable car lift installed by local villagers in the popular mountain resort of Murree broke and fell into a ravine hundreds of feet deep in 2017.

Russia's Putin stays away over arrest warrant as leaders of emerging economies meet in South Africa

By GERALD IMRAY Associated Press

JOHANNESBURG (AP) — Russian President Vladimir Putin will be notably absent when Chinese President Xi Jinping and other leaders from the BRICS group of emerging economies start a three-day summit in South Africa on Tuesday.

Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, Aug. 22, 2023 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 059 ~ 33 of 57

The bloc, consisting of Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa, is holding its first in-person meeting since before the COVID-19 pandemic, but Putin will participate via video call after his travel to South Africa was complicated by an International Criminal Court arrest warrant issued for him in March over the abduction of children from Ukraine.

Xi, Brazilian President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva, Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi and South African President Cyril Ramaphosa will attend in person as the bloc -- home to 40% of the world's population and responsible for more than 30% of global economic output -- mulls a possible expansion.

That will top the agenda at Wednesday's main summit meeting in Johannesburg's financial district of Sandton. More than 20 nations have applied to join the bloc, according to South African officials, including Saudi Arabia, Iran and the United Arab Emirates.

The five BRICS countries will have to agree on the criteria for new members before any countries are admitted, but a bigger BRICS is seen as a policy favored by China and Russia amid their deteriorating relations with the West.

The BRICS group was formed in 2009 by Brazil, Russia, India and China. South Africa was added in 2010.

South African Minister of Trade and Industry Ebrahim Patel officially opened the summit Tuesday, welcoming about 1,200 delegates from the five BRICS nations but also from dozens of other developing countries. More than 40 heads of state are expected at the three-day meeting, according to Ramaphosa.

Kremlin spokesperson Dmitry Peskov has stressed that Putin will fully participate despite appearing virtually and will make a speech. Russia will also be represented in person by Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov. United Nations Secretary-General António Guterres also is expected to attend.

The summit officially began with a business forum on Tuesday morning, and Xi, Lula, Modi and Ramaphosa were expected to arrive at the Sandton Convention Centre for the first meeting of the leaders in the afternoon. They will also hold a retreat Tuesday evening at the luxury Summer Place estate in Johannesburg's plush Hyde Park suburb.

Xi, who has gradually resumed foreign travel after the lifting of his country's strict COVID-19 regulations, was to meet with Ramaphosa for a state visit in the South African capital, Pretoria, on Tuesday morning.

He will then travel 60 kilometers (37 miles) through South Africa's most important economic province of Gauteng to the summit in Johannesburg.

As Tropical Storm Hilary shrinks, desert and mountain towns dig themselves out of the mud

By MARK J. TERRILL, JOHN ANTCZAK and JULIE WATSON Associated Press

CATHEDRAL CITY, Calif. (AP) — Crews worked to dig roads, buildings and care home residents out of the mud across a wide swath of Southwestern U.S. desert Monday, as the first tropical storm to hit Southern California in 84 years headed north, prompting flood watches and warnings in half a dozen states.

The National Hurricane Center in Miami said Tropical Storm Hilary had lost much of its force as it headed to the Rocky Mountains, but warned that "continued life-threatening and locally catastrophic flooding" was expected in parts of the region.

Forecasters said the threat for flooding in states farther north on Monday was highest across much of southeastern Oregon into the west-central mountains of Idaho, with potential thunderstorms and localized torrential rains on Tuesday.

As Hilary moved east into the neighboring state of Nevada, flooding was reported, power was out and a boil-water order was issued for about 400 households in the Mount Charleston area, where the only road in and out was washed out. The area is about 40 miles (64 kilometers) west of Las Vegas.

Hilary first slammed into Mexico's arid Baja California Peninsula as a hurricane, causing one death and widespread flooding before becoming a tropical storm. So far, no deaths, serious injuries or extreme damages have been reported in California, though officials warned that risks remain, especially in the mountainous regions where the wet hillsides could unleash mudslides.

In one dramatic scene, rescue officials in the desert community of Cathedral City, near Palm Springs,

Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, Aug. 22, 2023 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 059 ~ 34 of 57

drove a bulldozer through mud to a swamped care home and rescued 14 residents by scooping them up and carrying them to safety, Fire Chief Michael Contreras said.

"We were able to put the patients into the scoop. It's not something that I've ever done in my 34 years as a firefighter, but disasters like this really cause us to have to look at those means of rescue that aren't in the book and that we don't do everyday," he said at a news conference.

It was one of 46 rescues the city performed between late Sunday night and the next afternoon from mud and water standing up to 5 feet (1.5 meters).

Hilary is the latest potentially climate-related disaster to wreak havoc across the U.S., Canada and Mexico. Hawaii's island of Maui is still reeling from a blaze that killed more than 100 people, making it the deadliest U.S. wildfire in more than a century. Firefighters in Canada are battling that nation's worst fire season on record.

Hot water and hot air were both crucial factors that enabled Hilary's rapid growth — steering it on an unusual but not quite unprecedented path that dumped rain in some normally bone-dry places.

Scientists still don't know why some storms, like Hilary, get big and some stay small, said MIT hurricane scientist Kerry Emanuel.

"It's quite unusual for an Eastern Pacific storm to be so large since they are usually small and stay deep in the tropics," said University of Albany atmospheric scientist Kristen Corbosiero, an expert on Pacific hurricanes.

The wet weather might stave off wildfires for a few weeks in Southern California and in parts of the Sierra Nevadas, but widespread rain is not expected in the most fire-prone areas, University of California, Los Angeles, climate scientist Daniel Swain said in an online briefing Monday.

Flooding and mudslides were reported across Southern California's inland desert and mountain areas.

In the San Bernardino Mountains, crews worked to clear mud that blocked the homes of about 800 residents, Cal Fire Battalion Chief Alison Hesterly said.

In the Coachella Valley city of Desert Hot Springs, Steven Michael Chacon said the roads in the housing development where he and his husband live were impassable due to flooding and he was concerned emergency crews might not be able to reach people.

"Basically everybody's got to stay put, there's no way in or out," he said Monday morning.

Authorities also say a woman was unaccounted for after witnesses saw her trailer swept away in a flash flood.

Hilary shattered daily rain records in San Diego and likely dumped the equivalent of a full year's worth on Death Valley National Park, forcing the park to be closed indefinitely and leaving about 400 people sheltering at Furnace Creek, Stovepipe Wells and Panamint Springs until roads could be made passable, park officials said.

"We basically blew all of our previous rainfall records out of the water," National Weather Service meteorologist Elizabeth Adams in San Diego told The Associated Press.

A tropical storm last roared into California in September 1939, ripping apart train tracks, tearing houses from their foundations and capsizing many boats. Nearly 100 people were killed on land and at sea.

Southern Texas was also preparing for the arrival of a separate tropical system that was expected to bring badly needed rain but also possible flooding. The National Hurricane Center said tropical storm conditions could arrive to coastal areas by early Tuesday, including near the U.S.-Mexico border, where some residents grabbed sandbags in preparation.

In the Caribbean, meanwhile, Tropical Storm Franklin churned on Monday near Haiti and the Dominican Republic while Tropical Storm Harold is expected to bring heavy rains and high winds to south Texas early Tuesday.

Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, Aug. 22, 2023 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 059 ~ 35 of 57

The government and TEPCO say the water must be removed to make room for the plant's decommissioning and to prevent accidental leaks from the tanks.

Junichi Matsumoto, TEPCO executive in charge of the water release, said in an interview with The Associated Press last month that the water release marks "a milestone," but is still only an initial step in a daunting decommissioning process.

The government and TEPCO say the water will be treated and then diluted with seawater to levels safer than international standards.

TEPCO plans to release 7,800 tons of treated water in the 17-day first round of the release, Matsumoto said.

TEPCO plans to release 31,200 tons of the treated water by the end of March 2024, which would empty only 10 tanks at the site. The pace will pick up later.

The seawater and marine life will be tested and the results will be disclosed on government and TEPCO websites.

The International Atomic Energy Agency in a final report in July concluded that the release, if conducted as designed, will cause negligible impact on the environment and human health. After taking into possible bioconcentration of low-dose radionuclides that still remain in the water, the environmental and health impact is still negligible, TEPCO officials said.

Scientists generally support the IAEA view, but some say long-term impact of the low-dose radioactivity that remains in the water needs attention.

Kishida's government has stepped up outreach efforts to explain the plan to neighboring countries, especially South Korea, to keep the issue from interfering with their relationship.

Kishida said the effort has made progress and the international society is largely responding calmly to the plan. Still, Hong Kong said it would suspend exports from Fukushima and nine other prefectures if Japan went ahead with the plan, while China has stepped up radiation testing on Japanese fisheries products, delaying customs clearance.

TEPCO said it is working toward accepting application for damages caused by China's export restrictions on Japanese seafood.

Europe's sweeping rules for tech giants are about to kick in. Here's how they work

By KELVIN CHAN AP Business Writer

LONDON (AP) — Google, Facebook, TikTok and other Big Tech companies operating in Europe are facing one of the most far-reaching efforts to clean up what people encounter online.

The first phase of the European Union's groundbreaking new digital rules will take effect this week. The Digital Services Act is part of a suite of tech-focused regulations crafted by the 27-nation bloc — long a global leader in cracking down on tech giants.

The DSA, which the biggest platforms must start following Friday, is designed to keep users safe online and stop the spread of harmful content that's either illegal or violates a platform's terms of service, such as promotion of genocide or anorexia. It also looks to protect Europeans' fundamental rights like privacy and free speech.

Some online platforms, which could face billions in fines if they don't comply, have already started making changes.

Here's a look at what's happening this week:

WHICH PLATFORMS ARE AFFECTED?

So far, 19. They include eight social media platforms: Facebook, TikTok, Twitter, YouTube, Instagram, LinkedIn, Pinterest and Snapchat.

There are five online marketplaces: Amazon, Booking.com, China's Alibaba AliExpress and Germany's Zalando.

Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, Aug. 22, 2023 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 059 ~ 36 of 57

Mobile app stores Google Play and Apple's App Store are subject, as are Google's Search and Microsoft's Bing search engine.

Google Maps and Wikipedia round out the list.

WHAT ABOUT OTHER ONLINE COMPANIES?

The EU's list is based on numbers submitted by the platforms. Those with 45 million or more users — or 10% of the EU's population — will face the DSA's highest level of regulation.

Brussels insiders, however, have pointed to some notable omissions from the EU's list, like eBay, Airbnb, Netflix and even Pornhub. The list isn't definitive, and it's possible other platforms may be added later on.

Any business providing digital services to Europeans will eventually have to comply with the DSA. They will face fewer obligations than the biggest platforms, however, and have another six months before they must fall in line.

Citing uncertainty over the new rules, Meta Platforms has held off launching its Twitter rival, Threads, in the EU.

WHAT'S CHANGING?

Platforms have started rolling out new ways for European users to flag illegal online content and dodgy products, which companies will be obligated to take down quickly and objectively.

Amazon opened a new channel for reporting suspected illegal products and is providing more information about third-party merchants.

TikTok gave users an "additional reporting option" for content, including advertising, that they believe is illegal. Categories such as hate speech and harassment, suicide and self-harm, misinformation or frauds and scams, will help them pinpoint the problem.

Then, a "new dedicated team of moderators and legal specialists" will determine whether flagged content either violates its policies or is unlawful and should be taken down, according to the app from Chinese parent company ByteDance.

TikTok says the reason for a takedown will be explained to the person who posted the material and the one who flagged it, and decisions can be appealed.

TikTok users can turn off systems that recommend videos based on what a user has previously viewed. Such systems have been blamed for leading social media users to increasingly extreme posts. If personalized recommendations are turned off, TikTok's feeds will instead suggest videos to European users based on what's popular in their area and around the world.

The DSA prohibits targeting vulnerable categories of people, including children, with ads.

Snapchat said advertisers won't be able to use personalization and optimization tools for teens in the EU and U.K. Snapchat users who are 18 and older also would get more transparency and control over ads they see, including "details and insight" on why they're shown specific ads.

TikTok made similar changes, stopping users 13 to 17 from getting personalized ads "based on their activities on or off TikTok."

IS THERE PUSHBACK?

Zalando, a German online fashion retailer, has filed a legal challenge over its inclusion on the DSA's list of the largest online platforms, arguing that it's being treated unfairly.

Nevertheless, Zalando is launching content flagging systems for its website even though there's little risk of illegal material showing up among its highly curated collection of clothes, bags and shoes.

The company has supported the DSA, said Aurelie Caulier, Zalando's head of public affairs for the EU.

"It will bring loads of positive changes" for consumers, she said. But "generally, Zalando doesn't have systemic risk (that other platforms pose). So that's why we don't think we fit in that category."

Amazon has filed a similar case with a top EU court.

WHAT HAPPENS IF COMPANIES DON'T FOLLOW THE RULES?

Officials have warned tech companies that violations could bring fines worth up to 6% of their global revenue — which could amount to billions — or even a ban from the EU. But don't expect penalties to come right away for individual breaches, such as failing to take down a specific video promoting hate speech.

Instead, the DSA is more about whether tech companies have the right processes in place to reduce

the harm that their algorithm-based recommendation systems can inflict on users. Essentially, they'll have to let the European Commission, the EU's executive arm and top digital enforcer, look under the hood to see how their algorithms work.

EU officials "are concerned with user behavior on the one hand, like bullying and spreading illegal content, but they're also concerned about the way that platforms work and how they contribute to the negative effects," said Sally Broughton Micova, an associate professor at the University of East Anglia.

That includes looking at how the platforms work with digital advertising systems, which could be used to profile users for harmful material like disinformation, or how their livestreaming systems function, which could be used to instantly spread terrorist content, said Broughton Micova, who's also academic co-director at the Centre on Regulation in Europe, a Brussels-based think tank.

Under the rules, the biggest platforms will have to identify and assess potential systemic risks and whether they're doing enough to reduce them. These risk assessments are due by the end of August and then they will be independently audited.

The audits are expected to be the main tool to verify compliance — though the EU's plan has faced criticism for lacking details that leave it unclear how the process will work.

WHAT ABOUT THE REST OF THE WORLD?

Europe's changes could have global impact. Wikipedia is tweaking some policies and modifying its terms of service to provide more information on "problematic users and content." Those alterations won't be limited to Europe, said the nonprofit Wikimedia Foundation, which hosts the community-powered encyclopedia.

"The rules and processes that govern Wikimedia projects worldwide, including any changes in response to the DSA, are as universal as possible. This means that changes to our Terms of Use and Office Actions Policy will be implemented globally," it said in a statement.

It's going to be hard for tech companies to limit DSA-related changes, said Broughton Micova, adding that digital ad networks aren't isolated to Europe and that social media influencers can have global reach.

The regulations are "dealing with multichannel networks that operate globally. So there is going to be a ripple effect once you have kind of mitigations that get taken into place," she said.

Voter fatigue edges out optimism as Zimbabwe holds 2nd general election since Mugabe's ouster

By FARAI MUTSAKA Associated Press

HARARE, Zimbabwe (AP) — Colorful campaign posters adorn street poles, buildings, vehicles and trees in Zimbabwe, but the buzz surrounding the country's upcoming general election appears to end there.

The presidential and parliamentary elections taking place Wednesday are crucial to determining the future of a southern African nation endowed with vast mineral resources and rich agricultural land. But for many people in the educated but underemployed population, the daily grind to put food on the table inhibits interest in politics.

"What elections?" Kaleen Mbase, a 33-year-old Kuwadzana township resident, quipped as she half-heartedly chipped into a subdued political discussion at a local bar in the capital, Harare. "Elections have brought nothing but suffering, I don't expect anything different this year. There is no change, no matter how many times we vote."

It wasn't like this five years ago, when Zimbabwe prepared to hold its first elections since a coup ended the repressive 37-year rule of President Robert Mugabe. Multitudes thronged the streets to openly flaunt their desire for change in the country of 15 million people.

Mugabe's former vice president, Emmerson Mnangagwa, took over as president after the coup and promised a new beginning that would include economic prosperity, media freedom, easing of the opposition clampdown that marked Mugabe's tenure, and a thawing of relations with Western countries. But the July 2018 general election turned into a disappointment.

The opposition disputed the presidential election results after Mnangagwa was declared the winner.

Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, Aug. 22, 2023 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 059 ~ 38 of 57

Members of the army killed six people after storming the streets of the capital to put down a protest over delays in announcing the results and suspicions of rigging.

Since then, many citizens have felt let down by Mnangagwa and his administration. Fatigue has replaced the excitement once held by Zimbabweans who hoped Mugabe's removal would signal a break from decades of political repression, violent and disputed elections, and international isolation resulting from U.S. and European Union sanctions over alleged human rights abuses, analysts say.

This year's elections "certainly do not offer the same hope of a reset that the 2018 elections did," Nicolas Delaunay, the East and Southern Africa director of the International Crisis Group, wrote in an analysis on the organization's website.

In the presidential race, incumbent Mnangagwa, 80, faces a challenge from the main opposition leader, Nelson Chamisa, 45, whom he beat by a razor-thin margin in the last election.

Zimbabwe has a history of disputed and violent elections since the country's independence from the United Kingdom gained international recognition in 1980. Human rights groups say the same factors that blighted past elections, such as intimidation, voter roll irregularities, public media bias, and the use of law enforcement and the courts to hamstringing opposition campaigns, remain as concerns.

In recent weeks, the nation's courts have been busy handling election-related cases that included the disqualification of an influential presidential candidate and opposition parliamentary candidates, as well as gerrymandering allegations, police bans on opposition meetings and demands by the opposition for a final copy of voter registration lists.

Such a "skewed" environment, and opposition weaknesses, such as lack of funding, chaotic candidate selection, "a disorganized campaign" and an inability to deploy people to monitor voting in many rural areas that are ruling party strongholds, could ensure a Mnangagwa victory, according to Delaunay.

Although the Zimbabwe Electoral Commission has registered nearly a million more voters than for the last general election, independent research points to a wary pre-election mood.

In a survey by Afrobarometer, a respected pan-African organization, 54% of respondents said they think elections "do not work well" in empowering voters to remove unpopular leaders. Nearly half fear "that the announced results will not reflect counted results," according to the survey findings released in July.

At the same time, 70% of those Afrobarometer surveyed said they would "definitely" vote this time around, although 27% were unwilling to publicly state their choices in a country where revealing such information can have harsh repercussions.

"Elections mojo thrives on unpredictability," Zimbabwean political analyst Alexander Rusero told The Associated Press. "When we all know who the winner is prior to an election, it becomes more of a delayed match, which paralyzes enthusiasm and energy."

Rusero said he thinks Chamisa and his Citizens Coalition for Change party, which the candidate formed last year following upheaval in the traditionally dominant opposition party MDC, "for now" lack the financial and political capacity to defeat Mnangagwa and the ZANU PF party, which has ruled Zimbabwe for 43 years.

"For CCC, 2023 is to establish themselves as the most legitimate and formidable opposition more than a possible takeover of power," the analyst said.

High unemployment has forced more than two-thirds of Zimbabwe's working age population to survive through informal work such as street vending or in backyard facilities ranging from hair salons and car repair shops to writing services for university dissertations, according to the International Monetary Fund. Many factories closed down during the past two decades of Zimbabwe's economic turmoil.

For many Zimbabweans, change in government is necessary and desirable, but they just don't see it coming from this national election.

At the bar in Kuwadzana township, most patrons nonchalantly danced to loud music, while young men argued over a game of pool and placed bets on their favorite players.

Women vendors at a marketplace close to the bar chatted away as customers trooped in to buy vegetables for supper.

They talked about everything from the currency crisis affecting their trade to the high cost of their chil-

dren's educations and the latest neighborhood chatter, but not the elections or their preferred candidates.

From MLK to today, the March on Washington highlights the evolution of activism by Black churches

By DAVID CRARY AP National Writer

The March on Washington of 1963 is remembered most for the Rev. Martin Luther King Jr.'s "I Have a Dream" speech — and thus as a crowning moment for the long-term civil rights activism of what is sometimes referred to as the "Black Church."

At the march, King indeed represented numerous other Black clergy who were his colleagues in the Southern Christian Leadership Conference. But the march was the product of sustained activism by a broader coalition. Black and white labor leaders, as well as white clergy, played pivotal roles over many months ahead of the event.

Moreover, the Black Church was not monolithic then — nor is it now. Many Black pastors and their congregations steered clear of civil disobedience and other nonviolent confrontational tactics in the civil rights era, just as some now steer clear of the Black Lives Matter movement and shun progressive Black pastors' engagement on behalf of abortion rights and LGBTQ+ rights.

"The issues are multiracial. It's too simplistic now to say, "Black church/white church,"" said the Rev. William Barber, who in 2018 became co-chair of a national anti-poverty initiative called The Poor People's Campaign. It took its name from a movement launched by King and other SCLC leaders in 1968 shortly before King's assassination.

Barber, now director of the Center for Public Theology and Public Policy at Yale Divinity School, admires King immensely yet is critical of those who "water down the March on Washington to one man, one speech."

"That's a political strategy to undermine the purpose of mass protest," he said. "It must be a mass movement, not just a mass moment."

Barber said the new manifestation of the Poor People's Campaign has drawn active support from thousands of clergy of different races and faiths.

"There are Jews, Quakers, some predominantly white congregations that are pro-civil rights and pro-LGBT community — that care about immigrants and women's rights and voting rights," he said. "Any efforts today that are not engaging all these issues on an every day basis is not truly moving in the spirit of the March on Washington."

In the decades before and after 1963, Black churches and denominations have had diverse priorities and political approaches.

Many Black faith leaders in the early 1900s supported Booker T. Washington's call for Black progress to occur through education and economic self-sufficiency, rather than through direct challenges to segregation laws. In later decades, self-sufficiency was touted by the Nation of Islam as part of its advocacy of Black Nationalism. Some other Black pastors — notably Father Divine and Reverend Ike — became wealthy with optimistic promises of heaven-on-earth prosperity for their followers.

Currently, there are large numbers of Black pastors in two different categories, according to Robert Franklin, professor of moral leadership at Emory University's Candler School of Theology in Atlanta. Some of them, Franklin says, engage energetically in social-justice activism, envisioning themselves as "prophetic radicals" in the tradition of King.

Others have a more conservative, individualistic outlook, Franklin said. "They are a little mushy on the activism and the risk-taking."

"In many respects, they have declared victory, purchased their own buildings," he said. "There are fewer prophetic sermons and more concern with institutional maintenance. 'How to do we keep the lights on, pay the bills.'"

One notable trend in recent decades has been a rise in the number of multiracial congregations across the country. King's former church in Atlanta, Ebenezer Baptist Church, is among them, drawing increasing numbers of white and Hispanic worshippers.

Windows are shattered in a Moscow suburb as Russia says it thwarts latest Ukraine drone attack

By The Associated Press undefined

Russian air defense systems thwarted four nighttime Ukrainian drone attacks, Russia's Ministry of Defense said Tuesday, with the falling wreckage of one drone shattering an apartment building's windows and damaging vehicles in Moscow's western suburbs.

There were no reports of injuries in the latest drone attacks that Russia blamed on Kyiv, as the war approaches its 18-month milestone.

Though the drone attacks on Russian soil have occurred almost daily in recent weeks, they have caused little damage. Even so, they have unnerved some Russians and are in line with Ukraine President Volodymyr Zelenskyy's pledge to take the war into the heart of Russia.

Flights at several Moscow airports were temporarily suspended Tuesday as a security precaution amid the attacks, authorities said.

Two other drones were jammed and crashed in the western Bryansk region bordering Ukraine, the defense ministry said.

Ukraine hasn't acknowledged responsibility for the attempted drone strikes, nor have senior Russian leaders made any comment about the development.

Russian President Vladimir Putin was to speak via video link at a meeting this week in Johannesburg of leaders from Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa.

Putin is under threat of arrest if he travels abroad due to an International Criminal Court arrest warrant and won't attend the so-called BRICS talks in person.

Fukushima nuclear plant will start releasing treated radioactive water to sea as early as Thursday

By MARI YAMAGUCHI Associated Press

TOKYO (AP) — Japan will start releasing treated and diluted radioactive wastewater from the Fukushima Daiichi nuclear plant into the Pacific Ocean as early as Thursday — a controversial step that the government says is essential for the decades of work needed to shut down the facility that had reactor meltdowns 12 years ago.

Prime Minister Fumio Kishida gave the final go-ahead Tuesday at a meeting of Cabinet ministers involved in the plan and instructed the operator, Tokyo Electric Power Company Holdings, to be ready to start the coastal release Thursday if weather and sea conditions permit.

Kishida said at the meeting that the release of the water is essential for the progress of the plant decommissioning and Fukushima prefecture's recovery from the March 11, 2011, disaster.

He said the government has done everything for now to ensure the plant's safety, protect the reputation of Japan's fishing industry and clearly explain the scientific basis to gain understanding in and outside the country. He pledged that the government will continue those efforts until the end of the release and decommissioning, which will take decades.

"The government will take responsibility until the disposal of ALPS-treated water is completed, even if it takes several decades," Kishida said.

A massive earthquake and tsunami destroyed the Fukushima Daiichi plant's cooling systems, causing three of its reactors to melt and contaminating their cooling water. The water, now amounted to 1.34 million tons, is collected, filtered and stored in about 1,000 tanks, which fill much of the plant's grounds and will reach their capacity in early 2024.

The release of the treated wastewater has faced strong opposition from Japanese fishing organizations, which worry about further damage to the reputation of their seafood as they struggle to recover from the nuclear disaster. Groups in South Korea and China have also raised concerns, turning it into a political and diplomatic issue.

Barber suggested King would be pleased by that.

"Dr. King was fighting for the beloved community which included all people regardless of race," Barber said. "He brought in everybody from different faiths and traditions."

In New York City, one of the oldest Protestant churches, Middle Collegiate Church, is now a politically progressive, thoroughly multiethnic congregation. Its senior minister, the Rev. Jacqui Lewis, is a Black woman proud to be carrying on her family's tradition of civil rights activism.

"There's something in our blood that will never release us from our responsibility to make heaven here on earth," she said.

The Civil Rights Movement of the 1960s "was not just Black male clergy in the south," she said. "It was women who decided to march and not get on the buses (during the Montgomery bus boycott of 1955-56). It was white people who decided to pick up Black people in their cars and drive them to work. All the everyday, ordinary people who participated in this southern freedom movement."

Lewis agreed that the "Black Church" — as an umbrella term — may be of limited use now.

"Let's look at 'Black faith' instead," she said. "It's both inside and outside the church. 'Black Church' is standing in the streets for abortion rights, for immigrants. If there are two Black people in the streets chanting 'We shall overcome,' that's 'Black Church.'"

It is perhaps a sign of the times that there is no single faith-based group listed among the organizations serving as co-chairs of the 60th Anniversary of the March on Washington that will be celebrated on Aug. 26. Among the co-chairs are the NAACP, the National Urban League, the Anti-Defamation League and Asian Americans Advancing Justice.

However, the nation's six largest historically Black denominations — partners in the Conference of National Black Churches — will be participating in the anniversary events.

"The Black Church was the foundation of the Civil Rights Movement, which is why we are resolved to play a continued role in the fight for equality," said the CNBC board. "While we have made strides over the decades, recent events threatened to impact the right to vote, to quality education, and to good-paying jobs. The COVID-19 pandemic was a reminder that we have a long way to go, in so many aspects of life, as we strive for equality and justice."

How a mix of natural and human-caused factors cooked up Tropical Storm Hilary's soggy mess

By SETH BORENSTEIN AP Science Writer

A natural El Nino, human-caused climate change, a stubborn heat dome over the nation's midsection and other factors cooked up Tropical Storm Hilary's record-breaking slosh into California and Nevada, scientists figure.

Cooked up is the key phrase, since hot water and hot air were crucial in rapidly growing Hilary and then steering the storm on an unusual path that dumped 10 months of rain in a single weekend in normally bone-dry places. Nearly a foot of rain fell in parts of Southern California's mountains, while cities smashed summertime records.

"It was a combination of sort of a perfect situation of everything coming together in a way that made the storm possible," said University of Albany atmospheric scientist Kristen Corbosiero, an expert on Pacific hurricanes.

It's never easy to attribute a single event to climate change, especially so quickly and with El Nino being a prominent factor, said former National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration hurricane and climate scientist Jim Kossin, now with the nonprofit First Street Foundation.

To understand Hilary's unusual path, it's best to go where the storm began.

Hilary formed in an area south of Baja California and west of Mexico. Many storms form in the Eastern Pacific there, but most move harmlessly west into the open Pacific or into Mexico and then eventually — weaker — into the U.S. Southwest.

It's one of the most active birthing places for tropical cyclones, Corbosiero said. But the water — fuel for

Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, Aug. 22, 2023 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 059 ~ 42 of 57

the heat engine that is a hurricane – was about 3.5 to 5 degrees Fahrenheit (2 to 3 degrees Celsius) hotter than normal at the surface and that warmth went deep, said UCLA western weather scientist Daniel Swain.

So Hilary rapidly intensified, gaining 75 mph in wind speed strength in just 24 hours — going from nearly nothing to a Category 4 hurricane in no time.

“We’ve been seeing (rapid intensification) more and more recently,” said Kossin, who did a study showing this phenomenon increasing.

“For a storm to intensify the way Hilary did everything has to be ideal,” Kossin said. There has to be warm water, it has to run deep and there has to be little to no crosswinds decapitating the storm, he said. Hilary checked all those boxes.

The water was warm both because of the natural El Nino, a warming of parts of the equatorial Pacific that changes weather worldwide, and because of long-term climate change that has been shattering records for heat deeper in the oceans, scientists said.

UCLA’s Swain said there are three main reasons storms that form where Hilary did don’t normally swamp Southern California.

First, unlike the hurricane-prone Atlantic coast where the warm Gulf stream is ideal for storms, the coast along California and Baja California is cold and it brings cold water up from the deep, Swain said: “That’s a real hurricane killer.”

The normal atmosphere in California is also a hurricane killer. It’s dry and has downward motion, while storms like upward motion, Swain said.

But Hilary had grown so strong and big that even though it rapidly weakened when it hit the cold water, it was still packing enough of a punch when it got to California, Kossin said.

The reason it got to California is that the third factor — usually prevailing winds pushing storms from east to west – failed to protect the Pacific coast this time, Swain said.

Hot air to the east and a low-pressure system to the west combined to push and pull Hilary up into California instead of the normal paths for eastern Pacific storms, Corbosiero and other scientists said. And a big hot air mass sitting over the middle United States blocked the storm from turning east.

What’s unusual is that big hot air mass just hasn’t been moving. Some scientists, including Woodwell Climate Research Institute’s Jennifer Francis, have theorized that especially in summer there are more and more situations where weather patterns get stuck and it seems to be connected to changes in the Arctic because of global warming. Other scientists disagree. It’s one of the biggest unresolved issues in mainstream climate science, Swain said.

“Hilary is a rare storm but almost certainly we will see equally bizarre and destructive but different events unfold as the globe continues to warm generally and this El Nino continues to strengthen,” Francis said.

Last October, MIT hurricane scientist Kerry Emanuel was at UCLA giving a guest lecture on the rare chance of a tropical storm or hurricane hitting Los Angeles. His computer models, factoring in climate change and other ingredients, found that the type of storm that would dump 15.7 inches of rain (40 centimeters) on downtown Los Angeles used to have a one-in-108-year chance of happening, at least until 2010. But now that type of storm has a one-in-30-year chance, he figured.

“Hilary was substantially more probable today than it would have been 20 or 30 years ago,” said Emanuel, who also calculated the likelihood of a storm flooding New York City, months before 2012’s Superstorm Sandy.

But it’s not just climate change, Emanuel said: “We do know for sure that El Nino tends to enhance” hurricane activity in that region.

And when storms like Hilary hit, the warmer air also holds more moisture and that means more rain falling down, Corbosiero, Swain and Emanuel said. Studies show that worldwide tropical cyclones are getting rainier.

For the next two to three weeks, expect the eastern Pacific hurricane basin to be active – peak season is near the end of the month – Corbosiero said. Other weather and climate conditions may provide the region a break in early to mid-September only to get busier again at the end of next month, she said.

Mass shootings spur divergent laws as states split between gun rights and control

By DAVID A. LIEB Associated Press

Tennessee's Republican-led Legislature is meeting in special session this week to consider a package of public safety proposals, including some stemming from a deadly shooting at a Nashville elementary school earlier this year.

Though the session is not expected to result in any new firearms restrictions, it nonetheless highlights the widely divergent response among states to a spate of mass shootings across the U.S.

More than half the states have enacted substantive new laws this year regarding gun policies or school safety measures — most often tightening firearm restrictions in Democratic-led states and loosening them in Republican-led ones. Some states also have pumped money into efforts to secure schools or to train teachers and staff how to respond in shootings.

WHAT IS TENNESSEE DOING?

Republican Gov. Bill Lee has outlined an 18-prong agenda for Tennessee lawmakers to consider during their special session.

The proposal that has gotten the most public attention also appears among the least likely to pass. It would allow judges to order the temporary removal of guns from people determined to be a risk of killing themselves or others.

Laws allowing "extreme risk protection orders" already are in place 21 states and the District of Columbia, according to the Giffords Law Center to Prevent Gun Violence. That includes Michigan and Minnesota, where new Democratic legislative majorities passed so-called "red flag" laws this year.

Lee has shied away from referring to his proposal as a "red flag" law, emphasizing that it would allow guns to be removed only upon clear and convincing evidence during a court proceeding — and not before the person's court appearance.

The shooter that killed six people, including three students, at The Covenant School in Nashville had been under a doctor's care for an emotional disorder, police said, but there were no legal steps to prevent the person from buying guns.

Tennessee's special session agenda also includes legislation regarding mental health resources, school safety plans and tougher penalties for some crimes.

WHAT HAVE DEMOCRATIC STATES DONE LATELY?

The number of states enacting firearms legislation has climbed steadily this year. The most recent action occurred in Delaware, where Democratic Gov. John Carney signed legislation Friday expanding restrictions on guns at election polling places and school property.

Less than a week earlier, fellow Democratic Gov. J.B. Pritzker signed a law making Illinois the eighth state to roll back legal protections for firearms manufacturers and distributors. The new law bans firearms advertising that officials determine produces a public safety threat or appeals to children, militants or others who might later use the weapons illegally.

Pritzker signed the bill alongside attendees of an annual conference hosted by the gun-control group Everytown for Gun Safety. The group said 2023 has been "a historic year for gun safety in the states."

In addition to Illinois, Democratic-led legislatures in Colorado, Connecticut, Hawaii, Michigan, Maryland, Minnesota, Vermont and Washington all passed multiple gun control provisions this year. Among other things, those laws have strengthened background checks, banned certain semi-automatic weapons and restricted so-called "ghost guns," which lack serial numbers.

WHAT HAVE REPUBLICAN STATES DONE LATELY?

By contrast, some states have strengthened gun rights. One of the most recent laws got signed just weeks ago by Republican Gov. Mike Dunleavy, of Alaska.

The new Alaska law bars state and local officials from restricting the sale or possession of guns and

ammunition during disasters — a response to mandatory business closures during the coronavirus pandemic. The law will mean gun stores can't be closed in emergencies unless all commerce is shut down. The National Rifle Association described it as "the first major pro-Second Amendment legislation" passed in Alaska in a decade.

Several Republican-led states also made it easier for people to carry concealed handguns. A Florida law allowing concealed guns without needing a permit took effect July 1. North Dakota expanded a similar law Aug. 1. And Nebraska will become the 26th state with such a law on Sept. 10.

Texas responded to last year's deadly Uvalde school shooting with new laws this year that require armed security officers at every school and silent panic buttons in every classroom. The state also provided additional funding to improve the physical safety of schools.

WHAT HAVE THE COURTS SAID ABOUT GUNS?

The U.S. Supreme Court ruled last year that Americans have a right to carry firearms in public for self-defense. The ruling provided a new precedent for challenging state gun-control policies and sent some states scrambling to replace their former laws with newly reworded gun restrictions.

Most state gun laws get challenged in court, often triggering years of legal wrangling.

The most recent court ruling on guns came last week, when a federal appeals panel rejected a challenge to a 2022 New Jersey law allowing the state attorney general to bring "public nuisance" claims against gun manufacturers.

Connecticut provides another example of how the court battles can seem continuous. Earlier this month, a federal judge rejected a request to temporarily block a 2013 Connecticut law — passed after the 2012 Sandy Hook Elementary School shooting — that added more than 100 firearms to the state's assault weapons ban and prohibited ammunition magazines holding over 10 rounds.

But before that ruling came down, another lawsuit already had been filed against Connecticut's latest gun restrictions, which were signed in June by Democratic Gov. Ned Lamont. The new law expands the assault weapons ban even further, stiffens penalties for large-capacity ammunition magazines and bans the open carrying of firearms, among other things. Gun-rights advocates sued the same day the law was signed.

How Trump's attacks on prosecutors build on history of using racist language and stereotypes

By ALI SWENSON and AYANNA ALEXANDER Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — Donald Trump's aggressive response to his fourth criminal indictment in five months follows a strategy he has long used against legal and political opponents: relentless attacks, often infused with language that is either overtly racist or is coded in ways that appeal to racists.

The early Republican presidential front-runner has used terms such as "animal" and "rabid" to describe Black district attorneys. He has accused Black prosecutors of being "racist." He has made unsupported claims about their personal lives. And on his social media platform, Truth Social, Trump has deployed terms that rhyme with racial slurs as some of his supporters post racist screeds about the same targets.

The rhetoric is a reminder of Trump's tendency to use coded racial messaging as a signal to supporters, an approach he has deployed over several decades as he evolved from a New York City real estate tycoon to a reality television star and, eventually, the president. Even if he doesn't explicitly employ racial slurs, his language recalls America's history of portraying Black people as not fully human.

"He's taking that historical racialized language that was offensive and insulting, and the subordinating of Black persons, applying it in a contemporary space and really bubbling up that history," said Bev-Freda Jackson, a professor in the school of public affairs at American University.

While this is a well-worn strategy for Trump, his latest comments come at a particularly sensitive moment. On a personal level, a bond agreement signed on Monday by Trump's lawyers and Fulton County District Attorney Fani Willis imposes restrictions on his communications, including those issued through social media. And more broadly, experts worry Trump's broadsides will worsen online vitriol and inspire violence.

"It makes the internet a more dangerous place," said Heidi Beirich, co-founder of the Global Project

Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, Aug. 22, 2023 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 059 ~ 45 of 57

Against Hate and Extremism. "It just takes one angry person with a gun to do something terrible. And that's frankly the kind of violence I'm the most worried about."

Recent incidents underscore those concerns: Threats toward people involved in Trump's cases have factored into an arrest in Texas and an FBI killing in Utah.

Trump spokesman Steven Cheung pushed back against the idea that the former president attacks people based on race, saying in an emailed statement that Trump "doesn't have a racist bone in his body and anyone saying otherwise is a racist and bigot themselves."

"He garnered record-breaking votes from ethnic minority voters in 2020 and it will be even bigger in 2024," Cheung said.

Even before Trump was charged in Georgia last week with multiple criminal counts related to his efforts to overturn the 2020 election, he spent days assailing the prosecutor in the case with unfounded accusations and race-related attacks.

He wrote online that Willis was a "rabid partisan." He ran an ad that claimed without evidence that she hid a relationship with a gang member she was prosecuting — an ad she called "derogatory and false" in an email to staff obtained by The Associated Press. He lobbed accusations that Willis, the first Black woman to hold her role, was "racist" and using the indictment as a "con job."

After the indictment was filed, Trump sent an email highlighting parts of Willis' background. Under a heading titled "A family steeped in hate," Trump's email notes her father's identity as a former Black Panther and criminal defense attorney, as well as Willis' stated pride in her Black heritage and Swahili first name, which means "prosperous." Willis has been open about her father's history and her heritage.

"This is who Donald Trump is," said Cliff Albright, executive director of Black Voters Matter, a voting advocacy group. "He's been this way all his time in public life."

Willis has declined to comment on Trump's attacks, but urged restraint in her email to staff about the ad.

"We have no personal feelings against those we investigate or prosecute and we should not express any," she wrote.

Trump's reaction to the Georgia charges match how he has responded to earlier indictments and investigations.

He has slammed Manhattan District Attorney Alvin Bragg, who is Black, as a "Soros backed animal" even though George Soros, the Hungarian American and Jewish billionaire who conservatives frequently invoke as a boogeyman, doesn't know and didn't directly donate to Bragg, according to a Soros spokesman. The former president also claimed Bragg was a "degenerate psychopath" who "hates the USA."

In a message last September on Truth Social, Trump referred to New York Attorney General Letitia James, who is Black, as "Racist A.G. Letitia 'Peekaboo' James." The nickname is similar to a term used to insult Black people.

Cheung didn't say what Trump meant when he said "peekaboo," but wrote in an email that "anyone who thinks peek-a-boo is a racist phrase is obviously sick in the head and their assertion strains credulity and should not be taken seriously."

The former president's comments and actions toward people of color have been criticized for decades.

In 1989, Trump took out full-page newspaper ads calling for five Black and Hispanic men accused, and ultimately convicted, of rape to receive the death penalty. The "Central Park Five" were exonerated in 2019 and Trump responded to the news by saying, "You have people on both sides of that."

Just before he was elected president in 2016, Trump referred to U.S.-born District Judge Gonzalo Curiel as "Mexican." He said without evidence that Curiel had a conflict of interest over Trump's efforts to "build the wall" on the U.S.'s southern border. While in office, he said four congresswomen of color should go back to the "broken and crime infested" countries they came from, ignoring the fact that all of the women are American citizens and three were born in the U.S.

And in bluntly vulgar language while he was president, Trump questioned why the U.S. would accept more immigrants from Haiti and "shithole countries" in Africa.

Other modern public figures have used coded language around race. In a 1996 speech about President Bill Clinton's crime bill, then-first lady Hillary Clinton described young people in gangs as "super-predators."

She's said since then she regrets using the term.

But few contemporary political leaders at Trump's level have such a consistent pattern of deploying racist language and tropes. And there's a risk that such comments could fuel hate crimes and violence.

Earlier this month, a Texas woman was arrested and charged with threatening to kill U.S. District Judge Tanya Chutkan, who is overseeing the federal criminal case against Trump in Washington. In the call, Abigail Jo Shry called Chutkan a racist term and threatened to kill her if Trump wasn't elected next year. Craig Deleeuw Robertson, who was killed by the FBI earlier this month in Utah after threatening to kill President Joe Biden, also made threats in March to U.S. Attorney General Merrick Garland, Bragg and James on Truth Social.

Earlier this year, Bragg's office was sent a powdery substance with a threatening letter that said "Alvin, I am going to kill you."

Since the Georgia indictment, racist stereotypes about Willis have surged online. The Fulton County Sheriff's Office did not respond to an inquiry about whether her office had experienced threats.

Last week, Trump posted online that prosecutors instead should have gone after those who "rigged the election."

"They only went after those that fought to find the riggers!" he said.

The close resemblance of "riggers" to a racial slur garnered attention from internet users on a pro-Trump online forum, who used the term in dozens of racist messages calling for people to be killed or hanged after seeing Trump's post .

The term has appeared several times on far-right forums since the 2020 election, sometimes with the same racist context.

Asked what Trump meant by the term, Cheung defined a rigger as "a person who rigs an event or system."

Biden says federal government will help Maui 'for as long as it takes' to recover from wildfire

By SEUNG MIN KIM Associated Press

LAHAINA, Hawaii (AP) — President Joe Biden on Monday told survivors of Hawaii's wildfires that the nation "grieves with you" and promised that the federal government will help "for as long as it takes" Maui to recover from damage caused by the deadliest U.S. wildfire in more than a century.

Biden arrived in Maui 13 days after fire ravaged the western part of the island, killing at least 115 people. Standing near a severely burned 150-year-old banyan tree, the president acknowledged the "overwhelming" devastation but said that Maui would persevere through the tragedy.

"Today it's burned but it's still standing," Biden said of the tree. "The tree survived for a reason. I believe it's a very powerful symbol of what we can and will do to get through this crisis."

Biden and first lady Jill Biden got a close-up look at the devastation, seeing block after block of hollowed out homes and other structures, charred cars, singed trees and piles of debris as his motorcade wound through Lahaina. They spent most of their time in the historic town of 13,000 people that was virtually destroyed by the flames.

The Bidens lingered briefly on the tarmac after arriving at Kahului Airport to console Hawaii Gov. Josh Green, his wife Jaime Green and members of Hawaii's congressional delegation who greeted them. The president and first lady embraced each of their greeters before they boarded the Marine One helicopter for an aerial tour of the damage.

The Bidens also met with first responders and members of the community, and were briefed by state and local officials about the ongoing response. They also participated in a blessing of his visit by island elders. They had interrupted a weeklong vacation in the Lake Tahoe area to visit Lahaina.

Earlier Monday, the White House announced that Biden has named Bob Fenton, a regional leader at the Federal Emergency Management Agency, to be the chief federal response coordinator for the Maui wildfires, overseeing the long-term recovery. It will take years to rebuild Lahaina, where just about every building was obliterated.

Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, Aug. 22, 2023 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 059 ~ 47 of 57

"We're going to rebuild the way the people of Maui want to rebuild," said Biden, adding that his administration would focus on respecting sacred lands, cultures and traditions.

Dozens gathered on the streets of Lahaina to watch Biden's motorcade wind its way through the community. Some greeted the president enthusiastically, but others appeared to be waving their middle fingers at the motorcade. Other island residents held up signs urging Biden "to listen to the people of Lahaina" and to send more aid.

During a community event at Lahaina's civic center, Biden praised the "remarkable resilience" he said he saw during his few hours in the community.

The president also spoke, as he often does when addressing communities touched by tragedy, of understanding the personal weight of devastating loss and the slow and painful process of recovering. Biden's first wife, Neilia, and their 1-year-old daughter, Naomi, died in a car accident in 1972. He lost an adult son, Beau, to brain cancer in 2015.

"When things look the most bleak, that's when we need faith," said Biden, who spent 70 minutes after his remarks speaking with community members.

Biden has faced criticism from some Republicans, including 2024 Republican frontrunner Donald Trump, for saying too little during the first days after the catastrophe. The White House, however, has pushed back, saying the president acted quickly and kept in close touch with the governor and other emergency officials as the crisis unfolded.

Sen. Brian Schatz, D-Hawaii, said that as of Sunday about 85% of the affected area had been searched and nearly 2,000 people remained without power and 10,000 were without phone and internet. Water in parts of west Maui was unsafe to drink.

While immediate aid such as water, food and blankets has been readily distributed to residents, Schatz said cellphones, ID and other documents that people would need to help them enroll in longer-term aid programs were burned in the fires, adding more challenges to the application process.

During his tour, Biden walked down a street from which many Lahaina residents made their harrowing escape from the flames.

An army of search and rescue teams with dozens of dogs have blanketed the area to help with recovery efforts. White House homeland security adviser Liz Sherwood-Randall said some 500 to 800 people remain unaccounted for. Mayor Richard Bissen earlier Monday put the number of unaccounted for at 850. Sherwood-Randall said the FBI has sent specialists to Maui to help with identification efforts.

Sherwood-Randall added that Biden, who has toured numerous communities ravaged by extreme weather disasters during his presidency, was focused during the visit "on the human experience," and is "very impatient with bureaucracy."

"How fast can we move to help people in need, and in particular, how can we help those in need who have the hardest time getting access to that help?" Sherwood-Randall said of Biden's focus.

More than 1,000 federal officials remain on the ground to respond to the wildfires, according to the White House. The administration has distributed more than \$8.5 million in aid to some 8,000 affected families, including \$3.6 million in rental assistance, said FEMA Administrator Deanne Criswell.

Schatz, who accompanied Biden on Monday, stressed that officials were "still responding to the disaster" and "we are not yet in a recovery phase."

"As bad as this looks, it's actually worse," he said in a phone interview on Sunday. "What you can't see is the damage to utility infrastructure. What you can't see is the thousands of kids who are trying to figure out how to go to school this fall. What you can't see is the first responders who went into the flames without regard for their own safety and had their own homes burned down."

The initial online search that spurred a raid on a Kansas paper was legal, a state agency says

By JOHN HANNA Associated Press

MARION, Kan. (AP) — The initial online search of a state website that led a central Kansas police chief to raid a local weekly newspaper was legal, a spokesperson for the agency that maintains the site said Monday, as newly released video showed the publisher's 98-year-old mother protesting a search of their home.

The raids on the Marion County Record and the publisher's home happened earlier this month, after a local restaurant owner accused the newspaper of illegally accessing information about her. A prosecutor said later that there was insufficient evidence to justify the raids, and some of the seized computers and cellphones have been returned.

But video released by the newspaper Monday shows just how upsetting the raid was to the mother of publisher Eric Meyer. The woman died the next day.

"Get out of my house ... I don't want you in my house!" Joan Meyer shouted at the six officers who were in the home she shared with her son. The surveillance video shows Meyer using a walker and dressed in slippers and a long robe or gown as she approaches the officers, swearing at them and demanding to know what they are doing.

She yells: "Don't you touch any of that stuff!"

The raid on the Record put it and its hometown of about 1,900 residents in the center of a debate about press freedoms protected by the First Amendment to the U.S. Constitution and Kansas' Bill of Rights. It also exposed divisions in the town over local politics and the newspaper's coverage of the community and put an intense spotlight on Police Chief Gideon Cody, who led the Aug. 11 raids months after the newspaper had asked questions about his background.

"As far as Chief Cody goes, he can take his high horse he brought into this community and giddy-up on out of town," Darvin Markley, a Marion resident, said during a Monday afternoon City Council meeting. "The man needs to go. He needs to be fired."

Cody did not attend Monday's meeting or respond to email and cellphone messages seeking a responses to those comments. He said in affidavits used to obtain the warrants that he had probable cause to believe that the newspaper and a City Council member whose home was also raided had violated state laws against identity theft or computer crimes.

Both City Council member Ruth Herbel and the newspaper have said they received a copy of a document about the status of the restaurant owner's license without soliciting it. The document disclosed the restaurant's license number and her date of birth, which are required to check the status of a person's license online and gain access to a more complete driving record. The police chief maintains they broke state laws to do that, while the newspaper and Herbel's attorneys say they didn't.

Herbel, the city's vice mayor, presided over the City Council's meeting Monday, its first since the raids. It lasted less than an hour, and Herbel announced that council members would not discuss the raids — something its agenda already had said in an all-caps statement in red followed by 47 exclamation points. She said the council will address the raids in a future meeting.

While Herbel said after the meeting that she agrees that Cody should resign, other City Council members declined to comment. Mike Powers, a retired district court judge who is the only candidate for mayor this fall, said it's premature to make any judgments.

The meeting came after Kansas Department of Revenue spokesperson Zack Denney said it's legal to access the driver's license database online to check the status of a person's license using information obtained independently. The department's Division of Vehicles issues licenses.

"The website is public-facing, and anyone can use it," he said.

The Department of Revenue website allows a searcher to see whether a person has a valid driver's license and to see a list of documents related to that person's driving record.

Searchers can go further: The site allows them to download documents or buy a copy of a driving record

Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, Aug. 22, 2023 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 059 ~ 49 of 57

for \$16.70. But they also need a person's driver's license number and date of birth, and they are asked to provide an address and phone number.

The affidavit to search the newspaper's offices noted that when a person submits an online request for someone's driving record, it lists 13 circumstances in which it is legal to obtain it. They include a person is seeking their own record or a business seeking it to verify personal information to help collect a debt.

The last item says: "I will use the information requested in a manner that is specifically authorized by Kansas law and is related to the operation of a motor vehicle or public safety."

Meyer, the newspaper's publisher, said Monday that reporter Phyllis Zorn did not download or purchase any documents when at the site. He said the newspaper plans to file a lawsuit over the raid of its offices and his home.

"If they thought they were intimidating us, they were wrong," said Meyer, who blames the stress of the raid for his mother's death.

The Kansas Bureau of Investigation continues to probe the newspaper's actions. The KBI reports to state Attorney General Kris Kobach, a Republican, while the Department of Revenue is under Democratic Gov. Laura Kelly's authority.

Police seized computers, personal cellphones and a router from the newspaper and the publisher's home and a laptop and iPhone from Herbel.

As of Monday, cellphones belonging to the newspaper's staff, two reporters' computer towers and the newspaper's main server were back in its offices, while it was still waiting for the return of four computers, two removable hard drives and a router. Those items remained with a computer forensics audit firm hired by the newspaper's attorney, as did Herbel's laptop and iPhone.

The auditing firm was checking the equipment for signs that materials were accessed or copied. Meyer said the paper believes police started to copy the hard drive of one computer in the newspaper's offices but stopped and seized the equipment when that proved too slow.

Legal experts believe the police raid on the newspaper violated a federal privacy law or a state law shielding journalists from having to identify sources or turn over unpublished material to law enforcement.

Meyer has noted that among the items seized were a computer tower and personal cellphone of a reporter who was uninvolved in the dispute with the local restaurant owner — but who had been investigating why Cody left a Kansas City, Missouri, police captain's job in April before becoming Marion police chief.

The newspaper is known for its aggressive coverage of its community, set among rolling hills that once were part of a vast sea of tall prairie grass. Some of the town's residents believe the newspaper is too critical, a suggestion Meyer dismisses.

"I know it's a well-run paper," Powers said. "If you read the editorials, every week is a lecture about how horrible we are."

Powers and Markley had an animated discussion about local politics in the hallway outside its meeting room before the meeting and again when the council had a brief closed session to talk to the city's attorney about a matter unrelated to the raids.

"The world is watching Marion," Markley told the City Council. "There has to be accountability for those involved."

Trump says he will surrender Thursday on Georgia charges tied to efforts to overturn 2020 election

By ALANNA DURKIN RICHER and JILL COLVIN Associated Press

Former President Donald Trump says he will surrender to authorities in Georgia on Thursday to face charges in the case accusing him of illegally scheming to overturn his 2020 election loss in the state.

"Can you believe it? I'll be going to Atlanta, Georgia, on Thursday to be ARRESTED," Trump wrote on his social media network Monday night, hours after his bond was set at \$200,000.

It will be Trump's fourth arrest since April, when he became the first former president in U.S. history

Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, Aug. 22, 2023 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 059 ~ 50 of 57

to face indictment. Since then, Trump, who remains the leading candidate for the Republican presidential nomination, has had what has seemed like an endless procession of bookings and arraignments in jurisdictions across the country. His appearances in New York, Florida and Washington, D.C., have drawn enormous media attention, with news helicopters tracking his every move.

Trump's announcement came hours after his attorneys met with prosecutors in Atlanta to discuss the details of his release on bond. The former president is barred from intimidating co-defendants, witnesses or victims in the case — including on social media — according to the bond agreement signed by Fulton County District Attorney Fani Willis, Trump's defense attorneys and the judge. It explicitly includes "posts on social media or reposts of posts" made by others.

Trump has repeatedly used social media to attack people involved in the criminal cases against him as he campaigns to reclaim the White House in 2024. He has been railing against Willis since before he was indicted, and singled out Georgia Gov. Brian Kemp — a Republican who rebuffed his efforts to overturn the election — by name in a social media post Monday morning.

The agreement also prohibits the former president from making any "direct or indirect threat of any nature" against witnesses or co-defendants, and from communicating in any way about the facts of the case with them, except through attorneys.

The order sets Trump's bond for the Racketeer Influenced and Corrupt Organizations — or RICO — charge at \$80,000, and adds \$10,000 for each of the 12 other counts he is facing. Bond is the amount defendants must pay as a form of collateral to ensure they show up for required court appearances.

Willis set a deadline of noon Friday for Trump and his 18 co-defendants to turn themselves in to be booked. The prosecutor has proposed that arraignments for the defendants follow during the week of Sept. 5. She has said she wants to try the defendants collectively and bring the case to trial in March of next year, which would put it in the heat of the presidential nominating season.

A Trump spokesman did not immediately respond to a request for comment on the filing. A phone message seeking comment was also left for an attorney for the former president.

Trump's appearance in Georgia will come a day after the first Republican primary debate, which he has decided to skip.

He is expected to turn himself in at the Fulton County jail, which has long been plagued with problems. The Department of Justice last month opened a civil rights investigation into conditions, citing filthy cells, violence and the death last year of a man whose body was found covered in insects in the main jail's psychiatric wing. Three people have died in Fulton County custody in the past month.

The Fulton County Sheriff's Office said in a news release Monday afternoon that when Trump surrenders there will be a "hard lockdown" of the area surrounding the jail.

But Trump is not expected to spend much time there.

When defendants arrive at the building, they typically pass through a security checkpoint before checking in for formal booking in the lobby. During the booking process, defendants are typically photographed and fingerprinted and asked to provide certain personal information. Since Trump's bond has already been set, he will be released from custody once the booking process is complete.

Unlike in other jurisdictions, in Fulton County, arraignments — where a defendant first appears in court — are generally set after a defendant completes the booking process and do not happen on the same day.

Booking a former president, who still has 24-hour Secret Service protection, has created myriad security and logistical issues in other jurisdictions.

In his past appearances in a New York state court and federal courts in Miami and Washington, Trump was not handcuffed while in custody. He was also not required to pose for a mugshot, with officials instead using existing photographs of the former president.

Georgia officials have said Trump will be treated like others charged with crimes in their state.

"Unless somebody tells me differently, we are following our normal practices, and so it doesn't matter your status, we'll have a mugshot ready for you," Fulton County Sheriff Patrick Labat said at a news conference earlier this month.

Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, Aug. 22, 2023 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 059 ~ 51 of 57

Trump was charged last week in the case alongside a slew of allies, who prosecutors say conspired to subvert the will of voters in a desperate bid to keep the Republican in the White House after he lost to Democrat Joe Biden.

Trump has denied any wrongdoing, and he characterizes the case — and the three others he is facing — as efforts to hurt his 2024 presidential campaign. He has regularly used his Truth Social platform to single out prosecutors and others involved in his cases, and to continue to spread falsehoods that the 2020 election was stolen from him.

In a post on Monday, Trump called the Fulton County district attorney “crooked, incompetent, & highly partisan.” He also attacked Kemp, whom he has long targeted for the governor’s refusal to intervene after the 2020 election. Kemp has been outspoken in pushing back against Trump, writing in social media last week: “The 2020 election in Georgia was not stolen.”

Bond was also set Monday for three lawyers who were indicted along with Trump. For each of them, the bond for the RICO charge was set at \$20,000, with varying amounts for the other charges they face. John Eastman and Kenneth Chesebro each had a bond set at \$100,000, while Ray Smith’s bond is \$50,000.

Bail bondsman Scott Hall, who was accused of participating in a breach of election equipment in rural Coffee County, had his bond set at \$10,000.

Other defendants include former White House chief of staff Mark Meadows; Trump attorney and former New York City Mayor Rudy Giuliani, and a Trump administration Justice Department official, Jeffrey Clark, who aided the then-president’s efforts to undo his election loss in Georgia.

The Georgia indictment came just two weeks after the Justice Department special counsel charged Trump in a separate case in a vast conspiracy to overturn the election. Besides the two election-related cases, Trump faces a federal indictment accusing him of illegally hoarding classified documents as well as a New York state case charging him with falsifying business records.

Ecuadorians reject oil drilling in the Amazon, ending operations in a protected area

RIO DE JANEIRO (AP) — Ecuadorians voted against drilling for oil in a protected area of the Amazon, an important decision that will require the state oil company to end its operations in a region that’s home to isolated tribes and is a hotspot of biodiversity.

With over 90% of the ballots counted by early Monday, around six in 10 Ecuadorians rejected the oil exploration in Block 43, situated within Yasuni National Park. The referendum took place along with the presidential election, which will be decided in a runoff between leftist candidate Luisa González and right-wing contender Daniel Noboa. The country is experiencing political turmoil following the assassination of one of the candidates, Fernando Villavicencio.

Yasuni National Park is inhabited by the Tagaeri and Taromenani, who live in voluntary isolation, and other Indigenous groups. In 1989, it was designated, along with neighboring areas, a world biosphere reserve by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, also known as UNESCO. Encompassing a surface area of around 1 million hectares (2.5 million acres), the area boasts 610 species of birds, 139 species of amphibians and 121 species of reptiles. At least three species are endemic.

“Ecuadorians have come together for this cause to provide a life opportunity for our Indigenous brothers and sisters and also to show the entire world, amidst these challenging times of climate change, that we stand in support of the rainforest,” Nemo Guiquita, a leader of the Waorani tribe, told The Associated Press in a phone interview.

The referendum is the result of a long and winding process. It started in 2007, when then-President Rafael Correa announced that Ecuador would refrain from oil exploration in Block 43 if rich nations compensated the poverty-stricken country. This was to be accomplished through establishment of a \$3.6 billion fund, equal to 50% of the projected revenue from the block.

However, the fund drew in only a small fraction of the intended amount. As a result, in August 2013, Correa declared Ecuador’s intention to proceed with oil exploration in the block. In response, Indigenous

and environmentalist movements initiated a campaign under the banner of the Yasunidos movement, seeking to amass signatures for the referendum. After almost one decade of legal battles and bureaucratic hurdles, the Supreme Court ruled in May that the measure must be incorporated into this year's election.

The outcome represents a significant blow to Ecuadorian President Guillermo Lasso who advocated for oil drilling, asserting that its revenues are crucial to the country's economy. State oil company Petroecuador, which currently produces almost 60,000 barrels a day in Yasuni, will be required to dismantle its operations in the coming months.

The South American country started exploring oil on a large scale in the Amazon in the 1970s when it became an Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries member —membership it withdrew in 2020. For decades, oil has been Ecuador's main export. In 2022, it represented 35.5% of total exports, according to the country's Central Bank. Block 43 alone contributes \$1.2 billion annually to the federal budget.

In a statement Monday, Petroecuador said it would await the conclusion of the ballot counting before commenting on the referendum. The company added that it would comply with the decision of the Ecuadorian people.

The referendum applies only to Block 43. Within the Amazon region, oil production extends to other sections of Yasuni park and into Indigenous territories. Accidents are commonplace, mostly through oil spills into the rivers.

"It's not that we're going to feel relieved. We can breathe a moment of calm, we're happy, but there are many more oil wells in Waorani territory causing harm," says Indigenous leader Guiquita. "We hope that with this public consultation, there will be a path marked by the fact that the decision belongs to the people and that we can remove all those who are extracting oil and polluting our land."

British nurse Lucy Letby imprisoned for life in murders of 7 babies and attempted murders of 6

By BRIAN MELLEY and DANICA KIRKA Associated Press

LONDON (AP) — A former neonatal nurse convicted of murdering seven babies in her care and trying to kill six others at a hospital in northern England was sentenced Monday to life in prison with no chance of release by a judge who said she was cruel, cunning and callous, and acted with "malevolence bordering sadism."

Lucy Letby, who refused to appear in court for sentencing or to face an outpouring of anger and anguish from grieving parents, was given the most severe punishment possible under British law, which does not allow the death penalty.

Justice James Goss said the number of killings and attempts and the nature of the murders by a nurse entrusted with caring for the most fragile infants provided the "exceptional circumstances" required to impose a rare "whole-life order." Only three other women have received such a harsh sentence in the U.K.

"There was a deep malevolence bordering on sadism in your actions," Goss said, addressing the absent defendant, who will be given a transcript of the proceedings. "During the course of this trial, you have coldly denied any responsibility for your wrongdoing. You have no remorse. There are no mitigating factors."

A Manchester Crown Court jury that deliberated 22 days convicted Letby, 33, of murdering the seven babies over a yearlong period that saw her prey on the vulnerabilities of sick newborns and their anxious parents. Eight jurors showed up to watch the sentencing.

Letby sickened babies by injecting intravenous lines with air, poisoning some with insulin and force-feeding others milk. After killing them, she sometimes sobbed in grief, made keepsakes for parents and bathed the little bodies and dressed them for burial.

The victims, who were given anonymity and listed only by letters, such as Child A and Child B, died in the neonatal unit at the Countess of Chester Hospital in northwest England between June 2015 and June 2016.

"I don't think we will ever get over the fact that our daughter was tortured till she had no fight left in her and everything she went through over her short life was deliberately done by someone who was supposed to protect her and help her come home where she belonged," the mother of a girl identified as

Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, Aug. 22, 2023 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 059 ~ 53 of 57

Child I said in a statement read in court.

The judge said no one but Letby knows what drove her, though some parents ventured theories: she wanted to play god; she needed attention, drama and sympathy in her life; or she wanted to be remembered.

Prosecutor Nicholas Johnson said Letby deserved a "whole-life tariff" for "sadistic conduct" and premeditated crimes.

Defense lawyer Ben Myers said Letby maintained her innocence and that there was nothing he could add that would be able to reduce her sentence.

A mother who conceived her twin boys through in vitro fertilization said there were "no children in the world more wanted than them" and didn't know if she would have others. Letby killed one, Child E, and left Child F with learning deficiencies his mother attributes to insulin poisoning.

She became emotional as she described the regret she has every day for letting Letby spend the final moments of Child E's life bathing and clothing the boy in a woolen gown.

"He was buried in that gown, a gift from the unit chosen by Lucy," she said.

Other families also suffered multiple tragedies since Letby targeted three sets of twins and a set of triplets.

Another mother of twins was left to grieve the loss of a son and blame herself when her family members — who had been vigilant to watch over the second infant after the first one's death — let their guard down and Letby struck again, harming the boy's sister, who survived.

"Little did we know you were waiting for us to leave so you could attack the one thing that gave us a reason to carry on in life," the mother said.

The parents of triplets lost two of their babies, and the third survived after being transferred to another hospital. The couple said in a video played in court that Letby had ruined their lives.

"The anger and the hatred I have towards her will never go away," the father said. "It has destroyed me as a man and as a father."

One father called Letby "the devil" and said she had tried to kill his daughter twice. The nurse didn't succeed but the girl was left blind, with brain damage and having to be fed through a tube.

"Every day I would sit there and pray. I would pray for God to save her," the father of Child G said. "He did. He saved her, but the devil found her."

Letby's absence, which is allowed in British courts during sentencing, fueled anger from the families of the victims, who wanted her to listen to statements about the devastation caused by her crimes.

Politicians and victim advocates have called for changes in the law to force criminals to appear for sentencing after several high-profile convicts chose not to face their victims in recent months.

British Prime Minister Rishi Sunak, who called the crimes "shocking and harrowing," said his government would bring forward in "due course" a plan to require convicts to attend their sentencing hearings.

"It's cowardly that people who commit such horrendous crimes do not face their victims and hear first-hand the impact that their crimes have had on them and their families and loved ones," Sunak said.

Also planned is an independent inquiry into what happened at the Countess of Chester Hospital and how staff and management responded to the spike in neonatal unit deaths. However, there are calls for a more formal inquiry led by a judge, who could order people to testify.

During Letby's 10-month trial, prosecutors said the hospital started to see in 2015 a significant rise in the number of babies who were dying or suffering sudden declines in their health for no apparent reason.

Some suffered "serious catastrophic collapses" but survived after getting help from medical personnel.

Letby was on duty in all of the cases, with prosecutors describing her as a "constant malevolent presence" in the neonatal unit when the children experienced medical distress or died. The nurse harmed babies in ways that were difficult to detect, and she persuaded colleagues that their collapses and deaths were normal, they said.

Senior doctors said over the weekend that they had raised concerns about Letby as early as October 2015 and that children might have been saved if managers had taken their concerns seriously.

Dr. Stephen Brearey, the head consultant at the Countess of Chester Hospital's neonatal unit, told the

Guardian newspaper that deaths could arguably have been avoided as early as February 2016 if executives had “responded appropriately” to an urgent meeting request from concerned doctors.

Letby was finally removed from front-line duties in late June 2016. She was arrested at her home in July 2018.

Police found records she had taken home from the hospital on babies who had collapsed. Investigators learned Letby had performed thousands of searches online for information about the parents after the killings.

They also found a note in her house that served as a chilling confession: “I killed them on purpose because I’m not good enough to care for them,” she wrote. “I am a horrible evil person.”

The mother of Child C wept on the witness stand as she spoke of the loss of her firstborn, a “feisty” and “defenseless baby boy.”

She had worn her son’s hand and foot prints around her neck to remember him. The later realization that the person who took those prints — Letby — was the same person who took his life tainted the memory, she said.

“There is no sentence that will ever compare to the excruciating agony that we have suffered as a consequence of your actions,” she said. “At least now there is no debate that, in your own words, you killed them on purpose. You are evil. You did this.”

FDA approves RSV vaccine for moms-to-be to guard their newborns

By LAURAN NEERGAARD AP Medical Writer

WASHINGTON (AP) — U.S. regulators on Monday approved the first RSV vaccine for pregnant women so their babies will be born with protection against the scary respiratory infection.

RSV is notorious for filling hospitals with wheezing babies every fall and winter. The Food and Drug Administration cleared Pfizer’s maternal vaccination to guard against a severe case of RSV when babies are most vulnerable — from birth through 6 months of age.

The next step: The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention must issue recommendations for using the vaccine, named Abrysvo, during pregnancy. (Vaccinations for older adults, also at high risk, are getting underway this fall using the same Pfizer shot plus another from competitor GSK.)

“Maternal vaccination is an incredible way to protect the infants,” said Dr. Elizabeth Schlaudecker of Cincinnati Children’s Hospital, a researcher in Pfizer’s international study of the vaccine. If shots begin soon, “I do think we could see an impact for this RSV season.”

RSV is a coldlike nuisance for most healthy people but it can be life-threatening for the very young. It inflames babies’ tiny airways so it’s hard to breathe or causes pneumonia. In the U.S. alone, between 58,000 and 80,000 children younger than 5 are hospitalized each year, and several hundred die, from the respiratory syncytial virus.

Last year’s RSV season was extremely harsh in the U.S., and it began sickening tots in the summer, far earlier than usual.

Babies are born with an immature immune system, dependent for their first few months on protection from mom. How the RSV vaccination will work: A single injection late in pregnancy gives enough time for the mom-to-be to develop virus-fighting antibodies that pass through the placenta to the fetus — ready to work at birth.

It’s the same way pregnant women pass along protection against other infections. Pregnant women have long been urged to get a flu shot and a whooping cough vaccine — and more recently, COVID-19 vaccination.

Pfizer’s study included nearly 7,400 pregnant women plus their babies. Maternal vaccination didn’t prevent mild RSV infection — but it proved 82% effective at preventing a severe case during babies’ first three months of life. At age 6 months, it still was proving 69% effective against severe illness.

Vaccine reactions were mostly injection-site pain and fatigue. In the study, there was a slight difference

in premature birth — just a few weeks early — between vaccinated moms and those given a dummy shot, something Pfizer has said was due to chance. The FDA said to avoid the possibility, the vaccine should be given only between 32 weeks and 36 weeks of pregnancy, a few weeks later than during the clinical trial.

If enough pregnant women get vaccinated, Pfizer has predicted the U.S. could prevent as many as 20,000 infant hospitalizations a year and 320,000 doctor visits.

The only other option to guard babies from RSV: Giving them lab-made antibodies. The FDA recently approved a new drug that's the first one-dose version, recommended for all infants younger than 8 months before their first RSV season starts. Beyfortus, from Sanofi and AstraZeneca, is expected to be available this fall.

Cincinnati's Schlaudecker, a pediatric infectious disease specialist, said both the new antibody drug and the maternal vaccine are eagerly anticipated, and predicted doctors will try a combination to provide the best protection for babies depending on their age and risk during RSV season.

Another Cincinnati Children's physician who's cared for seriously ill RSV patients volunteered to participate in Pfizer's vaccine study when she became pregnant.

"The last thing a parent wants to see is their kid struggling to breathe," Dr. Maria Deza Leon said. "I was also at risk of being the person that could get RSV and give it to my son without even realizing."

Deza Leon received her shot in late January 2022 and her son Joaquin was born the following month. While she hasn't yet learned if she received the vaccine or a dummy shot, Joaquin now is a healthy toddler who's never been diagnosed with RSV.

Alabama can enforce ban on puberty blockers and hormones for transgender children, court says

By KIM CHANDLER Associated Press

MONTGOMERY, Ala. (AP) — A federal appeals court ruled Monday that Alabama can enforce a ban outlawing the use of puberty blockers and hormones to treat transgender children, the second such appellate victory for gender-affirming care restrictions that have been adopted by a growing number of Republican-led states.

A three-judge panel of the 11th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals vacated a judge's temporary injunction against enforcing the law. The judge has scheduled trial for April 2 on whether to permanently block the law.

Alabama Attorney General Steve Marshall called the ruling a "significant victory for our country, for children, and for common sense."

"The Eleventh Circuit reinforced that the State has the authority to safeguard the physical and psychological wellbeing of minors," Marshall said.

In lifting the injunction, the judges wrote that states have "a compelling interest in protecting children from drugs, particularly those for which there is uncertainty regarding benefits, recent surges in use, and irreversible effects."

The decision leaves families of transgender children, who had been receiving treatment, scrambling for care. The injunction will remain in place until the court issues the mandate, which could take several days. But once it is officially lifted, the attorney general's office will be able to enforce the ban, which threatens doctors with prison time.

Advocacy groups representing families who challenged the Alabama law vowed to continue the fight, saying "parents, not the government, are best situated to make these medical decisions for their children."

"Our clients are devastated by this decision, which leaves them vulnerable to what the district court—after hearing several days of testimony from parents, doctors, and experts—found to be irreparable harm as a result of losing the medical care they have been receiving and that has enabled them to thrive," said a joint statement from the Southern Poverty Law Center, the National Center for Lesbian Rights, GLBTQ Legal Advocates & Defenders, and the Human Rights Campaign.

Major medical groups, including the American Medical Association and the American Academy of Pediatrics, oppose the bans and experts say treatments are safe if properly administered.

Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, Aug. 22, 2023 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 059 ~ 56 of 57

Puberty blockers are fully reversible prescription medication that pause sexual maturation, typically given in injections or skin implants. Hormone treatments can prompt sexual development, including changes in appearance.

Dr. Morissa Ladinsky, a Birmingham pediatrician, said in a statement Monday that she is hopeful "today's decision is just a temporary setback."

"As a doctor who has treated hundreds of transgender adolescents, I know firsthand the challenges these young people and their families face and the benefits these treatments provide to youth who need them. This is safe, effective, and established medical care. There is no valid reason to ban this care," Ladinsky said.

The ruling follows a string of decisions in recent weeks against similar bans. A federal judge in June struck down a similar law in Arkansas, the first state to enact such a ban. At least 20 states enacted laws restricting or banning gender-affirming care for minors.

Opponents of youth transgender medical treatment say there's no solid proof of purported benefits, cite widely discredited research and say children shouldn't make life-altering decisions they might regret.

Bans have also been temporarily blocked by federal judges in Florida, Indiana, and Kentucky. A federal appeals court has allowed Tennessee's ban, which had been blocked by a federal judge, to take effect.

The ruling applies to only the Alabama ban, but comes as most of the state bans are being challenged in court.

Alabama Gov. Kay Ivey signed the Vulnerable Child Compassion and Protection Act into law in 2022, making it a felony punishable by up to 10 years in prison for doctors to treat people under 19 with puberty blockers or hormones to help affirm their gender identity.

Four families with transgender children ranging in ages 12 to 17 challenged the Alabama law as an unconstitutional violation of equal protection and free speech rights, as well as an intrusion into family medical decisions. The U.S. Department of Justice joined their lawsuit, seeking to overturn the law.

U.S. District Judge Liles Burke, who was nominated to the court by President Donald Trump in 2017, ruled when issuing the preliminary injunction that Alabama had produced no credible evidence to show that transitioning medications are "experimental."

Alabama then appealed to the 11th Circuit.

Burke allowed two other parts of the law to take effect. One bans gender-affirming surgeries for transgender minors, which doctors had testified are not done on minors in Alabama. The other requires counselors and other school officials to tell parents if a minor discloses that they think they are transgender.

More GOP states are poised to enact similar bans on gender-affirming care for minors. Democratic governors in Louisiana and North Carolina have vetoed bans, but both are expected to be overridden by Republican-led legislatures.

Today in History: August 22, first America's Cup trophy

By The Associated Press undefined

Today in History

Today is Tuesday, Aug. 22, the 234th day of 2023. There are 131 days left in the year.

Today's Highlight in History:

On Aug. 22, 1851, the schooner America outraced more than a dozen British vessels off the English coast to win a trophy that came to be known as the America's Cup.

On this date:

In 1787, inventor John Fitch demonstrated his steamboat on the Delaware River to delegates from the Constitutional Convention in Philadelphia.

In 1910, Japan annexed Korea, which remained under Japanese control until the end of World War II.

In 1914, Austria-Hungary declared war against Belgium.

In 1922, Irish revolutionary Michael Collins was shot to death, apparently by Irish Republican Army members opposed to the Anglo-Irish Treaty that Collins had co-signed.

In 1968, Pope Paul VI arrived in Bogota, Colombia, for the start of the first papal visit to South America.

Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, Aug. 22, 2023 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 059 ~ 57 of 57

In 1972, John Wojtowicz (WAHT'-uh-witz) and Salvatore Naturile took seven employees hostage at a Chase Manhattan Bank branch in Brooklyn, New York, during a botched robbery; the siege, which ended with Wojtowicz's arrest and Naturile's killing by the FBI, inspired the 1975 movie "Dog Day Afternoon."

In 1989, Black Panthers co-founder Huey P. Newton was shot to death in Oakland, California.

In 1992, on the second day of the Ruby Ridge siege in Idaho, an FBI sharpshooter killed Vicki Weaver, the wife of white separatist Randy Weaver.

In 1996, President Bill Clinton signed welfare legislation that ended guaranteed cash payments to the poor and demanded work from recipients.

In 2000, Publishers Clearing House agreed to pay \$18 million to 24 states and the District of Columbia to settle allegations it had used deceptive promotions in its sweepstakes mailings.

In 2003, Alabama's chief justice, Roy Moore, was suspended for his refusal to obey a federal court order to remove his Ten Commandments monument from the rotunda of his courthouse.

In 2007, A Black Hawk helicopter crashed in Iraq, killing all 14 U.S. soldiers aboard.

Ten years ago: Egypt's ousted leader Hosni Mubarak was released from prison and transported to a military hospital in a Cairo suburb to be held under house arrest. The day before, Mubarak was sentenced to up to 35 years in prison for leaking secrets. A mysterious glitch halted trading on the Nasdaq for three hours.

Five years ago: The bull market in U.S. stocks became the longest one on record; it had been 3,453 days since the S&P 500 index had seen a drop of 20 percent or more. Ohio State suspended football coach Urban Meyer for three games; investigators found that Meyer had protected an assistant coach for years through domestic violence allegations, a drug problem and poor job performance. A Democratic Party official said an attempt to break into the party's massive voter database had been thwarted.

One year ago: Lawyers for former President Donald Trump asked a federal judge to prevent the FBI from continuing to review documents recovered from his Florida estate until a neutral special master could be appointed. The attorneys asserted in a court filing, their first since the FBI search of Mar-a-Lago two weeks earlier, that the sets of documents taken from the residence were "presumptively" covered by executive privilege. Dr. Anthony Fauci, the nation's top infectious disease expert who became a household name — and the subject of partisan attacks — during the COVID-19 pandemic, announced he would leave the federal government in December. Great Britain's Prince William and his wife, Kate, announced they were relocating their family from central London to more rural dwellings in Windsor.

Today's Birthdays: Broadcast journalist Morton Dean is 87. Author Annie Proulx (proo) is 87. Baseball Hall of Famer Carl Yastrzemski is 83. Pro Football Hall of Fame coach Bill Parcells is 81. Writer-producer David Chase is 77. CBS newsmen Steve Kroft is 77. Pop musician David Marks is 74. International Swimming Hall of Famer Diana Nyad is 73. Baseball Hall of Famer Paul Molitor is 66. Rock musician Vernon Reid is 64. Country singer Ricky Lynn Gregg is 63. Country singer Collin Raye is 62. Actor Regina Taylor is 62. Rock singer Roland Orzabal (Tears For Fears) is 61. Rock musician Debbi Peterson (The Bangles) is 61. Rock musician Gary Lee Conner (Screaming Trees) is 60. Singer Tori Amos is 59. Country singer Mila Mason is 59. R&B musician James DeBarge is 59. International Tennis Hall of Famer Mats Wilander (VEE'-luhn-dur) is 58. Actor Brooke Dillman is 56. Rapper GZA (JIHZ'-ah)/The Genius is 56. Actor Adewale Akinnuoye-Agbaje (ah-day-WAH'-lay ah-kih-NOY'-yay ah-BAH'-jay) is 55. Actor Ty Burrell is 55. Celebrity chef Giada De Laurentiis is 52. Actor Melinda Page Hamilton is 51. Actor Rick Yune is 51. Rock musician Paul Doucette (DOO'-set) (Matchbox Twenty) is 50. Rap-reggae singer Beenie Man is 49. Singer Howie Dorough (Backstreet Boys) is 49. Comedian-actor Kristen Wiig is 49. Actor Jenna Leigh Green is 48. Rock musician Bo Diddley is 48. Rock musician Dean Cain (Theory of a Deadman) is 47. Talk show host James Corden is 44. Rock musician Jeff Stinco (Simple Plan) is 44. Actor Brandon Adams is 43. Actor Aya Sumika is 42. Actor Ari Stidham is 30.