

Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, Aug. 23, 2023 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 060 ~ 1 of 71

[1- Upcoming Events](#)

[1- M-P VB Schedule Change](#)

[3- Sirens sound Saturday morning](#)

[3- Flihs places fifth at NEC, second at Milbank](#)

[4- The flight of the Monarch](#)

[5- Name Released in Meade County Fatal Crash](#)

[5- Names Released in Lyman County Fatal Crash](#)

[6- Jackson County Fatal Crash](#)

[7 Gov. Noem Announces \\$27 Million in High-Speed](#)

[Broadband Grants](#)

[7- July Gaming Revenues Up 11.99%](#)

[8- Ways to Save Money at the State Fair](#)

[9- 2023 SD High School Volleyball Media Prep](#)

[Preseason Poll](#)

[10- Kory is turning 40](#)

[11- SD SearchLight: State's all-Republican congressional delegation will not attend Trump's SD event](#)

[12- SD SearchLight: One year later, no decision in slaying of transgender woman in Rapid City](#)

[12- SD SearchLight: Here's what to know about new federal policies for repaying student loans](#)

[15- Weather Pages](#)

[19- Daily Devotional](#)

[20- 2023 Community Events](#)

[21- Subscription Form](#)

[22- Lottery Numbers](#)

[23- News from the Associated Press](#)

M-P VB Schedule Change

The Mobridge/Pollock volleyball match has been moved to Monday, October 2nd. C game will be at 4pm, JV game at 5pm, Varsity to follow

JH will now play M/P at home on Monday, September 11th with both 7th and 8th grade at 5pm

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.

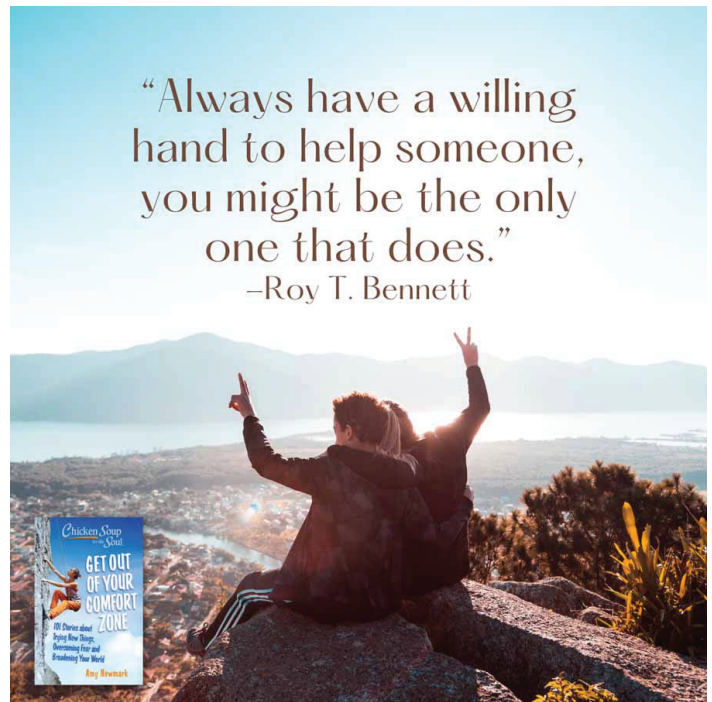
United Methodist: Community Coffee Hour, 9:30 a.m.

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

Groton Daily Independent

PO Box 34, Groton SD 57445

Paul's Cell/Text: 605-397-7460



“Always have a willing hand to help someone, you might be the only one that does.”

–Roy T. Bennett

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.

Friday, Aug. 25

School Breakfast: Biscuits.

School Lunch: Lasagna hot dish, corn.

Senior Menu: Hamburger gravy over mashed potatoes, green beans, tropical fruit, whole wheat bread.

Football at Redfield, 7 p.m.

Saturday, Aug. 26

Girls Soccer at Vermillion, 1 p.m.

Boys Soccer at Vermillion, 2:30 p.m.

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

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

OPEN: Recycling Trailer in Groton

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

© 2023 Groton Daily Independent

Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, Aug. 23, 2023 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 060 ~ 2 of 71

The Bulletin by Newsweek

World in Brief

The Fulton County Sheriff's office released the mugshot of John Eastman, one of Donald Trump's co-conspirators in the Georgia election interference case, after the lawyer surrendered to authorities. Former White House Chief of Staff Mark Meadows asked a judge to intervene and protect him from being arrested in Atlanta.

Chinese leader Xi Jinping sent his commerce minister to deliver a speech in his name at a business forum of the BRICS conference in South Africa. Beijing gave no explanation for why Xi skipped the event.

Hawaii officials urged residents to give DNA samples to help identify those missing after the devastating wildfires. More than 1,000 people are still unaccounted for.

Teamsters have voted to ratify a new contract agreement that was tentatively reached last month with UPS, officially avoiding a nationwide strike of 340,000 union workers.

Flood warnings are in place in parts of the Dominican Republic, and Haiti as Tropical Storm Franklin threatens to bring heavy rainfall, raising fears it could trigger landslides and flash flooding in the region.

The Biden Administration said student loan borrowers can enroll in the Saving on a Valuable Education (SAVE) income-driven repayment plan, which will help more than 20 million borrowers, many of whom could save \$1,000 a year.

At least 17 workers have been killed after a bridge under construction collapsed in northeast India.

In the ongoing war in Ukraine, Russia says three people have been killed by a Ukrainian drone attack in the Belgorod region, near the border between the two countries. Russia also claimed it foiled a Ukrainian drone attack on Moscow overnight, though one drone struck an under-construction building..

TALKING POINTS

"Donald Trump is a coward. He's scared to death of Chris Christie. Because I think Chris Christie is going to wipe the floor with him, and I think that's what he's afraid of," former Republican Rep. Adam Kinzinger of Illinois said ahead of the first 2024 GOP presidential primary debate.

"Operation Lone Star has led to nothing but stunt after stunt from a reckless and feeble-minded governor that would rather torture people than to have an immigration solution. We spent billions of dollars in taxpayer money on failed stunts that started with stopping trucks along the border in search of fentanyl and migrants, and found zero fentanyl and found zero migrants. But it did cost the Texas economy \$9 billion in rotted produce and logistical failure," Texas state Sen. Roland Gutierrez said at a press conference criticizing his state's use of border buoys in the Rio Grande.

"My legal team and I will vigorously contest every count of the indictment in which I am named, and also every count in which others are named, for which my knowledge of the relevant facts, law, and constitutional provisions may prove helpful. I am confident that, when the law is faithfully applied in this proceeding, all of my co-defendants and I will be fully vindicated," said John Eastman, the ex-attorney for former President Donald Trump, upon turning himself in to authorities following his indictment by a Fulton County grand jury last week..

WHAT TO WATCH IN THE DAYS AHEAD

Fox News will be hosting the first GOP debate of the 2024 presidential primary season. The debate is expected to last about two hours and begins at 9 p.m. ET.

Former Fox News host Tucker Carlson is expected to post an interview with Donald Trump on social media later today. The interview, which sources say has been pre-recorded, is expected to drop around the time the GOP debate begins.

S&P flash services and manufacturing PMI data for August and new home sales figures for July are due from 9:45 a.m. ET.

India's Chandrayaan-3, the country's third lunar mission, is "sailing" toward the moon's surface as it attempts a historic landing on the little-explored south pole.

Sirens sound Saturday morning

The sirens in Groton sounded around 2:45 a.m. Saturday, waking up many residents and wondering what was going on. According to Scott Meints from the Brown County Emergency Management, he said, "We had a radio system malfunction in dispatch that created an issue with many sirens. The system has been updated and fixed."



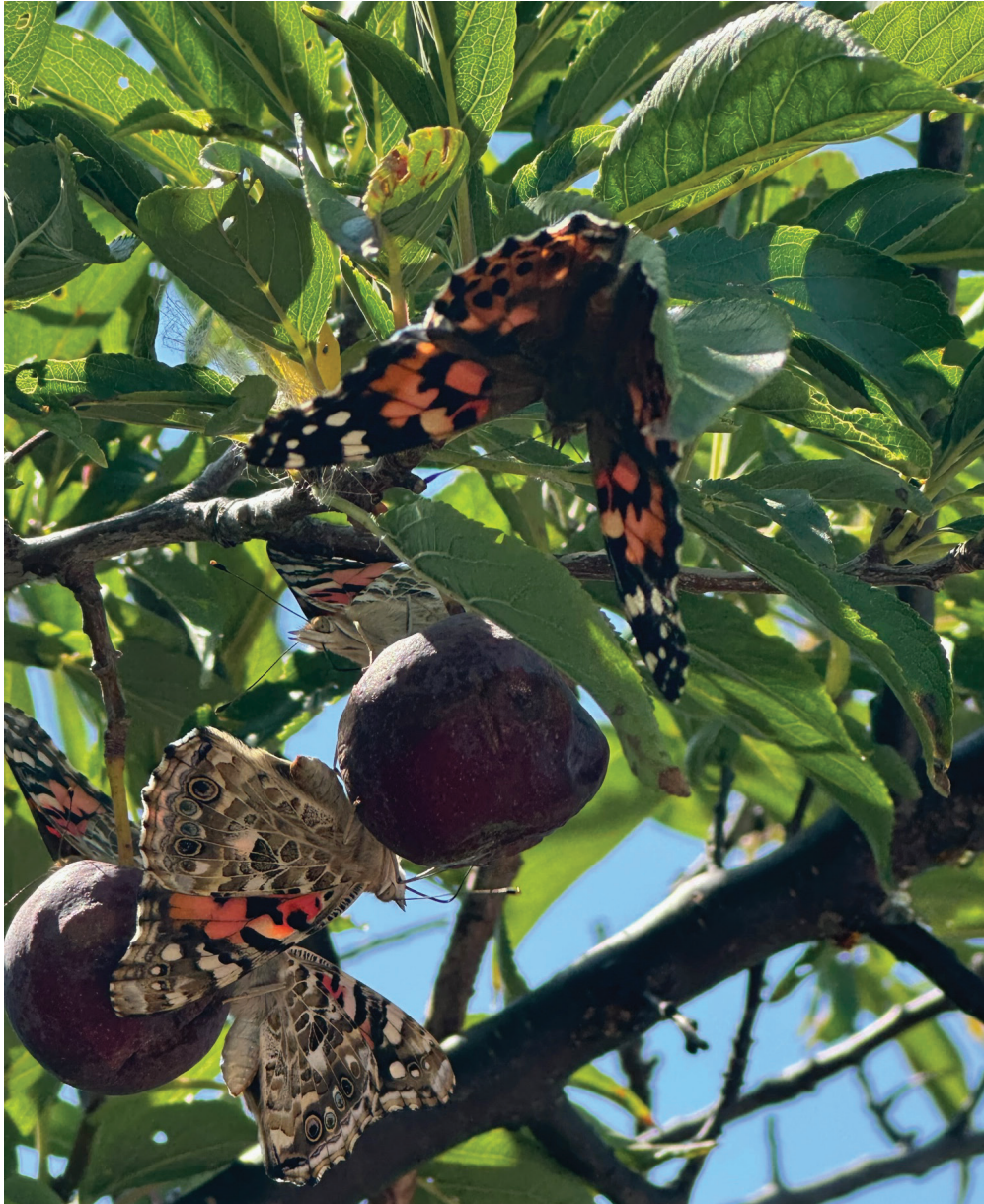
Fliehs places fifth at NEC, second at Milbank

The Northeast Conference golf meet was held Tuesday in Redfield with Groton's Brevin Fliehs taking fifth with a score of 78, Carter Simon placing 10th with an 87, Logan Pearson placing 12th with an 87 and Jace Johnson placing 14th with an 89. Roncalli won the team title with a 320 while Milbank was second with 339, Groton was third with 341 and Redfield was fourth with 371.

At the Poet Invitational held in Milbank on August 18th, Brevin Fliehs was second with a 76. Other scores were Carter Simon with 89, Logan Pearson with 92 and Jace Johnson with 109.



All four Groton Area golfers were medalists at the Northeast Conference meet held Tuesday in Redfield. Pictured are Jace Johnson, Carter Simon, Brevin Fliehs and Logan Pearson. (Photo courtesy Joel Guthmiller)



The flight of the Monarch

The Monarch butterflies made their presence known on Tuesday as they begin their flight south. People with fruit trees noticed hundreds of Monarchs fluttering on their trees. Dale Gunderson, a Conde resident, called Paul Kosel about when he was planning to spray for mosquitoes on Conde. The plan was for Tuesday evening. After review of the Monarchs presence and also talking with Jake Bawek, Conde's maintenance man, it was decided to postpone the Conde adult mosquito control to a later date after the Monarchs have left the area. The adult mosquito control was conducted in Groton on Monday evening, the day prior to the Monarch's arrival.

(Photo by Paul Kosel)

Name Released in Meade County Fatal Crash

What: Fatal Crash
Where: I 90, mile marker 30 eastbound, Sturgis, S.D.
When: 2:37 p.m., Wednesday, August 16, 2023

Driver: Bruce Fodness, 70, Black Hawk, S.D., Fatal Injuries
Vehicle: 2019 Peterbilt semi and trailer

Meade County, S.D.- A Black Hawk, South Dakota man has been identified as the person who died last Wednesday (August 16) in a crash in Sturgis S.D.

Preliminary crash information indicates a 2019 Peterbilt semi and trailer was traveling eastbound on I-90 near mile marker 30. The semi and trailer left the roadway toward the median while crossing a bridge. The combination struck the bridge end and then fell over into the median striking a parked train on the tracks below. Two of the train's cars derailed.

The driver of the semi and trailer, Bruce Fodness, age 70, was taken to Monument Health in Rapid City with life threatening injuries where he was later pronounced deceased.

He was wearing a seatbelt.

I-90 westbound was closed for about 20 minutes.

I-90 eastbound was closed for about two hours.

Names Released in Lyman County Fatal Crash

What: Two-vehicle fatal crash
Where: I-90 east, MM 242, 6 miles west of Reliance, S.D.
When: 7:11 p.m., Tuesday, Aug 15, 2023

Driver No. 1: Kenneth Cleveland, 70, Indianapolis, IN., Fatal Injuries
Vehicle No. 1: 2021 Toyota Highlander

Driver No. 2: Marcelo Ocana Martinez, 48, Mexico, No Injuries
Vehicle No. 2: 2019 Kenworth semi-tractor-trailer

LYMAN COUNTY, S.D.- An Indianapolis, IN. man has been identified as the person who died last Tuesday evening (August 15) in a two-vehicle crash 6 miles west of Reliance, S.D.

Preliminary crash information indicates a 2019 Kenworth semi-tractor-trailer blew a tire while traveling in the driving lane. The semi driver was then slowing down to pull over onto the shoulder. A 2021 Toyota Highlander was also in the driving lane. The Toyota Highlander ran into the trailer of the semi.

The driver of the Toyota Highlander, Kenneth Cleveland, age 70, sustained fatal injuries and was pronounced deceased at the scene.

He was wearing a seatbelt.

The driver of the 2019 Kenworth semi-tractor-trailer, Marcelo Ocana Martinez, age 48, was not injured. He was wearing a seatbelt.

Jackson County Fatal Crash

What: Two-vehicle crash
Where: I 90, mile marker 140, 12 miles west of Kadoka, S.D.
When: 12:46 p.m., Monday, August 21, 2023

Driver No. 1: Male, 22, Minor injuries
Vehicle No. 1: 1996 Toyota Camry

Driver No. 2: Female, 39, Serious Non-Life-Threatening injuries
Vehicle No. 2: 2004 Chevrolet Trailblazer
Passenger in Vehicle No. 2: Female, 35, Life Threatening injuries
Passenger in Vehicle No. 2: Female, 7, Life Threatening injuries
Passenger in Vehicle No. 2: Male, 11, Fatal injuries

JACKSON COUNTY, S.D.: One person died Monday afternoon in a two-vehicle crash 12 miles west of Kadoka, S.D.

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

Preliminary crash information indicates a 1996 Toyota Camry and a 2004 Chevrolet Trailblazer were both driving on Interstate 90 near mile marker 140 in Jackson County. The Camry struck the back of the Trailblazer which caused it to enter the median and roll. The Camry came to rest in the south ditch.

The 22-year-old male driver of the Camry sustained minor injuries and was taken by ambulance to the Philip Hospital.

He was wearing a seatbelt.

The 39-year-old female driver of the Trailblazer sustained serious non-life-threatening injuries and was taken by ambulance to the Philip Hospital.

She was not wearing a seatbelt.

There were three passengers in the Trailblazer.

The 35-year-old female passenger of the Trailblazer sustained life threatening injuries. She was taken by ambulance to the Philip Hospital and then flown by Black Hills Life Flight to Rapid City Monument Health Hospital.

The 7-year-old female passenger of the Trailblazer sustained life threatening injuries. She was taken by ambulance to the Philip Hospital and then flown by Black Hills Life Flight to Rapid City Monument Health Hospital.

She was not wearing a seatbelt.

The 11-year-old male passenger of the Trailblazer sustained fatal injuries.

He was not wearing a seatbelt.

July Gaming Revenues Up 11.99% Sports Wagering Up 59.49%

DEADWOOD, S.D. (08/22/2023) - According to statistics released today by the South Dakota Commission on Gaming, Deadwood's overall gaming revenues were up 11.99 percent over July of 2022, with slot machine handle increasing by 12.58 percent, when compared to July of 2022. The table game handle increased by 1.9 percent when compared to 2022 July's table game handle. Deadwood's sports wagering handle was up 59.49 percent when compared to July 2022. Deadwood gaming operators rewarded players with \$1,486,228 in "free-play" for the month of July, leaving taxable adjusted gross revenues of \$13,491,416 for July of 2023.

"July's revenues bounced back nicely, beating all previous July records," said Mike Rodman, executive director of the Deadwood Gaming Association. "We are now up 4.22% YTD overall over last year."

Gov. Noem Announces \$27 Million in High-Speed Broadband Grants

PIERRE, S.D. – Governor Kristi Noem and the Governor's Office of Economic Development (GOED) announced the final round of funding that will award up to \$27 million to connect rural South Dakota to high-speed broadband. Governor Noem made this announcement during the South Dakota Telecommunications Association Conference. You can find the video of Governor Noem's announcement [here](#).

"We are revitalizing small town America with this investment. And we are preserving our way of life," said Governor Noem. "My vision is to bring, high-speed internet to every home and business in South Dakota. No one should have to choose between the modern economy and a life in their hometown. It's time to finish the job."

The Connect SD broadband program has connected tens of thousands of households and businesses to high-speed broadband since Governor Noem took office in 2019. Over \$269.5 million has been invested into broadband expansion in South Dakota.

South Dakotans should never be left behind because of the small-town way of life they've chosen to build for themselves and for their families. Thanks to Governor Noem's continuous efforts, more and more South Dakotans are reaping the benefits of expanded opportunities in education, entertainment, and commerce," said GOED Commissioner Chris Schilken.

This investment will be crucial for South Dakota's workforce development and future economic efforts. The goal is to create vibrant, connected communities across the state.

This is South Dakota's eighth round of broadband expansion grants since 2019. Grant applications will be available soon on the Connect SD website.

Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, Aug. 23, 2023 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 060 ~ 8 of 71

Ways to Save Money at the State Fair

HURON, S.D. – The South Dakota State Fair offers several simple ways to save money during the fair.

Save time and money at the admission gates by purchasing daily gate admission in advance! All daily gate admission purchased on or before Wednesday, Aug. 30 will be sold at a 20% discount. Tickets purchased in advance can be taken directly to the scan and go lines at admission gates! Daily gate admission can be purchased online at www.sdstatefair.com, or at the State Fair Office located in the Nordby Exhibit Hall (1060 3rd St. SW, Huron, SD 57350).

Save on gate admission by purchasing your grandstand tickets on or before Wednesday, Aug. 30. Tickets purchased prior to the opening day of the fair include gate admission! Grandstand tickets can be purchased by calling 866.605.3247, online at www.sdstatefair.com, or at the grandstand ticket office.

On Thursday, Aug. 31, the State Fair is hosting a "Salute to Veterans" program on the Northwestern Energy Freedom Stage at 10:30 a.m. with keynote speakers MG (Ret) Tim Reisch and Elsie Honors Elsie Van Beek. All Veterans and active military members receive free gate admission. 4-H youth also receive free gate admission by showing their 4-H card, which can be obtained from county 4-H offices.

Coupons for \$1 off gate admission on Friday, Sept. 1 are available at Prostrollo Motors on east Highway 14 in Huron. The Prostrollo's Rockin' Rollback coupons are valid on Friday, Sept. 1 only.

Stock the Shelves on Monday, Sept. 4, by bringing a non-perishable item to any admission gate between 7 a.m. and 11 a.m. for \$2 off gate admission.

Pay It Forward Day is on Monday, Sept. 4. Businesses and organizations band together to sponsor gate admission passes for those in need and to randomly hand out at the gate admission entrances. Fairgoers attending the fair on Monday could be the lucky recipient of a 'Pay It Forward' pass.

There are plenty of ways to save money at the carnival throughout the week. All rides on Wednesday, Aug. 30, are only one dollar! The Weekly Passport to Fun pass offers a carnival ride pass for all five days of the fair. Advanced passes can be purchased at Prostrollo Motors for \$52. Big Jim 93.3 and Taco Johns are offering a \$3 off coupon for daily weekday rides. Coupons can be picked up at Taco Johns.

The 2023 South Dakota State Fair will run from Thursday, August 31, through Monday, September 4. Channel Seeds Preview night will be Wednesday, August 30. For more information on State Fair events, contact the Fair office at 800-529-0900, visit www.sdstatefair.com or find them on Facebook, Instagram and Twitter.

Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, Aug. 23, 2023 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 060 ~ 9 of 71

2023 SD High School Volleyball Media Prep Preseason Poll

The South Dakota high school volleyball preseason prep media poll for the 2023 season. Teams are listed with first place votes in parenthesis, final 2022 record, points and final 2022 poll ranking.

Class AA

1. Harrisburg (8) 28-3 62 1
2. Sioux Falls Washington (4) 27-5 52 3
3. Sioux Falls Jefferson 25-7 38 4
4. O'Gorman (2) 26-6 23 2
5. Sioux Falls Lincoln 21-12 13 RV

Receiving Votes: Sioux Falls Roosevelt (13-16) 6; Rapid City Stevens (23-15) 6; Pierre (18-6) 4; Watertown (17-15) 3; Brandon Valley (10-21) 3

Class A

1. Sioux Falls Christian (14) 33-5 70 1
2. Dakota Valley 28-8 37 2
3. Wagner 32-5 29 4
4. Elkton-Lake Benton 32-4 26 RV
5. Elk Point-Jefferson 26-10 14 NR

Receiving Votes: Dell Rapids (19-10) 12; Miller (33-4) 11; Platte-Geddes (28-9) 7; Belle Fourche (32-9) 3; Madison (12-16) 1

Class B

1. Warner (12) 37-2 64 1
2. Chester Area (1) 28-6 55 3
3. Northwestern (1) 29-9 36 4
4. Burke 32-6 24 2
5. Colman-Egan 24-11 11 NR

Receiving Votes: Castlewood (23-9) 10; Wolsey-Wessington (30-5) 8; Freeman (21-12) 1; Faulkton Area (20-12) 1

Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, Aug. 23, 2023 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 060 ~ 10 of 71

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 SEARCHLIGHT

<https://southdakotasearchlight.com>

State's all-Republican congressional delegation will not attend Trump's SD event

BY: JOSHUA HAIAR - AUGUST 22, 2023 4:56 PM

When the South Dakota Republican Party hosts former President Donald Trump on Sept. 8 in Rapid City, the state's all-Republican congressional delegation will not be there.

All three have scheduling conflicts, their offices said.

South Dakota's senators have endorsed South Carolina Sen. Tim Scott in the Republican presidential primary, rather than former President Donald Trump.

Sen. John Thune told South Dakota Searchlight recently that Trump's campaign is too focused on the past. "If all you can talk about is the last election, you're not going to win the next election," Thune said. "People want to hear how you want to lead this country going forward, not backward."

Sen. Mike Rounds said Scott is a good alternative to Trump.

"I just want people in South Dakota to give him a look," Rounds said. He described Scott as a candidate with policies similar to Trump's but without the legal complications (Trump is currently a defendant in four criminal cases).

Rep. Dusty Johnson has not endorsed a presidential candidate and said he plans to "suspend judgment" of Trump's criminal cases until the courts reach a conclusion.

"Maybe I'm old school, but I feel like you actually want to get to the bottom of things before you come to judgment," Johnson said. He said endorsing candidates "is not something that I do."

Johnson faces reelection next year, while Rounds' current term runs through 2026 and Thune's runs through 2028.

The Trump event, a fundraiser for the state party, will be at The Monument event center in Rapid City with Gov. Kristi Noem billed as Trump's "special guest." General admission tickets were advertised at \$25 apiece, and the state party has said the 6,000 available seats are sold out. The party is also offering VIP packages, including a chance to meet with Trump and Noem, for up to \$25,000. State Rep. and GOP Chairman John Wiik, of Big Stone City, directed South Dakota Searchlight's inquiries about the event to a party employee who did not immediately respond.

The event does not have universal support within the party. State Senate President Pro Tempore Lee Schoenbeck, of Watertown, said he thinks "Biden belongs in assisted living" but "the MAGA crowd is not my cup of tea." "MAGA" is an acronym for Trump's slogan, "Make America great again."

Schoenbeck said he's most interested in the Republican presidential candidacies of former South Carolina Gov. Nikki Haley and former New Jersey Gov. Chris Christie. In particular, Schoenbeck said he respects Christie's willingness to criticize Trump.

Polls averaged by Real Clear Politics show Trump favored among Republican primary voters at 55.9%, with other candidates far behind, including Florida Gov. Ron DeSantis and Scott at 14.6% and 3%, respectively.

Schoenbeck said the polling should tell Republican voters that Trump would do poorly in the general election.

"Trump can hardly hold down half of his own party," Schoenbeck said.

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.

One year later, no decision in slaying of transgender woman in Rapid City

BY: JOHN HULT - AUGUST 22, 2023 6:34 PM

It's been a year since a Rapid City man shot Acey Morrison to death in a trailer home north of town. Pennington County prosecutors have yet to decide whether to charge the shooter or close the investigation into her death.

Morrison, a transgender Native American woman, was shot after meeting a man on the dating app Grindr, according to friends and family members. The family said they were told by investigators that the man claimed to have fired on her in self defense.

Morrison's mother, Edelyn Catches, said on Tuesday that she hasn't heard from anyone in the Pennington County State's Attorney's Office since last winter, when former State's Attorney Mark Vargo left his position for work overseas.

Vargo told her the incoming state's attorney would make the call, she said.

"They were supposed to tell us if they were going to do any charges, do anything," Catches said of the early 2023 meeting. "That was the last time anyone said anything."

State's Attorney Lara Roetzel, the longtime prosecutor who replaced Vargo, told South Dakota Searchlight earlier this summer and again last week that her office hasn't made a call on charges or closed the investigation.

Catches said she's reached out multiple times to ask where the case stands, but has never connected with anyone from the office. Twice, she said, she tried going to the office in person, but she said it's not easy for her to make the drive to Rapid City from her home on the Pine Ridge Indian Reservation.

Catches said she spent Monday night at her daughter's grave to commemorate a year since her death on Aug. 21, 2022, but also to avoid interactions she wasn't prepared to handle.

"People were coming around and stuff, but I just couldn't be there," Catches said.

In May, Roetzel told South Dakota Searchlight that self-defense claims can complicate homicide cases, though she offered no details on the Morrison investigation due to it being an ongoing case. She did say, however, that she feels for Morrison's family and that she planned to review the case and make a decision soon.

John is the senior reporter for South Dakota Searchlight. He has more than 15 years experience covering criminal justice, the environment and public affairs in South Dakota, including more than a decade at the Sioux Falls Argus Leader.

Here's what to know about new federal policies for repaying student loans

BY: ARIANA FIGUEROA - AUGUST 22, 2023 12:08 PM

WASHINGTON — Following the Supreme Court's summer ruling against 40 million federal student loan borrowers who would have qualified for debt relief, the Biden administration crafted a year-long delay in repayments.

The policy, known as an on-ramp, is set to begin next month.

Additionally, hours after the Supreme Court's decision, the Department of Education unveiled a new repayment plan for those with federal student loans, known as Saving on a Valuable Education, or SAVE. The new income-driven repayment plan calculates payments based on a borrower's income and family size and forgives balances after a set number of years.

It's estimated by the administration that more than 20 million borrowers will benefit. Borrowers can apply here. A campaign is being launched to publicize the new program, by the Department of Education in collaboration with groups like the Student Debt Crisis Center, UnidosUS and the NAACP.

Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, Aug. 23, 2023 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 060 ~ 13 of 71

"This plan is a game changer for millions of Americans, many of whom are putting off having children, buying their first home, or even starting a business because they can't get out from under their student loans," said White House Domestic Policy Advisor Neera Tanden on a call with reporters on Monday. "Student loans will be manageable."

Last year, the Biden administration rolled out a debt forgiveness plan for borrowers with federal student loans that would have been a one-time cancellation of up to \$10,000. Borrowers who had received Pell Grants — federal aid to help low-income students pay for higher education — could qualify for an additional \$10,000 in forgiveness.

The conservative bloc of the Supreme Court on June 30 ruled that the Biden administration did not have the legal authority to enact that one-time student debt relief program. The case was filed by Republican attorneys general of Nebraska, Missouri, Arkansas, Iowa, Kansas, and South Carolina, and they argued the Biden administration overstepped its reach.

Following that decision from the court, the Biden administration initiated rulemaking through the Higher Education Act to try again to enact debt relief, and finalized a rule for the new repayment plan known as SAVE.

Here are some questions and answers about the on-ramp policy and SAVE plan.

When does the on-ramp program start?

Federal student loan repayments are set to resume in October, but while borrowers have a year of leniency to begin repayments, interest will continue to accrue starting in September. The on-ramp program starts Oct. 1 and will extend until Sept. 30 of next year.

"Financially vulnerable borrowers who miss monthly payments during this period are not considered delinquent, reported to credit bureaus, placed in default, or referred to debt collection agencies," according to a fact sheet released by the White House.

The Department of Education did not respond to questions from States Newsroom asking how the agency would prevent loan servicers from reporting borrowers to credit bureau or debt collectors.

How is the on-ramp policy different from the pause on federal student loan repayments?

The pause on federal student loan repayments was first put in place by the Trump administration in 2020 at the start of the coronavirus pandemic, and has been extended several times.

The pause meant those with federal student loans did not have to repay, and no interest accrued. With this new policy, interest will still accrue, but borrowers have a year before having to start paying back their loans.

What does a final rule for the SAVE plan mean?

This is an income-driven repayment plan that the Department of Education said will cut borrowers' monthly payments in half. The official launch of the application was Tuesday.

A borrower could save more than \$1,000 per year on payments, compared to other income-driven repayment plans. And, depending on income levels, it will allow more than 1 million additional borrowers to make \$0 monthly payments without their interest accruing, the Department of Education estimates.

How does the SAVE plan work?

Borrowers with undergraduate loans will pay 5% of their discretionary income, rather than the 10% required under previous income repayment plans. Borrowers with undergraduate and graduate loans will pay a weighted average between 5% and 10% of their incomes.

The White House said a borrower's monthly payment will be based on their discretionary income, defined in the plan as the difference between their adjusted gross income and 225% of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services poverty guideline amount for the family size. Borrowers who earn a minimum wage of \$15 an hour will not have to make a monthly payment.

According to the Department of Education, that means borrowers will not owe loan payments if they are

Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, Aug. 23, 2023 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 060 ~ 14 of 71

a single person earning \$32,800 or less or a family of four earning \$67,500 or less, though the amounts are higher in Alaska and Hawaii.

The plan also forgives loan balances after as little as 10 years of payment, rather than 20 years under previous income repayment plans. The plan also does not charge borrowers with unpaid monthly interest, as long as those borrowers are making their monthly payments.

Who qualifies for the SAVE student loan repayment plan?

Most federal student loan borrowers are going to qualify for this plan. However, those with Direct PLUS loans to parents and certain other loans will not qualify for it; the list can be found [here](#).

Borrowers signed up for the current Revised Pay as You Earn (REPAYE) plan will automatically be enrolled in SAVE.

How is SAVE different from previous federal student loan repayment plans?

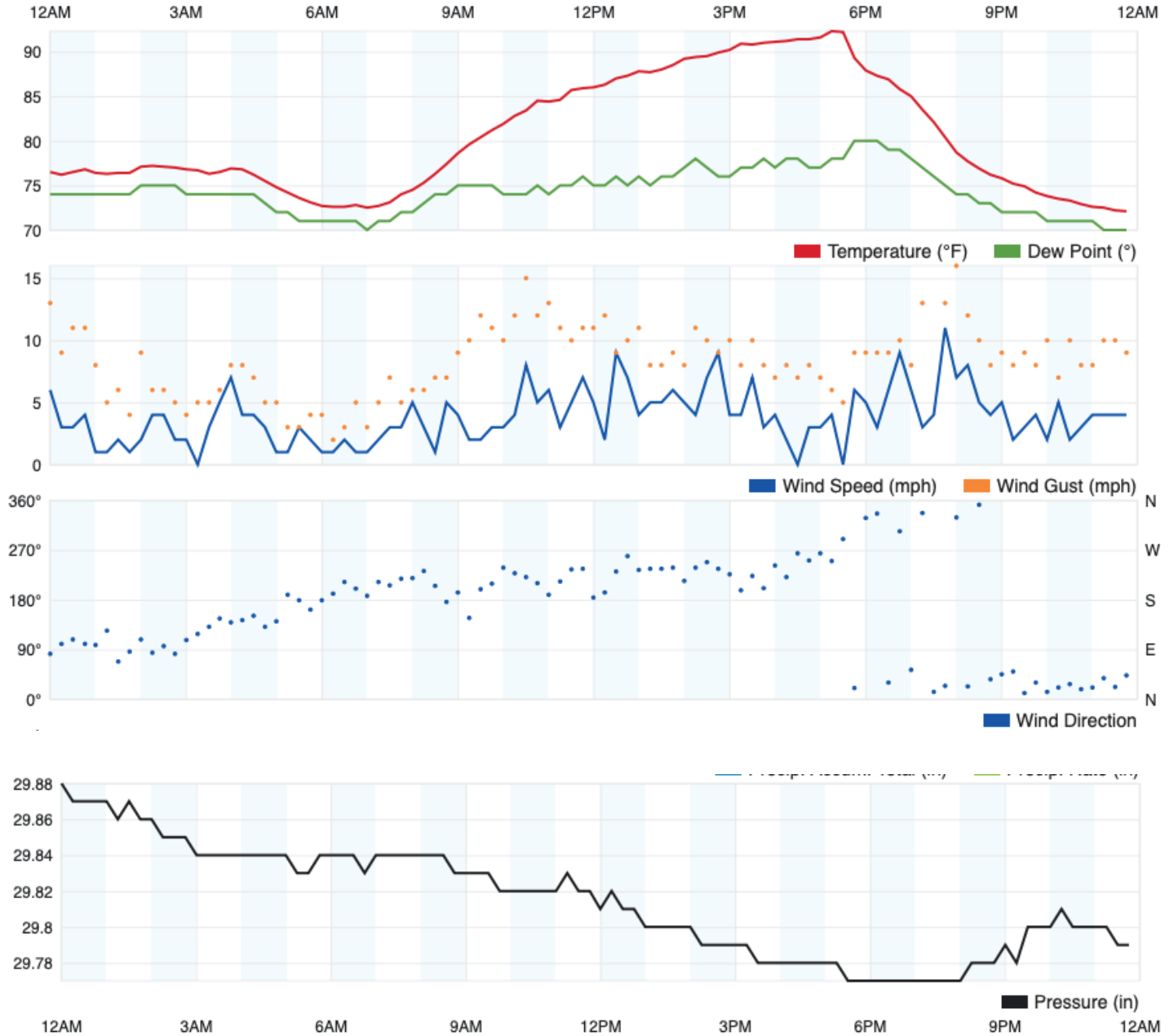
With this plan, if your calculated payment ends up to be less than the amount of interest that accrues every month, that remaining interest will be forgiven. The previous plan did not have that element.

Ariana covers the nation's capital for States Newsroom. Her areas of coverage include politics and policy, lobbying, elections and campaign finance.

Groton Daily Independent

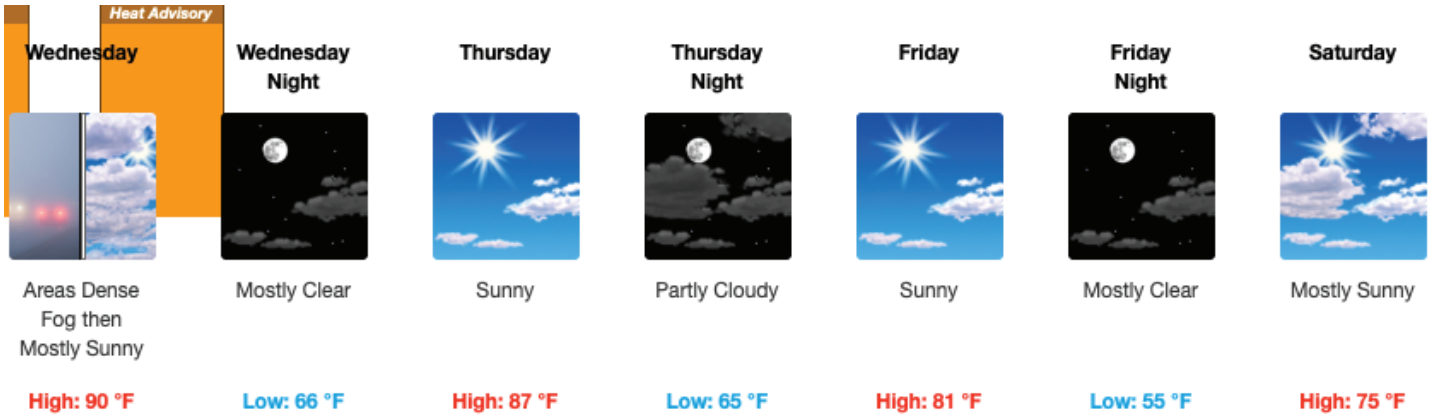
Wednesday, Aug. 23, 2023 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 060 ~ 15 of 71

Yesterday's Groton Weather Graphs



Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, Aug. 23, 2023 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 060 ~ 16 of 71



Last Day Of The Heatwave

August 23, 2023
3:55 AM

	Temperature Forecast												Heat Index Forecast															
	9am	10am	11am	12pm	1pm	2pm	3pm	4pm	5pm	6pm	7pm	8pm	9pm	10pm	9am	10am	11am	12pm	1pm	2pm	3pm	4pm	5pm	6pm	7pm	8pm	9pm	10pm
Aberdeen	70	73	76	78	81	84	86	87	89	88	88	85	80	77	70	73	76	78	86	91	94	96	99	98	98	94	85	77
Britton	69	72	74	77	79	83	85	86	87	86	86	83	77	74	69	72	74	77	79	89	93	93	95	94	95	90	77	74
Brookings	80	85	87	90	91	93	95	96	96	96	95	90	87	82	83	87	90	94	97	101	104	105	106	106	104	99	93	87
Chamberlain	77	82	87	91	95	99	101	103	103	102	101	96	89	84	77	88	96	100	106	109	111	113	113	111	110	106	97	91
Clark	74	78	81	83	85	89	90	91	92	91	90	87	82	79	74	78	85	88	92	97	99	100	102	101	99	96	88	79
Eagle Butte	71	76	78	81	84	88	91	92	93	92	92	88	81	78	71	76	78	84	87	90	93	94	94	93	92	88	82	78
Ellendale	68	71	72	75	76	81	83	84	86	85	85	83	78	75	68	71	72	75	76	85	88	90	93	91	92	90	78	75
Eureka	68	71	74	76	79	83	86	88	89	88	87	84	78	75	68	71	74	76	79	88	92	95	96	95	94	90	78	75
Gettysburg	69	73	76	80	82	86	88	89	91	90	89	86	80	77	69	73	76	84	86	92	95	96	99	97	96	93	84	77
Huron	78	81	84	88	91	93	97	98	98	98	97	93	88	84	78	85	91	96	100	104	108	110	110	109	108	104	96	90
Kennebec	74	79	82	87	90	94	96	98	99	98	96	94	87	83	74	79	87	93	95	99	100	103	104	104	101	99	92	87
McIntosh	69	72	75	78	81	86	89	90	91	89	88	85	79	75	69	72	75	78	84	90	94	93	95	92	90	88	79	75
Milbank	72	76	78	81	83	87	89	90	92	91	90	87	80	78	72	76	78	87	90	96	100	102	103	102	101	98	86	78
Miller	72	75	78	80	83	86	89	90	92	91	91	88	83	79	72	75	78	84	90	95	100	102	105	103	103	99	90	79
Mobridge	70	73	77	80	83	87	89	91	93	91	90	88	81	77	70	73	77	83	88	93	94	97	99	97	95	94	85	77
Murdo	74	79	84	88	92	95	97	97	98	97	95	93	86	82	74	79	87	91	95	98	99	99	100	99	97	94	88	85
Pierre	73	77	81	85	88	93	95	97	99	97	95	93	86	83	73	77	85	90	93	99	102	102	105	102	101	98	91	87
Redfield	72	76	78	81	84	86	89	89	92	91	90	87	82	79	72	76	78	86	91	95	100	100	105	103	103	99	89	79
Sisseton	69	73	75	77	79	83	85	86	87	86	86	83	78	76	69	73	75	77	79	89	93	94	94	93	93	90	78	76
Watertown	74	77	80	83	86	89	91	91	92	91	91	87	82	79	74	77	84	89	93	97	100	100	101	100	100	95	88	79
Webster	71	74	77	79	81	84	86	87	88	87	87	84	79	77	71	74	77	79	86	91	94	95	97	95	95	91	79	77
Wheaton	69	73	75	78	81	84	86	87	89	88	87	84	78	76	69	73	75	78	85	90	93	94	97	95	94	90	78	76

It'll be the last day of extreme heat and humidity. A front will pass through the region tonight which will result in a step down in temperatures, that will be followed by another front early Friday which will bring readings much closer to normal for this time of year. Best chance for precipitation will be late Thursday early Friday with scattered weak storms.

Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, Aug. 23, 2023 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 060 ~ 17 of 71

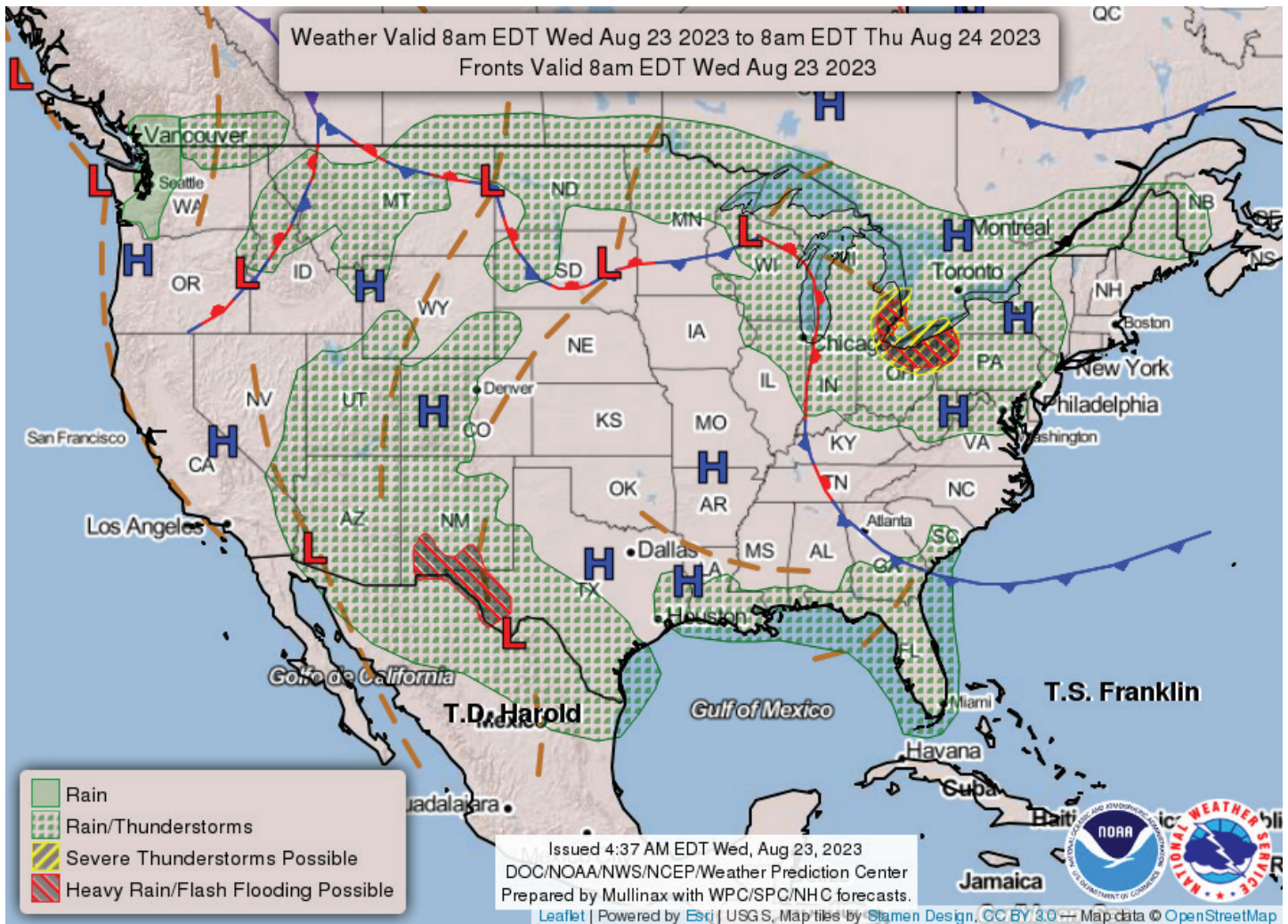
Yesterday's Groton Weather

High Temp: 93 °F at 5:23 PM
Low Temp: 72 °F at 11:25 PM
Wind: 16 mph at 7:55 PM
Precip: : 0.00

Day length: 13 hours, 47 minutes

Today's Info

Record High: 106 in 2003
Record Low: 39 in 1987
Average High: 82
Average Low: 55
Average Precip in Aug.: 1.67
Precip to date in Aug.: 5.92
Average Precip to date: 15.77
Precip Year to Date: 18.59
Sunset Tonight: 8:28:33 PM
Sunrise Tomorrow: 6:42:43 AM



Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, Aug. 23, 2023 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 060 ~ 18 of 71

Today in Weather History

August 23, 1960: Lightning and damaging winds caused damage to occur from Hand and Sanborn Counties to Marshall and Roberts Counties. A small airplane was destroyed, and the high winds broke windows in Miller. Also, roofs, TV antenna, utility lines, and trees were damaged in Kingsbury and Marshall Counties.

August 23, 1998: Winds gusting to 65 mph in and around Milbank, in Grant County, took the roof off a mobile home and wrapped it around a utility pole. The people inside the mobile home were uninjured. The Summit Dairy Barn had sustained significant damage. The high winds also blew a shed and a large tennis court fence down. Several trees along with many large tree branches were down all over town. Strong winds were also reported in Day and Roberts Counties. Winds of 60 mph also downed many tree branches north of Watertown.

1724: An event is known as the "Great Gust of 1724" occurred on this day. Almost all tobacco and much of the corn crops were destroyed by this violent tropical storm, which struck the Chesapeake Bay. Intense floods of rain and a huge gust of wind were seen on the James River. Some homes were wrecked, and several vessels were driven ashore. The storm was likely followed by a second hurricane just five days later causing rain for many straight days that caused the Virginia floods of 1724.

1906 - Thunderstorms deluged Kansas City, MO, with six inches of rain during the early morning, including nearly three inches in thirty minutes. (The Kansas City Weather Almanac)

1921 - Denver, CO, was drenched with 2.20 inches of rain in one hour, a record for that location. (The Weather Channel)

1933: A hurricane made landfall near Nags Head, North Carolina and tracked up the Chesapeake Bay. The Chesapeake-Potomac hurricane moved over Norfolk, Virginia, and Washington, DC. A seven-foot tide flooded businesses in Norfolk, Virginia. Described in the American Meteorological Society's August 1933 weather review as "one of the most severe storms that have ever visited the Middle Atlantic Coast."

1970 - Dry thunderstorms ignited more than one hundred fires in the Wenatchee and Okanogan National Forests of Washington State. Hot, dry, and windy weather spread the fires, a few of which burned out of control through the end of the month. More than 100,000 acres burned. (The Weather Channel)

1987 - A cold front brought autumn-like weather to the Northern and Central Plains Region. Afternoon highs were in the 50s and 60s across parts of Colorado, Kansas and Nebraska that just two days earlier were in the 90s or above 100 degrees. Thunderstorms produced locally heavy rain in New Mexico, Texas, Oklahoma and Arkansas. (The National Weather Summary)

1988 - Thunderstorms produced hail an inch in diameter, wind gusts to 64 mph, and 2.62 inches of rain at Tucson AZ resulting in three million dollars damage. Cool weather prevailed in the northeastern U.S. Hartford CT reported a record low of 42 degrees. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1989 - Thunderstorms produced heavy rain with flash flooding in West Virginia. Pickens, WV, reported 4.80 inches of rain in 24 hours. Evening thunderstorms in Mississippi deluged Alta Woods with 4.25 inches of rain in less than an hour. Thunderstorms also produced heavy rain in southeastern Kentucky, and flooding was reported along Big Creek and along Stinking Creek. The Stinking Creek volunteer fire department reported water levels 12 to 14 feet above bankfull. Fort Worth TX hit the 100 degree mark for the first time all year. Strong winds ushering cool air into northwest Utah gusted to 70 mph, raising clouds of dust in the salt flats. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1992: While South Florida residents were preparing for Hurricane Andrew, folks in western Montana were dealing with early season snowfall. Some snowfall amounts include 8.3" in Great Falls, 6.2" in Helena, and 5.1" in Cut Bank. This snowfall is the first significant snowfall on record in western Montana in August.

2005: Hurricane Katrina formed from Tropical Depression Twelve over the southeastern Bahamas. Katrina would become the costliest (\$81.2 billion) and one of the most deadly hurricanes (1,836 lives) in U.S. history.

Daily Devotionals

Seeds of Hope

WILLING AND ABLE

Little Anne was anxious for her birthday to arrive. It was a day of celebration filled with presents and a party with her best friends.

One morning before school she asked, "Mom, when's my birthday? How long before it's here? You know, how much time do I have to spend being good "cause you know it's hard for me to be good."

How true of all of us!

If we truly want to be good and do good, however, we need to listen to the advice of Paul: "For God is working in you, giving you the power to do what pleases Him."

To do good we begin by first being willing "to please Him" - we must be willing to be willing. For the Christian, "doing good" is being Christ-like. For some of us, it takes time. We know that our goal is to have an attitude like Jesus and act as He did. But what do we do until that happens? Many of us have had that as a goal for years and still have not achieved the results we want: to think and act like Jesus. Perhaps our "want" does not match our "will."

Look at it this way: If we are willing - surrender our wills to the Lord - God will enable - make us able - to do what He would have us to do. If we read the Gospel message, we can see what Jesus did and then go into His world and do whatever He did to honor His Father. Willingness always precedes ability. Ability will come from God when He knows we are willing.

Prayer: Lord, sometimes we really try to complicate things to get out of doing them. Truth is if we want to do good we can do good because You promised to help us. In Jesus' Name, Amen.

Scripture For Today: For God is working in you, giving you the desire and the power to do what pleases him. Philippians 2:13



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

Wednesday, Aug. 23, 2023 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 060 ~ 20 of 71

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

Wednesday, Aug. 23, 2023 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 060 ~ 21 of 71

The Groton Independent Printed & Mailed Weekly Edition

Subscription Form

All prices listed include 6.5% Sales Tax

- Black & White \$48.99/year
- Colored \$79.88/year
- Colored \$42.60/6 months
- E-Weekly* \$31.95/year

* The E-Weekly is a PDF file emailed to you each week. It does not grant you access to the GDI/Video Archives.

Name: _____

Mailing Address: _____

City _____

State, Zip Code _____

E-mail _____

Phone Number _____

Mail Completed Form to:

Groton Independent

P.O. Box 34

Groton, SD 57445-0034

or scan and email to paperpaul@grotonsd.net

Groton Daily Independent

www.397news.com

Subscription Form

This option will grant you access to the GDI/Video Archives.

- 1 Month \$15.98
- 3 Months..... \$26.63
- 6 Months..... \$31.95
- 9 Months..... \$42.60
- 12 Months..... \$53.25

Name: _____

Mailing Address: _____

City _____

State, Zip Code _____

Phone Number _____

The following will be used for your log-in information.

E-mail _____

Password _____

Pay with Paypal. Type the following into your browser window:

paypal.me/paperpaul



Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, Aug. 23, 2023 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 060 ~ 22 of 71



WINNING NUMBERS

MEGA MILLIONS

WINNING NUMBERS:

08.22.23

1 12 26 36 50 7

MegaPlier: 2x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:

\$52,000,000

NEXT 2 Days 17 Hrs 25

DRAW: Mins 42 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 16 Hrs 40 Mins

DRAW: 42 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

LUCKY FOR LIFE

WINNING NUMBERS:

08.22.23

5 14 15 33 43 17

TOP PRIZE:

\$7,000/week

NEXT 16 Hrs 55 Mins 42

DRAW: Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

DAKOTA CASH

WINNING NUMBERS:

08.19.23

4 8 19 26 27

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:

\$20,000

NEXT 16 Hrs 55 Mins 42

DRAW: Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

POWERBALL

DOUBLE PLAY

WINNING NUMBERS:

08.21.23

1 13 19 49 66 7

TOP PRIZE:

\$10,000,000

NEXT 17 Hrs 24 Mins 42

DRAW: 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 17 Hrs 24 Mins 42

DRAW: Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, Aug. 23, 2023 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 060 ~ 23 of 71

News from the  Associated Press

Tuesday's Scores

The Associated Press

PREP VOLLEYBALL=

Alcester-Hudson def. Menno, 16-25, 26-15, 21-25, 25-15, 15-10

Avon def. Wessington Springs

Belle Fourche def. Sturgis Brown, 25-22, 25-5, 25-23

Canistota def. Oldham-Ramona/Rutland, 25-12, 25-18, 25-15

Canton def. Beresford, 25-9, 25-10, 25-10

Castlewood def. Clark/Willow Lake, 25-19, 25-20, 25-19

DeSmet def. Howard, 25-15, 17-25, 12-25, 25-23, 15-7

Dell Rapids def. Elkton-Lake Benton, 25-17, 25-9, 25-14

Deuel def. Sioux Valley, 18-25, 20-25, 25-22, 25-22, 17-15

Douglas def. St. Thomas More, 25-11, 25-13, 25-18

Florence/Henry def. Redfield, 25-22, 25-14, 25-11

Freeman def. Sanborn Central/Woonsocket, 25-20, 25-19

Hanson def. Avon, 25-23, 23-25, 25-19

James Valley Christian def. Iroquois/ Lake Preston Co-op, 25-17, 25-20, 25-16

McCook Central/Montrose def. Bridgewater-Emery, 25-22, 25-22, 18-25, 21-25, 15-11

Miller def. Kimball/White Lake, 25-18, 25-15, 25-22

Newell def. Lead-Deadwood, 25-18, 25-9, 25-18

Northwestern def. Aberdeen Roncalli, 19-25, 25-20, 25-21, 25-13

Parker def. Irene-Wakonda, 25-12, 25-21, 25-21

Parkston def. Mt. Vernon/Plankinton, 25-22, 22-25, 25-19, 25-19

Platte-Geddes def. Freeman Academy/Marion, 25-20, 25-8

Sully Buttes def. Jones County, 25-21, 25-21, 25-23

Tripp-Delmont/Armour def. Colome, 25-6, 25-9, 25-9

West Central def. Vermillion, 24-26, 25-14, 25-14, 13-25, 15-8

Wilmot def. Sisseton, 25-15, 25-19, 25-19

Wolsey-Wessington def. Arlington, 23-25, 25-20, 25-11, 25-20

Some high school volleyball scores provided by Scorestream.com, <https://scorestream.com/>

Philippine supply boats breach a Chinese coast guard blockade in the hotly contested South China Sea

By JIM GOMEZ and AARON FAVILA Associated Press

ABOARD BRP CABRA (AP) — As a United States Navy plane circled overhead, two Philippine boats breached a Chinese coast guard blockade in a dangerous confrontation Tuesday in the disputed South China Sea to deliver food and other supplies to Filipino forces guarding a contested shoal.

Two Philippine coast guard vessels escorting the supply boats, however, were blocked by at least four Chinese coast guard ships for about five hours in the tense standoff near Second Thomas Shoal.

The dangerous encounter is the latest flare-up from the long-seething territorial disputes in the busy sea that involve China, the Philippines, Vietnam, Malaysia, Taiwan and Brunei. It's regarded as an Asian flashpoint and has become a delicate fault line in the U.S.-China rivalry.

The Philippine coast guard invited a small group of journalists, including two from The Associated Press, to join its ships that secured the supply boats as part of a new strategy aimed at exposing China's increas-

Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, Aug. 23, 2023 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 060 ~ 24 of 71

ingly aggressive actions in the South China Sea, which Beijing claims virtually in its entirety.

One Chinese coast guard ship came as close as 46 meters (50 yards) as it crossed the bow of BRP Cabra to block the Philippine coast guard ship, which maneuvered fast to avoid a collision, said a coast guard officer onboard the Cabra who could not be named because of official policy.

The Cabra and another coast guard ship, the BRP Sindangan, were surrounded by four Chinese coast guard ships and four suspected militia vessels and forced to stop as the other two Philippine boats delivered supplies to the Filipino forces at Second Thomas Shoal, more than 7 kilometers (4 miles) away.

All the Philippine vessels sailed away without further incident after the supplies and a fresh crew of Filipino sailors were delivered to the military outpost on a long-marooned Philippine navy ship at the shoal. "We're happy that the resupply mission succeeded despite all the dangerous blockings and other actions," Cmdr. Emmanuel Dangate of the Cabra told AP.

Coast Guard spokesperson Commodore Jay Tarriela condemned the Chinese coast guard blockade and other perilous maneuvers as a violation of international regulations aimed at avoiding sea collisions. The coast guard would provide a report to the Department of Foreign Affairs in Manila for a possible diplomatic protest against China, he said.

The hostilities started Monday night, when a Chinese coast guard ship started tailing the Philippine vessels. On Tuesday morning, both sides asserted their territorial rights in a flurry of radio message exchanges with a man identifying himself as coming from the one of the Chinese coast guard ships, warning at one point: "To avoid miscalculation, leave and keep out, otherwise, you will bear full responsibility for all the consequences."

When the Philippine ships did not back away, the Chinese radio caller warned that, because of such continued "infringement and provocation, we will take countermeasures."

Chinese coast guard ships repeatedly crossed the bows of the two Philippine coast guard ships at close range. Up to three later positioned in front of the Cabra, which remained stationary. The Chinese ships also moved dangerously close to the wooden-hulled supply boats, but the two smaller vessels managed to dart cross the shallows toward the shoal.

Chinese officials at the embassy in Manila did not immediately comment on the encounter. It was not immediately clear why the U.S. Navy deployed the surveillance plane that flew for more than three hours overhead as the Chinese ships blocked and shadowed the Philippine vessels off Second Thomas Shoal. When asked about the deployment of the Navy plane, U.S. Embassy spokesperson Kanishka Gangopadhyay in Manila said he could not provide specifics. "What I can say is that all of our military activities in the Philippines are conducted in full coordination with our Philippine allies," he said.

Filipino security officials have said they've received intelligence information and surveillance images taken in the disputed waters from their American and other foreign counterparts in the past as part of security cooperation.

The United States lays no claim to the South China Sea but has declared that freedom of navigation and flight, as well as peacefully resolving disputes, are in its national interest.

After a Chinese coast guard ship used a water cannon against a Philippine supply boat on Aug. 5, Washington renewed a warning that it's obligated to defend its longtime treaty ally if Filipino forces, aircraft and vessels come under an armed attack, including in the South China Sea.

Russia launches 3-hour drone attack on Odesa as Ukrainian drones target Moscow again

By SUSIE BLANN Associated Press

KYIV, Ukraine (AP) — Russia and Ukraine traded drone attacks early Wednesday, officials said, with Kyiv apparently targeting Moscow again and the Kremlin's forces launching another bombardment of Ukrainian grain storage depots in what have recently become signature tactics in the almost 18-month war.

A three-hour nighttime Russian drone attack in Ukraine's southern Odesa region overnight Tuesday caused a blaze at grain facilities, Odesa Regional Military Administration Head Oleh Kiper wrote on the

Telegram messaging app.

Ukrainian air defense systems downed nine Shahed drones, Kiper said.

"Unfortunately, there are hits on production and transshipment complexes," he said, adding that no casualties had been reported.

Russia zeroed in on Odesa last month, crippling significant parts of the port city's grain facilities, days after President Vladimir Putin broke off Russia's participation in the Black Sea Grain Initiative. That wartime deal enabled Ukraine's exports to reach many countries facing the threat of hunger.

Russian officials, meanwhile, claimed to have downed Ukrainian drones in Moscow and the surrounding region early Wednesday, the defense ministry and the mayor said. No casualties were reported in the drone attack, which has become almost a daily occurrence in the Russian capital.

Moscow Mayor Sergey Sobyanin said one drone smashed into a building under construction in Moscow City, a prestigious business complex hit by drones twice before. Several windows were broken in two buildings nearby and emergency services responded to the scene.

Russia's Ministry of Defense said the drone had been electronically jammed.

It blamed the attack on Ukraine and said two other drones were shot down by air defense systems in the Mozhaik and Khimki areas of the Moscow region. Kyiv officials, as usual, neither confirmed nor denied Ukraine was behind the drone attacks.

Moscow airports briefly closed but have now reopened, according to Russian state media.

Neither side's claims could be independently verified.

Ukraine has since early this year sought to take the war into the heart of Russia. It has increasingly targeted Moscow's military assets behind the front lines in eastern and southern Ukraine and at the same time has launched drones against Moscow.

Kyiv is also trying to keep up the pressure on the Kremlin along multiple fronts, pursuing a counteroffensive at various points along the 1,500-kilometer (900-mile) front line, as well as diplomatically by obtaining pledges of more weaponry from its Western allies, including F-16 warplanes.

Meanwhile, three people were killed in the Belgorod region of Russia on the Ukrainian border after repeated shelling of a sanatorium, according to Gov. Vyacheslav Gladkov.

Gladkov said the sanatorium in the village of Lavy, about 40km (25 miles) from the border, was shelled and that "the enemy dropped two grenades from a drone while people were on the street."

The Belgorod region has witnessed sporadic fighting and shelling during the war, including a border incursion last May that prompted the Kremlin to introduce tighter security.

A handful of foreign dignitaries, including the presidents of Portugal, Finland and Lithuania, visited Ukraine on Wednesday.

Their presence coincided with the Day of the National Flag of Ukraine, which precedes Ukrainian Independence Day on Thursday.

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy, along with Ukrainian Armed Forces Commander in Chief Valerii Zaluzhnyi and other top officials, attended the unfurling in Kyiv of a giant Ukrainian flag with numerous signatures of soldiers, volunteers, doctors and rescuers.

Teenager rescued with 7 others from a broken cable car over a Pakistan gorge says it was a miracle

By RIAZ KHAN and MUNIR AHMED Associated Press

PESHAWAR, Pakistan (AP) — The rescue of six school children and two adults who were plucked from a broken cable car that was dangling precariously hundreds of meters (yards) above a steep gorge was a miracle, a survivor said Wednesday. The teenager said he and the others felt repeatedly that death was imminent during the 16-hour ordeal.

The eight passengers were pulled from the cable car in several rescue attempts Tuesday. One of the youngest children was grabbed by a commando attached to a helicopter by rope. A video of the rescue shows the rope swaying wildly as the child, secured by a harness, is pulled into the helicopter.

Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, Aug. 23, 2023 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 060 ~ 26 of 71

Because helicopters could not fly after sunset, rescuers constructed a makeshift chairlift from a wooden bed frame and ropes and approached the cable car using the one cable that was still intact, local police chief Nazir Ahmed said. In the final stage of the risky operation, just before midnight Tuesday, rescuers and volunteers pulled a rope to lower the chairlift to the ground. Joyful shouts of "God is great" erupted as the chairlift came into view, carrying two boys in traditional white robes.

"I had heard stories about miracles, but I saw a miraculous rescue happening with my own eyes," said 15-year-old Osama Sharif, one of the six boys who were in the cable car.

Locally made cable cars are a widely used form of transportation in the mountainous Battagram district in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province. Gliding across steep valleys, they cut down travel time but often are poorly maintained and accident prone. Every year people die or are injured while traveling in them.

On Tuesday morning, the six boys got into the cable car to travel to their school across the ravine from their village. Osama said he was headed to school to receive the result of his final exam.

"We suddenly felt a jolt, and it all happened so suddenly that we thought all of us are going to die," Osama said in a telephone interview.

He said some of the children and the two adults had cellphones and started making calls. Worried parents tried to reassure the children.

"They were telling us don't worry, help is coming," he said. After several hours, the passengers saw helicopters flying in the air, and at one point a commando using a rope came very close to the cable car.

But the choppers also added an element of danger. The air currents churned up by the whirling blades risked weakening the only cable preventing the cable car from crashing to the bottom of the river canyon.

"We cried, and tears were in our eyes, as we feared the cable car will go down," Osama said.

Eventually a helicopter plucked one of the youngest children from the cable car, he said. Then, the makeshift chairlift arrived, first to give them food and water, followed by the rescue.

Ahmed, the local police chief, said the children received oxygen as a precaution before being handed over to their parents, many of whom burst into tears of joy.

An estimated 30,000 people live in Battagram, and nearly 8,000 gathered to watch the rescue operation, with many volunteering to help.

On Wednesday, authorities were preparing to repair the broken cable car.

Ata Ullah, another rescued student, said cable cars are the only way residents can reach offices and schools.

"I feel fear in my mind about using the cable car, but I have no other option. I will go to my school again when the cable car is repaired," he said.

In 2017, 10 people were killed when a cable car fell hundreds of meters (yards) into a ravine in the popular mountain resort of Murree after its cable broke.

Tropical Storm Franklin nears Haiti and the Dominican Republic bringing fears of floods, landslides

By MARTÍN ADAMES ALCÁNTARA Associated Press

SANTO DOMINGO, Dominican Republic (AP) — Tropical Storm Franklin roared toward the island of Hispaniola shared by the Dominican Republic and Haiti early Wednesday, bringing fears it would trigger deadly landslides and heavy flooding in both countries.

Franklin was expected to swirl above the island for most of Wednesday, with forecasters warning the storm could dump up to 10 inches (25 centimeters) of rain, with a maximum of 15 inches (38 centimeters) in isolated areas.

By early Wednesday morning, the storm was centered about 120 miles (190 kilometers) southwest of Santo Domingo, the capital of the Dominican Republic, according to the National Hurricane Center in Miami. It had maximum winds of 50 mph (85 kph) with higher gusts and was moving northward at 10 mph (17 kph).

Meanwhile, Tropical Storm Harold weakened into a tropical depression Tuesday night after making landfall in South Texas, bringing strong winds, rain and leaving thousands of homes without power.

Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, Aug. 23, 2023 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 060 ~ 27 of 71

In the Caribbean, officials were most concerned about Franklin's impact in Haiti, which is vulnerable to catastrophic flooding given the country's severe erosion.

Prime Minister Ariel Henry had urged Haitians on Tuesday to stock up on water, food and medication as authorities checked on some of the more than 200,000 people displaced by gang violence, with some living on the street or in makeshift shelters.

Some recalled how a powerful thunderstorm that unleashed heavy rains one day in June left more than 40 people dead across Haiti.

In the Dominican Republic, officials shuttered schools, government agencies and several airports with at least 24 of the country's 31 provinces under red alert.

Flooding already was reported on Tuesday in the capital of Santo Domingo and beyond, where residents prepared for heavy rainfall.

"We're scared of the river," said Doralisa Sánchez, a government employee who lives near the Ozama River that divides the capital and has had to flee her home three times during previous storms.

She hoped Franklin wouldn't force her to seek shelter and temporarily abandon her home because she said people steal belongings left behind.

Others, like businesswoman Albita Achangel, worried they had nowhere to go if the waters start rising. "We are hoping for God's will," she said, adding that her patio already was flooded.

The storm worried thousands of Dominicans who live in flood-prone areas. "When two drops of water fall here, this suddenly becomes flooded," said Juan Olivo Urbáez, who owns a small business in a community near the Ozama River.

A tropical storm warning was in effect for the entire southern coast of the Dominican Republic and Haiti, as well as the entire northern Dominican coast. The government of the Bahamas also issued a tropical storm warning for the Turks and Caicos Islands, according to the National Hurricane Center in Miami.

Franklin is the seventh named storm of the Atlantic hurricane season, which runs from June 1 to Nov. 30. An eighth named storm, Gert, dissipated on Tuesday.

On Aug. 10, the National Ocean and Atmospheric Administration updated its forecast and warned that this year's hurricane season would be above normal. Between 14 to 21 named storms are forecast. Of those, six to 11 could become hurricanes, with two to five of them possibly becoming major hurricanes.

Polls open in Zimbabwe as the president known as 'the crocodile' seeks a second and final term

By FARAI MUTSAKA Associated Press

HARARE, Zimbabwe (AP) — Polls opened in Zimbabwe on Wednesday as President Emmerson Mnangagwa seeks a second and final term in a country with a history of violent and disputed votes.

These are the second general elections since the ouster of longtime repressive ruler Robert Mugabe in a coup in 2017.

Twelve presidential candidates are on the ballot, but the main contest is expected to be between the 80-year-old Mnangagwa, known as the "the crocodile", and 45-year-old opposition leader Nelson Chamisa. Mnangagwa narrowly beat Chamisa in a disputed election in 2018.

Chamisa hopes to break the ruling ZANU-PF party's 43-year hold on power. Zimbabwe has known only two leaders since gaining independence from white minority rule in 1980.

A runoff election will be held on Oct. 2. if no candidate wins a clear majority in the first round. This election will also determine the makeup of the 350-seat parliament and close to 2,000 local council positions.

In several poor townships of the capital, Harare, some people were at polling stations two hours before voting opened, fearing long lines.

"It's becoming tougher to survive in this country," said Basil Chendambuya, 50, an early voter in the working-class township of KuwadzanaI in Harare. "I am hoping for change. This is my third time to vote and I am praying hard that this time my vote counts. I am getting desperate, so God has to intervene this

time round." The father of three said his two adult children are working menial jobs and surviving "hand to mouth."

The southern African nation of 15 million people has vast mineral resources, including Africa's largest reserves of lithium, a key component in making electric car batteries. But watchdogs have long alleged that widespread corruption and mismanagement have gutted much of the country's potential.

European Union chief election observer Fabio Massimo Castaldo told reporters at a polling station in Harare that around 30% of polling stations there had significant delays in opening, often linked to the lack of essential materials, "notably, in many cases, paper ballots."

Ahead of the election, the opposition and human rights groups including Human Rights Watch and Amnesty International accused Mnangagwa of seeking to silence dissent amid rising tensions due to a currency crisis, a sharp hike in food prices, a weakening public health system and a lack of formal jobs.

Mnangagwa voted in his hometown of Kwekwe and expressed confidence he would win. "If I think I am not going to take it, then I will be foolish," he said, and encouraged people to be peaceful during the voting period.

Mnangagwa was a close ally of Mugabe and served as vice president before a fallout ahead of the 2017 coup. He has sought to portray himself as a reformer, but many accuse him of being even more repressive than the man he helped remove from power.

Zimbabwe has been under United States and EU sanctions for the past two decades over allegations of human rights abuses, charges denied by the ruling party. Mnangagwa has in recent years repeated much of Mugabe's rhetoric against the West, accusing it of seeking to topple his regime.

Ahead of elections, observers from the EU and the U.S. have come under criticism from officials and state-run media for allegedly being biased against the ruling party.

The Carter Center, invited by the government to observe the polls, has said 30 members of its 48-member observer team were yet to be accredited on the eve of the elections and any further delay will "hinder its ability to observe polling, counting, and tabulation in many locations."

Several local human rights activists, including lawyers and a clergyman viewed as critical of the government, have been denied accreditation to observe the vote. The U.S. State Department has condemned Zimbabwe's decision to deny accreditation to them and to several foreign journalists.

As oil activities encroach on sacred natural sites, a small Ugandan community feels besieged

By RODNEY MUHUMUZA Associated Press

BULIISA, Uganda (AP) — Alex Wakitinti is worried about the sacred natural sites he tends in the large swath of bushy grassland near Lake Albert. It's the same slice of his homeland that oil companies are developing in order for Uganda to become an oil producer by 2026.

But French oil company TotalEnergies and others working toward that goal are recklessly ignoring the significance of Wakitinti's spiritual work, he said, as well as that of the other custodians minding hallowed natural sites in the remote district of Buliisa near the Congo border.

"According to the program of Total, custodians are not there," said Wakitinti, chief custodian of sacred sites in Buliisa. "We are not in their program."

That is a mistake, he said, making note of the bad luck that can come from disturbing these special places without performing the necessary rituals or making sacrifices to spirit mediums — like the tree Wakitinti recently knelt under to pray and present a bird's nest.

Sacred natural sites here range from single trees in the bush to the rift in the land where the Nile River merges with Lake Albert, creating a spectacular landscape that intensifies the Bagungu's respect for nature. They believe these sites are repositories of occult mediums with the power to solve problems that range from a thief in the community to a sickness in the family.

As TotalEnergies invests billions into oilfield development and acquires more and more land, Wakitinti and other Bagungu people who practice traditional beliefs worry the spiritual power of at least 32 sacred

Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, Aug. 23, 2023 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 060 ~ 29 of 71

natural sites in Buliisa keeps deteriorating. There are already signs, like the region's prolonged dry spell some say is proof the sanctity of some sites has already been breached.

"You can see we have no rain. ... We are crying," said farmer William Byabagambi, who noted that communal offerings to spirits will be fewer as community members move out to make way for oil infrastructure.

Uganda is estimated to have recoverable oil reserves of at least 1.4 billion barrels, and officials see future oil earnings lifting millions out of poverty. Investors from Australia, Ireland, China and, most recently, France have been involved over the years.

TotalEnergies — the top shareholder in Uganda's oil project — faces a legal challenge and pressure to pull out because of concerns over a heated pipeline that campaigners say undermines the Paris climate accord.

A TotalEnergies spokesperson in Uganda did not immediately respond to detailed requests for comment on the concerns of the Bagungu.

In 2006, a commercially viable amount of oil was discovered in Buliisa, which is home to less than 100,000 Bagungu, a community of farmers and others who depend on the Albertine area for everything from food to religious practice. Their traditional beliefs are seen as peculiar in this Christian-majority country of 45 million people, contributing to the sense of injustice that's now driving a campaign to protect their sacred natural sites from oil activities.

"The sites are threatened," said Robert T. Katemburura, an activist with the Uganda-based African Institute for Culture and Ecology.

Most families in Buliisa maintain small shrines to ancestral spirits close to home but sometimes take trips to sacred natural sites, seeking revelations and blessings in response to their more serious matters.

While the sites remain largely intact, the sanctity of two has been violated by a nearby pipeline and a processing facility. Excessive noise from oil-related work is believed to anger spirits, he said.

"We fault the oil companies because they have taken their roads and infrastructure through the sacred natural sites," he said.

In 2020, Irish firm Tullow Oil completed the \$575 million sale of its Ugandan assets to TotalEnergies, raising hopes of oil production after delays due to corruption scandals and tax disputes. But the French company faces challenges as some campaigners go to court and others urge banks to withdraw support.

European lawmakers last year passed a resolution that urged TotalEnergies to suspend its activities in the region. This year the company faced a second lawsuit in Paris over its East Africa project. Filed in June by French and Ugandan civic groups, the lawsuit accuses the company of failing to comply with France's "duty of vigilance" law and seeks compensation for six years of alleged land and food rights violations.

TotalEnergies has long denied the charges, saying it's deploying state-of-the-art design — including horizontal drilling — to minimize ecological damage.

In Buliisa, the land rush destroyed the cultural "commons" as landowners fenced off their properties in anticipation of compensation, said Wilson Kiiza, founder of the Bugungu Heritage and Information Centre. He pointed out that unmarked natural sites in the jungle are especially vulnerable amid a cash bonanza.

Human Rights Watch last month published a report that warned of a looming disaster, asserting that households affected by land acquisitions are worse off than they had been. "The land acquisition process has been marred by delays, poor communication, and inadequate compensation," that report said.

Newplan, a company contracted by TotalEnergies to handle the environmental aspects of relocations, didn't respond to the AP's questions. It contends that graveyards and shrines have been relocated respectfully, with family members themselves paid to carry out the appropriate rituals.

The oil boom caught people off guard, with community leaders too slow to identify possible threats to sacred natural sites after oil deposits were discovered, said Gilbert Tibasiima, the second-in-command official in Buliisa.

Attempts to remedy that have stalled. The Buliisa assembly passed a bylaw in 2020 that would restrict access to sacred sites and impose fines for disturbances. But it is yet to be ratified by the office of Uganda's attorney-general, underscoring the politically prickly nature of the matter.

"The discovery of oil and gas found people when they were not prepared for the industry. These are

people who did not know the potential impacts that come along," said Tibasiima, a Mugungu raised in Buliisa. "Had they known earlier, probably, maybe, they could have developed their local means of preserving the environment in general, including protection of their sacred sites."

Custodians of sacred sites were not able to predict the impact of compulsory land acquisitions, especially with oil contractors withholding information about project pathways to keep compensation costs down. Now some authorities regard the Bagungu's concern over sacred sites as a nuisance that could only delay the start of oil production, he said.

Wakitinti, the chief custodian, said he sees prolonged dry conditions in Buliisa these days as a sign the spirits are not happy with oil activities. He also cited the elephants that run rampant from the nearby Murchison Falls National Park, where TotalEnergies is digging oil wells, and trample people's crops.

Those are signs of bad luck, he said.

Hawaii officials urge families of people missing after deadly fires to give DNA samples

By AUDREY McAVOY, GENE JOHNSON and JENNIFER SINCO KELLEHER Associated Press

LAHAINA, Hawaii (AP) — Authorities in Hawaii pleaded Tuesday with relatives of those missing after the deadliest U.S. wildfire in more than a century to come forward and give DNA samples, saying the low number provided so far threatens to hinder efforts to identify any remains discovered in the ashes.

Some 1,000 to 1,100 names remain on the FBI's tentative, unconfirmed list of people unaccounted for after wildfires destroyed the historic seaside community of Lahaina on Maui. But the family assistance center so far has collected DNA from just 104 families, said Julie French, who is helping lead efforts to identify remains by DNA analysis.

Maui Prosecuting Attorney Andrew Martin, who is running the center, said that the number of family members coming in to provide DNA samples is "a lot lower" than in other major disasters around the country, though it wasn't immediately clear why.

"That's our concern, that's why I'm here today, that's why I'm asking for this help," he said.

Martin and French sought to reassure people that any samples would be used only to help identify fire victims and would not be entered into any law enforcement databases or used for any other purpose. People will not be asked about their immigration status or citizenship, they said.

"What we want to do — all we want to do — is help people locate and identify their unaccounted-for loved ones," Martin said.

Two weeks after the flames tore through Lahaina, officials are facing huge challenges to determine how many people who remain unaccounted for perished and how many 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.

Hawaii officials have expressed concern that by releasing a list of the missing, they would also be identifying some people who have died. In an email Tuesday, the State Joint Information Center called it "a standard held by all law enforcement and first responders here in Hawaii, out of compassion and courtesy for the families, to withhold the names until the families can be contacted."

As of Monday there were 115 confirmed dead, according to Maui police. All single-story, residential properties in the disaster area had been searched, and teams were transitioning to searching multi-story residential and commercial properties, Maui County officials said in an update late Monday.

Police Chief John Pelletier said Tuesday that his team faces difficulties in coming up with a solid list of the missing. In some cases people only provided partial names, and in other cases names might be duplicated. There was "no secrecy, no hiding things," he added.

"We want to get a verified list. The 1,100 names right now, we know that there's a margin of that that some of them have first names only and there's no contact number back. So there was a, 'John's missing,'

Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, Aug. 23, 2023 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 060 ~ 31 of 71

and when we try to call back who said that, no one is answering," he said. "And so we're trying to scrub this to make it as accurate as we can."

Pelletier urged people to provide DNA and file a police report with as much information as possible if they have relatives unaccounted for.

"If you feel you've got a family member that's unaccounted for, give the DNA," he said. "Do the report. Let's figure this out. A name with no callback doesn't help anybody."

One whose name was on the list was Roseanna Samartano, a resident of Lahaina, who didn't know anyone was looking for her until an FBI agent phoned her a few days ago.

"I was shocked. Why is the FBI calling me?" the 77-year-old retiree said. "But then he came out with it right away, and then I kind of calmed down."

It turned out a friend had reported her missing because he'd been unable to get in touch despite calling, texting and emailing. Her neighborhood of Kahana — which didn't burn — had no power, cellphone service or internet in the days after the fires.

Clifford Abihai came to Maui from California after getting nowhere finding answers about his grandmother, Louise Abihai, 98, by phone. He has been just as frustrated on the ground in Maui.

"I just want confirmation," he said last week. "Not knowing what happened, not knowing if she escaped, not knowing if she's not there. That's the hard thing."

As of Tuesday, he said, he still had learned nothing further. He did provide a DNA sample, he said.

Abihai's grandmother lived at Hale Mahaolu Eono, a senior living facility where another member of his extended family, Virginia Dofa, lived. Authorities have identified Dofa as one who perished. Abihai described Dofa and Louise Abihai as best friends.

He said his grandmother was mobile and could walk a mile a day, but it was often hard to reach her because she'd frequently turn off her cellphone to save battery power.

Confirming whether those who are unaccounted for are deceased can be difficult. Fire experts say it's possible some bodies were cremated by the intense heat, potentially leaving no bones left to identify through DNA tests. Three-quarters of the remains tested for DNA so far have yielded usable results, French said.

People who lived through other 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, for example, 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 focusing 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 in New York.

Four years into crisis, Lebanon's leaders hope tourism boom will help bypass reforms in IMF bailout

By KAREEM CHEHAYEB Associated Press

BEIRUT (AP) — Four years into its historic economic meltdown, Lebanon's political elites, masters at survival, are pushing for a recovery that would sidestep tough reforms demanded by the International Monetary Fund.

Economic experts and former officials involved in designing Lebanon's original IMF-approved recovery plan in 2020 say the political leadership and associates in the banking sector are deliberately implementing a "shadow plan" to torpedo the deal and place the burden of bailing out the financial system on ordinary Lebanese who are already impoverished by the crisis.

Carrying out the IMF reforms, which include audits of Lebanon's long secretive central bank and other banks, would not just force the elites to bear much of the cost of repairing the financial meltdown. It would

Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, Aug. 23, 2023 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 060 ~ 32 of 71

also threaten the networks of corruption, patronage and waste that allowed them to milk the system for years, experts say.

"I would have never thought that these people, despite the size of the catastrophe, would still act with so much cold blood and irresponsibility," said Alain Bifani, a former Finance Ministry director general and an architect of the recovery plan, speaking to The Associated Press about the elite's refusal to implement it.

A growing number of politicians are now betting that a rebounding tourism sector, remittances from Lebanese abroad, and a fledgling natural gas industry will revive the economy without reforms requiring major sacrifices from them.

The financial meltdown has widely been blamed on the political leadership that has held power for decades — as well as top banking officials and former Central Bank Governor Riad Salameh.

Salameh, who ran the bank for 30 years until July, is under investigation on money laundering and embezzlement allegations and was slapped with sanctions two weeks ago by the United States, the United Kingdom and Canada.

For years before the crisis hit, the central bank operated what the World Bank says amounted to a Ponzi scheme to keep the economy afloat. It enticed commercial banks to lend it dollars at high interest rates to stay flush with cash. The banks then attracted customers to deposit dollar savings with even higher interest rates, turning a profit.

In late 2019, the scheme collapsed when the pipeline of dollars slowed, sparking a panic and a run on the banks. The banks locked down dollar accounts, allowing depositors to withdraw only in local currency at a fraction of the market rate. The life savings of many effectively melted away.

Lebanon's inflation hit triple-digits. Its currency, the lira, which had been pegged at 1,500 to the dollar for a quarter century, now goes for around 90,000 on the black market. Sucked dry of funds, state electricity is now nearly non-existent. Public schools and hospitals can barely afford to keep their lights on. Officials beg for humanitarian aid similar to that for a nation in war.

"Before the crisis, they were extracting air from the lungs of society," said Sami Zoughaib, an economist at Beirut-based think tank The Policy Initiative. "Now that society is dead, they are preying on the carcass."

The lira incomes of public sector workers and pensions of retirees, who together make up a large sector of the population, have become nearly worthless. For survival, Lebanese scrounge for dollars, most often sent by relatives abroad. Most businesses now require payment in dollars — everything from grocery stores and pharmacies to private hospitals and private electricity generators.

Jeanette Fares, 62 and unemployed, relies on money from her brothers, who are themselves struggling. She rarely drives her 1995-model car anymore because gas is expensive.

"It's all lies. I can't even fix my faucet," she said, calling the country's rulers "mafias."

An IMF bailout was once seen as Lebanon's only hope.

After nearly two years of talks, Lebanon reached a tentative deal with the IMF in April 2022 for a \$3 billion rescue package. But finalizing it is contingent on major financial restructuring and reforms to combat corruption and waste.

The IMF plan would place much of the burden of backfilling the financial system's losses on commercial bank shareholders, who include many prominent Lebanese political families and private sector associates. After extensive audits, many banks would have to sell assets or merge with others. Small depositors, meanwhile, would be able to recover most of their money.

A finalized deal with the IMF would open the door for the rescue package and billions of dollars of international investments and loans badly needed to rebuild productive sectors.

Without the deal and its associated reforms, Lebanon won't get the investment and will be left "dependent on the handouts from the international community," the IMF head of mission in Lebanon Ernesto Rigo warned in June.

Caretaker Economy Minister Amin Salam told the AP in a recent interview that a growing number of officials in government believe Lebanon can do without an IMF plan, or can better its negotiation position, "with a little bit of housekeeping" in the financial system.

Salam said officials he recently met from oil-rich Gulf nations that once poured billions into Lebanon told

him they felt the same.

He and other officials are banking on remittances from the diaspora that now make up almost 40% of the economy, while welcoming record numbers of tourists this summer. Tourists shell out hard cash in private beach clubs along the Mediterranean by day before flocking to nightclubs until sunrise.

Meanwhile, commercial banks — spared from restructuring — are instead cleaning up their losses on the backs of small depositors, who are forced to withdraw their trapped dollars as lira at a rate of 15,000, a sixth of their current market value.

Lebanon started negotiating with the IMF in May 2020, but Bifani called the discussions a joke given the divisions on the Lebanese side.

Ruling parties, commercial banks and the central bank played down the crisis, claiming the estimates of financial losses, a gargantuan \$70 billion, were inflated.

Reformist ministers and advisers promoting the initial IMF-backed recovery plan say they faced resistance and animosity. One former senior government official said they and other officials had received threats for advocating tough reforms. The official spoke on condition of anonymity out of fear of retaliation.

Then-central bank chief Salameh, who was on the negotiating team, often ignored requests to send crucial information about the financial situation and dwindling foreign reserves, Bifani said. Salameh also did not cooperate with a forensic audit into the central bank's questionable financial transactions.

The banks, meanwhile, proposed a plan placing the majority of the financial burden on the government, calling for a sale of state assets — or in other words, a government bailout. Talks froze within weeks, prompting Bifani and finance minister adviser Henri Chaoul to resign in late June 2020.

"I will not stand witness to this detrimental inaction," Chaoul said in his resignation statement.

The government has put talks on the back burner. The negotiating portfolio is held by Deputy Prime Minister Saade Chami, a reformist economist who spent almost two decades working at the IMF, but he has virtually no political support.

Parliament's budget and finance committee has ignored reform legislation, several parliamentarians told the AP. Instead, they said, it mostly focuses on setting up a sovereign wealth fund for hoped-for oil and gas revenues, though exploration in an offshore gas field has not started.

Outside the buzzing nightlife spots and fancy hotels, much of Lebanon's impoverished population is losing hope.

"They live in their palaces," Fares said of the country's ruling elite, "and don't notice the poor people who can barely afford to eat."

In deadly Maui fires, many had no warning and no way out. Those who dodged barricades survived

By REBECCA BOONE, HEATHER HOLLINGSWORTH, CLAUDIA LAUER and CHRISTOPHER L. KELLER
Associated Press

As flames tore through a West Maui neighborhood, car after car of fleeing residents headed for the only paved road out of town in a desperate race for safety.

And car after car was turned back toward the rapidly spreading wildfire by a barricade blocking access to Highway 30.

One family swerved around the barricade and was safe in a nearby town 48 minutes later, another drove their 4-wheel-drive car down a dirt road to escape. One man took a dirt road uphill, climbing above the fire and watching as Lahaina burned. He later picked his way through the flames, smoke and rubble to pull survivors to safety.

But dozens of others found themselves caught in a hellscape, their cars jammed together on a narrow road, surrounded by flames on three sides and the rocky ocean waves on the fourth. Some died in their cars, while others tried to run for safety.

"I could see from the bypass that people were stuck on the balconies, so I went down and checked it

Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, Aug. 23, 2023 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 060 ~ 34 of 71

Meanwhile, police officers knock down a fence to help others escape, the police chief says later. Firefighters in the area nearly become trapped themselves, losing a truck to the flames, Pelletier says.

When Baird and his family turn south to drive out of town, the way is blocked by cones and a crew working on downed electric poles. The workers were motioning for everyone to turn back toward Lahaina.

They decide they don't care what the crew wants, swerving around the cones and heading south. They make it to a neighboring town by 4:18 p.m. and begin texting people to see who else has made it out.

"Nobody realized how little time we really had," Baird said. "Like even us being from the heart of the fire, we did not comprehend. Like we literally had minutes and one wrong turn. We would all be dead right now."

Jonelle Santos said her daughter, Ronelle Santos-Adrian, managed to escape her Lahaina affordable housing apartment with her 3-year-old daughter and partner by turning their four-wheel-drive vehicle away from the standstill traffic and onto a dirt road, eventually finding their way to a friend's house in Napili. Some of the other people who lived in the apartment complex didn't have cars, Santos said, and her daughter thinks some of them didn't make it out.

Kim Cuevas-Reyes narrowly escapes with her 12- and 15-year-old by ignoring instructions to turn right on Front Street toward Lahaina's Civic Center, which earlier in the day had been turned into a shelter for refugees. Instead, she takes a left, driving in the wrong lane to pass a stack of cars heading in the other direction.

"The gridlock would have left us there when the firestorm came," said Cuevas-Reyes, 38. "I would have had to tell my children to jump into the ocean as well and be boiled alive by the flames or we would have just died from smoke inhalation and roasted in the car."

At 5:20 p.m., Maui County shares another update on Facebook. The road leading south out of Lahaina has been cleared and is open for traffic, the county says.

But by then, some on Front Street have already died, according to survivor accounts. Others have jumped over the seawall and are treading water, dodging flaming debris and breathing overheated black smoke.

At some point, police begin directing people away from Front Street, Pelletier says, "because it had already gotten too late." He does not say exactly when that point is reached.

A private ambulance company calls the U.S. Coast Guard at about 5:45 p.m., asking for help transporting 10 injured people from Lahaina to Maalaea because a fire is blocking road access to Lahaina. It is the Coast Guard's first notification of the fire.

People in the water and on boat moorings use flashlights and phones to guide the boats through the thick smoke. The Coast Guard rescues nearly 40 people from the shore, and pulls 17 people from the water while civilians help pull more from the ocean. The rescue efforts stretch into the early morning hours.

Kekoa Lansford is among the rescuers. Earlier, he had climbed a hill behind the town and watched as the city burned, trying to gauge when it would be safe to return. Lansford said he knew people would need help "because the roads are small, and it's pretty tight down there."

Over the next several hours, Lansford makes repeated trips into the still-burning downtown, often using back roads to travel safely.

"I seen one girl and her legs was all burned up, and then I helped her," Lansford said. "And then something just clicked in my head, like, everybody's going to be burned up. So I just kept going back down."

Lansford focuses his effort on Front Street, getting as many people as he can out of the fire.

"Pulling them off behind the seawall, you know, and walking them back to my truck," he said.

He takes each person to a place that seems safe from fire where they can be picked up by others. And then he goes back to find more.

"Just getting them out of the fire, make sure they don't die of smoke inhalation. Some of them will die after anyway," he recounted.

The houses and buildings are too hot to enter, he said, and a popular spot for watching the sunset has become a death zone.

When the sun rises on Wednesday, the town that was once home to about 13,000 people has become an ashen wasteland frozen in its final moments of panic.

More than 100 deaths have been confirmed, and roughly 1,000 people remain unaccounted for. Many of the survivors are angry, and haunted by the thought that a just few minutes of notice could have saved many lives.

Baird's neighborhood near Lahainaluna Road was filled with kids who were home alone when the flames hit, he said.

"We needed like 10 more minutes, and we could have saved a lot of kids," he said, choking back tears. "If we'd just had like a 10- or 15-minute warning."

The family ventured out to a Kahului mall recently, looking for a moment of normalcy in the aftermath of the tragedy. They ran into a playmate of their son.

"The kids just don't have a filter. So their son ran up and was just telling our son, you know, 'This kid is dead. This kid is dead.' And it's like, all my son's friends that they come to our house every day," he said. "And their parents were at work, and they were home alone. And nobody had a warning. Nobody, nobody, nobody knew."

Thaksin moved from prison to a hospital less than a day after he returned to Thailand from exile

By JINTAMAS SAKSORNCHAI Associated Press

BANGKOK (AP) — Thailand's divisive former Prime Minister Thaksin Shinawatra was transferred from prison to a hospital early Wednesday, less than a day after he returned from an extended exile and started serving an 8-year sentence.

He had returned to Thailand after 15 years abroad on the same day a party linked to him won a parliamentary vote to form a new government. Thaksin was then sent to prison to serve sentences from several criminal convictions made in absentia that he had decried as politically motivated.

The prison reported Thaksin had high blood pressure and low oxygen, he could not sleep and felt tightness in his chest, according to a statement from Sitthi Sutivong, deputy director-general of the Corrections Department.

Doctors at the prison's hospital said he should be transferred to prevent life-threatening risks, the statement said. Corrections officials previously had said Thaksin, 74, was considered vulnerable due to his age and chronic conditions of his heart and lungs, high blood pressure, and back problems.

Hours after Thaksin's return to Thailand, Pheu Thai party candidate Srettha Thavisin secured enough votes to become prime minister, ending over three months of suspense, legal wrangling and horse trading that followed May elections. The party had entered a coalition with military parties linked to a coup that removed it from power in 2014, and excluded the progressive Move Forward Party that won the most votes in the elections.

Srettha is expected to receive a royal endorsement as prime minister later Wednesday, according to Thai media.

Pheu Thai is the latest in a string of parties affiliated with Thaksin, who was ousted in a 2006 military coup. The coup that ousted him triggered nearly two decades of deep political divisions that pitted a mostly poor, rural majority in the north that supports Thaksin against royalists, the military and their urban backers.

A Pheu Thai government led by Thaksin's sister, Yingluck Shinawatra, was ousted in the 2014 coup by then-army chief Prayuth Chan-ocha, who is now the outgoing prime minister.

It is widely speculated Thaksin returned out of hope that a friendly government will reduce his sentence, although he has said his decision had nothing to do with the Pheu Thai party's bid for power and that he was ready to follow the legal process. The outgoing government has said Thaksin can request a royal pardon like any other inmate.

Prosecutors prepare evidence in trial of 3 men accused in plot to kidnap Michigan Gov. Whitmer

By JOHN FLESHER and ED WHITE Associated Press

BELLAIRE, Mich. (AP) — Prosecutors were preparing Wednesday to present evidence against three men accused of plotting to kidnap Michigan Gov. Gretchen Whitmer in what investigators described as an extremist scheme to ignite a civil war.

Attorneys were scheduled to make opening arguments in the trial of Eric Molitor and brothers William Null and Michael Null, who were among 14 defendants charged weeks before the November 2020 election. Nine have been convicted in state or federal court, including four who pleaded guilty, while two were acquitted.

Investigators described them as members of paramilitary groups angered by Whitmer's COVID-19 policies, which shut down schools and restricted the economy.

Eleven women and seven men were selected Monday to serve as circuit court jurors in Republican-leaning Antrim County, a rural area popular with tourists. Whitmer has a vacation home in the Lake Michigan village of Elk Rapids.

Evidence presented in previous trials suggested the plotters intended to abduct the two-term Democratic governor there and blow up a bridge to prevent law enforcement officers from aiding her. Informants and undercover FBI agents were inside the group for months, leading to arrests. Whitmer was not physically harmed.

Molitor, 39, and the Null brothers, both 41, are charged with providing material support for terrorist acts — punishable by up to 20 years in prison — and illegally possessing firearms. They have pleaded not guilty.

Two other defendants, Brian Higgins and Shawn Fix, pleaded guilty to reduced charges earlier this year and agreed to cooperate with prosecutors.

The main kidnapping conspiracy case was handled in federal court, where four men, including ringleaders Adam Fox and Barry Croft, were convicted. Two others were acquitted.

Separately, three men were convicted at trial in Jackson County, the site of training for self-styled militia members, and are serving lengthy prison terms.

After the plot was thwarted, Whitmer blamed then-President Donald Trump, saying he had given "comfort to those who spread fear and hatred and division." Trump called the kidnapping plan a "fake deal" in August 2022.

At March on Washington's 60th anniversary, leaders seek energy of original movement for civil rights

By AARON MORRISON AP National Writer

Sixty years ago, Andrew Young and his staff had just emerged from an exhausting campaign against racial segregation in Birmingham, Alabama.

But they didn't feel no ways tired, as the Black spiritual says. The foot soldiers were on a "freedom high," Young recalls.

"They wanted to keep on marching, they wanted to march from Birmingham to Washington," he said.

And march they did, in the nation's capital. Just four months later, they massed for what is still considered one of the greatest and most consequential racial justice demonstrations in U.S. history.

The nonviolent protest, which attracted as many as 250,000 to the steps of the Lincoln Memorial, helped till the ground for passage of federal civil rights and voting rights legislation in the next few years.

But in the decades that followed, the rights gains feeding the freedom high felt by Young and others came under increasing threat. A close adviser to the Rev. Martin Luther King Jr., Young went on to become a congressman, a U.N. ambassador and Atlanta's mayor. He sees clear progress from the time when Black Americans largely had no guarantee of equal rights under the law. But he hasn't ignored the setbacks.

"We take two steps forward, and they make us take one step back," Young told The Associated Press in an interview at the offices of his Atlanta-based foundation.

Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, Aug. 23, 2023 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 060 ~ 37 of 71

"It's a slow process that depends on the politics of the nation."

At 91 years old, an undeterred Young will gather again with Black civil rights leaders and a multiracial, interfaith coalition of allies on Saturday, to mark 60 years since the first March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom, an event most widely remembered for King's "I Have A Dream" speech.

But organizers of this year's commemoration don't see this as an occasion for kumbaya — not in the face of eroded voting rights nationwide, after the recent striking down of affirmative action in college admissions and abortion rights by the Supreme Court, and amid growing threats of political violence and hatred against people of color, Jews and the LGBTQ community.

The issues today appear eerily similar to the issues in 1963. The undercurrent of it all is that Black people are still the economically poorest in American society.

Organizers intend to remind the nation that the original march wasn't just about dreaming of a country that lived up to its promises of equality and liberty to pursue happiness. They wanted legislative action then, and they want the same now.

The survival of American democracy depends on it, the organizers say.

"It's inevitable to me that this nation, as Martin Luther King said, will live out, one day, the true meaning of its creed," Young declared.

Six decades ago, from the steps of the monument to President Abraham Lincoln, King began his most famous speech by decrying economic disparity, quality of life issues, police brutality and voter disenfranchisement. He brought his remarks home with the sermonic delivery of his dream of social and class harmony transcending racial and ethnic lines in America.

His words have resounded through decades of push and pull toward progress in civil and human rights. Today, the March on Washington is a marker by which racial progress is measured. But drivers of that progress — namely the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the Voting Rights Act of 1965 — have teetered precariously on the edges of partisanship.

"(King) said in the speech, 'We come to here, Mr. Lincoln, because 100 years ago, in 1863, you promised that we'd be full citizens, and America has not fulfilled the promise,'" said the Rev. Al Sharpton, president of the National Action Network and co-convenor of the 60th commemoration of the march.

King also said America had given Black Americans a check for equality that had been marked "insufficient funds" in the bank of justice.

"They came (to Washington) in '63 to say the check bounced," Sharpton said. "We come in '23 ... to say the check didn't bounce this time. They put a stop payment on the check. And we're coming to say, 'You're going to take stop payment off the check, and you will pay your debt.'"

This is at least the third time that Sharpton has organized a commemoration of the March on Washington. There was a march in 2000, the 37th anniversary of King's speech, focused on police brutality and racial profiling. Thirteen years later, the late Rep. John Lewis, who at the time was the last living speaker from the original march, and a host of celebrities, athletes and politicians attended the 50th anniversary commemoration.

Each time, Sharpton has partnered with members of King's family. Martin Luther King III, the eldest son of the late civil rights icon, and his wife, Arndrea Waters King, head the Drum Major Institute and are co-conveners of this year's march. A list of march partners includes about 100 other civil rights, faith and cultural organizations.

Sharpton's organization expects tens of thousands to attend on Saturday.

Part of the success of the original march was its turnout, said author Michael Long, who next month will publish the book "Bayard Rustin: A Legacy of Protest and Politics," which celebrates the march's chief architect.

"Rustin really believed that the power on that day would be in numbers created by this coalition that he put together of Black civil rights activists, people from faith communities and progressive workers in the labor rights movement," Long said.

Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, Aug. 23, 2023 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 060 ~ 38 of 71

"Civil disobedience attracts the hardcore few," he added, "but when you get 250,000 people together on the National Mall, you serve notice on the political leaders of the day."

Most Americans say King has had a positive impact on the U.S., according to a Pew Research Center report detailing the results of an opinion survey conducted in the spring. Just over half of Americans say there has been a great deal or a fair amount of progress on racial equality since the original March on Washington.

Along racial lines, a clear majority of Black adults (83%) say efforts to ensure equality for all, regardless of race and ethnicity, haven't gone far enough. About 58% of Hispanic adults, 55% of Asian American adults and 44% of white adults say the same. A 2022 poll by The Associated Press-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research found similar gaps in opinions about the treatment of Black people by police and in the criminal justice system.

Further, in the Pew report, a majority of people who think efforts to ensure equality haven't gone far enough also feel it is unlikely that there will be racial equality in their lifetime.

It's difficult to blame those with a pessimistic view of racial progress, considering most of the key measures of socioeconomics in America.

Today, Black Americans are more educated, they are less disproportionately incarcerated, and they are in more positions of power than they were 60 years ago. But the Black-white wealth gap is larger now than in 1963, the Black homeownership rate has risen only modestly, and younger Black Americans are more often saddled with student loan debts that dim gains made in other areas. Black Americans and other nonwhites live disproportionately in communities plagued by climate disasters and exposure to pollution that shortens their lifespans and depresses their property values.

From neighborhood redlining and job discrimination to healthcare disparities and incarceration, racism has proven to be the most effective tool to uphold an unjust capitalist system, said Jennifer Jones Austin, CEO of the the Federation of Protestant Welfare Agencies, an anti-poverty policy and advocacy group and a march partner.

The federation recently released an analysis of stalled civil rights progress in the 60 years since the March on Washington, as a way to recenter King's focus on economic issues. Job attainment, income inequality and poverty continue to greatly impact how differently Black Americans and other people of color experience life in the U.S. compared to many white people.

"If America is able to tell the story today, that Black unemployment has reached record lows, but they're not saying that Black Americans are still disproportionately earning just minimum wage or that they're not earning as much as their white counterparts, with the same levels of education and experience, they're only telling half the story," said Jones Austin who, with the National Action Network and the Drum Major Institute, is lobbying the federal government to change how economic deprivation and need are measured in the U.S.

Congresswoman Eleanor Holmes Norton was a 26-year-old Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee worker in Mississippi in 1963 when she became part of the staff that organized the March on Washington.

"I was on the staff in New York and was the last person to leave because we were getting people on the buses," she said. "And as I flew from New York to Washington, I could see that the march would be a success because as far as the eye could see, there were crowds. We weren't sure how big because there had never been such a large march before, but it was overwhelming."

Norton, now 86, and Washington's nonvoting delegate, said she knew once she saw how many people had come that "the march was not only successful, but they would help us with what we wanted the march to do."

The civil rights and voting rights legislation, as well as the 1968 Fair Housing Act, all came in part from the energy and commitment from the march, she said.

Now, 60 years out, she said the political environment is so polarized it is hard to imagine the legislative achievements in the aftermath of the 1963 march being possible now.

"Unlike the kind of atmosphere we had during the March on Washington, we have exactly the opposite

Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, Aug. 23, 2023 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 060 ~ 39 of 71

out," said Kekoa Lansford, who made several trips into town to look for survivors. What he found was horrible, Lansford said, with dead bodies and flames like a hellish movie scene. "And I could see that people were on fire, that the fire was just being stoked by the wind, and being pushed toward the homes."

The road closures — some because of the fire, some because of downed power lines — contributed to making historic Lahaina the site of the deadliest U.S. wildfire in more than a century. But there were many problems that day, and in some ways the disaster began long before the fires started.

A flash drought in the region provided plenty of kindling, and Hurricane Dora brought strong winds to Maui as it passed roughly 500 miles (800 kilometers) south of the Hawaii island chain. Those winds downed at least 30 power poles in West Maui, and Hawaiian Electric had no procedure in place for turning off the grid — a common practice in other fire-prone states. Video shot by a Lahaina resident shows a downed powerline setting dry grasses alight, possibly revealing the start of the larger fire.

And later, as the fire began to swallow homes in its ravenous path, Maui County emergency officials declined to use an extensive network of emergency sirens to alert Lahaina's residents to flee.

During a news conference Tuesday, Maui Police Chief John Pelletier said police officers drove up and down streets, knocking on doors and using loudspeakers to tell people to leave, but he didn't say exactly where and what time those efforts occurred. The Associated Press has filed public records requests for location reports and other documentation including video and internal communications to clarify the details of the police and fire response, but Maui County has not yet released that information.

A team of Associated Press journalists documented the first hours of the deadly wildfire by interviewing dozens of survivors and public officials, examining public documents and analyzing citizen videos, satellite images and publicly available data. The timeline reveals the chaos that overtook the town.

Shane Treu wakes early on Aug. 8, and is in his backyard when he hears a utility pole snap next to Lahainaluna Road. He sees the downed powerline ignite the grass, and calls 911 at 6:37 a.m. to report the fire.

Small brush fires aren't unusual for Lahaina, and the fire department declares this one 100% contained by 9:55 a.m. The assurance puts many residents at ease; the high winds have prompted the closure of some public schools for the day, and others have not yet started. That means many of Lahaina's 3,000 public school students are home alone while their parents work.

Contained is not controlled, however, and the town is being battered by high winds. While many of Maui County's fire crews work to extinguish the Upcountry fire on the eastern half of the island, the wind is toppling power poles and scattering embers like seeds in Lahaina.

Treu's neighbor Robert Arconado said the fire reignites around 2 p.m. He records video of it spreading at 3:06 p.m., as large plumes of smoke rise near Lahainaluna Road and are carried downtown by the wind.

Around 3:20 p.m., Lahaina resident Kevin Eliason is watching the black smoke from a vantage point closer to downtown when passersby tell him a power pole has been knocked onto the tar roof of a gas station two blocks away, creating fireballs that are being blown in the wind, he said.

Eliason said the fire knocked the power out in the area soon after.

Ten minutes later, Hawaiian Electric sends a news release asking Maui residents to prepare for extended outages. The utility says more than 30 power poles are down in West Maui, including along the Honoapiilani Highway at the south end of Lahaina. At the same time, the fire department closes the Lahaina Bypass road because of the fire.

The closures block the only route out of Lahaina to the south. Two weeks later, Maui Police Chief John Pelletier says during a news conference that officers never stopped people from leaving Lahaina that day but did try to prevent them from driving over live power lines.

Back in the subdivision near Lahainaluna Road, the first sign of trouble for Nate Baird and Courtney Stapleton comes at 3:40 p.m., when their 9- and 10-year-old sons say they can smell s'mores.

By the time the family piles into the car with their dog and Baird's mother and joins a caravan of evacuating residents, parts of the subdivision are beginning to burn. A telephone pole falls behind their car, causing an accident and blocking a side street.

now," Norton said.

At the 1963 march, the late AFL-CIO leader Walter Reuther seemed to predict the current period of political division, retrenchment and violent threats on democracy.

"If we fail, then the vacuum of our failure will be filled by the apostles of hatred who will search in the dark of night, and reason will yield to riot, and brotherhood will yield to bitterness and bloodshed, and we will tear asunder the fabric of American democracy," Reuther warned.

Indeed, Congress and the White House have often been consistently at odds on modern civil rights and voting rights legislation. A Democratic-controlled House, for example, has passed versions of the John Lewis Voting Rights Advancement Act — it would have restored a potent tool against voting law bias that was gutted by the Supreme Court in 2013 — only for a past Republican-controlled Senate and then a narrowly Democratic Senate to block or fall short of sending legislation to the president's desk.

That's also been true of police reform legislation proposed after the murder of George Floyd by police in Minneapolis and during unprecedented racial justice demonstrations nationwide. The Floyd legislation was before Congress when Sharpton convened a march at the Lincoln Memorial in 2020 that featured several families of Black victims of police brutality.

Voting rights and police reform aren't the only issues that march partners want to uplift on Saturday. Increased antisemitic hate crimes, as well as attacks on Asian American communities, have drawn in participation from the Anti-Defamation League, a Jewish civil rights organization.

"America was built on the backs of enslaved Africans — you can't deny that reality," said ADL CEO Jonathan Greenblatt. "That is a unique and searing experience, which I think its effects still linger today and are pervasive in so many ways."

The traumatic experiences of Jews across millennia in Europe and the Middle East have shaped how many in the community view racism and the threat it poses to everyone, Greenblatt added.

"And so I think we both stand here today in this reality, aware of our path and focused on how we can lock arms, to build a better future for ourselves, for our children and for our grandchildren."

Young, the King adviser and former U.S. ambassador to the U.N., said he thinks it unwise for him to predict how successful this year's March on Washington will be. But his Christian faith tells him to not place limits on what is possible.

"If there is a place where we can learn to live together as brothers and sisters, rather than perish together as fools, it's the United States of America," he said.

Allies say Guatemala election winner is a highly qualified peacebuilder, but opponent's still silent

By CHRISTOPHER SHERMAN and SONIA PÉREZ D. Associated Press

GUATEMALA CITY (AP) — Bernardo Arévalo's experience in peacebuilding and diplomacy eminently qualify him to lead Guatemala as the conflict-riven country's next president, those who know him say. But first he will have to overcome forces that could keep him from taking power.

Guatemalans voted for Arévalo in a landslide Sunday, but his opponent, former first lady Sandra Torres, has not conceded, or said anything for that matter. The election results have not been certified, a legal step necessary for Arévalo to become president.

That's not the only hitch: The attorney general's office also continues to investigate the registration of his Seed Movement party and has already asked a judge once to suspend it. And even if Arévalo takes the presidency, Guatemala's powers that be could hamstring him as leader when he takes power in five months.

Arévalo and those who know him say that he wants to unite his country. It's his platform of eradicating corruption that has earned enemies among the political and economic elite.

The 64-year-old son of former President Juan José Arévalo was born in Uruguay, where his father was in exile following the ouster in a 1954 CIA-backed coup of his successor President Jacobo Árbenz, whom the U.S. saw as a threat during the Cold War.

He came to Guatemala as a teenager before leaving again to continue his studies overseas. Then Arévalo

Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, Aug. 23, 2023 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 060 ~ 41 of 71

did what few Guatemalan children of privilege do these days, he went back. The country suffers a continuous brain drain, not only from hundreds of thousands of migrants travelling illegally to the U.S. in recent years, but also among the best-educated, who study abroad and never return.

Arévalo studied sociology and anthropology abroad in Israel and the Netherlands, served as Guatemala's ambassador to Spain, and for years worked in Geneva for the nongovernmental organization Interpeace.

He held a variety of roles there, but among his contributions was pioneering the organization's peace-building work in Central America.

Interpeace started as a United Nations pilot program and one of its early projects was Guatemala. The country was emerging from a 36-year internal conflict and the goal was to support Guatemalan society.

Torres tried to make Arévalo's time spent outside Guatemala a liability. In their only debate, she repeatedly called him the "Uruguayan lawmaker."

Renée Lariviere, now Interpeace's senior program director, worked closely with Arévalo for years in conflict resolution around the world. She said Arévalo's approach was collaborative, seeking input from various sectors in Guatemalan society rather than trying to impose a top-down plan from outside.

"It was really about putting Guatemalans at the forefront of their efforts of how to help facilitate a process to find solutions, what makes sense for their country," Lariviere said, describing Arévalo as humble, wise and a person of integrity.

She still remembers him telling her that he was considering moving back to Guatemala about eight years ago. He had collected experiences from around the world and learned a lot.

"And now I feel it's time for me to give back, to go back to my roots, to give back to my country," Lariviere recalled from their conversation. He moved home into his father's old house, just blocks from the president's offices.

"There's not a lot of hope in terms of the new styles of leadership that are emerging across the world, not just in the region, and I think he really believed that he could actually make a difference," she said.

In the two months between the first round of voting in June and Sunday's runoff, Torres made Arévalo out to be a radical leftist, a communist who wanted to establish an authoritarian regime like Venezuela or Nicaragua.

But in his writings -- dozens of academic articles and books -- Arévalo comes off much more as a policy wonk than a radical.

Several weeks before the runoff, Arévalo was the star of Guatemala's book fair. Copies of what had been his doctoral thesis published as a book -- "Violent State and Political Army: State Formation and Military Function in Guatemala (1524-1963)" -- sold out and he spent nearly six hours signing autographs.

His diagnosis in 2008 of problems that still plague Guatemala today was clear-eyed and told within the context of the country's internal conflict.

"The political culture of Guatemalans is undergoing a process of change, but is still permeated by perceptions and notions forged in a society submitted since its pre-Hispanic origins to authoritarian forms of government," he wrote in a 2008 article published for *New Society*, a Latin American social-sciences journal. "Within this framework, even today an authoritarian notion of security prevails, that conceives the solution to the problem exclusively from the angle of repression."

Edmond Mulet, who competed in the first round of presidential voting for the conservative Cabal party, said he counts Arévalo as a friend. He said Torres' characterizations of Arévalo were absurd, saying he was a moderate with the skills of a mediator.

"He will want to unite people," Mulet said.

In an interview with AP in late June, shortly after it appeared he had won a spot in the runoff, Arévalo said that the Seed Movement was trying to rebuild Guatemalans' hope. Corruption had fed cynicism, desperation and exhaustion to the extent that good people didn't want to engage in politics.

His appeal to Guatemalans was, "We have to take a step forward and recover that hope, because if not we're not going to be able to get out of this situation."

Allowing himself to look ahead for a moment, Arévalo said, "As an administration we have four years to

Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, Aug. 23, 2023 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 060 ~ 42 of 71

be able to establish the foundation for a change, but change for our country is going to take much more time.”

Lariviere from Interpeace said that she was in close contact with Arévalo in the days ahead of the runoff. She said he seemed confident in his campaign, but uncertain about the outcome.

“I thought I could maybe make it to the second round because enough is enough,” she recalled him telling her. “But I’m probably not going to win. I’m just being realistic.”

“He’s the kind of leader that the world needs today,” she said.

Who takes advantage of Donald Trump’s absence and other things to watch in the Republican debate

By STEVE PEOPLES AP National Political Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — Eight Republican candidates will meet on the debate stage for the first time Wednesday night in what may be the biggest moment in the GOP’s young 2024 presidential primary so far. The overwhelming front-runner in the contest, former President Donald Trump, won’t participate. He says he’s so far ahead that he’d be helping his opponents by showing up. But his absence also offers them opportunity.

Florida Gov. Ron DeSantis, a distant second to Trump in many polls, is betting that a strong showing will cement his status as the strongest alternative to the former president despite his many stumbles. DeSantis’ team sees rising newcomer Vivek Ramaswamy, a 38-year-old entrepreneur, as a threat, while South Carolina Sen. Tim Scott, former United Nations ambassador Nikki Haley and former Vice President Mike Pence have positioned themselves to compete.

The debate also features a handful of aggressive Trump critics led by former New Jersey Gov. Chris Christie, whose anti-Trump message is the centerpiece of his campaign despite the former president’s continued popularity in the party. Other lesser-known candidates including North Dakota Gov. Doug Burgum and former Arkansas Gov. Asa Hutchinson are largely trying to introduce themselves to voters across the country to help qualify for the second debate.

Here’s what to watch:

ALL ABOUT TRUMP

Trump is the central issue in today’s Republican Party, which means he will be the central issue in the debate even in absentia. To this point, most of his rivals have tiptoed around the former president, unwilling to raise serious concerns about his mounting legal baggage, his lies about the 2020 election and his divisive leadership style.

It may be more difficult for the candidates to avoid tough questions about Trump’s many shortcomings on Wednesday night, especially with outspoken critics like Christie pressing the issue. DeSantis’ approach is particularly significant given his struggle to take advantage of Trump’s shortcomings so far, although DeSantis’ allies put out a memo last week actually encouraging him to defend the former president during the debate.

Few Republican rivals, if any, have successfully navigated the delicate politics of Trump over the last eight years. They’re about to be tested again under the brightest lights in presidential politics.

CAN DESANTIS BEGIN TO REVERSE HIS SLIDE?

On paper, DeSantis was Trump’s strongest competitor when he entered the race this spring. He hasn’t lived up to the billing. And after a series of stumbles and staffing cuts, DeSantis cannot afford to underwhelm with the nation watching on Wednesday night.

His opponents won’t make it easy. He may have avoided a direct confrontation with Trump, but DeSantis is expecting an onslaught of attacks from the other candidates on stage. He’ll need to defend himself while projecting a likeable image, which is something he’s struggled with in the past.

DeSantis also risks being too scripted if he parrots the talking points leaked by allies last week that called for him to “defend Donald Trump in absentia in response to a Chris Christie attack,” “hammer Ramaswamy in a response” and “attack Joe Biden and the media 3-5 times.” Perhaps no one has more to gain with a

Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, Aug. 23, 2023 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 060 ~ 43 of 71

strong performance than DeSantis. But if he has any glaring missteps, he may not make it to Iowa.

ABORTION MINEFIELD

For much of the year, many Republican candidates have sidestepped specific questions about abortion and whether they would support a federal law outlawing the procedure nationwide. Whatever they say or don't say Wednesday night could have serious short- and long-term political consequences. And there are no easy answers.

Religious conservatives who wield tremendous influence in GOP primary elections — especially in the first-in-the-nation Iowa caucuses — strongly support a nationwide abortion ban. But the broader swath of voters who will ultimately decide the general election next fall overwhelmingly support abortion rights.

Look no further than DeSantis for evidence of the delicate dance on abortion. Just four months ago, the Florida governor signed into Florida law a ban on abortions at six weeks of pregnancy — before most women know they're pregnant. But he has largely avoided the issue on the campaign trail. Scott and Pence stand on the other side. Both have said they would sign a national abortion ban if elected. And Pence is planning to press the issue on the debate stage whether his rivals want him to or not. Democrats hope he does.

FOREIGN POLICY CONFLICT

The conservatives on stage agree on most policies. But in the age of Trump, foreign policy has emerged as a serious point of contention.

A growing group of Republicans, including the likes of DeSantis and Ramaswamy, have embraced Trump's "America First" populism that calls for a reduced U.S. footprint in global affairs. DeSantis earlier in the year described Russia's invasion of Ukraine as "a territorial dispute" before being forced to backtrack. Others have offered similar assessments. And the conflicts extend well beyond Ukraine.

Ramaswamy last week said he hoped to reduce expanded aid to Israel by 2028. On the other side of the issue, Pence and Haley have called for a more muscular foreign policy against Russia and other geopolitical foes as is the GOP tradition.

Foreign policy rarely sways presidential primaries, but few issues will demonstrate the differences between the candidates' policies on Wednesday night more than this one.

CHRISTIE: A DANGEROUS WILDCARD

No one on stage has proven to be a more effective debater than Christie. The pugnacious former New Jersey governor, always comfortable in the spotlight, almost single-handedly ended Florida Sen. Marco Rubio's campaign during a 2016 presidential debate with a devastating takedown. Later that year, Christie joined Trump's debate prep team ahead of his meeting with former Secretary of State Hillary Clinton.

That makes Christie a dangerous and experienced wildcard for the other participants. He has emerged as the most vocal Trump critic in the 2024 Republican field so far, and he is expected to continue to pound on the former president even in absentia. But without Trump on stage, it's unclear if such attacks will resonate. Christie could easily shift his ire to one or more of Trump's apologists on stage, including DeSantis.

In recent days, Christie has seized on the memo that the Florida governor's allies leaked last week outlining specific debate talking points. Christie, who took down Rubio for being overly scripted, warned that the Florida governor should "get the hell out of the race" if he repeats the talking points.

CAN A LOWER-TIER CANDIDATE BREAK OUT?

For some candidates, this presidential debate could be their last unless they can score a breakout moment. Pence in particular struggled to meet the fundraising thresholds to qualify for Wednesday's event. Hutchinson and Burgum barely met the 1% polling marks. That gives several candidates a big incentive to generate a viral moment that will be remembered — and replayed on social media and cable TV — over the coming weeks.

Most will have prepared lines designed to do just that, although it's not easy to deliver such lines without sounding overly scripted. That won't stop them from trying. The next debate is scheduled for Sept. 27 at the Ronald Reagan Presidential Library. Trump has already said he would not participate in that one either. And given rising polling and fundraising thresholds, it would be a surprise to see all eight candidates on stage again.

Trump won't be at the GOP's first presidential debate. But his presence will be felt

By JILL COLVIN and SARA BURNETT Associated Press

MILWAUKEE (AP) — He'll be missing from the stage, but Donald Trump will still be a central figure at the first Republican presidential primary debate Wednesday night as the remaining candidates hoping to take on President Joe Biden confront each other in person for the first time.

The eight contenders who are scheduled to attend the Milwaukee debate hosted by Fox News will likely face pressure to articulate how they would differ in style and substance from Trump, who holds a commanding early lead in the race. That could be a delicate task, forcing candidates to decide how closely to align themselves with the former president's most outlandish positions, including his lies about widespread fraud during the 2020 election.

With less than five months until the Iowa caucuses jumpstart the GOP presidential nomination process, the debate is a critical opportunity for lower-polling candidates to introduce themselves to millions of voters, many of whom are just beginning to pay attention to the race. The pressure is perhaps greatest for Florida Gov. Ron DeSantis, who announced his campaign in May to great fanfare but has since struggled to gain traction and is now fighting to maintain his distant second-place status.

"It's really important for the whole crowd and an opportunity for them to connect," said former Maryland Republican Gov. Larry Hogan, who passed on a run of his own. But the stakes, he said, are highest for DeSantis.

"It's really do or die for him, make or break. Finally time to show that he's a capable candidate. And if he doesn't," he added, "I think this could be the end."

Beyond DeSantis, the debate will include South Carolina Sen. Tim Scott, former U.N. Ambassador Nikki Haley, biotech entrepreneur Vivek Ramaswamy, former New Jersey Gov. Chris Christie, North Dakota Gov. Doug Burgum, former Vice President Mike Pence and former Arkansas Gov. Asa Hutchinson.

The primetime event will unfold at a moment of reckoning for the Republican Party.

Trump is now the prohibitive early frontrunner in the race, raising serious questions about whether the party will have much of a competitive primary. Yet Trump's vulnerabilities in a general election are clear, particularly in the wake of four criminal indictments that charge him with everything from hoarding classified documents, conspiring to overturn the 2020 election and making hush money payments to a porn actress and other women.

The debate will take place a day before Trump is set to travel to Georgia to again be booked on criminal charges.

Yet Trump's standing in the primary has only increased as the charges have mounted, leaving the GOP on track — barring a stunning realignment — to nominate a candidate who would enter the race against Biden in a potentially weak position. Polling this month from The Associated Press-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research found 64% of Americans are unlikely to support Trump if he is the GOP nominee, including 53% who say they would definitely not support him and 11% who say they would probably not support him in November 2024.

At Fiserv Forum in downtown Milwaukee, metal barricades were in place outside the arena that is home to the Milwaukee Bucks basketball team Tuesday evening. At least one bar near the stadium had a scrolling sign welcoming Republicans to the heavily Democratic city along Lake Michigan.

Republican National Committee Chairwoman Ronna McDaniel, along with Milwaukee officials, planned an event for Wednesday to showcase local businesses ahead of next summer's convention, which will also be held in the city in a sign of the state's premier battleground status. Democrats were planning to hold rival events.

The RNC had set polling and donor thresholds and required participants to sign a loyalty pledge in order to qualify for the debate, which will be moderated by Fox's Bret Baier and Martha MacCallum.

Trump had long said he felt it would be foolish to participate, given his dominant lead in the race. But

Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, Aug. 23, 2023 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 060 ~ 45 of 71

his decision to boycott is nonetheless a blow to the network, which had wooed him privately and publicly on air to appear. Instead, Trump has pre-recorded an interview with ex-Fox host Tucker Carlson that is expected to be broadcast on the platform formerly known as Twitter as the debate takes place.

But even in his absence, Trump's presence is expected to be felt at the debate. MacCallum has made clear she will press his rivals to respond to Trump's indictments, telling Vanity Fair that, "It will absolutely be incumbent upon them to address" them.

So far, the candidates have been reticent to take Trump on directly, given his broad support from the GOP base, and one key question will be how aggressively his rivals take him on.

In his absence, DeSantis' campaign is preparing for the Florida governor to be the debate's top target as the frontrunner on stage.

In a memo sent to donors and supporters over the weekend, DeSantis campaign manager James Uthmeier said they "are fully prepared for Governor DeSantis to be the center of attacks" because, he said, "this is a two-man race for the Republican nomination between Governor DeSantis and Donald Trump."

Uthmeier said DeSantis would try to remain above the fray, and that his "objective in this debate will be to lay out his vision to beat Joe Biden, reverse American decline, and revive the American Dream."

Dan Eberhart, a Republican donor and DeSantis supporter, said DeSantis will have to be prepared to fend off attacks from the rest of the field, but "should focus on policy and what he's going to do for voters — and not let the debate be all about the one candidate who is not on the stage."

"The stakes," he added, "are huge for Gov. DeSantis. He will be the front runner on the stage and everyone has to go through him to eventually take on Trump."

Ken Cuccinelli, a leader of Never Back Down, the Super PAC supporting DeSantis, maintained that DeSantis remains best positioned among Trump's rivals to outlast him and framed the debate as a chance for DeSantis to speak directly to viewers at home.

"People want blood sport to a certain extent, and they associate that with Trump," he said. "But to me the value of it is the unfiltered-by-the-media personal introduction. It won't be (DeSantis') individual interactions with any particular candidate. It's the whole package, the introduction to voters who are tuning into all this for the first time."

But Georgia Rep. Marjorie Taylor Greene, who is among the long list of Trump supporters who traveled to Milwaukee to back him in his absence, called Wednesday's debate "a waste of time" given Trump's lead in polls.

"It's pointless," she said. "He's over 40 points ahead ... I believe the primaries are over. ... We're just watching people try out for the cabinet."

Most of the field has been reluctant to attack Trump on the campaign trail so far. But some, including Hutchinson, have been vocal in their opposition. Pence has criticized Trump over his efforts to overturn the election, while Christie has positioned himself as the most anti-Trump candidate and called the former president a "coward" for refusing to participate in the debate.

Christie, who in earlier campaigns had helped Trump prepare for his debates by playing the role of Trump's opponents, offered a preview of punches he may land as he campaigned in Atlanta over the weekend.

"When are we going to allow our country to understand again that nominating someone who's out on bail in four jurisdictions is not a winning formula?" he asked.

Democrats meanwhile, dismissed the field as extreme and divisive, even without Trump on stage.

"The truth is, it doesn't matter who wins the debate," said Biden-Harris Campaign Co-Chair Rep. Cedric Richmond in a call with reporters. "They're all playing out of the same playbook, and they're all espousing the same unpopular positions that Donald Trump led with and he continues to drag this party to the extreme."

___ Colvin reported from Washington. Associated Press writers Bill Barrow in Atlanta and Steve Peoples in New York contributed to this report.

Thousands of discouraged migrants are stranded in Niger because of border closures following coup

By SAM MEDNICK Associated Press

NIAMEY, Niger (AP) — After three months of crossing the desert and then watching other migrants die at sea in his failed attempt to reach Europe, Sahr John Yambasu gave up on getting across the Mediterranean and decided to go back home.

The 29-year-old from Sierra Leone reached Niger in June on his return journey, but United Nations officials said he had to wait for packed migrant centers to empty before he could be repatriated.

Then mutinous soldiers toppled Niger's president a few weeks later, bringing regional tensions and the shuttering of the borders. Yambasu was trapped.

He is one of nearly 7,000 discouraged migrants trying to get home elsewhere in Africa that the U.N. estimates have been stranded in Niger since late July when members of the presidential guard overthrew the country's democratically elected president, Mohamad Bazoum. Niger's junta closed its airspace and regional countries closed border crossings as part of economic and travel sanctions, making it hard for people to leave.

Niger is an important route both for Africans trying to reach Libya as a jumping off spot to cross the Mediterranean to Europe and those who are returning to their homes with help from the United Nations.

Yambasu and others like him are unsure when they will be able to leave.

"I feel sad because it's a country that I don't belong to. It's not easy," Yambasu said.

Recounting his story, he said he left Sierra Leone in June because of political unrest and was hoping to reach Germany. He got rides across the region until arriving in Libya, where he boarded a boat with some 200 other migrants. The boat spent days at sea, with some people dying onboard before it was intercepted by Libya's coast guard and taken back to Libya.

That was enough for him and he headed for home. Helped by aid groups, he made it as far as Niger but has been unable to go farther.

U.N. officials estimate about 1,800 in Yambasu's predicament are living on Niger's streets because centers run by the International Organization for Migration are too crowded to take in more. The centers hold about 5,000 people trying to get home.

The U.N. agency had been assisting approximately 1,250 people a month return to their countries this year. But the closure of borders and airspace has forced it to temporarily suspend returns and its centers are now jammed at 14% over capacity, said Paola Pace, acting interim chief of mission for the agency in Niger.

"This situation poses challenges for migrants as migrants staying in these centers may experience heightened stress and uncertainty with limited prospects for voluntary return and already crowded facilities," she said.

Pace worries the stall in the transiting of Africans seeking to get home could increase exploitation of vulnerable people by traffickers and smugglers who normally focus on individuals trying to migrate to Europe.

The shelters are helping people who are making their way home, rather than would-be migrants heading to Europe — a northern flow that has seen more than 100,000 cross the central Mediterranean to Italy so far this year, according to Italy's interior ministry.

COOPI, an Italian aid group that provides shelter for migrants in Niger's northern town of Assamakka near the border with Algeria, said that since the coup an additional 1,300 people have entered its center trying to return home.

COOPI assists the U.N. in hosting people, but has warned that it will run out of food and water if the borders don't open soon.

Not only are migrants unable to leave but aid groups are unable to bring in food and medical supplies.

Morena Zucchelli, head of mission for COOPI in Niger, said it has only enough food stocks to last until the end of August and its funding will run out at the end of September.

"If the situation doesn't change ... we can't guarantee things will continue running," she said.

Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, Aug. 23, 2023 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 060 ~ 47 of 71

Before the coup, Niger worked with the European Union in trying to slow the flow of migrants north to Libya and Algeria. The EU had been scheduled to provide more than \$200 million to Niger to help it address security, socio-economic and migration challenges.

It's unclear how cooperative the new military leaders will be with the EU, which has now frozen assistance to Niger. Anitta Hipper, a spokeswoman for the European Commission, could not say Tuesday whether cooperation on migration had been suspended, saying only that the EU would continue to "monitor and evaluate the situation."

Momo Kmulbah is another of those trying to get back home, for him in Liberia. He says many of them have nowhere to turn for help. He says U.N. officials have told him to be patient.

The 36-year-old has been sleeping on the pavement in Niger's capital, Niamey, with his two daughters and wife since June and they beg for food.

"Our children don't have food to eat. I feel confused when I wake up in the morning," Kmulbah said.

Who's in, who's out, who's boycotting: The 8 candidates expected on-stage for the first GOP debate

By MEG KINNARD Associated Press

COLUMBIA, S.C. (AP) — Donald Trump won't be on the Republican debate stage Wednesday. But the former president is driving the conversation on and off the debate stage anyway.

Trump supporters including Rep. Marjorie Taylor Greene will be in Milwaukee. There are questions about how many of his campaign surrogates will be allowed into Fox News' spin room. The network has restricted their access unless they are the guests of another media organization.

Eight other candidates met the donor and polling qualifications to be on stage, according to the Republican National Committee. For those who didn't, missing the debate could be a decisive moment in their campaigns.

Conservative radio host Larry Elder has said he plans to sue the RNC over being left out, despite what he says is proof that he qualified for the debate. It also wasn't immediately clear what Miami Mayor Francis Suarez — who didn't make the cut — would do, following his Iowa State Fair comments that he might drop out of the race if that happened.

To qualify for the Aug. 23 debate, candidates needed to satisfy polling and donor requirements set by the RNC: at least 1% in three national polls or a mix of national and early-state polls deemed acceptable by the committee, between July 1 and Aug. 21, and a minimum of 40,000 donors, with 200 in 20 or more states.

Candidates also needed to commit at least 48 hours before the Wednesday evening debate, according to RNC criteria, which also required participants to sign a pledge promising to support the party's eventual nominee.

A look at who's in, who's out and who's decided not to participate:

WHO'S IN

RON DESANTIS

The Florida governor has long been seen as Trump's top rival, finishing a distant second to him in polls in early-voting states and in national polls as well, and raising an impressive amount of money.

But DeSantis' campaign has struggled in recent weeks to live up to high expectations. He let go of more than one-third of his staff as federal filings showed his campaign was burning through cash at an unsustainable rate.

With Trump absent, DeSantis may be the primary target for others on stage. According to people familiar with DeSantis' planning who were granted anonymity to discuss strategy, the campaign is preparing him for nonstop attacks.

DeSantis has been participating in debate-related question and answer sessions at least once a week, having brought in experienced debate strategist Brett O'Donnell to assist.

TIM SCOTT

Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, Aug. 23, 2023 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 060 ~ 48 of 71

The South Carolina senator has been looking for a breakout moment. The first debate could be his chance. A prolific fundraiser, Scott entered the summer with \$21 million cash on hand.

In one debate-approved poll in Iowa, Scott joined Trump and DeSantis in reaching double digits. The senator has focused much of his campaign resources on the leadoff GOP voting state, which has a large number of white evangelical voters.

Scott is hitting the early-state campaign trail after the debate, traveling to New Hampshire, Iowa and his home state of South Carolina, where he has four stops planned on Monday.

NIKKI HALEY

She has blitzed early-voting states with campaign events, walking crowds through her successes ousting a longtime South Carolina lawmaker, then becoming the state's first female and first minority governor. Also serving as Trump's U.N. ambassador for about two years, Haley frequently cites her international experience, focusing on the threat China poses to the United States.

The only woman in the GOP race, Haley has said transgender students competing in sports is "the women's issue of our time" and has drawn praise from a leading anti-abortion group, which called her "uniquely gifted at communicating from a pro-life woman's perspective."

Entering the race in February, Haley has brought in \$15.6 million. Making no mention of plans to go on the attack while speaking to reporters in Iowa earlier this month, Haley did explain why she showed up to the state fair in a shirt that read, "Underestimate me, that'll be fun."

VIVEK RAMASWAMY

The biotech entrepreneur and author of "Woke, Inc.: Inside Corporate America's Social Justice Scam" is an audience favorite at multi-candidate events and has polled well despite not being nationally known when he entered the race.

Ramaswamy's campaign says he met the donor threshold earlier this year, but this summer he rolled out "Vivek's Kitchen Cabinet" to boost his donor numbers even more by letting fundraisers keep 10% of what they bring in for his campaign.

As he pursues a whirlwind campaign schedule, Ramaswamy has done virtually no formal debate prep, according to a senior adviser granted anonymity to discuss campaign strategy. The adviser said he'll spend the day before the debate playing tennis and spending time with family.

CHRIS CHRISTIE

The former New Jersey governor opened his campaign by portraying himself as the only candidate ready to take on Trump. Christie called on the former president to "show up at the debates and defend his record," calling him "a coward" if he doesn't.

Last month, Christie — who kicked off his campaign in June — told CNN that he surpassed "40,000 unique donors in just 35 days." He also has met the polling requirements.

DOUG BURGUM

Burgum, a wealthy former software entrepreneur now in his second term as North Dakota's governor, has been using his fortune to boost his campaign.

He announced a program last month to give away \$20 gift cards — "Biden Relief Cards," hitting President Joe Biden's handling of the economy — to as many as 50,000 people in exchange for \$1 donations. Critics have questioned whether the offer violates campaign finance law.

Within about a week of launching that effort, Burgum announced he had surpassed the donor threshold. Ad blitzes in the early-voting states helped him meet the polling requirements.

MIKE PENCE

Trump's vice president had met the polling threshold but struggled to amass a sufficient number of donors, raising the possibility he might not qualify for the first debate.

But on Aug. 8, Pence's campaign announced that it had crossed the 40,000 donor threshold, and also that he had become the first candidate to formally submit his donor count to the RNC for verification.

An adviser who spoke on the condition of anonymity to discuss internal strategy said earlier this month that Pence had participated in roughly a half-dozen formal debate prep sessions to date, including at least

Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, Aug. 23, 2023 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 060 ~ 49 of 71

one in which a campaign aide previously close to Trump is playing the part of the former president.

ASA HUTCHINSON

The former two-term Arkansas governor was the final candidate to meet the RNC's qualifications. Satisfying the polling requirements but slowly working on passing the donor threshold, Hutchinson said Sunday on CNN that he had finally surpassed 40,000 unique donors.

Hutchinson is running in the mold of an old-school Republican and has differentiated himself from many of his GOP rivals in his willingness to criticize Trump. He posted pleas on Twitter for \$1 donations to help secure his slot.

WHO'S DECIDED NOT TO PARTICIPATE

DONALD TRUMP

The current GOP front-runner long ago satisfied the polling and donor requirements. But Trump has opted not to participate in Wednesday's debate — and potentially any others that may follow.

"The public knows who I am & what a successful Presidency I had," Trump wrote on his social media site over the weekend. "I WILL THEREFORE NOT BE DOING THE DEBATES!"

His spokesman did not immediately clarify whether he plans to boycott every primary debate or just those that have currently been scheduled. Trump has also said that he would not sign the debate pledge.

He has floated a range of possible counterprogramming options, notably a competing interview with former Fox News host Tucker Carlson, who now has a program on X, the site formerly known as Twitter. The day after the debate, Trump is expected to go to Atlanta for booking on state racketeering charges over his alleged efforts to overturn the 2020 election.

WHO DIDN'T MAKE IT

FRANCIS SUAREZ

The Miami mayor told The Associated Press on Friday that he had qualified for the debate, but party officials disagreed. Senior RNC advisers who spoke on the condition of anonymity to share internal discussions said later that Suarez had not yet officially met the criteria, and Suarez was not among the candidates listed in the official on-stage lineup released Monday night.

Suarez has been one of the more creative candidates in his efforts to boost his donor numbers. He offered a chance to see Argentine soccer legend Lionel Messi's debut as a player for Inter Miami, saying donors who gave \$1 would be entered in a chance to get front-row tickets.

Still shy of the donor threshold, he took a page from Burgum's playbook by offering a \$20 "Bidenomics Relief Card" in return for \$1 donations. A super political action committee supporting Suarez launched a sweepstakes for a chance at up to \$15,000 in tuition, in exchange for a \$1 donation to Suarez's campaign.

LARRY ELDER

The conservative radio host claimed Monday that he had met the debate qualifications, sharing the letter sent to debate director David Bossie and saying that Elder planned to arrive in Milwaukee Tuesday afternoon.

Following the RNC's announcement, Elder's campaign said it planned to sue the party "over their eleventh-hour attempt to keep him off the Debate stage, even after he completed — and in some cases, exceeded — all of the requirements."

PERRY JOHNSON

Johnson, a wealthy but largely unknown businessman from Michigan, said on social media earlier this month he had notched 40,000 donors. Last week, he said he had satisfied other qualifications and on Monday posted a photo of his signed debate pledge.

But after the RNC's list was announced, without him, Johnson took his dissatisfaction to social media, writing that "the debate process has been corrupted, plain and simple" and adding that he would be in Milwaukee on Wednesday "and will have more to say" about the process on Tuesday.

WILL HURD

The former Texas congressman — the last candidate to enter the race, on June 22 — has said repeatedly that he would not pledge to support the eventual GOP nominee, a stance that would keep him off the stage even if he had the qualifying polling numbers.

Prosecutors say witness in Trump's classified documents case retracted false testimony

By ERIC TUCKER Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — A witness in the criminal case against Donald Trump over the hoarding of classified documents retracted "prior false testimony" after switching lawyers last month and provided new information that implicated the former president, the Justice Department said Tuesday.

The statements from the witness, a Trump staffer identified in court papers as the director of information technology at Mar-a-Lago, was presented to prosecutors weeks before special counsel Jack Smith secured an updated indictment accusing Trump and two others in a plot to delete surveillance video at the Florida property.

Prosecutors said in a court filing Tuesday that the witness told a grand jury in Washington in March that he could not recall any conversations about the security footage

But in July, after being warned by prosecutors that he was a target of the investigation and after being advised that his lawyer might have a conflict of interest because of his representation of others in the probe, the witness received a new attorney from the federal defender's office and provided the Justice Department with information that helped form the basis of the revised indictment against Trump, his valet Walt Nauta and a third defendant, Carlos De Oliveira, the court filing says.

Prosecutors described the witness interaction in a filing that seeks a hearing in Florida about potential conflicts of interest involving the defense lawyer, Stanley Woodward, who also represents Nauta. Woodward declined to comment Tuesday to The Associated Press.

"The target letter to Trump Employee 4 crystallized a conflict of interest arising from Mr. Woodward's concurrent representation of Trump Employee 4 and Nauta," prosecutors wrote.

They added: "Advising Trump Employee 4 to correct his sworn testimony would result in testimony incriminating Mr. Woodward's other client, Nauta; but permitting Trump Employee 4's false testimony to stand uncorrected would leave Trump Employee 4 exposed to criminal charges for perjury."

In the filing, the Justice Department also sought to explain its use of grand juries in both Washington and Florida, where charges were ultimately filed. U.S. District Judge Aileen Cannon, a Florida judge presiding over the case, had earlier asked about the legal propriety of using grand juries in both districts.

Prosecutors said they continued using the Washington grand jury even after charges were filed in Florida for the express purpose of investigating potential false statements by witnesses in Washington. The Washington grand jury completed its term last week, they said.

A trial has been set for May 20, 2024, in the classified documents case. Trump has pleaded not guilty and denied any wrongdoing.

Trump is facing another prosecution by Smith, over efforts to overturn the results of the 2020 presidential election, as well as a criminal case in Georgia over attempts to subvert that state's vote and another in New York in connection with hush money payments to a porn actor.

Digital clones and Vocaloids may be popular in Japan. Elsewhere, they could get lost in translation

By YURI KAGEYAMA Associated Press

TOKYO (AP) — Kazutaka Yonekura dreams of a world where everyone will have their very own digital "clone" — an online avatar that could take on some of our work and daily tasks, such as appearing in Zoom meetings in our place.

Yonekura, chief executive of Tokyo startup Alt Inc., believes it could make our lives easier and more efficient.

His company is developing a digital double, an animated image that looks and talks just like its owner. The digital clone can be used, for example, by a recruiter to carry out preliminary job interviews, or by a physician to screen patients ahead of checkups.

Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, Aug. 23, 2023 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 060 ~ 51 of 71

"This liberates you from all the routine (tasks) that you must do tomorrow, the day after tomorrow and the day after that," he told The Associated Press as he showed off his double — a thumbnail video image of Yonekura on the computer screen, with a synthesized version of his voice.

When his digital clone is asked "What kind of music do you like," it pauses for several seconds, then goes into a long-winded explanation about Yonekura's fondness for energetic rhythmical music such as hip-hop or rock 'n' roll.

A bit mechanical perhaps — but any social gaffes have been programmed out.

Yonekura, 46, argues that the technology is more personal than Siri, ChatGPT or Google AI. Most importantly, it belongs to you and not the technology company that created it, he said.

For now, having a digital double is expensive. Each Alt clone costs about 20 million yen (\$140,000), so it will likely take some time before there's a clone for everyone.

In creating a digital double, information about a person is skimmed off social media sites and publicly available records in a massive data collection effort, and stored in the software. The data is constantly updated, keeping in synch with the owner's changing habits and tastes.

Yonekura believes a digital clone could pave the way for a society where people can focus on being creative and waste less time on tedious interactions.

For many Japanese — the nation that gave the world Pokemon, karaoke, Hello Kitty and emojis — the digital clone is as friendly as an animation character.

But Yonekura acknowledges cultures are different and that Westerners may not like the idea of a digital clone as much.

"I can't tell you how many times I've been asked: Why does it have to be a personal clone, and not just a digital agent?" he said, a hint of exasperation in his voice.

Yonekura's company has drawn mostly domestic investments of more than 6 billion yen (\$40 million), including venture capital funds run by major Japanese banks, while also building collaborative relationships with academia, including the University of Southern California and the University of Tokyo.

But large-scale production of digital doubles is a long way off — for now, the company offers more affordable voice recognition software and virtual assistant technology.

Matt Alt, who co-founded AltJapan Co., a company that produces English-language versions of popular Japanese video games and who has written books about Japan, including "Pure Invention: How Japan Made the Modern World," says the digital clone idea makes more sense culturally in Japan.

Ninjas, the famous feudal Japanese undercover warriors, were known for "bunshin-jutsu" techniques of creating the illusion of a double or a helper in battle to confuse the opponent. The bunshin-jutsu idea has been adopted and is common in modern-day Japanese video games and manga comic books and graphic novels.

"Who wouldn't want a helping hand from someone who understood them intimately?" Alt said but added that in the West, the idea of an existing double is "more frightening."

"There is the 'Invasion of the Body Snatchers,' for instance, or even the brooms that multiply like a virus in Disney's 'Fantasia,'" he said.

INCS toenter Co., another Tokyo-based startup, has been successful as a production company of computerized music for animation, manga, films, virtual realities and games that uses so-called Vocaloid artists. The synthesized singers or musical acts known as Vocaloid are often paired up with anime- or manga- style characters.

Like Yonekura's digital clone, Vocaloids are an example of Japanese technology that uses computer software to duplicate human traits or likeness.

Among INCS toenter's hits is "Melt," created on a single desktop in 2007 and performed by a group called Supercell, which has been played 23 million times on YouTube.

A more recent hit is "Kawaikute gomen," which means "Sorry for being so cute," by HoneyWorks, a vocaloid unit. Another is Eve, who performs the theme song of megahit animation series "Jujutsu Kaisen," and has 4.6 million subscribers on his YouTube channel.

Some wonder whether digital clones or Vocaloids could become popular outside Japan. Digital assistant and voice software, as well as computerized music exist in the West, but they are not clones or Vocaloids.

Yu Tamura, chief executive and founder of INCS toenter, says he is encouraged by the increasing global popularity of Japanese animation and manga but that one thing to watch out for is the "Galapagos syndrome."

The term, referring to the isolated Pacific islands where animals evolved in unique ways, is widely used in Japan to describe how some Japanese products, while successful at home, fail to translate abroad.

Overseas consumers could see it as quirky or too cutesy, except for Japanophiles, Tamura said.

"They simply won't get it," he said.

A failed lunar mission dents Russian pride and reflects deeper problems with Moscow's space industry

By The Associated Press undefined

An ambitious but failed attempt by Russia to return to the moon after nearly half a century has exposed the massive challenges faced by Moscow's once-proud space program.

The destruction of the robotic Luna-25 probe, which crashed onto the surface of the moon over the weekend, reflects the endemic problems that have dogged the Russian space industry since the 1991 collapse of the Soviet Union. Those include the loss of key technologies in the post-Soviet industrial melt-down, the bruising impact of recent Western sanctions, a huge brain drain and widespread corruption.

Yuri Borisov, the head of the state-controlled space corporation Roscosmos, attributed the failure to the lack of expertise due to the long break in lunar research that followed the last Soviet mission to the moon in 1976.

"The priceless experience that our predecessors earned in the 1960-70s was effectively lost," Borisov said. "The link between generations has been cut."

While the USSR lost the race to the United States to land humans on the moon, the Soviet lunar program had more than a dozen successful pioneering robotic missions, some of which featured lunar rovers and brought soil samples back to Earth. The proud Soviet space history includes launching the first satellite in space in 1957 and the first human in space in 1961.

Mikhail Marov, a 90-year-old scientist who played a prominent role in planning the earlier lunar missions and worked on the Luna-25 project, was hospitalized after its failure.

"It was very hard. It's the work of all my life," Marov said in remarks carried by Russian media. "For me, it was the last chance to see the revival of our lunar program."

Borisov said the spacecraft's thruster fired for 127 seconds instead of the planned 84 seconds, causing it to crash, and a government commission will investigate the glitch.

Natan Eismont, a leading researcher with the Moscow-based Institute for Space Research, told the state RIA Novosti agency said that signs of equipment problems had appeared even before the crash, but space officials still gave the go for landing.

Vitaly Egorov, a popular Russian space blogger, noted that Roscosmos may have neglected the warnings in a rush to be the first to land on the lunar south pole ahead of an Indian spacecraft that has been orbiting the moon ahead of a planned landing.

"It looks like things weren't going according to plan, but they decided not to change the schedule to prevent the Indians from coming first," he said.

The lunar south pole is of particular interest to scientists, who believe the permanently shadowed polar craters may contain frozen water in the rocks that future explorers could transform into air and rocket fuel.

A major factor exacerbating Russia's space woes that could have played a role in the Luna-25 failure has been the Western sanctions on Moscow over its war in Ukraine. Those penalties have blocked imports of microchips and other key Western components and restricted scientific exchanges.

While working on the Luna-25 project, Roscosmos partnered with the European Space Agency that was to provide a camera to facilitate the landing. The ESA halted the partnership soon after the February 2022

Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, Aug. 23, 2023 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 060 ~ 53 of 71

invasion and requested Roscosmos to remove its camera from the spacecraft.

Years earlier, Russia hoped to buy the main navigation device for the lunar mission from Airbus, but couldn't due to restrictions blocking the technology transfer. In the end, it developed its own equipment that delayed the project and weighed twice as much, reducing the scientific payload for the spacecraft that weighed 1,750 kilograms (over 3,800 pounds).

Many industry experts note that even before the latest Western sanctions, the use of substandard components led to the collapse of an ambitious mission to send a probe to Mars' moon Phobos in 2011. The spacecraft's thrusters failed to send it on a path toward Mars and it burned in the Earth's atmosphere — a problem that investigators attributed to using cheap commercial microchips that were unfit for the harsh conditions in space.

Some observers speculated that using the cheap components could have stemmed from a scheme to embezzle government funds, rather than importing the specialized equipment for the Phobos-Grunt spacecraft, which was designed by the NPO Lavochkin, the same company that developed Luna-25.

NPO Lavochkin designed fighter planes during World War II and was the main developer of Soviet robotic missions to the moon, Venus and Mars. Several top Lavochkin managers have been arrested on charges of abusing their office in recent years.

Following the Phobos failure, space officials talked about conducting a thorough revision of the lunar spacecraft design to avoid using similar substandard components. It's unclear whether such work ever happened.

Russian state television had hailed Luna-25 as the country's triumphant entry into a new moon race, but since the crash, the broadcasters have tried to play down the loss of the spacecraft. Some argued the mission wasn't a complete failure because it sent back pictures of the lunar surface from orbit and other data.

Borisov tried to stay optimistic, arguing it achieved some important results.

He insisted that taking part in lunar research "not only means prestige or achieving geopolitical goals, it is necessary to ensure defense capability and technological sovereignty."

"I hope that the next missions ... will be successful," Borisov said, adding that Roscosmos will intensify work on future moon missions, the next of which is planned for 2027.

"Under no circumstances we should interrupt our lunar program. It would be an utterly wrong decision," he said.

Amid the finger-pointing, some argued the failure could cost Borisov his job. Others predicted he probably would avoid the dismissal, noting President Vladimir Putin's record of avoiding quick ousters of officials in response to incidents.

Borisov, who previously served as a deputy prime minister in charge of arms industries, became Roscosmos chief a year ago, succeeding Dmitry Rogozin, who was widely blamed for some earlier space mishaps. Rogozin, who has joined the fighting in Ukraine as a volunteer, has not commented on the failed Luna-25 mission.

Under Rogozin, Roscosmos suffered a series of failed satellite launches. Combined with the growing role of private companies like Elon Musk's SpaceX, those failures have cost Russia its once-sizable niche in the lucrative global space launch market.

Rogozin was widely criticized for failing to root out endemic graft, including funds embezzled during the construction of the Vostochny cosmodrome in Russia's Far East, which was used to launch the latest moon mission.

Some commentators said the Luna-25 crash dented Russian prestige and raised new doubts about its technological prowess following military blunders in Ukraine.

"The consequences of the Luna-25 catastrophe are enormous," pro-Kremlin political analyst Sergei Markov said.

"It raises doubts about Russia's claims of a great power status in the eyes of the global community. Many would decide that Russia can't fulfill its ambitions either in Ukraine or on the moon because it lives not by its modest current capability but rather fantasies about its great past," he said. "People as well as coun-

tries want to side with the strong who win, not the weak who keep making excuses about their defeats.”

UPS workers approve 5-year contract, capping contentious negotiations that threatened deliveries

By HALELUYA HADERO and MATT OTT AP Business Writers

The union representing 340,000 UPS workers said Tuesday that its members voted to approve the tentative contract agreement reached last month, putting a final seal on contentious labor negotiations that threatened to disrupt package deliveries for millions of businesses and households nationwide.

The Teamsters said in a statement that 86% of the votes cast were in favor of ratifying the national contract. They also said it was passed by the highest vote for a contract in the history of the Teamsters at UPS.

The union said more than 40 supplemental agreements were also ratified, except for one that covers roughly 170 members in Florida. The national master agreement will go into effect as soon as that supplemental is renegotiated and ratified, it said.

UPS said voting results for deals covering employees under two locals are expected soon.

“Our members just ratified the most lucrative agreement the Teamsters have ever negotiated at UPS,” Teamsters General President Sean M. O’Brien said in a statement. “This contract will improve the lives of hundreds of thousands of workers.”

He said the contract set a new standard for pay and benefits.

“This is the template for how workers should be paid and protected nationwide, and nonunion companies like Amazon better pay attention,” O’Brien said, giving a nod to the union’s growing ambitions to take on the e-commerce behemoth.

Voting on the new five-year contract began Aug. 3 and concluded Tuesday.

After negotiations broke down in early July, Atlanta-based UPS reached a tentative contract agreement with the Teamsters just days before an Aug. 1 deadline. It came as large and small businesses were working on contingency plans in the event of a strike, which would have spiked shipping prices and scrambled supply chains.

Earlier this month, the delivery company reported its revenue fell for the second quarter as package volume declined amid negotiations with the union. The shipping industry has also been impacted by unpredictable consumer spending.

The company, which has lowered its full-year revenue expectations by \$4 billion, had said it expected bargaining to restart if members rejected the deal. But that outcome could have also opened the door to a strike with the potential to cause widespread disruption.

Under the tentative agreement, full- and part-time union workers will get \$2.75 more per hour in 2023, and \$7.50 more in total by the end of the five-year contract. Starting hourly pay for part-time employees also got bumped up to \$21, but some workers said that fell short of their expectations.

UPS says that by the end of the new contract, the average UPS full-time driver will make about \$170,000 annually in pay and benefits. It’s not clear how much of that figure benefits account for.

As part of the deal, the delivery company also agreed to make Martin Luther King Jr. Day a full holiday, end forced overtime on drivers’ days off and stop using driver-facing cameras in cabs, among a host of other issues. It eliminated a two-tier wage system for drivers and tentative deals on safety issues were also reached, including equipping more trucks with air conditioning.

Union members, angered by a contract they say union leadership forced on them five years ago, argued in the lead up to the deal that they have shouldered the more than 140% profit growth at UPS as the pandemic increased delivery demand. Unionized workers said they wanted to fix what they saw as a bad contract.

The Teamsters’ leadership was upended two years ago with the election of O’Brien, a vocal critic of union President James Hoffa — son of the famed Teamsters firebrand — who signed off on the previous contract in 2018.

Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, Aug. 23, 2023 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 060 ~ 55 of 71

The 24 million packages UPS ships daily amount to about a quarter of all U.S. parcel volume, according to the global shipping and logistics firm Pitney Bowes. UPS says that's equivalent to about 6% of the nation's gross domestic product.

This isn't the first showdown the union has had with the delivery company. During the last breakdown in labor talks a quarter of a century ago, 185,000 UPS workers walked out for 15 days, crippling the company's ability to function.

A walkout this time would have had much further-reaching implications, with millions of Americans now accustomed to online shopping and speedy delivery. The consulting firm Anderson Economic Group estimated a 10-day UPS strike could have cost the U.S. economy more than \$7 billion and triggered "significant and lasting harm" to the business and workers.

Labor experts say they see the showdown as a demonstration of labor power at a time of low U.S. union membership. This summer, Hollywood actors and screenwriters have been picketing over pay issues. United Auto Workers are considering a potential strike.

"Together we reached a win-win-win agreement on the issues that are important to Teamsters leadership, our employees and to UPS and our customers," Carol Tomé, UPS CEO, said when the tentative deal was announced.

Industry groups, the U.S. Chamber of Commerce, labor leaders and President Joe Biden also applauded the deal.

Kerry Washington, Martin Sheen shout for solidarity between Hollywood strikers and other workers

By ANDREW DALTON AP Entertainment Writer

LOS ANGELES (AP) — Kerry Washington and Martin Sheen, a pair of fictional former politicians, turned Hollywood's strikes into a rousing campaign rally Tuesday with speeches celebrating unity across the industry and with labor at large.

"We are here because we know that unions matter," said Washington, who played a political fixer on ABC's "Scandal." "Not only do we have solidarity within our union, we have solidarity between our unions, because we are workers."

The rally outside Disney Studios in Burbank, California, coming more than a month into a strike by Hollywood actors and more than three months into a strike by screenwriters, was meant to highlight their alliance with the industry's other guilds and the nation's other unions, including the Teamsters and the AFL-CIO.

"The audacity of these studios to say they can't afford to pay their workers after they make billions in profits is utterly ridiculous," Los Angeles County Federation of Labor President Yvonne Wheeler told the crowd. She added a dig at Disney's CEO, who has become a target of strikers. "But despite their money, they can't buy this kind of solidarity. Tell Bob Iger that."

Sheen, who played the president for seven seasons on "The West Wing," was joined by most of the show's main cast members on the stage as he emphasized that the toll being taken as the strikes stretch out.

"Clearly this union has found something worth fighting for, and it is very costly," Sheen said. "If this were not so we would be left to question its value."

Washington also sought to highlight that high-profile guild members like her were once actors who struggled to find work and make a living, as the vast majority of members still are. She ran through the issues at the heart of both strikes, including compensation and studios and streaming services using artificial intelligence in place of actors and writers.

"We deserve to be able to be paid a fair wage. We deserve to have access to healthcare. We deserve to be free from machines pretending to be us," Washington said. "The dream of being working artist, the dream of making a living doing what we want to do, should not be impossible."

Washington and others carefully avoided saying the names of the shows that made them famous, in observation of strike rules against promotion of studio projects.

The alliance of studios, streaming services and production companies that are the opposition in the strikes

says it offered fair contracts to both unions before talks broke off that included unprecedented updates in pay and protections against AI.

Talks have restarted between the studios and writers, who went on strike May 2, though progress has been slow. There have been no negotiations with actors since they went on strike July 14.

The rally included many members and leaders of other Hollywood unions that unlike the striking guilds were able to make deals with the studios, including the International Alliance of Theatrical Stage Employees, which represents most Hollywood crew members and struck an 11th hour deal to avoid a strike in 2021. That contract expires next year.

Some thought the Directors Guild of America would be a third Hollywood strike in 2023, but the group promptly reached a contract deal while talks for others sputtered. Yet its members have also been out of work, with nearly all major Hollywood productions shut down.

One of the DGA's officers, Paris Barclay, who directed episodes of both "Scandal" and "The West Wing," told the crowd Tuesday that makes it essential that workers under contract support their striking colleagues.

"It's not enough that one of us has a meal on the table," Barclay said, "until everybody has a meal on the table, nobody eats."

Rescuers save 8 people trapped in cable car dangling above canyon in Pakistan

By RIAZ KHAN and MUNIR AHMED Associated Press

PESHAWAR, Pakistan (AP) — Eight people who got trapped in a disabled cable car dangling high above a valley in Pakistan returned safely to the ground Tuesday after military commandos staged a daring and delicate rescue using helicopters and a makeshift chairlift.

The daylong ordeal began when six children got into the gondola for a trip to school. Two adults were with them. But then a cable snapped, bringing the car to a halt and trapping the group in midair. They were helpless, suspended hundreds of meters (feet) above a remote, mountainous landscape.

Six hours passed before a helicopter arrived. When the rescues began at last, at least one child who was plucked out of the car could be seen in video footage hanging at the end of a cable as he was winched up to the aircraft.

But the choppers also added an element of danger. The air currents churned up by the whirling blades risked weakening the only cable holding the car aloft and preventing it from crashing to the bottom of the river canyon in the Battagram district in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province.

Because helicopters could not fly after sunset, rescuers eventually shifted from an airborne effort to a risky operation that involved using one cable that was still intact to approach the car with the improvised chairlift.

Slowly, all eight people were brought down. Video from the final rescues showed a handful of people hanging from a cable as they were pulled to safety through a stand of trees to a waiting crowd.

Caretaker Prime Minister Anwaar-ul-Haq Kakar congratulated the military and other rescuers for the success. The drama transfixed the country for hours as Pakistanis crowded around televisions in offices, shops, restaurants and hospitals.

"Relieved to know that ... all the kids have been successfully and safely rescued," Kakar said on X, the service formerly known as Twitter. "Great team work by the military, rescue departments, district administration as well as the local people."

In a statement, the military said the rescue involved the commandos, pilots from the army and air force and the support of local authorities.

As the children were handed over to their families, most burst into tears, said Nazir Ahmed, a senior police officer.

"Everyone was praying for this moment," he said. He said villagers hugged the commandos and other rescuers.

According to Pakistani TV stations, some of those trapped were in contact with their families by cellphone.

Authorities said the two adults were consoling the children, who were between 11 and 15 years old.

Food and water were supplied to the car earlier in the day, said Bilal Faizi, a spokesperson for the state-run emergency service.

Villagers frequently use cable cars to get around Pakistan's mountainous regions. But the cars are often poorly maintained, and every year people die or are injured while traveling in them.

Kakar said he ordered safety inspections of the country's cable cars and chairlifts.

While awaiting help, the group hung precariously 350 meters (1,150 feet) above ground, according to Taimoor Khan, a spokesman for the disaster management authority.

In 2017, 10 people were killed when a cable car fell into a ravine hundreds of meters (feet) deep in the popular mountain resort of Murree after its cable broke.

Texas' floating barrier to stop migrants draws recurring concerns from Mexico, US official says

By PAUL J. WEBER Associated Press

AUSTIN, Texas (AP) — Mexico's government has repeatedly raised concerns with the U.S. about large buoys Texas put on the Rio Grande to deter migrants and agreements between the two countries could suffer if the floating barrier remains in place, a State Department official said in court Tuesday.

The testimony sought to reinforce what the Biden administration argues are the diplomatic stakes over wrecking-ball-sized buoys that Texas Gov. Greg Abbott authorized this summer as part of the Republican's increasingly hardline measures in the name of curbing the flow of migrants crossing the border.

U.S. District Judge David Ezra did not immediately rule at the conclusion of the hearing Tuesday in Austin. At one point, Ezra said the issue centered on whether Abbott has the power to unilaterally try stopping what the governor has described as an "invasion" on America's southern border.

"Mexico has sensitivities about sovereignty and doesn't want to be seen as a lesser partner to the United States," said Hillary Quam, the State Department's coordinator for border affairs between U.S. and Mexico.

The hearing is one of two key court cases in Texas this week surrounding immigration. On Thursday, the Biden administration will again be in court, this time on the defense as it tries to keep in place a program designed to allow people to come to the U.S. from four countries.

Texas is one of 21 states that have sued over that program, and a victory would undercut a broader policy seeking to encourage migrants to use the Biden administration's preferred pathways into the country. A decision in that hearing, which will be held in Victoria, Texas, also was not expected to come immediately.

In Austin, Quam said Mexico has raised concerns "at the highest diplomatic levels" with the U.S. in the short time that the buoys — which stretch roughly the length of a handful of soccer fields on a portion of the river near the Texas city of Eagle Pass — have been on the water. Quam said infrastructure projects between the countries and Mexico's commitments to delivering water to the U.S. could stall over the barrier.

The hearing was held days after Texas repositioned the barrier closer to U.S. soil. During a trip Monday to Eagle Pass, Abbott said the barrier was moved "out of an abundance of caution" after what he described as allegations that they had drifted to Mexico's side of the river. He added that he did not know whether the allegations were true.

Ezra questioned why Texas would have moved the barrier if it was already on the U.S. side and whether the currents of the river were causing the buoys to drift.

"If it were in a position Texas was comfortable with, they wouldn't have done that," Ezra said.

The state's only called witness was a representative from Cochrane Global, which manufactured the buoys, who testified that barrier was securely in place. Patrick Sweeten, a special counsel for the Texas attorney general's office, also drew attention to recent comments made by Secretary of State Anthony Blinken that ties between the U.S. and Mexico were strong.

Ezra, who was appointed by former President Ronald Reagan, made a point to emphasize at the end of the hearing that his ruling would stick to the dispute at hand and not veer into politics. A ruling either way would likely be appealed to the conservative U.S. 5th Circuit Court of Appeals.

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 arrested by Texas troopers after crossing the border.

The men, including a father and son, are among thousands of migrants who since 2021 have been arrested on trespassing charges in the state. Most have either had their cases dismissed or entered guilty pleas in exchange for time served. But the plaintiffs remained 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 sheriff's office allowing the jails to release the men, the lawsuit alleges, they were transported to federal immigration facilities and then sent to Mexico.

Officials in Kinney and Val Verde County, which are named in the lawsuit, have not commented or responded to the claims.

'Get out of my house!' Video shows 98-year-old mother of Kansas newspaper publisher upset amid raid

By JOHN HANNA and JIM SALTER Associated Press

MARION, Kan. (AP) — Newly released video shows the 98-year-old mother of a Kansas newspaper publisher confronting police officers as they searched her home in a raid that has drawn national scrutiny, at one point demanding: "Get out of my house!"

Video released by the newspaper Monday shows Joan Meyer shouting at the six officers inside the Marion, Kansas, home she shared with her son, Marion County Record Editor and Publisher Eric Meyer. Standing with the aid of a walker and dressed in a long robe or gown and slippers, she seems visibly upset.

"Get out of my house ... I don't want you in my house!" she said at one point. "Don't touch any of that stuff! This is my house!" she said at another.

The raids of the newspaper and the homes of the Meyers and a City Council member happened on Aug. 11, after a local restaurant owner accused the newspaper of illegally accessing information about her. Joan Meyer died a day later. Her son said he believes that the stress contributed to her death.

A prosecutor said later that there was insufficient evidence to justify the raids, and some of the seized computers and cellphones have been returned. Meanwhile, the initial online search of a state website that the police chief cited to justify the raid was legal, a spokesperson for the agency that maintains the site said Monday.

The Kansas Bureau of Investigation continues to examine the newspaper's actions.

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 to turn over unpublished material to law enforcement.

Two state lawmakers, Kansas House Democratic Leader Vic Miller, and Democratic state Rep. Jason Probst, a former newspaper reporter and editor in Hutchinson, about 50 miles (80 kilometers) southwest of Marion, said they plan to pursue legislation dealing with search warrants next year but are looking for other ideas as well.

"I don't want this to fade away until we've addressed it," Miller said during a Statehouse news conference.

The raid on the Record put it and its hometown of around 1,900 residents about 150 miles (241 kilometers) southwest of Kansas City 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 raids 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 comment. He said in affidavits used to obtain the warrants that he had probable cause to believe that the newspaper and City Council member Ruth Herbel, whose home was also raided, had violated state laws against

identity theft or computer crimes.

Both 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 woman's license number and 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.

Meyer said the newspaper plans to file a lawsuit over the raid of its offices and his home.

The publisher 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.

Video from a security camera overlooking the newsroom showed an officer reading the reporter her rights during the raid. Bernie Rhodes, the newspaper's attorney, said the action meant she wasn't free to leave and could have been jailed.

"People keep asking me, 'Why haven't you already sued?'" Rhodes said. "I don't want to be rash like the police were. I'm doing a thorough investigation."

Spain's acting prime minister criticizes federation head for kissing player from World Cup champs

By DAVID BRUNAT and JOSEPH WILSON Associated Press

BARCELONA, Spain (AP) — Spain's acting prime minister said it was "unacceptable" that the Spanish soccer federation president kissed a player on the lips without her consent, as pressure builds on Luis Rubiales to resign for tarnishing the team's Women's World Cup championship.

Pedro Sánchez praised the team during an audience at the presidential palace on Tuesday and later joined the growing criticism of Rubiales.

"What we saw is unacceptable," Sánchez said. "And the apologies offered by Mr. Rubiales are not sufficient, I would call them inappropriate, so he must continue taking further steps to clarify what we all saw."

Late Tuesday, the Spanish soccer federation announced it will hold an emergency meeting of its general assembly on Friday. It is unclear if Rubiales can maintain the backing of the leaders of Spain's regional soccer organizations.

The federation said it was opening an internal probe "regarding the incidents during the awards ceremony Women's World Cup."

Gender equality and women's rights have been cornerstones of Sánchez's leftist government. But Spain's Women's World Cup success has been marred by the forced kiss Rubiales gave to player Jenni Hermoso during the medal ceremony following Spain's 1-0 victory on Sunday in the final against England in Sydney, Australia.

After claiming that those who criticized his kiss were "idiots and stupid people," Rubiales was forced to apologize on Monday.

Rubiales accompanied the team and staff to the meeting with Sánchez, who greeted him with a handshake.

The forced kiss caused an immediate outcry both inside Spain and abroad. Deputy Prime Minister Yolanda Díaz said Rubiales "has harassed and assaulted" a woman and called for his resignation.

The country's equality minister said it was an act of "sexual assault." Under a new sexual violence law,

Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, Aug. 23, 2023 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 060 ~ 60 of 71

the unsolicited kiss, during which Rubiales grabbed Hermoso's face before giving her a kiss on the mouth, could potentially be pursued as a crime.

Immediately after Spain's victory, Rubiales had also grabbed his crotch in a victory gesture. That occurred with 16-year-old Princess Infanta Sofía and Queen Letizia of Spain standing nearby.

The country's leading opposition party has joined in denouncing Rubiales' behavior, leaving him without any support from major public or political figures.

Asked if Rubiales should go, Sánchez said that it was not his call to make because the Spanish soccer federation is not controlled by the government. But Sánchez did say Rubiales "has yet to be clear and compelling in his apologies."

Spain's players union, which Rubiales used to head, issued a statement on Tuesday calling for Spain's Higher Council for Sports, which oversees Spanish sports, to act against Rubiales if he does not step down. The union cited Spain's sports law that sanctions acts that "damage the dignity" of someone or "creates an atmosphere of intimidation" based on unwanted conduct related to gender or race.

"The incident regarding Jenni Hermoso is especially grave since she finds herself in a situation of vulnerability before a person in a position of power," the union said. "A once-in-a-lifetime celebration for the Spanish players has been overshadowed by the improper behavior of the federation president."

Spain's Higher Council for Sports told The Associated Press that on Tuesday it received a formal complaint against Rubiales filed by the president of Spain's national school for soccer coaches, Miguel Galan. It said it was studying the complaint.

Sumar, a left-wing political party led by Díaz, also said it had filed an official complaint with Spain's Higher Council for Sports.

During the celebrations on Monday in the capital, Hermoso avoided commenting on the incident.

"We're world champions, aren't we?" she said. "Right now I think it's too much."

Players and staff landed late Monday in Madrid after a 20-plus hour flight from Sydney. They were greeted by thousands in a celebration that lasted until past midnight.

Sánchez said the team members will be awarded Spain's golden medal of sports achievement.

"You have achieved something very important. The girls who watch you see soccer as a place where they can develop athletically and personally," Sánchez said while posing for a group photo with the soccer team in Madrid. "The 21st century will be the century of women on all fronts, and the century of effective equality between men and women."

The 45-year-old Rubiales is a former player who led the world players' union's Spanish affiliate for eight years before being elected to lead the national soccer federation in 2018. Since then, he has revamped the Spanish Super Cup, taking it to Saudi Arabia for millions of dollars, in a move criticized by human rights groups. Last year, Spain's state prosecutors' office announced it was opening a probe into the contracts behind the Super Cup move.

Rubiales is now promoting a joint bid by Spain, Portugal and Morocco to host the men's World Cup in 2030. The bid could potentially include Ukraine as well. Neither FIFA nor UEFA have commented on his conduct at the final.

Rubiales is up for re-election next year. The president of the soccer federation is chosen by representatives of clubs, players, coaches, referees and regional federation heads.

The Spain squad was in near-mutiny last year because of some players' complaints about the culture under coach Jorge Vilda, demanding better coaching and preparation to get more out of the team.

Rubiales backed Vilda and only three of the 15 players who complained were included on the World Cup team. The federation did take some steps toward improving the conditions of the players, which included a financial package to allow them to bring family members to the World Cup and permission for players with children to spend time with them.

Wildfires torment Greece. California digs out from Hilary. What to know in extreme weather now

By The Associated Press undefined

A nightmarish summer of wildfires for Greece took its deadliest turn yet on Tuesday when firefighters found the burned bodies of 18 people near the city of Alexandroupolis.

A hint of the scope of the fire can be seen in this image by Associated Press photographer Achilleas Chiras. The dead were believed to have been migrants who had crossed the nearby border with Turkey before falling victim to a major fire that was among dozens across the country being whipped by gale-force winds. Their deaths came after two people had died in fires Monday elsewhere in the country.

Spain continues to struggle with fires, too, including one on the tourist island of Tenerife that authorities said was arson. It's forced the evacuation of more than 12,000 people. And in Canada, firefighters held back fires from destroying more structures in a scenic region of British Columbia in what one official called the most difficult days fighting fire in the province's history.

Here's what else is happening related to extreme weather and the climate right now:

—Two weeks after the deadliest U.S. wildfire in more than a century hit Hawaii, authorities said between 500 and 1,000 people are unaccounted for. Authorities are hoping many of those are survivors who simply haven't checked in.

—In California, crews in mountain and desert towns were working to clear away mud and debris left behind by Tropical Storm Hilary, the first tropical storm to hit Southern California in 84 years. Meanwhile, Tropical Storm Harold was closing in on the Texas coast and parts of Mexico, and Tropical Storm Franklin was due to make landfall Wednesday in the Dominican Republic and Haiti.

—Experts say Hilary's unusual path was the result of a variety of factors.

—In Japan, preparations were being made to release treated and diluted radioactive wastewater as early as Thursday from the Fukushima Daiichi nuclear plant that melted down 12 years ago. Scientists have generally agreed the water won't hurt the environment, but the government has pledged to protect the country's fishing industry from reputational harm.

—A 1-year-old girl died after being left inside a day care center's van in Nebraska on Monday, as a heat wave settled in over the central United States.

—A few U.S. states are passing up billions of dollars being made available from the federal government to remove millions of dangerous lead pipes that can contaminate drinking water and damage brain development in children. Experts say some states and communities may be hesitant to take out loans to search for lead pipes.

QUOTABLE:

"We mourn their loss ... (and) the destruction of nature, (and) we are saddened by our inability to avert it. We must urgently take effective initiatives to ensure that this bleak reality does not become the new normality." — Greece President Katerina Sakellariopoulou, on the deaths of 18 people in wildfires.

Former Thai leader Thaksin goes to jail as political party linked to him wins vote to take power

By JINTAMAS SAKSORNCHAI Associated Press

BANGKOK (AP) — A divisive former prime minister of Thailand made a dramatic return home Tuesday to face an eight-year prison term, just as a party linked to him won a vote in Parliament to lead the government — the latest turn in the country's tumultuous politics.

The move by Thaksin Shinawatra indicates he is hoping that a friendly government will be able to cut short his sentence, although he has said his decision to come back had nothing to do with the Pheu Thai party's bid for power.

Thaksin's return after 15 years in self-imposed exile was an emotional moment for supporters of the 74-year-old billionaire, who won the loyalty of millions with populist policies that directed attention and

Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, Aug. 23, 2023 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 060 ~ 62 of 71

funding to the country's largely rural, impoverished north before being removed in a coup. His reemergence recalls the years of pitched battles — both figurative and sometimes literal — between his “red shirt” supporters and “yellow shirt” opponents who champion conservative, royalist values.

Hundreds of people gathered outside of the airport early in the morning, donning red clothes and holding signs with welcoming messages. They sang and chanted in anticipation, then raised a raucous cheer when Thaksin appeared at the terminal's door.

Hours later, Srettha Thavisin of the Pheu Thai party secured enough votes to become prime minister, ending months of suspense, legal wrangling and horse trading that followed May's elections. The progressive Move Forward Party won the most votes in those elections but was blocked from taking power by conservative senators.

The Pheu Thai party has since entered a coalition with military parties linked to the coup that removed it from power in 2014, and some accuse the party of turning its back on the election results and the democracy movement that began after the military removed Thaksin from power in an earlier coup, in 2006. Thaksin is widely seen as the party's de facto leader.

“From the past, the party was seen by the people as the most diligent in standing up for democracy,” said Thanet Aphornsuvan, a retired professor of history. “Now, that sentiment is going to disappear.”

Thaksin and parties he backed have tussled with the military — and the conservative elite it represents — for years. His second term as prime minister was cut short by the 2006 coup, sparking years of deep political divisions.

He was hit with corruption charges, which he dismissed as politically motivated, and was tried and convicted in absentia after he fled into exile.

A Pheu Thai government led by Thaksin's sister, Yingluck Shinawatra, eventually came to power but was ousted in 2014 by then-army chief Prayuth Chan-ocha, who is now the outgoing prime minister.

At the airport, Thaksin prostrated himself before a portrait of Thailand's king and queen and left a flower wreath — an important gesture of deference for a man who often had been accused of not sufficiently respecting the monarchy, which is widely revered in Thailand. He spent a moment greeting supporters and the media waiting in front of the terminal, but did not speak.

“I feel fulfilled that I traveled here today to welcome him. 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.

Pheu Thai will begin forming Thailand's next government and Srettha will lead a coalition of 11 parties that includes two pro-military parties affiliated with Prayuth.

Pheu Thai said the coalition agreed to back the party's platform of boosting the economy, increasing the minimum wage and ending mandatory conscription. They will also support keeping medical marijuana legal and work to amend the constitution to help the country “become more democratic.”

“I will try my best to perform my duty without being worn down, in order to lift up the quality of life of all Thai people,” Srettha said.

Move Forward was excluded from the coalition. Pheu Thai leaders said Move Forward's vow to reform a law that forbids insulting the royal family had made it impossible to rally enough support from other parties and the unelected Senate, which was installed by the previous military government. Both houses of Parliament vote together for the prime minister under the military-implemented constitution.

Critics say the law, which carries a penalty of up to 15 years in prison, has been widely abused as a political weapon. The Pheu Thai-led coalition pledged not to touch the law.

Thanet, the retired professor, said the wide range of interests in the coalition would make the government an “unhappy” one, forced to accommodate allies from all ends of the political spectrum and a backlash from Pheu Thai's own supporters.

But Thitinan Pongsudhirak, a professor of political science at Bangkok's Chulalongkorn University, held out some hope that the government could work effectively, with Move Forward able to push some reform from its position in the opposition.

Before the parliamentary vote began, Thaksin's convoy went from the airport to the Supreme Court,

where a special body that handles criminal cases against former officeholders confirmed his eight-year sentence. He then went directly to Bangkok's main prison.

Many observers say that Thaksin is betting he won't stay in prison long. Less than a week before the May elections, Thaksin announced plans to return before his birthday in July, but they were repeatedly delayed after his party failed to win and faced uncertain prospects of entering a new government.

"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.

Napon said Thaksin's decision to return 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.

Correctional officers at Bangkok Remand Prison said in a news conference that following a medical check that Thaksin had been categorized as "vulnerable" due to his age and chronic conditions, including high blood pressure, and he will be held in isolation and monitored.

A rice shortage is sending prices soaring across the world. And things could get worse

By ANIRUDDHA GHOSAL and EVELYNE MUSAMBI Associated Press

Francis Ndege isn't sure if his customers in Africa's largest slum can afford to keep buying rice from him. Prices for rice grown in Kenya soared a while ago because of higher fertilizer prices and a yearslong drought in the Horn of Africa that has reduced production. Cheap rice imported from India had filled the gap, feeding many of the hundreds of thousands of residents in Nairobi's Kibera slum who survive on less than \$2 a day.

But that is changing. The price of a 25-kilogram (55-pound) bag of rice has risen by about a fifth since June, going from the equivalent of about \$14 to \$18. Wholesalers are yet to receive new stocks since India, the world's largest exporter of rice by far, said last month that it would ban some rice shipments.

It's an effort by the world's most populous nation to control domestic prices ahead of a key election year — but it's left a yawning gap of around 9.5 million metric tons (10.4 tons) of rice that people around the world need, roughly a fifth of global exports.

"I'm really hoping the imports keep coming," said Ndege, 51, who's sold rice for 30 years.

He isn't the only one. Global food security is already under threat since Russia halted an agreement allowing Ukraine to export wheat and the El Nino weather phenomenon hampers rice production. Now, rice prices are soaring — Vietnam's rice export prices, for instance, have reached a 15-year high — putting the most vulnerable people in some of the poorest nations at risk.

The world is at an "inflection point," said Beau Damen, a natural resources officer with the U.N. Food and Agriculture Organization based in Bangkok.

Even before India's restrictions, countries already were frantically buying rice in anticipation of scarcity later when the El Nino hit, creating a supply crunch and spiking prices.

What could make the situation worse is if India's ban on non-basmati rice creates a domino effect, with other countries following suit. Already, the United Arab Emirates has suspended rice exports to maintain its domestic stocks. Another threat is if extreme weather damages rice crops in other countries.

An El Nino is a natural, temporary and occasional warming of part of the Pacific Ocean that shifts global weather patterns, and climate change is making them stronger. Scientists expect the one underway to expand to supersized levels, and, in the past, they have resulted in extreme weather ranging from drought to flooding.

The impact would be felt worldwide. Rice consumption in Africa has been growing steadily, and most countries are heavily dependent on imports. While nations with growing populations like Senegal have

been trying to grow more of their own rice — many are struggling.

Amadou Khan, a 52-year-old unemployed father of five in Dakar, says his children eat rice with every meal except breakfast, which they often have to skip when he's out of work.

"I am just getting by — sometimes, I've trouble taking care of my kids," he said.

Imported rice — 70% of which comes from India — has become prohibitively expensive in Senegal, so he's eating homegrown rice that costs two-thirds as much.

Senegal will turn to other trading partners like Thailand or Cambodia for imports, though the West African country is not "far from being self-sufficient" on rice, with over half of its demand grown locally, Agriculture Ministry spokesperson Mamadou Aïcha Ndiaye said.

Asian countries, where 90% of the world's rice is grown and eaten, are struggling with production. The Philippines was carefully managing water in anticipation of less rain amid the El Nino when Typhoon Doksuri battered its northern rice-producing region, damaging \$32 million worth of rice crops — an estimated 22% of its annual production.

The archipelago nation is the second-largest importer of rice after China, and President Ferdinand Marcos Jr. has underscored the need to ensure adequate buffers.

India's rice restrictions also were motivated by erratic weather: An uneven monsoon along with a looming El Nino meant that the partial ban was needed to stop food prices from rising, Indian food policy expert Devinder Sharma said.

The restrictions will take offline nearly half the country's usual rice exports this year, said Ashok Gulati of the Indian Council for Research on International Economic Relation. Repeated restrictions make India an unreliable exporter, he added.

"That's not good for the export business because it takes years to develop these markets," Gulati said.

Vietnam, another major rice exporter, is hoping to capitalize. With rice export prices at a 15-year high and expectations that annual production to be marginally higher than last year, the Southeast Asian nation is trying to keep domestic prices stable while boosting exports.

The Agriculture Ministry says it's working to increase how much land in the Mekong Delta is dedicated to growing rice by around 500 square kilometers — an area larger than 90,000 football fields.

Already the Philippines is in talks with Vietnam to try to get the grain at lower prices, while Vietnam also looks to target the United Kingdom, which receives much of its rice from India.

But exporters like Charoen Laothamatas in neighboring Thailand are wary. The Thai government expects to ship more rice than it did last year, with its exports in the first six months of the year 15% higher than the same period of 2022.

But the lack of clarity about what India will do next and concerns about the El Nino means Thai exporters are reluctant to take orders, mill operators are unwilling to sell and farmers have increased the prices of unmilled rice, said Laothamatas, president of the Thai Rice Exporters Association.

With prices fluctuating, exporters don't know what prices to quote — because prices may spike again the next day.

"And no one wants to take the risk," Laothamatas said.

North Korea's Kim lambasts premier over flooding, in a possible bid to shift blame for economic woes

By HYUNG-JIN KIM Associated Press

SEOUL, South Korea (AP) — North Korean leader Kim Jong Un severely rebuked his premier and other senior officials over what he called their irresponsible response to recent flooding of farmlands along the country's western coast, state media reported Tuesday.

Summer floods in North Korea often cause serious damage to farmlands due to poor drainage and deforestation. Observers say Kim's lambasting of top officials likely aims to shift blame to them for the country's economic hardships and food insecurity, or could set the stage for a reshuffling of senior leadership.

Kim on Monday visited a western coastal tideland where seawater recently destroyed the embankment,

Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, Aug. 23, 2023 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 060 ~ 65 of 71

flooding more than 270 hectares of rice paddies. After inspecting the situation, Kim accused officials of “very irresponsible neglect of duties,” according to the official Korean Central News Agency.

Kim criticized Premier Kim Tok Hun for showing “the attitude of an onlooker,” KCNA said. He berated the vice premier for failing to perform his duties faithfully, and he accused the director of the tideland reclamation bureau of concealing fuel oil that was supposed to be used for construction projects.

“In recent years the administrative and economic discipline of Kim Tok Hun’s Cabinet has become seriously out of order, and, consequently, the idlers are spoiling all the state economic work with an irresponsible work manner,” Kim Jong Un said, according to KCNA.

Kim called the recent flooding a man-made disaster, citing a botched construction project that was supposed to improve drainage in the area. Kim said the project went forward even though a substantial leak was discovered. He ordered stern disciplinary steps for those responsible for the flooding damage.

North Korea watchers say Kim Jong Un’s moves are unusually strong given there were no reports of human casualties. They say Kim could use the flooding as a chance to reshuffle top officials in a bid to reinforce public confidence in his government as he struggles to revive an economy reeling from COVID-19.

“Kim Jong Un appears to be searching for extreme steps to divert public complaints that have been heightened due to worsened public livelihoods and economic situations,” said Tae Yongho, a South Korean lawmaker, who served as a minister at the North Korean Embassy in London before his defection in 2016.

Outside experts believe North Korea’s current food shortages and economic troubles have deepened due to draconian pandemic curbs, U.N. sanctions and North Korea’s own mismanagement. But there are no signs of an imminent famine or major public unrest that could threaten Kim’s grip on his 26 million people.

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.

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.

Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, Aug. 23, 2023 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 060 ~ 66 of 71

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, Facebook and Instagram parent 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.

The DSA "will have a significant impact on the experiences Europeans have when they open their phones or fire up their laptops," Nick Clegg, Meta's president for global affairs, said in a blog post.

Meta's existing tools to report illegal or rule-breaking content will be easier to access, Clegg said.

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 and posts based on what a user has previously viewed. Facebook, Instagram and Snapchat users will have similar options. Such systems have been blamed for leading social media users to increasingly extreme posts.

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.

Big platforms 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 use to provide more information on "problematic users and content." Those alterations won't be limited to Europe and "will be implemented globally," 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," it said in a statement.

Snapchat said its new reporting and appeal process for flagging illegal content or accounts that break its rules will be rolled out first in the EU and then globally in the coming months.

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.

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 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.

Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, Aug. 23, 2023 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 060 ~ 68 of 71

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

Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, Aug. 23, 2023 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 060 ~ 69 of 71

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."

Free Disney World passes are latest front in war between Disney and DeSantis appointees

By MIKE SCHNEIDER Associated Press

Already involved in two lawsuits with Disney, Gov. Ron DeSantis' appointees to a board that oversees Disney World's governing district on Monday launched a battle against the company on a new front — free passes and discounts for district employees.

Board members of the Central Florida Tourism Oversight District submitted a complaint to the state Inspector General, claiming that the millions of dollars in season passes, as well as discounts on hotels, merchandise, food and beverages, that their Disney-supporting predecessors provided governing district employees amount to unethical benefits and perks.

Last year alone, before the DeSantis appointees took over the governing board and it was still controlled by Disney backers, around \$2.5 million in discounts and passes were given to district employees and their families, the board said in a news release.

The arrangement was self-serving to the company because it funneled money back to Disney, with the district footing the bill, the release said.

Disney didn't respond to an email seeking comment. A spokesman for the board didn't respond to a request for the letter sent to the Inspector General, which investigates fraud, mismanagement, waste and abuse.

The arrangement appears to be more like an employee benefit rather than a taxpayer scam, similar to the way professors at a university may get free passes to athletic events or free tuition for family members, said Richard Foglesong, a Rollins College professor emeritus who wrote a definitive account of Disney World's governance in his book "Married to the Mouse: Walt Disney World and Orlando."

The complaint from the DeSantis appointees comes as the district administrator they appointed last May faces an ethics dilemma of his own. Glen Gilzean, who earns \$400,000 annually in his new job, also is chair of the Florida Commission on Ethics. He can't simultaneously be a commission board member and work for the district because the commission prohibits public employees from serving on its board, a commission attorney said last week in a legal opinion.

A fight between DeSantis and Disney began last year after the company, facing significant pressure internally and externally, publicly opposed a state law banning classroom lessons on sexual orientation and gender identity in early grades.

Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, Aug. 23, 2023 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 060 ~ 70 of 71

As punishment, DeSantis took over the district through legislation passed by the Republican-controlled Florida Legislature and appointed a new board of supervisors to oversee municipal services for the sprawling theme parks and hotels. But the new supervisors' authority over design and construction has been limited by the company's agreements with Disney-supporting predecessors, which were signed before the new board took over.

In response, Florida lawmakers passed legislation that repealed those agreements.

Disney has sued DeSantis in federal court, claiming the governor violated the company's free speech rights. The district has sued Disney in state court, seeking to nullify the agreements.

Today in History: August 23, Sacco and Vanzetti executed

By The Associated Press undefined

Today in History

Today is Wednesday, Aug. 23, the 235th day of 2023. There are 130 days left in the year.

Today's Highlight in History:

On Aug 23, 1927, amid worldwide protests, Italian-born anarchists Nicola Sacco and Bartolomeo Vanzetti were executed in Boston for the murders of two men during a 1920 robbery. (On the 50th anniversary of their executions, then-Massachusetts Gov. Michael Dukakis issued a proclamation that Sacco and Vanzetti had been unfairly tried and convicted.)

On this date:

In 1305, Scottish rebel leader Sir William Wallace was executed by the English for treason.

In 1775, Britain's King George III proclaimed the American colonies to be in a state of "open and avowed rebellion."

In 1914, Japan declared war against Germany in World War I.

In 1939, Nazi Germany and the Soviet Union agreed to a non-aggression treaty, the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact, in Moscow.

In 2000, A Gulf Air Airbus crashed into the Persian Gulf near Bahrain, killing all 143 people aboard.

In 2003, former priest John Geoghan (GAY'-gun), the convicted child molester whose prosecution sparked the sex abuse scandal that shook the Roman Catholic Church nationwide, died after another inmate attacked him in a Massachusetts prison.

In 2004, President George W. Bush criticized a political commercial accusing Democratic nominee John Kerry of inflating his own Vietnam War record, and said broadcast attacks by outside groups had no place in the race for the White House.

In 2008, Democratic presidential candidate Barack Obama introduced his choice of running mate, Sen. Joe Biden of Delaware, before a crowd outside the Old State Capitol in Springfield, Illinois.

In 2011, a magnitude-5.8 earthquake centered near Mineral, Virginia, the strongest on the East Coast since 1944, caused cracks in the Washington Monument and damaged Washington National Cathedral.

In 2020, a white police officer in Kenosha, Wisconsin, shot a Black man, Jacob Blake, seven times as officers tried to arrest Blake on an outstanding warrant; the shooting left Blake partially paralyzed and triggered several nights of violent protests.

Ten years ago: A military jury convicted Maj. Nidal Hasan in the deadly 2009 shooting rampage at Fort Hood, Texas, that claimed 13 lives; the Army psychiatrist was later sentenced to death. Staff Sgt. Robert Bales, the U.S. soldier who'd massacred 16 Afghan civilians, was sentenced at Joint Base Lewis-McChord, Washington, to life in prison with no chance of parole. San Diego Mayor Bob Filner, a Democrat, agreed to resign in return for the city's help defending him against claims he'd groped, kissed and made lewd comments to women.

Five years ago: Mark David Chapman, the killer of former Beatle John Lennon, was denied parole for a 10th time. The long-running rift between President Donald Trump and Attorney General Jeff Sessions exploded into a public smackdown, with Trump accusing Sessions of failing to take control of the Justice Department and Sessions responding that he "will not be improperly influenced by political considerations."

Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, Aug. 23, 2023 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 060 ~ 71 of 71

The United States and China imposed tariff increases on an additional \$16 billion of each other's goods. One year ago: A jury convicted two men of conspiring to kidnap Michigan Gov. Gretchen Whitmer in 2020, a victory for prosecutors in a plot that was broken up by the FBI and described as a rallying cry for a U.S. civil war by anti-government extremists. Adam Fox and Barry Croft Jr. were also found guilty of conspiring to obtain a weapon of mass destruction as part of the plot. The husband of U.S. House Speaker Nancy Pelosi pleaded guilty to misdemeanor DUI related to a crash in California's wine country and agreed to spend five days in prison. The Nielsen Co. revealed that the "Game of Thrones" spinoff "House of the Dragon" was the most-watched series premiere ever for HBO.

Today's Birthdays: Actor Vera Miles is 93. Actor Barbara Eden is 92. Pro Football Hall of Famer Sonny Jurgensen is 89. Actor Richard Sanders is 83. Ballet dancer Patricia McBride is 81. Former Surgeon General Antonia Novello is 79. Country singer Rex Allen Jr. is 76. Actor David Robb is 76. Singer Linda Thompson is 76. Actor Shelley Long is 74. Actor-singer Rick Springfield is 74. Country singer-musician Woody Paul (Riders in the Sky) is 74. Noor al-Hussein (Queen Noor of Jordan) is 72. Actor-producer Mark Hudson is 72. Actor Skipp Sudduth is 67. Rock musician Dean DeLeo (Army of Anyone; Stone Temple Pilots) is 62. Actor Jay Mohr is 53. Actor Ray Park is 49. Actor Scott Caan is 47. Country singer Shelly Fairchild is 46. Figure skater Nicole Bobek (BOH'-bek) is 46. Rock singer Julian Casablancas (The Strokes) is 45. Actor Joanne Froggatt is 43. Actor Jaime Lee Kirchner is 42. Actor Annie Ilonzeh is 40. Dance musician Sky Blu is 37. Actor Kimberly Matula is 35. Basketball player Jeremy Lin is 35.