

Groton Daily Independent

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Saturday, Sept. 2

CLOSED: Common Cents Community Thrift Store

Sunday, Sept. 3

St. John's Lutheran/Zion worship with communion. St. John's at 9 a.m., Zion at 11 a.m.

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

Groton CM&A: Sunday School at 9:15 a.m., Worship Service at 10:30 a.m.

Catholic: SEAS Confession, 7:45-8:15 a.m., SEAS Mass, 8:30 a.m.; Turton Confession, 10:30-10:45 a.m.; Turton Mass, 11 a.m.

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

United Methodist: Worship with communion. Conde at 8:30 a.m., Coffee Hour at 9:30 a.m., Groton at 10:30a .m.

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

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



Monday, Sept. 4

No Senior Menu

No School

CLOSED: The Pantry at Groton Community Center

Tuesday, Sept. 5

Senior Menu: Ranch chicken breast, rice pilaf, cauliflower and pea salad, cookie, fruit, whole wheat bread.

St. John's Lutheran LWML Ladies Aid, 1 p.m.

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

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

City Council Meeting, 7 p.m.

Cross country at Britton, 4 p.m.

Boys soccer at James Valley Christian, 4 p.m.

Volleyball at Webster (7th/C at 5 p.m., 8th/JV at 6 p.m. with varsity to follow)

United Methodist: Bible Study, 10 a.m.

Groton unit 39 will have their its meeting at the post home. Meal at 6 and meeting begins at 6:30. At this meeting you can pay your membership dues and help make a plan for our new Auxiliary year.

OPEN: Recycling Trailer in Groton

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The
Bulletin
by Newsweek

World in Brief

Joseph Biggs and Zachary Rehl were sentenced Thursday to 17 and 15 years, respectively.

Mohamed Al Fayed, the wealthy businessman who questioned the events surrounding the 1997 car crash that killed Princess Diana and his son Dodi, has died at age 94.

A judge appointed by former President Barack Obama has dismissed a case seeking to block former President Donald Trump from appearing on Florida's 2024 primary ballot due to his alleged role in the Capitol riot on January 6, 2021.

The family of Ta'Kiya Young, the pregnant Black woman who was fatally shot outside an Ohio supermarket by police who suspected her of shoplifting, is calling for the arrest of the officer who fired the gun.

Ruby Franke, the woman who offered parenting advice on her "8 Passengers" YouTube channel, was arrested in Utah this week amid child abuse suspicions, local authorities said.

French President Emmanuel Macron said there will be "intractable" enforcement of a new and controversial school ban on robes often worn by Muslims when students return to classrooms next week.

Narcan is becoming available over-the-counter in the U.S. this month. Some major pharmacies expect to have the opioid overdose treatment on shelves next week, though experts are concerned its suggested \$44.99 retail price may be too costly.

Prosecutors in Germany have charged a 98-year-old former Nazi concentration camp guard with being complicit in the murders of more than 3,300 people.

In the ongoing war in Ukraine, Ukrainian troops have made "notable progress" against Russia in the Zaporizhzhia region over the last few days, according to White House officials. Meanwhile, a suspected Ukrainian drone has damaged a building in the western Russian town of Kurchatov, which is home to the Kursk Nuclear Power Plant. The plant said it's "operating normally" and that radiation in the area is at a "natural level."

TALKING POINTS

"He sincerely believes that the next step after the accusations and the declaration of impeachment will be an assassination of [former President Donald] Trump. But this man, who is currently the most popular English-speaking journalist, signed his own death warrant," Rossiya-1 talk show host Vladimir Solovyov said of former Fox News host Tucker Carlson.

"Right now, the Senate is the most privileged nursing home in the country. Mitch McConnell has done some great things, and he deserves credit. But you have to know when to leave. That is why I am strongly in support of term limits in this country," 2024 GOP presidential candidate and former U.S. Ambassador to the United Nations Nikki Haley told Fox News.

"The actions of Mr. [Kenneth] Chesebro and Ms. [Sidney] Powell are akin to oil and water; wholly separate and impossible to mix (into one conspiracy)," Chesebro's attorneys said in a motion seeking to have his expedited trial severed from that of Sidney Powell, a fellow ex-attorney for Donald Trump who is facing charges alongside the former president in Georgia..

What to Watch in the Days Ahead

President Joe Biden is set to visit Florida to survey damage caused by Hurricane Idalia on Saturday.

The college football season officially kicks off this weekend, with dozens of teams scheduled to compete today and on Sunday.

It's Labor Day weekend, viewed by many as bringing about the end of summer.

Officials with the United Nations Independent International Commission of Inquiry on Ukraine will be wrapping up a weeklong investigation of alleged human rights violations amid the ongoing Russia-Ukraine war. Their trip is scheduled to conclude with a Monday press conference in Kyiv.

Russian President Vladimir Putin is expected to host a meeting with Turkish leader Recep Tayyip Erdogan in Sochi on Monday.

Vice President Kamala Harris will be traveling to Jakarta, Indonesia, on Monday to meet with Indo-Pacific leaders and attend the U.S.-ASEAN Summit and the East Asia Summit.

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Football: Groton Area 50, Dakota Hills 0

Groton Area Tigers

Rushing: 30 carries for 234

Korbin Kucker: 7-59, 2 TDs

Christian Ehresmann: 1-57, 1 TD

Brevin Flihs: 3-50, 1 TD

Keegen Tracy: 3-38

Tristin McGannon: 7-21

Taylor Diegel: 2-8

Caden McInerney: 6-7

Lane Tietz: 1-(-6)

Passing:

Lane Tietz completed 6 of 8 for 143 yards, 3 TD

Receivers:

Colby Dunker: 2-61, 1 TD

Taylor Diegel: 1-43, 1 TD

Keegen Tracy: 2-18

Bevin Flihs: 1-17, 1 TD

Fumbles: Had 1, lost 0

Penalties: 6 for 35 yards

Defensive Leaders

Logan Ringgenberg: 9 tackles

Keegen Tracy: 1 Interception

Lane Tietz: 1 Interception

Karter Moody: Fumble Recovery

Christian Ehresmann: Fumble Recovery, 1 sack

Easton Ekern: 1 sack

Holden Sippel: 1 sack

Record: 2-1 (NEC: 1-1)

Next Game: Friday host Clark/Willow Lake

Scoring:

First Quarter

6:51: Groton: Korbin Kucker, 3 yard run. PAT: Kucker kick. 7-0

4:08: Groton: Taylor Diegel, 43 yard pass from Lane Tietz. PAT: Kucker kick. 14-0

1:16: Groton: Korbin Kucker, 11 yard run. PAT: Kucker kick. 21-0

Second Quarter

6:46: Groton: Brevin Flihs, 17 yard pass from Lane Tietz. PAT: Kucker kick. 28-0

3:12: Groton: Christian Ehresmann, 57 yard run. PAT: Kucker kick. 35-0

1:24: Groton: Colby Dunker 27 yard pass from Lane Tietz. PAT: Kucker kick. 42-0

Fourth Quarter

0:44: Groton: Brevin Flihs 27 yard run. PAT: Flihs run 50-0

Mercy Rule: End of Game

Dakota Hills Grizzlies

Rushing: 15 carries for -16 yards

Brook Dolen: 1-10

Linken Niles: 1-5

Witten Butler: 2-1

Evan Aker: 6-(-22)

Dylan Rumpza: 11-18

Passing:

Evan Aker completed 7 of 17 for 101 yards, 2 Int.

Receivers:

Tigh Gaikowski: 5-100

Jaxen Dockla 1-6

Witten Butler: 1-(-5)

Fumbles: Had 2, lost 2

Penalties: 1 for 1 yards

Defensive Leaders

Tigh Gaikowski: 8 tackles

Dylan Rumpza: 6 tackles

Brooks Dolan: 6 tackles

Record: 0-3

Next Game: at Roncalli

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Groton beats Dakota Hills

Groton Area defeated Dakota Hills Friday night in Waubay, 50-0. The Tigers scored 42 points in the first half with the younger players taking to the field in the second half. The final touchdown was scored with 44 seconds left in the game.

Lane Tietz passed for 143 yards and touchdowns with Colby Dunker, Teylor Diegel and Brevin Flihs all scoring from catches. Korbin Kucker scored two touchdowns and kicked all six PATs successfully. Christan Ehresmann and Flihs scored on the run. Kucker rushed for 59 yards, Ehresmann for 57 yards and Flihs for 50 yards. Logan Ringgenberg had nine tackles.

The game was broadcast live on GDILIVE.COM with Mike Nehls, Paul Kosel and Jeslyn Kosel, sponsored by Bary Keith at Harr Motors, BK Custom Ts & More, Bierman Farm Service, Blocker Construction, Dacotah Bank, Full Circle Ag, Groton Ag Partners, Groton Chamber, Groton Ford, John Sieh Agency, Krueger Brothers and Locke Electric.



Christian Ehresmann dashes for 57 yards to score. (Photo by Paul Kosel)



Colby Dunker gains yards after making the catch. (Photo by Paul Kosel)



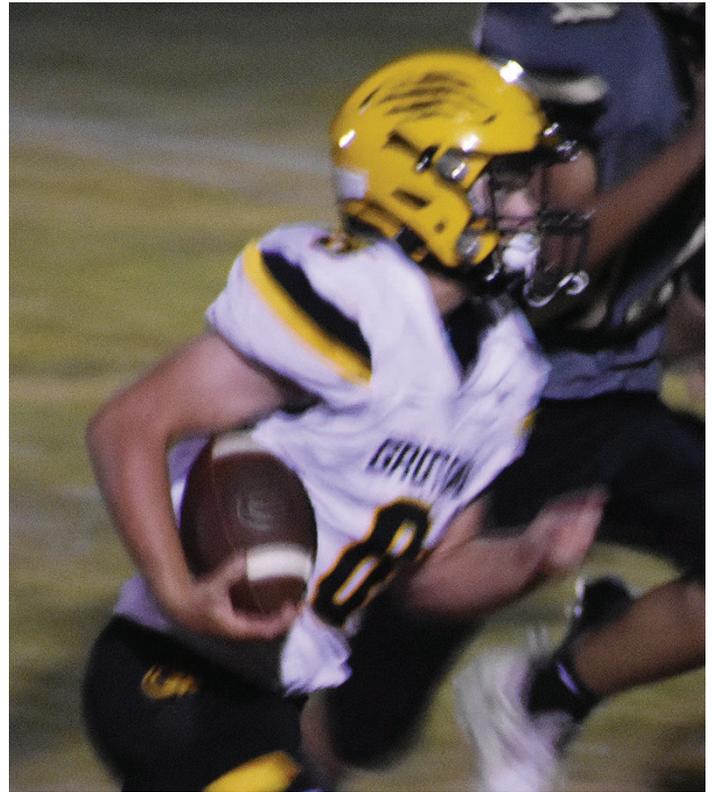
Lane Tietz had 143 yards passing with three touchdowns for the Tigers. (Photo by Paul Kosel)

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Taylor Diegel makes the catch and then darts for 43 yards to score. (Photo by Paul Kosel)



Brevin Flihs finds an opening and dashes to the endzone for the final touchdown of the game. (Photo by Paul Kosel)

Gilbert wins JV race at Redfield

The Groton Area cross country team took part in its first meet at Redfield where Rylee Gilbert won the junior varsity girls race. She took first place with a time of 12:237.33; Sydney Holmes was 19th with a time of 14:07.11, Rylie Rose was 37th with a time of 15:25.02 and Emily Clark was 55th with a time of 18:31.21. Overall, Groton Area placed sixth in a field of 10 teams.

In the boys junior varsity race, Tristin McGannon placed 18th with a time of 12:13.30; Kason Oswald was 66th with a time of 15:37.64 and Logan Clocksene was 68th with a time of 19:38.05.

Four boys ran the 5K varsity event with Jayden Schwan placing 71st with a time of 22:12.84; Gavin Kroll was 73rd with a time of 22:27.90; Nathan Unzen was 79th with a time of 23:08.67; and Garrett Schultz was 85th with a time of 25:42.61.

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Groton Community Transit

P.O. Box 693
205 E. 2nd Ave.
Groton, SD 57445

Dear Groton family,

Thank you, Thank you, for your loyalty and support through all of these years! We appreciate everyone of you!!

Although we have tried our best to keep the expenses low, our operating costs have increased significantly due to global factors in recent times. After carefully reviewing the finances, we have made a tough decision of increasing our transportation prices.

The change will take effect on Oct. 1, 2023 our rides within the town of Groton will be \$2 per ride, \$4 roundtrip. And, medical rides to Aberdeen from Groton will be \$20 roundtrip. Until then, you can take benefit of the old prices. We will honor old prices till Sept. 30, 2023!

We also offer a discounted pass for \$30 which includes 22 one way rides within Groton area!

We are a non-profit transportation service for the needs of all age groups of people!

As always, thank you for your loyalty and we thank you for your understanding and continued support!

Sincerely,

Dam Hansen & Eugenia Strom

Groton Transit

Steve Smith, Sherry Koehler, Topper Tostad, Dick Kolker

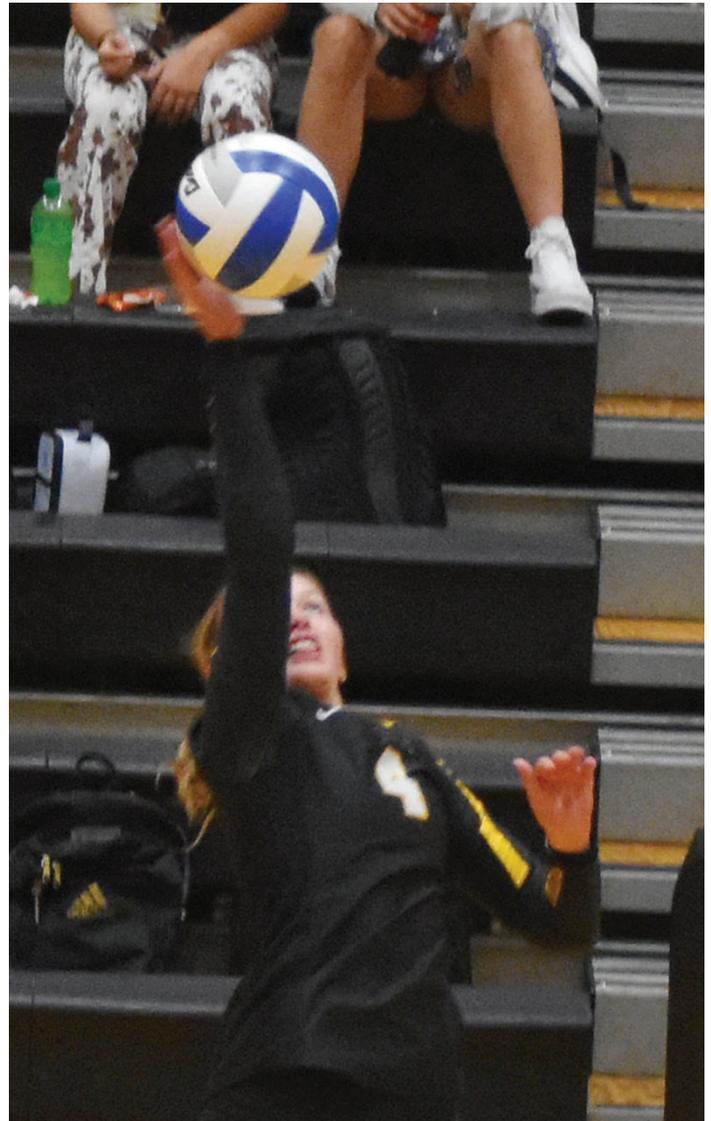
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Jerrica Locke
(Photo by Jeslyn Kosel)

Volleyball Photos from the Sisseton Match



Sydney Leicht
(Photo by Jeslyn Kosel)



Faith Traphgen
(Photo by Jeslyn Kosel)

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Laila Roberts
(Photo by Jeslyn Kosel)



Carly Guthmiller
(Photo by Jeslyn Kosel)



Anna Fjeldheim and Elizabeth Flihs
(Photo by Jeslyn Kosel)



Rylee Dunker
(Photo by Jeslyn Kosel)

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Jeslyn Kosel snapped this photo of the sunset at the football game Friday night in Waubay.

Wolves Volleyball Sweeps Arkansas Monticello

Monticello, Ark. – The Northern State University volleyball team split with Maryville University and Arkansas Monticello on Friday from the Blossom Classic. The Wolves dropped a 5-set match to the Saints and defeated the host Blossoms in three sets. Full results and match statistics were not submitted following the evening contest versus the Blossoms. Updates will be made to this release when they become available.

THE QUICK DETAILS

Final Score: NSU 2, MU 3

Final Score: NSU 3, UAM 0

HOW IT HAPPENED vs. MARYVILLE

Northern took a 2-set lead to open the match, defeating the Saints 25-14 and 27-25

MU rallied back in the third and fourth sets with scores of 25-21 and 25-22, before taking the match with a 15-11 set-5 victory

The Wolves hit .180 in the match, including a set high .346 in the first with ten kills and only one error

NSU led the match with ten aces and ten blocks, while adding 57 kills, 54 assists, and 91 digs

Defensively the Wolves held the Saints to a .195 attack percentage, forcing 22 total hitting errors

Three Wolves recorded double figure kills, led by true freshman Morissen Samuels with a career high 17

Keri Walker dished out 50 assists and added 12 digs, while Abby Meister led the defense with 28 digs

NORTHERN STATE STATISTICAL STANDOUTS

Morissen Samuels: 17 kills, .245 attack%, 11 digs, 1 block

Keri Walker: 50 assists, 12 digs, 4 blocks, 2 kills, 1 ace

Abby Meister: 28 digs, 2 aces

Sara Moberg: 14 digs, 5 aces

UP NEXT

Northern is back on the court tomorrow in Monticello taking on Truman State at 9 a.m. and Christian Brothers at 1 p.m. from the Blossom Classic.

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Girls Soccer remains at number two

Groton Area girls soccer team handed Dakota Valley its second loss of the season with 2-0 win. The game was played at Dakota Valley. Brooklyn Hansen scored off of a corner kick from Kennedy Hansen in the first half. Kennedy Hansen scored in the second half off of a corner kick. Groton Area remains at the number two spot in the seeding behind Tea Area. Tea Area plays more AA schools; thus, have more points despite playing fewer games so far.

#	Name	Season				Seed Pts
		W	L	T	PCT	PTS
1	 Tea Area	4	1	0	.800	45.200
2	 Groton Area	5	1	0	.833	43.000
3	 West Central	6	2	0	.750	42.625
4	 Dakota Valley	3	2	0	.600	41.200
5	 Sioux Falls Christian	3	2	0	.600	40.600
6	 Vermillion	2	3	0	.400	39.800
7	 St. Thomas More	1	5	0	.167	37.333
8	 Garretson	1	4	0	.200	37.000
9	 Belle Fourche	0	7	0	.000	35.429

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Groton Area boys soccer at number six

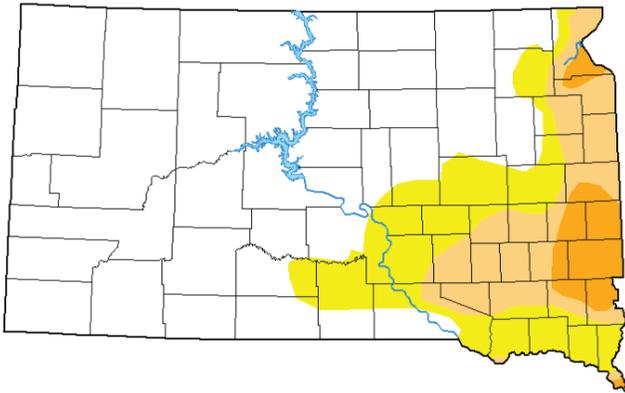
Groton Area boys soccer team moved up to number six with a 4-3 win over Dakota Valley. The game was played Friday at Dakota Valley. Jacob Zak and Braxton Imrie each had two goals

#	Name	Season				Seed Pts
		W	L	T	PCT	PTS
1	 Sioux Falls Christian	5	0	1	.917	44.417
2	 Vermillion	3	0	0	1.000	42.000
3	 Belle Fourche	3	2	0	.600	41.800
4	 Tea Area	3	2	0	.600	40.600
5	 Freeman Academy	1	0	1	.750	39.750
6	 Groton Area	2	4	0	.333	39.000
7	 James Valley Christian	1	3	0	.250	38.750
8	 St. Thomas More	2	3	0	.400	38.600
9	 Dakota Valley	0	3	1	.125	38.125
10	 West Central	0	4	0	.000	38.000
11	 Hot Springs	0	3	1	.125	37.875
12	 Custer	1	1	1	.500	34.250

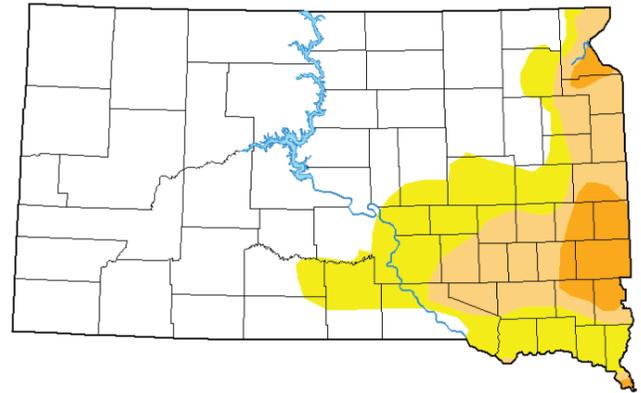
Drought Classification

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

Drought Monitor



August 29



August 22

On this week's map, degradations were made in northern portions of North Dakota and in eastern Kansas. Conversely, recent precipitation during the past 30-60-day period led to some minor improvements on the map in drought-affected areas of southeastern Nebraska. Across most of the Plains, hot and dry conditions prevailed this week except for some isolated shower activity along the Kansas-Nebraska border region where 1 to 3 inches were observed. Average temperatures for the week were well above normal (2 to 8 degrees F) with the greatest departures observed in northwestern North Dakota and eastern portions of Nebraska and Kansas.

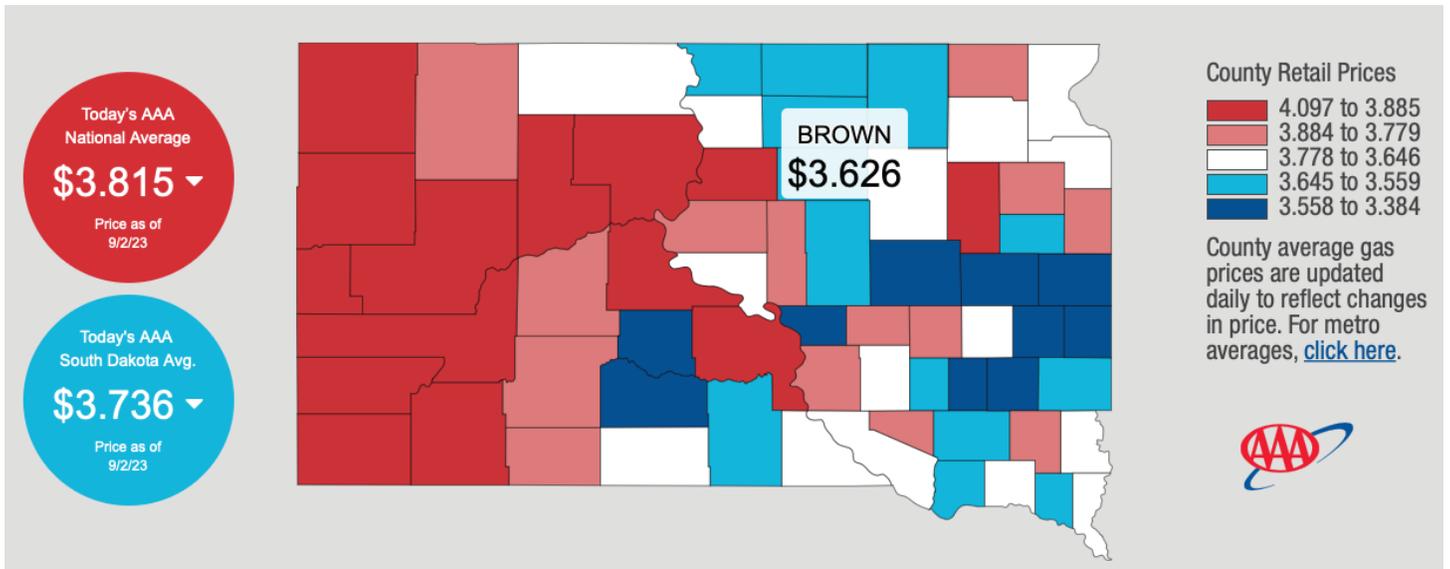
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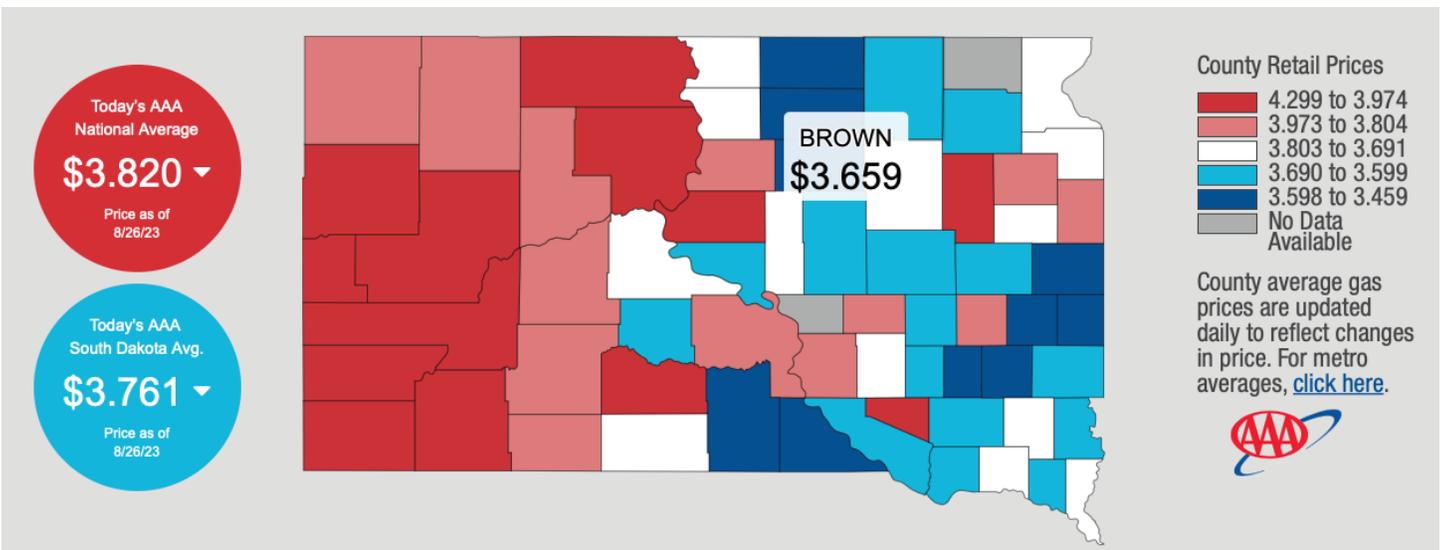
South Dakota Average Gas Prices

	Regular	Mid-Grade	Premium	Diesel
Current Avg.	\$3.736	\$3.901	\$4.365	\$4.248
Yesterday Avg.	\$3.738	\$3.882	\$4.346	\$4.243
Week Ago Avg.	\$3.761	\$3.911	\$4.369	\$4.165
Month Ago Avg.	\$3.770	\$3.912	\$4.365	\$3.941
Year Ago Avg.	\$3.779	\$3.945	\$4.431	\$4.898

This Week



Two Weeks Ago



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Groton City Council Meeting Agenda

September 5, 2023 – 7:00pm

City Hall – 120 N Main Street

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

- Approval of Agenda
- Public Comments - pursuant to SDCL 1-25-1
(Public Comments will offer the opportunity for anyone not listed on the agenda to speak to the council. Speaking time will be limited to 3 minutes. No action will be taken on questions or items not on the agenda.)
- Department Reports
- Discussion Regarding Wastewater Project(s)
- Surplus of Various Items
- Boulevard Trees
- Pickleball/Basketball Court Fence
- Airport Discussion – Darrell Hillestad
- Park Saferoom – Dean Marske from HKG Architects
- First Reading of Ordinance No. 770 Certifying 2024 City of Groton Property Tax Levy to Brown County
- Authorization for Cash Fund Transfer
- Minutes
- Bills
- Announcement: Family Fun Fest on Sept. 8, 2023 from 3:30pm to 5:30pm on Main Street
- Executive session personnel & legal 1-25-2 (1) & (3)
- Adjournment

Broton Daily Independent

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

September 5, 2023, 8:45 A.M.

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

1. Call To Order - Pledge of Allegiance
2. Approval of Agenda
3. Opportunity for Public Comment
4. Provisional Budget Hearing
5. Approve Planning & Zoning Board Alternate
6. Rachel Kippley, Fair Manager – Discuss Ticketing Agent for Brown County Fair
7. Consent Calendar
 - a. Approval of General Meeting Minutes from August 29, 2023
 - b. Claims
 - c. HR Report
 - d. Travel Requests
 - e. Lease
 - f. Claim Assignments
 - g. Set Hearing Date for Highway 5-year plan
 - h. Approve & Authorize Advertising for Landfill Scale Bids
8. Other Business
 - a. No Commission Meeting on September 12th
9. Executive Session (if requested per SDCL 1-25-2)
10. Adjourn

Brown County Commission Meeting

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

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

You can also dial in using your phone. United States: [+1 \(872\) 240-3311](tel:+18722403311)

Access Code: 601-168-909 #

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

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

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

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

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



On China trade, South Dakota farmers face an 'uneasy balance'

Bart Pfankuch

South Dakota News Watch

As political apprehension over the U.S.-China relationship rises, South Dakota farmers find themselves forced to think more globally and find a way to support American national security interests while protecting their own need to make a living.

On the one hand, South Dakota farmers want to maintain their industry's existing relationship with China, which represents the state's largest international importer of South Dakota agricultural products.

In 2022, China spent roughly \$1.4 billion a year to purchase soybeans, dairy products and meat raised in the Rushmore State.

"Pork is their main protein source, and they're very large consumers of pork, so we're very concerned about the trade relationship we have with them," said Glenn Muller, director of the South Dakota Pork Producers Council. "China is one of our major markets we look to, along with Japan and Mexico, so we're very concerned about maintaining those markets."



Glenn Muller



South Dakota soybean farmers are keeping a close eye on the state's trade relationship with China, which is a major importer of products from the Rushmore State. (Photo: Shutterstock)

At the same time, farmers are aware of the increasingly strong rhetoric among U.S. government officials to keep America safe from Chinese interventions, be it from spy balloons floating across the skies, by social media platforms like TikTok, through threat of cyber attacks and even potential military aggression.

Farmers who want to keep a strong trade relationship with China also support efforts by national and state politicians to talk tough and increase restrictions on the ability of the communist country to buy land, run businesses or make other inroads into American life, commerce and security.

"We realize our governments are having issues, real national security issues, and we totally understand that those need to be addressed," said Jerry Schmitz, director of the South Dakota Soybean Association.

Soybean growers, whose product is the top commodity shipped from South Dakota to China each year with a value of \$1.2 billion, are trying to toe a fine line in supporting their government while also feeding the world – and their own families at home, he said.

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Jerry Schmitz

"We certainly need to protect our country first. However, we're also selling a product to feed China's people, and we see that people are different from their government," Schmitz said.

Billions of dollars in play

Overall, South Dakota exports about \$6.7 billion worth of goods and services to foreign countries each year, about \$5 billion of which is from agricultural products.

China remains a critical market for numerous South Dakota goods and services, serving as the top export destination for goods produced in the state and as the third-largest importer of services originating in the state, according to the U.S.-China Business Council.

In 2022, about 28% of goods produced in South Dakota were sold to China, and 5% of global services exports headed there that year, the council reported. South Dakota saw a 14% increase in goods sold to China from 2020 to 2022, the council said.

The top exported goods to China that year were soybean oils, seeds and grains, with \$1.2 billion in sales, followed by dairy products (\$30 million), medical equipment (\$24 million), paper products (\$16 million) and meats (\$13 million.) The top services provided by South Dakota to China were credit-related services with \$28 million in annual sales, followed by other financial services (\$25 million.)

Volatility evident in pork market

South Dakota pork producers were provided an example in the volatility of international markets over the past few years.

Hog farmers in South Dakota and across the U.S. saw a boost in export levels to China over the past three years or so as the Asian country battled a devastating outbreak of African swine fever in its own hog farms, Muller said.

But of late, China has rebuilt its internal pork production, which has reduced the need for foreign imports, including pork from South Dakota, he said.

"They had to import more products to supply the protein needs for their consumers because they lost most of their herd," Muller said. "But since they've rebuilt their herd, there's less reliance on imports."

The U.S. pork industry exports about 27% of its total production of pork, with top markets in China, Japan and Mexico among others, Muller said. South Dakota is home to about 800 pork farms that produce about 3.1 million hogs a year, he said.

The South Dakota agriculture industry is aware of and concerned about the growing anti-China political rhetoric that has arisen in the U.S. in recent years, including by Gov. Kristi Noem, he said.

The governor included China on her list of "evil foreign governments" that the state should not contract with and also banned state use of Chinese-owned Tiktok. Noem and U.S. Sen.



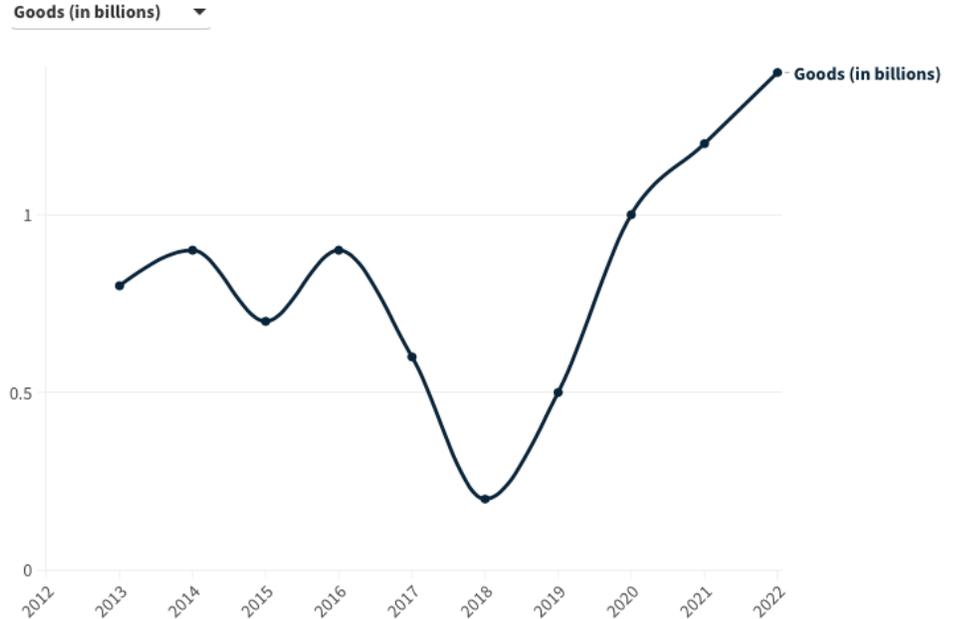
Soybeans are the top commodity sold from South Dakota to China each year. (Photo: Shutterstock)

Mike Rounds have also sought to limit Chinese ownership of land in the U.S.

"The largest risk to America's security is posed by the Chinese Communist Party – including to our financial security," Noem wrote in August to the investment firm Vanguard, urging the company to divest from China in one of its largest international funds.

One example of the complicated relationship with China is that while Noem and others are working to limit Chinese influence, the country is home to the meat producing conglomerate that owns Smithfield Foods. It operates a large pork processing plant in Sioux Falls that serves producers across the region and employs about 3,700 people.

South Dakota exports to China by year



Source: US-China Business Council • Graphic: Michael Klinski / SD News Watch

Chinese investors seek stability

The challenge of balancing those competing concerns with China is readily apparent when Chinese buyers visit and speak with South Dakota producers, Schmitz said. Those buyers want to know that if they begin trade with South Dakota that they can rely on the relationship to remain stable and provide a consistent flow of food products.

"This is a way to have a toe in the door, and while we do get questions from Chinese folks about why the rhetoric is so harsh, we feel it's against their government and not their common people," he said. "So, in terms of our relationships with customers, it is a concern, but also, we want to make sure we maintain the communication back and forth so we can curry favor with that nation."

China concerns may prompt trade changes

The national security concerns over the U.S.-China relationship are bipartisan in nature and partly originate within concerns that the trade relationship between the two nations has not been as positive for the U.S. as it has for China, said Luke Lindberg, CEO of South Dakota Trade, an organization formed this year to bolster state trading options.

The continued concerns make it likely that some type of shift in America's trade relation-

— “ —

(China) is not a country with our same values. Chinese investments and relationships are never symbiotic or a two-way street. China is always looking out for No. 1.

” —



Michelle Bekkering, U.S. Global Leadership Coalition director

ship is imminent, he said.

"The U.S.-China relationship is undoubtedly the most frequently talked about or discussed trade matter at this time," Lindberg said. "There's a largely bipartisan consensus in Washington that the existing U.S.-China relationship over the past several decades hasn't yielded the results that the U.S. would consider to be positive, so there needs to be a change in that relationship to level things out or a full reset."

South Dakota Trade hosted an event in Sioux Falls on Aug. 23 called the Midwest Agricultural Export Summit, which included a session on U.S.-China trade relations.

The world beyond China

Lindberg said volatility in the ongoing trade relationship with China was shown in a 25% decrease in U.S. imports from China in the first half of 2023, which could also result in a decrease in U.S. exports to China.

"China is looking elsewhere to procure their commodities," he said. "They're actively looking for alternative suppliers, and we at the same time need to be looking at alternative buyers."



“ (China is) actively looking for alternative suppliers, and we at the same time need to be looking at alternative buyers. ”

Luke Lindberg, CEO of South Dakota Trade



Those target markets for expanding South Dakota trade goods are likely to include Mexico, already a strong trade partner, as well as newer markets in Africa and East Asia, Lindberg said.

"As our relationship (with China) frays, there is a need for us to have other market opportunities to sell our goods around the world," he said. "We need to be able to help build and foster new relationships around the world that build resilience in our export markets."

South Dakota Trade has planned its first international visit with a planned trip to Mexico by Lt. Gov. Larry Rhoden, state Agriculture and Natural Resources secretary Hunter Roberts and representatives of the soybean industry, Lindberg said.

Trade wars painful for producers

Previous attempts to gain political advantage over a country by restricting trade with that nation have historically been bad news for American farmers, agricultural group leaders said.

The grain embargo with the former Soviet Union in 1980 was damaging to the U.S.

Source: US-China Business Council; Images and graphic: Canva

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agricultural industry as was former President Donald Trump's trade war with China, which in 2018 cut South Dakota imports to China by more than half, they said. Schmitz noted that the Trump administration enacted a program to provide financial help to farmers with losses.

China is a bonafide concern for the U.S., as the communist country remains the holder of huge levels of American debt and has a terrible record on human rights, said Michelle Bekkering, a director with the U.S. Global Leadership Coalition who spoke at the recent export summit in Sioux Falls.

Midwest farmers should not expect an easing of tensions with China anytime soon and must be prepared for any change and further tensions that may come, said Bekkering, an Iowa native who grew up on a soybean farm..

"There's always going to be this friction between what we see going on in China and how we get ahead of it and be wary," Bekkering said. "But how do you rectify that with your soy producers who say, 'Don't cut off our markets.' I would call that an uneasy balance."



Smithfield Foods, a major pork processor and employer in Sioux Falls, was purchased by a Chinese firm in 2013. (Photo:

Bart Pfankuch / South Dakota News Watch)

China security concerns valid

Bekkering said U.S. leaders should be "wary" of China because in her 25 years of experience in international development, she has seen that China may be a financially valuable partner but requires caution.

"This is not a country with our same values," she said. "Chinese investments and relationships are never symbiotic or a two-way street. China is always looking out for No. 1."

And yet, Bekkering also does not believe that the U.S. trade relationship will be cut off in dramatic fashion anytime soon.

"Back in the heartland, you have to have these frank and honest discussions, but our economy here is really dependent on them," she said. "We need to work for balance and fair trade. But at the same time, we can't pretend that we're going to just decouple from China because it's just not practical at the end of the day."

American farmers, meanwhile, should continue to protect their Chinese interests and also begin to look elsewhere to diversify their trading options, Bekkering said. She was pleased to see groups like South Dakota Trade taking a lead role in expanding market opportunities.

"You will not see a cessation in trade with China, and we need to continue to work diplomatic angles to make sure our producers and our manufacturers are getting their fair share," she said. "But meanwhile, let's make sure we are on the ball and really investing and building up those new markets."

New markets, new products

Enhancing trade opportunities for South Dakota farmers is likely to not only include new trade markets but also new ways to sell goods produced in the state, Schmitz said. Soybeans and byproducts long used as human food and animal feed can also be used to replace rubber in tires or be part of a move to alternative fuels, he said.

Building new trade relationships must be an ongoing process, and it takes patience and diligence to es-

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establish a stable partnership, Schmitz said.

"The U.S. soybean organizations were in China 20 years before we sold our first soybean," he said. "To diversify in other countries, it takes time, building trust, relationships and facilities. It's not an overnight thing. It's a slow build upwards."

And when it comes to China specifically, Schmitz said soybean producers in South Dakota hope that commerce centered around food can overcome any political battles and be seen instead as a way to build bridges through shared humanity.

"We know buyers are asking the question, 'Are you a reliable supplier because we see people in your country saying you shouldn't be trading with China, so are we next?'" Schmitz said. "But we have our own lives to live and they do as well in China, and we actually believe that these goods can be used as a tool of peace."

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



South Dakota's soybean industry, which includes production of ethanol and its byproducts, is a major player in the international export market. Shown here is the Poet Biofuels plant near Chancellor, South Dakota. (Photo: Bart Pfankuch / South Dakota

News Watch)



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



SOUTH DAKOTA SEARCHLIGHT

<https://southdakotasearchlight.com>

Legislator's conflict of interest puts meaning of 'indirect' under microscope

BY: MAKENZIE HUBER - SEPTEMBER 1, 2023 4:41 PM

What does "indirect" mean?

The question has been at the forefront of political discourse in South Dakota for weeks after former Sen. Jessica Castleberry, R-Rapid City, was found to have accepted over \$500,000 in allegedly illegal indirect benefits from state government while serving as a state legislator.

The state constitution prohibits legislators from being interested "directly or indirectly" in contracts with the state or counties. In the handful of state Supreme Court cases and opinions dealing with the matter over the last 135 years, none has explicitly defined "indirect," said Michael Card, associate professor emeritus of political science at the University of South Dakota.

Castleberry has said she consulted with an attorney and believed her company – a preschool – was eligible for federal pandemic relief funds distributed by the state. Attorney General Marty Jackley explained to the press in a news conference in August that although the funds did not go straight to Castleberry and were therefore not a "direct" benefit, they were an "indirect" benefit since they went to her business.

Since the matter was settled in mid-August with Castleberry agreeing to a repayment plan and resigning, it's caused lawmakers and the public to question legislators' personal and professional relationships.

Sens. Helene Duhamel and Randy Deibert are directly paid by counties — Duhamel as the public information officer for the Pennington County Sheriff's Office, and Deibert as a Lawrence County commissioner. Duhamel's employment and Deibert's latest commission term began before they were elected to the Legislature.

At least a half-dozen legislators or their businesses, as highlighted in a Dakota Scout story, are listed as vendors in state finance documents. Some legislators' spouses are employed by the state, including House Majority Leader Will Mortenson, R-Pierre; Sen. Jim Mehlhaff, R-Pierre; and Rep. Chris Kassin, R-Vermillion.

Such situations could violate the constitution, said Rich Helsper, an attorney at Helsper, McCarty and Rasmussen Law Firm in Brookings.

"The two words," Helsper said, referencing "direct" and "indirect," can "cover virtually anything which may have been appropriate 135 years ago but not now," he said. Women, for example, are more independent than they were when the state was formed and the constitution was written, and are more likely to have their own job or business that could indirectly benefit a spouse who's a legislator. The government has thousands more employees today and is far more involved in business contracts, Helsper said.

Helsper represented Carol Pitts in a conflict of interest lawsuit in front of the state Supreme Court in 2001. Pitts, who was a legislator from Brookings, was also a state employee through South Dakota State University Extension. The court decided in a 3-2 opinion that her SDSU employment contract, which was renewed on a yearly basis and therefore renewed when she was a legislator, was an indirect benefit that violated the constitution and was therefore null and void. The court also found that the state properly refused to pay her for the SDSU job while she was a legislator.

As that case showed, the state Supreme Court could further define "direct" or "indirect" benefits if it hears more cases on the subject or is asked to issue an advisory opinion.

Voters could also tackle the issue through a ballot question, and legislators could address the matter with rules or legislation.

Senate President Pro Tempore Lee Schoenbeck, R-Watertown, hopes to proceed with rule changes.

"I hope this is an objective, nonpartisan effort to help interpret the constitution so legislative candidates

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and current legislators can comply with it," Schoenbeck told South Dakota Searchlight.

History of conflict of interest: 'It's exactly what our constitutional framers wanted'

In 2001, Helsper argued the constitutional provision didn't apply to Pitts' job at SDSU because she was probably "ten levels removed from any authority position," Helsper told South Dakota Searchlight. Therefore, her role as a legislator and votes cast wouldn't affect her SDSU contract, he contended.

Yet the language of the constitution is plain and its meaning "cannot be mistaken," the Supreme Court wrote in its majority opinion.

"Specifically, this broad prohibition extends to any contract entered into with the State," the Supreme Court decided.

In a 2020 advisory opinion, the Supreme Court said the law is "unambiguous" and "must be applied as it reads."

The provision is intended to prevent any possibility of a legislator monetarily benefiting from their position, Card explained.

"This is a wide net," Card said. "But I think it's also to prevent the appearance that people elected to government positions are in it for themselves. It's exactly what our constitutional framers wanted to prevent from happening."

Helsper believes the provision should be repealed or changed so the Legislature could readdress and redefine conflicts of interest. There should be some restrictions focused on governmental employees in authoritative positions, he said.

"In Carol's case, the Supreme Court said at least a couple of times that all parties were dealing in good faith and there were no improper motives," Helsper said. "That is why I say that thousands of state and county employees should not be shut out of the legislative process."

Repealing the constitutional provision won't be an easy task, he said.

There have been four attempts to revise the constitutional language in the last 53 years. None of them came close to passing, Card said.

"Eliminating this provision would truly stand a snowball's chance in Maui," Card said. "I don't think the public would vote for it."

The decision to add the conflict of interest provision was made in the aftermath of territorial government corruption, Card said. Territorial Indian Agent Walter Burleigh, for example, hired his wife and two children to teach English to tribal members at the rate of what would today be \$70,000 each, he said. And John Albyne Burbank, the fourth governor of Dakota Territory, used his authority to improve his own financial well being.

"This is all about public acceptance of governance," Card said. "We have to have the trust of the people to make a republic work."

Legislators have limited options when they have a conflict involving legislation. They can be absent or excused from a vote, but they can't abstain from a vote that's called while they're on the floor of the state House or Senate. And an option to abstain wouldn't keep legislators from violating the constitution anyway, Attorney General Marty Jackley said. The constitution strictly prohibits a legislator from contracts with the state, even if they didn't vote on a bill that concerned such contracts.

Ethical complaints against legislators can go to an ad-hoc legislative ethics committee made up of the Legislature's own members, though it is at the discretion of the Legislature to take on a complaint and form a committee. The State Government Accountability Board doesn't have jurisdiction over the state Legislature.

Legislature plans to tackle definition: 'Indirect doesn't stretch into infinity'

In Schoenbeck's 14-year tenure in the Legislature, he can recall instances when potential candidates or appointed legislators chose not to run for office because they were major shareholders or officers of companies. Their political aspirations interfered with potential business dealings.

But after the Castleberry situation, Schoenbeck said he's heard concerns about potential candidates second guessing political careers because of more minor business associations or dealings.

Gov. Kristi Noem issued an executive order on the matter in the wake of the Castleberry situation. It requires state offices under her control to include language in contracts requiring signers to acknowledge they're aware of the law Castleberry allegedly violated.

State Auditor Rich Sattgast's office is also reevaluating how to monitor payments and is writing conflict of interest guidelines for legislators.

"I've been looking at all kinds of different hypotheticals that we could run into with kind of a broad view of how these funds — how any of the state funds — are working with legislators," Sattgast told South Dakota Searchlight.

Sattgast suggested any transaction between a legislator's business and the state could be illegal, using a hypothetical situation where a legislator owns a hotel unknowingly booked by a state employee while on official business.

The Bureau of Finance and Management is implementing a new accounting system in a few years that will automatically cross-check financial interests and disclosures from legislators to avoid any such payments, Sattgast said. The upgrade is part of a \$70 million investment with one-time funding.

Schoenbeck is working with the Legislative Research Council to draft and introduce policies that could be adopted by the Executive Board later this year, including a disclaimer saying the South Dakota Supreme Court interprets the constitution.

"Indirect doesn't stretch into infinity," Schoenbeck said. "It has to mean something realistically."

Clearly defining indirect benefits in a policy could help the public, legislators and potential candidates, he added.

"This isn't about any individual person. This isn't an executive session matter," Schoenbeck said. "This is a discussion the public needs to have. It's all going to be in the public because they need to understand it."

But Card said rule changes could be insufficient, and other efforts could be difficult. If the Legislature were to change the definition of "contract" in state law, for example, Card said that could have unintended consequences. Such a vote could be subjected to a public referendum, he added. And changing constitutional language requires a two-thirds vote in each legislative chamber and a majority vote of the public.

"Unless the Supreme Court limits 'indirect' or says 'indirect' doesn't apply to less than a controlling interest in an entity," Card said, "then we're just going to have trouble."

— South Dakota Searchlight's John Hult contributed to this report.

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

Gun law raises funding concerns for school hunting programs

Thune among Republican senators objecting to Education Department guidance

BY: SAMANTHA DIETEL - SEPTEMBER 2, 2023 5:00 AM

WASHINGTON — Republican lawmakers are concerned that the Biden administration is interpreting last year's bipartisan gun safety law to cut funding for school archery and hunting programs, though programs themselves say they haven't been affected.

A provision in the law — a bipartisan effort to curb gun violence that established new criminal offenses, and expanded background check requirements and the scope of existing restrictions, according to the bill summary — bans education funding for "training in the use of a dangerous weapon." Republicans in Congress have noted concern that could lead to funding cuts for school programs that encourage gun safety.

The law included a provision that "prohibits the use of elementary and secondary education funds to provide any person with a dangerous weapon or training in the use of a dangerous weapon."

The Department of Education has interpreted this provision to defund school archery and hunting programs across the country, scores of Republican lawmakers say, which prompted wide disapproval.

However, there is little evidence that any programs have yet been affected.

Patrick O'Connell, director of training and technology at the National Archery in the Schools Program, an organization that coordinates school archery programs across the country and has spoken out in defense

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of archery and firearm safety education, said he is unaware of any schools that have been affected by a loss of funding.

"Just a large number of schools concerned about that possibility," he said.

Spokespeople for the Education Department did not return messages seeking comment.

Criticism from lawmakers

Funding for hunting and archery programs generally comes from student fees, organized fundraisers, donations or state funds — with federal money adding relatively little, Michael Bloxom, the NASP Alabama state coordinator, said.

But congressional Republicans have still voiced objections about potential losses in that funding.

In an Aug. 4 letter, 66 House Republicans pressed Education Secretary Miguel Cardona to restore funding for archery and hunting programs.

The representatives praised the long safety records of such programs and the opportunities that they provide for students.

"These scholastic programs are where millions of kids learn safe and responsible firearm handling and storage, and this egregious, irresponsible overreach by your Department will have far-reaching negative consequences," the representatives wrote.

In an Aug. 11 letter to President Joe Biden, 19 Republican senators — including Sen. John Thune of South Dakota — demanded that the administration withdraw Education Department guidance specifying that federal funds cannot be used for firearm training programs. That reversal would allow school archery and hunting programs to continue receiving federal funds, they said.

The senators, led by U.S. Sen. John Barrasso, a Wyoming Republican and the third-ranking member of the Senate GOP, used the letter to highlight the importance of school archery and hunting programs.

"While the administration claims to be eliminating dangerous activities, this guidance will, in fact, have the opposite effect," the senators wrote. "These programs provided thousands of students with the opportunity to learn proper instruction for firearm and archery safety."

The senators, none of whom were among the 14 Senate Republicans who joined the full Democratic caucus in voting for the bill last year, called on the Biden administration to reverse "this misguided decision and ensure funding for these vital programs is not withheld."

Objections haven't come only from Republicans. Sen. Jon Tester, a Montana Democrat, also wrote a letter to Cardona to express concern about how the interpretation of the gun law may affect school archery and hunting programs.

"In Montana, our schools have long offered shooting sport and hunter safety classes that play an important role in teaching safety and personal responsibility to students," Tester said in his letter. "Outdoor recreation is foundational to our western way of life and any reduction of federal support for these educational programs is unacceptable."

U.S. Rep. Mark Green, a Republican from Tennessee who chairs the U.S. House Homeland Security Committee, introduced a bill on Aug. 1 meant to ensure federal funding for school archery and hunting programs would continue.

Green said that the Biden administration should not prevent Tennessee schoolchildren from receiving safety and skills training in archery, hunting or other shooting sports.

"The classes President Biden wants to defund aren't only about hunting and archery, they are about teaching young Americans how to respect nature and to focus on a goal," Green said. "The Biden administration's decision to strip funding for these important classes doesn't just miss the mark, it misses the entire target."

The Department of Education issued a statement to Fox News last month that it would work to restore federal funding for these programs.

Signs of impact

Officials with state chapters of NASP say they have been unaffected by the recent funding interpretation. Generally the only cost to the schools may come in the form of teacher salaries, Bloxom, the Alabama

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NASP coordinator, said.

Still, there has been confusion and concern from people involved in the program.

"There was a lot of concern and discussion among teachers and parents, and a lot of that fear was due to a lack of information," Bloxom said.

Alabama's programs have not been interrupted so far, he said.

"We are hopeful a compromise on the interpretation by the US DOE will permanently alleviate the fear that these important programs could be affected in the future," Bloxom said.

Wyoming NASP coordinator William Poole said the legislation has been misinterpreted and that it is unclear how it would impact schools in his state.

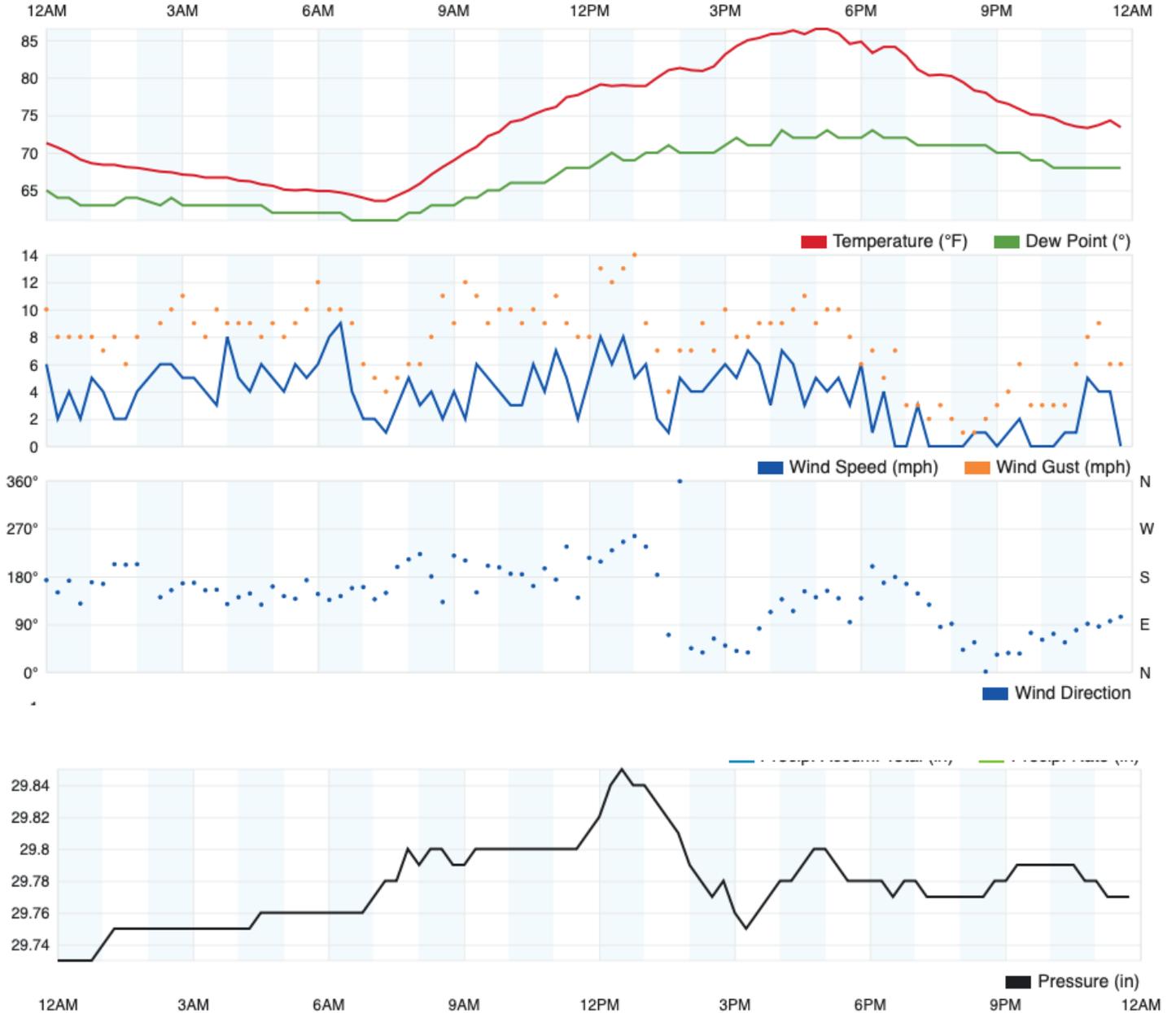
"Our agency and partners are working to understand the intent of the legislation," Poole said. "We will continue to support and advocate wholeheartedly for hunter education and archery in the schools. These programs play a vital role in fostering conservation ethic in our youngest citizens."

Samantha Dietel is a reporter intern in Washington, D.C. She is pursuing a degree in journalism at the University of Missouri-Columbia. She has previously covered the Missouri legislature in Jefferson City as a reporter for the Columbia Missourian.

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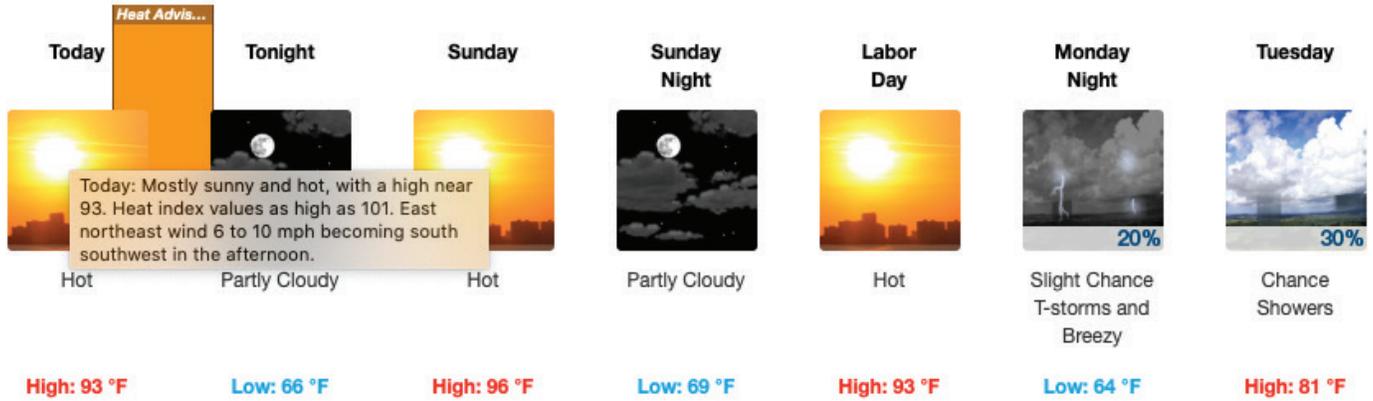
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Yesterday's Groton Weather Graphs



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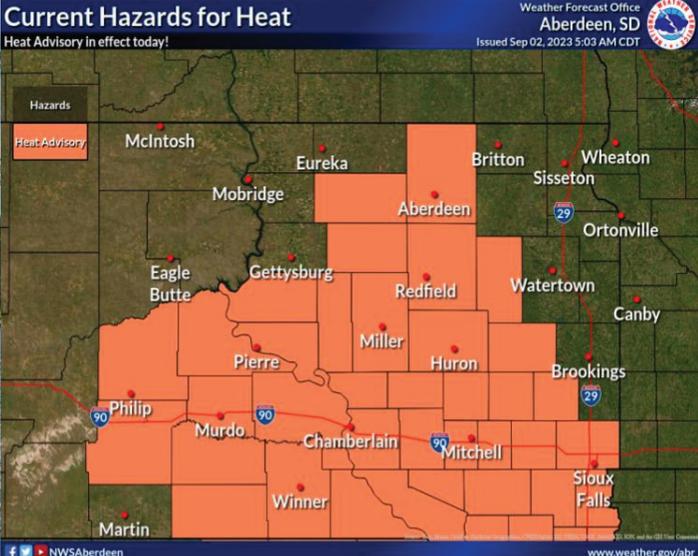
Holiday Weekend Heat

September 2, 2023
5:41 AM

Advisories in place for heat index values around 100 degrees or higher

Current Hazards for Heat

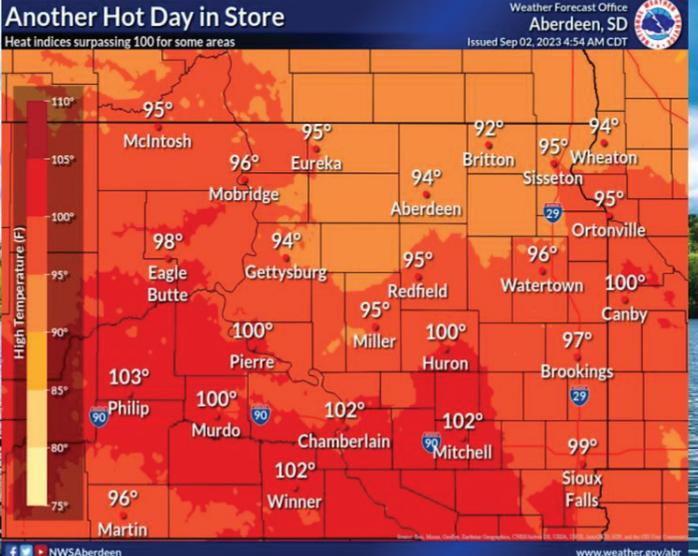
Heat Advisory in effect today!



Weather Forecast Office Aberdeen, SD
Issued Sep 02, 2023 5:03 AM CDT

Another Hot Day in Store

Heat indices surpassing 100 for some areas



Weather Forecast Office Aberdeen, SD
Issued Sep 02, 2023 4:54 AM CDT



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

National Weather Service
Aberdeen, SD

Heat will continue to build across the Northern Plains today, and persist right into Monday. Highs today will top out in the 90s to around 100 degrees, with heat index values reaching 100 to 105 degrees for some areas. Heat Advisories are in place across portions of the region. Stay safe in the heat by staying hydrated and taking frequent breaks if engaging in outdoor activities.

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Yesterday's Groton Weather

High Temp: 85.9 °F at 4:15 PM

Low Temp: 63.6 °F at 7:30 AM

Wind: 14 mph at 1:00 PM

Precip: : 0.00

Day length: 13 hours, 16 minutes

Today's Info

Record High: 104 in 1913

Record Low: 35 in 1896

Average High: 80

Average Low: 52

Average Precip in Sept.: .14

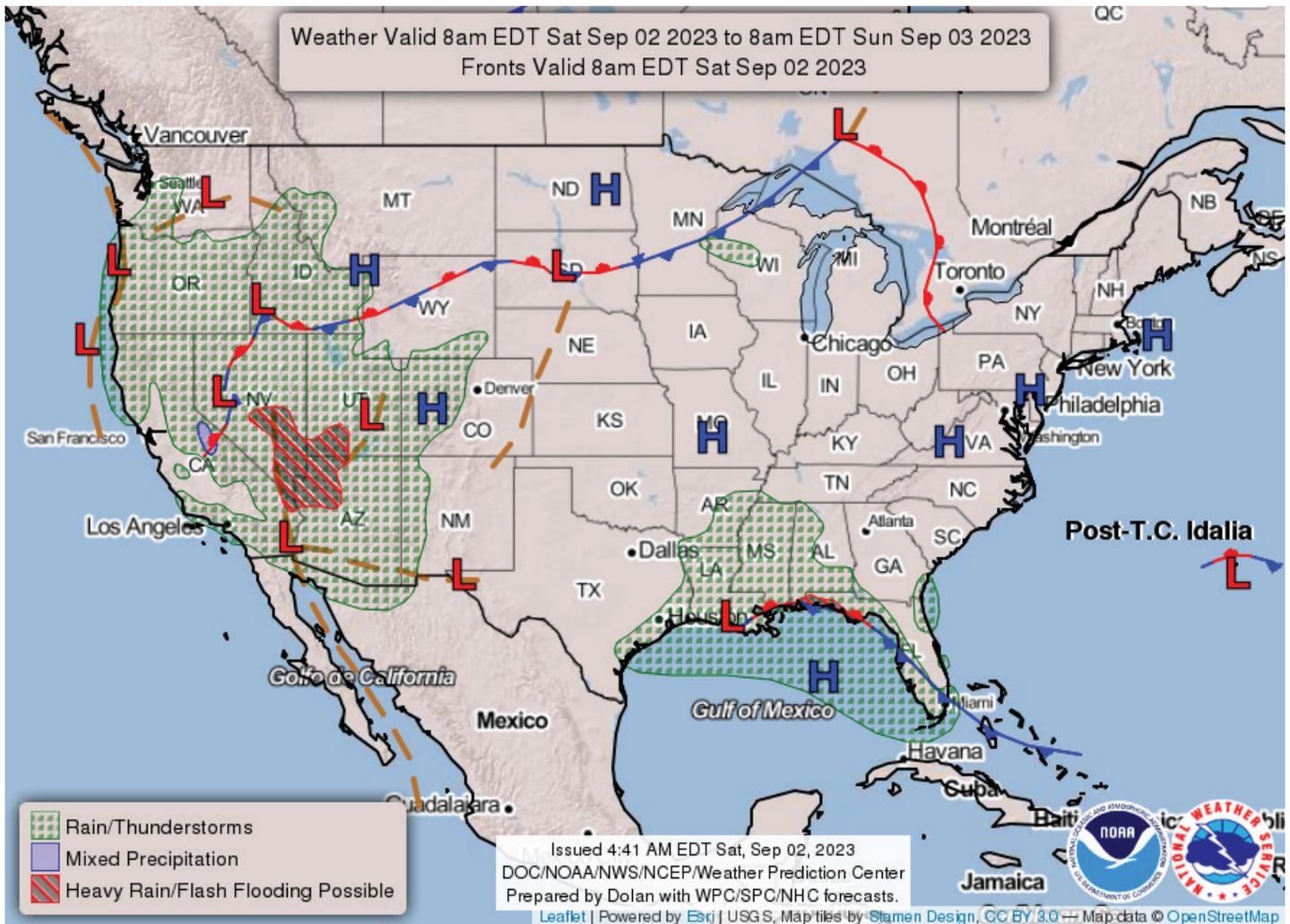
Precip to date in Sept.: 0.00

Average Precip to date: 16.48

Precip Year to Date: 18.59

Sunset Tonight: 8:10:27 PM

Sunrise Tomorrow: 6:54:54 AM



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Today in Weather History

September 2, 1962: From 315 to 445 pm, hail fell in and around the Moberge area. The hail ranged from 1 1/2 to 4 inches in diameter. The ground was covered up to 3 inches deep with drifts of 2-3 feet. At this time, the storm was one of the worst in recent history for damage.

September 2, 1983: A tornado touched down in the late afternoon 3 miles west and 1 mile south of Polo in Hand County damaging buildings, machinery, and trees. The roof of a hog house was torn off, and the north side of the building was destroyed. A barn was pulled several inches off of its foundation, and numerous trees were destroyed. At a nearby farm, two outbuildings were damaged, with two cows injured along with two calves killed.

September 2, 1985: Intense thunderstorms moved from south-central South Dakota to northeast South Dakota during the evening. Winds gusted to 60 to 70 mph over the area. Southwest of Presho, three small buildings were destroyed, and barns were damaged. Power lines and other property were damaged near Vayland, Miller, Wessington, Wolsey, Kimball, White Lake, Armour, and Castlewood. Large hail caused considerable damage to crops.

1775: The 1775 Newfoundland hurricane, also known as the Independence Hurricane, was a storm that hit the Colony of Newfoundland. It is believed to have killed at least 4,000 people, making it one of the deadliest Atlantic hurricanes of all time. The death toll in Virginia and North Carolina was 163 lives.

1882: Possibly the first photograph of a lightning strike was taken on this day by William Jennings in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.

1887: The U.S. Army Signal Service station in Greenville, SC reported a minimum temperature of 50°F. This observation at Greenville still stands as the record low for the day. Additional stations across the state recorded low temps in the low 50's.

1935 - Perhaps the most intense hurricane ever to hit the U.S. struck the Florida Keys with 200 mph winds. The hurricane produced a fifteen foot tide and waves thirty feet high. 400 persons perished in the storm on that Labor Day. The barometric pressure at Matecumbe Bay FL hits a record low for the U.S. of 26.35 inches. (David Ludlum)

1950 - The temperature at Mecca, CA, soared to 126 degrees to establish a U.S. record for the month of September. The low that morning was 89 degrees. (The Weather Channel)

1985 - After teasing residents along the Gulf of Mexico for two days, Hurricane Elena finally came ashore at Biloxi MS. The hurricane, packing winds of 127 mph, caused more than a billion dollars damage. (The Weather Channel)

1987 - Late evening thunderstorms in the Northern Plains Region produced wind gusts to 75 mph at Jordan MT, and a ""hot flash"" at Redig SD. The temperature at Redig rose from 66 degrees at 10 PM to 86 degrees at 11 PM as thunderstorm winds gusted to 36 mph. Nine cities in the Upper Ohio Valley, the Tennessee Valley and the Central Gulf Coast States reported record low temperatures for the date, including Elkins WV with a reading of 38 degrees. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1988 - Unseasonably hot weather prevailed in the northwestern U.S. Afternoon highs of 98 degrees at Olympia WA, 98 degrees at Seattle WA, 105 degrees at Portland OR, and 110 degrees at Medford OR, established records for the month of September. Quillayute WA equalled their September record with an afternoon high of 97 degrees. (The National Weather Summary)

1989 - Eight cities in the Gulf Coast Region reported record high temperatures for the date as readings soared into the upper 90s. Houston TX and Port Arthur TX hit 99 degrees. Late evening thunderstorms, developing ahead of a cold front, produced wind gusts to 63 mph at Dickinson ND, and golf ball size hail in North Dakota and Nebraska. Winds along the cold front itself gusted to 62 mph at Buffalo SD. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

2002: An F3 tornado destroyed much of the downtown area of Ladysmith, Wisconsin. Overall damage was estimated at \$20 million, but there were no fatalities.

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Daily Devotionals

Seeds of Hope

FAILING IS NOT FATAL

For years Thomas Edison tried to perfect a long-lasting storage battery. During this time he conducted thousands of experiments that were unsuccessful. One day one of his employees came to him and said, "Isn't it a shame that you have wasted all of this time? All of the tremendous labor and time that you have spent on this project has not achieved any results that are worthwhile or will work."

"I've got plenty of results," said Edison. "You see, I've discovered several thousand results that won't work!"

To his credit, Edison was able to look at what he was doing as a way of learning and solving problems. When he failed, he did not look at it as final. He looked at it as a stepping stone to success. How fortunate is that person who can see beyond the moment of defeat to the joy of victory! Failing at something does not make you or mean that you are a failure!

Often we fail to see God at work in what we are doing. We look for the approval of others believing that our rewards come from them. Scripture reminds us, however, to define success in terms of being faithful to God and what He has called us to do. God rewards us for what we accomplish in His name as well as being faithful to Him, for doing what He calls us to do even when we fail in the eyes of the world.

Struggling through difficult days and trying times proves that our trust is in God and that we look to Him for our rewards. "Fear not, I will strengthen and help you."

Prayer: It's natural, Lord, to want the approval of those around us. Often we think that they are the final authority. Remind us that they are not and that we labor for You. In Jesus' Name, Amen.

Scripture For Today: Don't be afraid, for I am with you. Don't be discouraged, for I am your God. I will strengthen you and help you. I will hold you up with my victorious right hand. Isaiah 41:10



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

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2023 Community Events

- 01/29/2023 Groton Robotics Pancake Feed, 10am-1pm, Community Center
- 01/29/2023 85th Carnival of Silver Skates 2pm & 6:30pm (Last Sunday of January)
- 01/31/2023-02/03/2023 Lion's Club Prom & Formal Dress Consignment Drop Off 6-9pm, Community Center
- 02/04/2023-02/05/2023 Lion's Club Prom & Formal Dress Consignment Sale 1-5pm, Community Center
- 02/25/2023 Littles and Me, Art Making 10-11:30am, Wage Memorial Library
- 03/25/2023 Spring Vendor Fair, 10am-3pm, Community Center
- 04/01/2023 Dueling Duo Baseball/Softball Fundraiser at the Legion Post #39 6-11:30pm
- 04/06/2023 Groton Career Development Event
- 04/08/2023 Lion's Club Easter Egg Hunt 10am Sharp at the City Park (Saturday a week before Easter)
- 04/22/2023 Firemen's Spring Social at the Fire Station 7pm-12:30am (Same Saturday as GHS Prom)
- 04/23/2023 Princess Prom 4:30-8pm (Sunday after GHS Prom)
- 05/06/2023 Lion's Club Spring Citywide Rummage Sale 8am-3pm (1st Saturday in May)
- 05/29/2023 Legion Post #39 Memorial Day Services (Memorial Day)
- 06/16/2023 SDSU Alumni and Friends Golf Tournament
- 06/17/2023 Groton Triathlon
- 07/04/2023 Couples Firecracker Golf Tournament
- 07/09/2023 Lion's Club Summer Fest/Car Show at the City Park 9am-4pm (Sunday Mid-July)
- 07/26/2023 GGA Burger Fundraiser Lunch at Olive Grove Golf Course
- 08/04/2023 Wine on Nine 6pm
- 08/10/2023 Family Fun Fest, 5:30 p.m. to 7:30 p.m.
- 08/11/2023 GHS Basketball Golf Tournament
- 09/08/2023 Family Fun Fest 3:30-5:30pm
- 09/09/2023 Lion's Club Fall Citywide Rummage Sale 8am-3pm
- 09/09-10/2023 Groton Airport Fly-In/Drive-In, Groton Municipal Airport
- 09/10/2023 Couples Sunflower Tourney at Olive Grove Golf Course 10am
- 09/10/2023 Emmanuel Lutheran Church Sunday School Rally 9:00am
- 09/10/2023 7th Annual Doggie Day at the Swimming Pool 4-6pm
- 09/15/2023 Homecoming Parade
- 10/13/2023 Lake Region Marching Band Festival 10am
- 10/14/2023 Pumpkin Fest at the City Park 10am-3pm
- 10/31/2023 Downtown Trick or Treat 4-6pm
- 10/31/2023 United Methodist Church Trunk or Treat 5:30-7pm
- 11/23/2023 Community Thanksgiving at the Community Center 11:30am-1pm
- 12/02/2023 Tour of Homes, Live & Silent Auctions at Olive Grove Golf Course 4pm-close
- 12/09/2023 Santa Claus Day at Professional Management Services 9-11am

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WINNING NUMBERS

MEGA MILLIONS

WINNING NUMBERS:
09.01.23

10 31 42 43 55 8

MegaPlier: 2x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:
\$101,000,000

NEXT DRAW:

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

LOTTO AMERICA

WINNING NUMBERS:
08.30.23

8 15 30 44 46 8

All Star Bonus: 3x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:
\$9,300,000

NEXT 13 Hrs 53 Mins 59
DRAW: Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

LUCKY FOR LIFE

WINNING NUMBERS:
09.01.23

18 22 34 39 47 14

TOP PRIZE:
\$7,000/week

NEXT 14 Hrs 8 Mins 59
DRAW: Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

DAKOTA CASH

WINNING NUMBERS:
08.30.23

1 5 9 15 23

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:
\$29,000

NEXT 14 Hrs 8 Mins 59
DRAW: Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

POWERBALL

DOUBLE PLAY

WINNING NUMBERS:
08.30.23

2 10 45 46 59 2

TOP PRIZE:
\$10,000,000

NEXT 14 Hrs 37 Mins 59
DRAW: Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

POWERBALL

WINNING NUMBERS:
08.30.23

4 13 35 61 69 4

Power Play: 2x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:
\$420,000,000

NEXT 14 Hrs 37 Mins 59
DRAW: Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

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News from the  Associated Press

Friday's Scores

The Associated Press

PREP FOOTBALL=

Aberdeen Roncalli 35, Redfield 0

Alcester-Hudson 42, Burke 8

Bridgewater-Emery/Ethan 32, Clark/Willow Lake 7

Britton-Hecla 34, Waverly-South Shore 6

Canistota 44, Viborg-Hurley 21

Canton 42, Beresford 14

Castlewood 36, Arlington 16

Centerville 24, Irene-Wakonda 22

Corsica/Stickney 52, Oldham-Ramona/Rutland 0

Dakota Valley 49, Chamberlain 13

DeSmet 32, Dell Rapids St. Mary 14

Dell Rapids 39, Belle Fourche 13

Deubrook 57, Great Plains Lutheran 6

Deuel 35, Sisseton 0

Elkton-Lake Benton 28, Bon Homme 14

Faulkton 52, Potter County 8

Freeman/ Marion/ Freeman Academy Co-op 52, Avon 18

Groton Area 50, Dakota Hills 0

Hamlin 53, Garretson 0

Hill City 46, Lead-Deadwood 20

Hitchcock-Tulare 62, Iroquois/ Lake Preston Co-op 8

Hot Springs 61, Lakota Tech 6

Howard 28, Kimball/White Lake 0

Lennox 18, Vermillion 12

Leola/Frederick 52, Northwestern 0

Lyman 28, Kadoka Area 26, OT

McCook Central/Montrose 46, Baltic 6

Milbank 37, Madison 34, OT

Miller/Highmore-Harrold 24, Scotland 20

Mt. Vernon/Plankinton 30, Tripp-Delmont/Armour/Andes Central/Dakota Christian 0

Parker 35, Flandreau 7

Parkston 54, Wolsey-Wessington 0

Philip 48, Bennett County 8

Pierre T F Riggs High School 49, Brookings 0

Platte-Geddes 42, Gregory 14

Sioux Falls Jefferson 24, Sioux Falls Washington 17, OT

Sioux Falls O'Gorman 77, Sioux Falls Roosevelt 20

Sioux Valley 20, Elk Point-Jefferson 11

Stanley County 40, Dupree 0

Sturgis Brown 38, Mitchell 6

Sully Buttes 62, Sunshine Bible Academy 32

Tea Area 28, Aberdeen Central 7

Timber Lake 52, Newell 0

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Tri-Valley 45, Custer 7
Wall 52, New Underwood 0
Warner 35, Ipswich 6
Watertown 32, Huron 13
West Central 14, Sioux Falls Christian 6
White River 40, Jones County 8
Winner 46, Webster 14
Yankton 42, Spearfish 27

PREP VOLLEYBALL=

Mobridge-Pollock def. Belle Fourche, 25-13, 25-8, 25-18

Gillette Invitational=

Pool B=

Rapid City Stevens def. Casper Natrona, Wyo., 25-17, 25-18

Pool C=

Douglas, Wyo. def. St. Thomas More, 25-17, 25-18

Pool D=

Rapid City Christian def. Glenrock, Wyo., 25-11, 25-16

Rapid City Christian def. Scottsbluff, Neb., 20-25, 25-16, 15-9

Rapid City Christian def. Sheridan, Wyo., 25-17, 25-14

Pool E=

Laramie, Wyo. def. Rapid City Central, 25-16, 25-19

Pool F=

Casper Kelly Walsh, Wyo. def. Spearfish, 25-11, 25-23

Spearfish def. Moorcroft, Wyo., 25-11, 25-12

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

'Margaritaville' singer Jimmy Buffett, who turned beach-bum life into an empire, dies at 76

By MARK KENNEDY AP Entertainment Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — Singer-songwriter Jimmy Buffett, who popularized beach bum soft rock with the escapist Caribbean-flavored song "Margaritaville" and turned that celebration of loafing into a billion-dollar empire of restaurants, resorts and frozen concoctions, has died. He was 76.

"Jimmy passed away peacefully on the night of September 1st surrounded by his family, friends, music and dogs," a statement posted to Buffett's official website and social media pages said late Friday. "He lived his life like a song till the very last breath and will be missed beyond measure by so many."

The statement did not say where Buffett died or give a cause of death. Illness had forced him to re-schedule concerts in May and Buffett acknowledged in social media posts that he had been hospitalized, but provided no specifics.

"Margaritaville," released on Feb. 14, 1977, quickly took on a life of its own, becoming a state of mind for those "wastin' away," an excuse for a life of low-key fun and escapism for those "growing older, but not up."

The song is the unhurried portrait of a loafer on his front porch, watching tourists sunbathe while a pot of shrimp is beginning to boil. The singer has a new tattoo, a likely hangover and regrets over a lost love. Somewhere there is a misplaced salt shaker.

"What seems like a simple ditty about getting blotto and mending a broken heart turns out to be a profound meditation on the often painful inertia of beach dwelling," Spin magazine wrote in 2021. "The tourists come and go, one group indistinguishable from the other. Waves crest and break whether somebody is there to witness it or not. Everything that means anything has already happened and you're not

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even sure when.”

The song — from the album “Changes in Latitudes, Changes in Attitudes” — spent 22 weeks on the Billboard Hot 100 chart and peaked at No. 8. The song was inducted into the Grammy Hall of Fame in 2016 for its cultural and historic significance, became a karaoke standard and helped brand Key West, Florida, as a distinct sound of music and a destination known the world over.

“There was no such place as Margaritaville,” Buffett told the Arizona Republic in 2021. “It was a made-up place in my mind, basically made up about my experiences in Key West and having to leave Key West and go on the road to work and then come back and spend time by the beach.”

The song soon inspired restaurants and resorts, turning Buffett’s alleged desire for the simplicity of island life into a multimillion brand. He landed at No. 18 in Forbes’ list of the Richest Celebrities of All Time with a net worth of \$1 billion.

Music critics were never very kind to Buffett or his catalogue, including the sandy beach-side snack bar songs like “Fins,” “Come Monday” and “Cheeseburgers in Paradise.” But his legions of fans, called “Parrotheads,” regularly turned up for his concerts wearing toy parrots, cheeseburgers, sharks and flamingos on their heads, leis around their necks and loud Hawaiian shirts.

“It’s pure escapism is all it is,” he told the Republic. “I’m not the first one to do it, nor shall I probably be the last. But I think it’s really a part of the human condition that you’ve got to have some fun. You’ve got to get away from whatever you do to make a living or other parts of life that stress you out. I try to make it at least 50/50 fun to work and so far it’s worked out.”

His special Gulf Coast mix of country, pop, folk and rock added instruments and tonalities more commonly found in the Caribbean, like steel drums. It was a stew of steelpans, trombones and pedal steel guitar. Buffett’s incredible ear for hooks and light grooves were often overshadowed by his lyrics about fish tacos and sunsets.

Rolling Stone, in a review of Buffett’s 2020 album “Life on the Flip Side,” gave grudging props. “He continues mapping out his surfy, sandy corner of pop music utopia with the chill, friendly warmth of a multi-millionaire you wouldn’t mind sharing a tropically-themed 3 p.m. IPA with, especially if his gold card was on the bar when the last round came.”

Tributes on Saturday came from all walks of life, from Hollywood star Miles Teller posting photos of himself with Buffett to former U.S. Sen. Doug Jones of Alabama, who wrote on X, formerly Twitter, that Buffett “lived life to the fullest and the world will miss him.” Brian Wilson of the Beach Boys wrote: “Love and Mercy, Jimmy Buffett.”

Buffett’s evolving brand began in 1985 with the opening of a string of Margaritaville-themed stores and restaurants in Key West, followed in 1987 with the first Margaritaville Café nearby. Over the course of the next two decades, several more of each opened throughout Florida, New Orleans and California.

The brand has since expanded to dozens of categories, including resorts, apparel and footwear for men and women, a radio station, a beer brand, ice tea, tequila and rum, home décor, food items like salad dressing, Margaritaville Crunchy Pimento Cheese & Shrimp Bites and Margaritaville Cantina Style Medium Chunky Salsa, the Margaritaville at Sea cruise line and restaurants, including Margaritaville Restaurant, JWB Prime Steak and Seafood, 5 o’Clock Somewhere Bar & Grill and LandShark Bar & Grill.

There also was a Broadway-bound jukebox musical, “Escape to Margaritaville,” a romantic comedy in which a singer-bartender called Sully falls for the far more career-minded Rachel, who is vacationing with friends and hanging out at Margaritaville, the hotel bar where Sully works.

James William Buffett was born on Christmas day 1946 in Pascagoula, Mississippi, and raised in the port town of Mobile, Alabama. He graduated from the University of Southern Mississippi in Hattiesburg, Mississippi, and went from busking the streets of New Orleans to playing six nights a week at Bourbon Street clubs.

He released his first record, “Down To Earth,” in 1970 and issued seven more on a regular yearly clip, with his 1974 song “Come Monday” from his fourth studio album “Living and Dying in ¾ Time,” peaking at No. 30. Then came “Margaritaville.”

He performed on more than 50 studio and live albums, often accompanied by his Coral Reefer Band, and was constantly on tour. He earned two Grammy Award nominations, two Academy of Country Music Awards and a Country Music Association Award.

Buffett was actually in Austin, Texas, when the inspiration struck for "Margaritaville." He and a friend had stopped for lunch at a Mexican restaurant before she dropped him at the airport for a flight home to Key West, so they got to drinking margaritas.

"And I kind of came up with that idea of this is just like Margarita-ville," Buffett told the Republic. "She kind of laughed at that and put me on the plane. And I started working on it."

He wrote some on the plane and finished it while driving down the Keys. "There was a wreck on the bridge," he said. "And we got stopped for about an hour so I finished the song on the Seven Mile Bridge, which I thought was apropos."

Buffett also was the author of numerous books including "Where Is Joe Merchant?" and "A Pirate Looks At Fifty" and added movies to his resume as co-producer and co-star of an adaptation of Carl Hiaasen's novel "Hoot."

Buffett is survived by his wife, Jane; daughters, Savannah and Sarah; and son, Cameron.

More than a meal: Restaurant-based programs feed seniors' social lives

By KATHY McCORMACK Associated Press

GOFFSTOWN, N.H. (AP) — A group of friends and neighbors meets for a weekly meal, choosing from a special menu of nutritious foods paid for by social programs meant to keep older adults eating healthy. They're all over 60, and between enjoying butternut squash soup, sandwiches, oats and eggs, they chat and poke fun about families, politics, and the news of the day.

But if you're imagining people gathering for lunch in a senior center, think again.

Long before COVID put a pause on social gatherings, some senior centers were losing their lunch appeal. Others didn't reopen after the pandemic.

Enter this elegant solution that's gained popularity: give some of the federal and state money set aside to feed seniors to struggling restaurants and have them provide balanced meals with more choices, flexible timing and a judgment-free setting that can help seniors get together to chat and stem loneliness.

"Isolation is the new pandemic," said Jon Eriquezzo, president of Meals on Wheels of New Hampshire's Hillsborough County, which runs one such program, in addition to delivering meals to homebound seniors and senior centers. "Knocking on doors and seeing somebody who's homebound is helpful. But getting people out to do this — the mutual support — you can't beat that."

Seniors are changing. They may still be working, taking care of grandchildren, and fitting in medical appointments, unable to show up at a set time for lunch or dinner. And after years of cooking for others, it's nice to be able to sit at the restaurant and order a meal.

Some restaurant programs target seniors in rural communities. Others benefit people with limited access to transportation. Some are geared toward minority communities.

"Everybody does something a little bit different when they're having a gap in services," said Lisa LaBonte, a nutrition consultant based in Connecticut.

According to information compiled by Meals on Wheels America, one in four Americans is at least 60 years old, with 12,000 more turning 60 every day. Those on fixed incomes also are living longer with less money; one in two seniors living alone lacks the income to pay for basic needs.

Debbie LaBarre looks forward to the weekly gathering with her pals at a bright, bustling restaurant a short drive from her New Hampshire apartment. The special menu at the White Birch Eatery in Goffstown lists the calories, carbohydrates and sodium content for the meals, which have to meet a dietician-approved one-third of the USDA recommended daily requirements for adults under the federal Older Americans Act Nutrition Program. LaBarre and others sign up for the program and swipe credit- and keychain-style cards with QR codes for their allotted meals. There's no charge for the meals, but donations are encouraged.

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Even though she's eating out more, LaBarre, 67, lost weight as she prepared for a recent surgery. But what's most important for LaBarre is that she's interacting with others. Retired after years working as a plumbing and heating business office manager, she's concerned about Alzheimer's disease.

"My mother had it, and she was always in the house. She never left," she said. "I'm deathly afraid of it, so I said I guess I'm going to be as social as I can be."

LaBarre takes a friend — a recent widower who is blind — to a different restaurant in Merrimack, New Hampshire, that participates in the program.

"He says, 'I never go out unless you take me,'" LaBarre said.

From a nutrition standpoint, "we eat better in groups," nutrition consultant Jean Lloyd said. "Studies are out there that we eat healthier surrounded with people who eat healthy. And older adults are a vulnerable population."

She cited one from 2020 about the health impact of loneliness on seniors. Recently, the U.S. surgeon general noted that widespread loneliness in the U.S. poses health risks as deadly as smoking up to 15 cigarettes daily.

The program focuses on goals of the wide-ranging Older Americans Act — to reduce hunger and food insecurity and promote the socialization, health and well-being of seniors.

Back in the 1980s, the restaurant was considered a little-explored, unpopular option to the traditional meal gatherings at senior centers and church basements. As of early this year, there were at least 26 states where some restaurants and other food providers partnered locally with an area agency on aging or a nonprofit such as Meals on Wheels.

"We get to see people and check in on them and they bring new friends, and we get to meet all new faces, sometimes," said Cyndee Williams, owner of the White Birch Eatery, which opened in March 2020, right before the pandemic shut down everything. It restarted limited operations that summer. "And then, while we have a small profit margin, that helps us, too. It keeps my staff here and working."

Restaurant partnerships in New Hampshire and in states like South Carolina, Iowa, and New Jersey, for example, started as COVID-19 restrictions were being lifted, along with the urgency of curbside pick-ups. Meanwhile, communities in Massachusetts, upstate New York, and northern California, which have established, pre-pandemic programs targeting rural areas and ethnic communities, are seeing additional restaurants coming on board.

"The pandemic had created an opportunity for us because it just made everyone aware of the need to think in a different way, to not provide services the way they always had in the past," said Edwin Walker, deputy assistant secretary for aging under the Department of Health and Human Services.

Some programs offer grab-and-go options for seniors, grocery dining services, food trucks, hospital facilities, and catering at senior centers and other community locations in addition to or in place of in-house restaurant dining.

The partnerships originate at the local level. The federal Administration for Community Living, which oversees the nutrition services program and provides grants for innovative projects, does not keep data on how many restaurants and people take part and overall costs. It is working on a research project to learn more about them.

Federal funds are distributed to states based on a formula. States coordinate with local area agencies on aging and related nonprofits to distribute funds, and states provide matching funds for some programs. Nonprofits also seek out grants and donations.

Programs target services to people with the greatest economic or social need, such as low-income and minority populations, rural residents, and those with limited English proficiency.

The programs have to adjust to costs of food and labor, which can be challenging. The restaurants are reimbursed, but the funding sources are limited, especially as COVID-related emergency money has come to an end.

"For every meal we serve, we get \$8.11," Eriquezzo said. "The meal costs us \$13. We suggest a \$4 donation. Even if we get donations, we're still short 80 cents."

Restaurants might need to adjust menus, perhaps by offering smaller portion sizes, lowering the maximum monthly meals to save money and more specifically target who is using the meal programs the most.

Still, partnering with the restaurants costs less than contracting with a town hall or a church for the community dining option, said Janet Buls, nutrition director, Northeast Iowa Area Agency on Aging.

Bents Smokehouse & Pub in Westgate, Iowa, population 200, was the first restaurant in Bul's territory to sign on after cooking meals for Meals on Wheels recipients during the worst of the pandemic.

Before any of that happened, though, times were tough.

"We would sit here all day and not even have 100 bucks in the till," restaurant owner Sheila Bents said. "They saved us."

And it's saving seniors, too.

Robert Mays, 65, started going with his wife and mother-in-law to the The Lizard's Thicket in Columbia, South Carolina, for weekly "Senior Lunch Bunch" gatherings.

"It allowed people living in the same neighborhood that normally don't see one another and even different races to come together to find out that we're way more alike than we are different," he said.

Nobel Foundation retracts invite to Russia, Belarus and Iran representatives to attend ceremonies

STOCKHOLM (AP) — The Nobel Foundation on Saturday retracted its invitation for representatives of Russia, Belarus and Iran to attend this year's Nobel Prize award ceremonies after the controversial decision "provoked strong reactions".

Several Swedish lawmakers said Friday they would boycott this year's Nobel Prize award ceremonies in the Swedish capital, Stockholm, after the private foundation that administers the prestigious awards changed its position from a year earlier and invited representatives of the three countries to attend.

Some of the lawmakers cited Russia's war on Ukraine and the crackdown on human rights in Iran as reasons for their boycott.

The Swedish Prime Minister Ulf Kristersson told media outlets Friday that he wouldn't allow Russian representatives to attend the ceremony to attend Nobel award ceremonies this year if given the choice.

"The basis for the decision is that we believe that it is important and right to reach out as widely as possible with the values and messages that the Nobel Prize stands for," the Nobel Foundation said in a brief statement.

The foundation said they recognized "the strong reactions in Sweden, which completely overshadowed this message" and chose not to invite "the ambassadors of Russia, Belarus and Iran to the Nobel Prize award ceremony in Stockholm."

However, it said that it would follow its usual practice and invite all ambassadors to the ceremony in Oslo where the Nobel Peace Prize is awarded.

The Nobel Foundation said earlier it had extended invitations to all countries with diplomatic missions in Sweden and Norway to the Dec.10 event since that "promotes opportunities to convey the important messages of the Nobel Prize to everyone."

India launches a spacecraft to study the sun after successful landing near the moon's south pole

By ASHOK SHARMA and AIJAZ HUSSAIN Associated Press

NEW DELHI (AP) — India launched its first space mission to study the sun on Saturday, less than two weeks after a successful uncrewed landing near the south polar region of the moon.

The Aditya-L1 spacecraft took off on board a satellite launch vehicle from the Sriharikota space center in southern India on a quest to study the sun from a point about 1.5 million kilometers (930,000 miles) from Earth. The point, known as L1, affords an uninterrupted view of the sun.

The spacecraft is equipped with seven payloads to study the sun's corona, chromosphere, photosphere

and solar wind, the Indian Space Research Organization said.

After over an hour, the ISRO said the launch was "accomplished successfully."

"The vehicle has placed the satellite precisely into its intended orbit. India's first solar observatory has begun its journey to the destination of Sun-Earth L1 point," ISRO posted on the X platform, formerly known as Twitter.

The satellite is scheduled to take 125 days to reach the L1 point.

India became the first country to land a spacecraft near the moon's south pole on Aug. 23 — a historic voyage to uncharted territory that scientists believe could hold vital reserves of frozen water. After a failed attempt to land on the moon in 2019, India joined the United States, Russia and China as only the fourth country to achieve the milestone.

Jitendra Singh, India's junior minister for science and technology, praised the ISRO officials for their work on the latest launch.

"Congratulations India. Congratulations ISRO," he said while being present at the ISRO control room. "It's a sunshine moment for India."

The sun study, combined with India's successful moon landing, would completely change the image of the ISRO in the world community, said Manish Purohit, a former scientist at the research organization.

Hundreds of people who had gathered to watch the launch cheered as India's sun mission took off.

Among the spectators, Prakash, who gave only one name, said the launch was "one more milestone" like the country's recent moon mission. "This is going to set the bar high for ISRO," he said.

"We are privileged to be Indian and witness this kind of developmental activities on the space center for India," said Sridevi, who also gave only one name.

Once in place, the satellite would provide reliable forewarning of an onslaught of particles and radiation from heightened solar activity that has the potential to knock out power grids on Earth, said B.R. Guruprasad, a space scientist, in an article in The Times of India newspaper. The advanced warning can protect the satellites that are the backbone of the global economic structure as well as the people living in space stations.

"Those seven payloads are going to study the sun as a star in all the possible spectrum positions that we have visible, ultraviolet, and X-ray. ... It's like we're going to get a black and white image, the color image and the high-definition image, 4K image of the sun, so that we don't miss out on anything that is happening on the sun," Purohit said.

Pope starts Mongolia visit by praising the country's religious freedom dating back to Genghis Khan

By NICOLE WINFIELD and SARUUL ENKHBOLD Associated Press

ULAANBAATAR, Mongolia (AP) — Pope Francis on Saturday praised Mongolia's tradition of religious freedom dating to the times of its founder, Genghis Khan, as he opened the first-ever papal visit to the Asian nation with a word of encouragement to its tiny Catholic flock.

Francis met with President Ukhnaagiin Khurelsukh inside a traditional Mongolian ger, or round yurt, set up inside the state palace and wrote a message in the guest book that he was visiting "a country young and ancient, modern and rich of tradition," as a pilgrim of peace.

Francis is in Mongolia to minister to one of the world's newest and smallest Catholic communities — some 1,450 Mongolians are Catholic — and make a diplomatic foray into a region where the Holy See has long had troubled relations, with Russia to the north and China to the south.

While Christianity has been present in the region for hundreds of years, the Catholic Church has only had a sanctioned presence in Mongolia since 1992, after the country abandoned its Soviet-allied communist government and enshrined religious freedom in its constitution.

While Catholicism is tolerated and legal, foreign missionaries working here lament that the government restricts their numbers and treats the church as a non-governmental organization, limitations that the Holy See is hoping will be lifted with a comprehensive bilateral agreement.

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In his remarks, Francis praised Mongolia's tradition of religious liberty, noting that such tolerance existed even during the period of the Mongol Empire's vast expansion over much of the world. At its height, the empire stretched as far west as Hungary to become the largest contiguous land empire in world history.

Nowadays, the landlocked nation sandwiched between Russia and China is overwhelmingly Buddhist, with traditional links to Tibet's leading lamas, including the Dalai Lama.

"The fact that the empire could embrace such distant and varied lands over the centuries bears witness to the remarkable ability of your ancestors to acknowledge the outstanding qualities of the peoples present in its immense territory and to put those qualities at the service of a common development," Francis told the president, diplomats and cultural leaders in remarks at the state palace.

"This model should be valued and re-proposed in our own day," he said.

Referring to the 13th-century period of relative political stability within the Mongol Empire that allowed trade and travel to flourish, Francis called for such a period of fraternity and peace to take root today and spread peace throughout the region.

"May heaven grant that today, on this earth devastated by countless conflicts, there be a renewal, respectful of international laws, of the condition of what was once the pax mongolica, that is the absence of conflicts," he said.

Khurelsukh also referred to the "pax mongolica" in his remarks, saying that same spirit still guides Mongolia's efforts to be a peaceful, multilateral player on the world stage.

"Achievements of pax mongolica have created the solid grounds for the development of mutual respect between different nations of the world, cherishing each other's values and identities, enabling peaceful coexistence of various civilizations," he said.

Later in the day, Francis met with bishops and the missionaries who have cultivated the Catholic faith here for the past three decades, presiding over a prayer in the ger-shaped St. Peter and Paul cathedral in the capital, Ulaanbaatar. On the altar sat a delicate wooden statue of the Madonna, which was found by a Mongolese woman in a landfill and now is a symbol of the church in the country.

As Francis entered and blessed the crowd with holy water, he was met with shouts of "Viva il Papa!" inside and out of the cathedral, where an estimated 2,000 people gathered.

Francis sought to encourage the missionaries, telling them not to be concerned by their "small numbers, limited successes or apparent irrelevance." Rather, he urged them to be close to their Mongolian flocks, learn their language and love their culture.

"May you find refreshment, knowing that being little is not a problem but a resource," he said. "God loves littleness, and through it he loves to accomplish great things."

In the pews was one of the two Mongolese priests who have been ordained, the Rev. Peter Sanjaajav, who got a rousing applause from the crowd when he addressed Francis in Mongolian.

"Many thanks for coming to Mongolia, and for visiting our Church. Your visit makes us particularly happy," he said.

Another Mongolian woman who converted, Rufina Chamingerel, told Francis she had spent 14 years learning her Catholic faith, to which she converted as a student. Addressing Francis in Italian, she acknowledged the Mongolian church is young and small.

"Our Church is in that phase typical of children who constantly ask their parents questions," she said.

In his remarks to government authorities, Francis also praised Mongolia's efforts to care for the environment. The vast, landlocked country, historically afflicted by weather extremes, is considered to be one of the countries most affected by climate change. The country has already experienced a 2.1-degree Celsius (3.8-degree Fahrenheit) increase in average temperatures over the past 70 years, and an estimated 77% of its land is degraded because of overgrazing and climate change, according to the United Nations Development Program.

Mongolia is set to host the 2026 U.N. conference on desertification and has launched a campaign to plant 1 billion trees across its vast steppes and mountains of grasslands.

The pope, however, noted the need to combat "the insidious threat of corruption," an apparent reference to a scandal over Mongolia's trade with China over the alleged theft of 385,000 tons of coal. In December,

hundreds of people braved freezing cold temperatures in the capital to protest the scandal.

"Corruption is the fruit of a utilitarian and unscrupulous mentality that has impoverished whole countries," he said.

The Mongolian government has declared 2023 to be an "anti-corruption year" and says it is carrying out a five-part plan based on Transparency International, the global anti-graft watchdog that ranked Mongolia 116th last year in its corruption perceptions index.

Mongolians Catholic and not welcomed Francis' visit, saying it was a sign of Mongolia's prominence on the world stage.

"The visit of Roman pope is the proof that Mongolians are peace loving, mindful and spiritual nation," said Chinbat Gantulga, a Mongolian engineer. "It also shows that Mongolia has a religious freedom, and respect of spiritual beliefs of anyone."

Typhoon Saola makes landfall in southern China but appears to cause only light damage

BEIJING (AP) — Typhoon Saola made landfall in southern China before dawn Saturday after nearly 900,000 people were moved to safety and most of Hong Kong and parts of the coastal mainland suspended business, transport and classes. Damage appeared to be minimal, however, and some services were returning to normal by afternoon.

Meanwhile, Taiwan issued a warning Saturday for a second typhoon, Haikui, which was expected to pass over the island Sunday, before traveling onward to the central Chinese coast.

Guangdong province's meteorological bureau said the powerful storm churned into an outlying district of the city of Zhuhai, just south of Hong Kong at 3:30 a.m. It was weakening as it moved in a southwesterly direction along the Guangdong coast at a speed of around 17 kilometers (10 miles) per hour, prompting Hong Kong to resume flights and subway and rail train services.

On Friday, 780,000 people in Guangdong were moved away from areas at risk as did 100,000 others in neighboring Fujian province. More than 80,000 fishing vessels returned to port.

Workers stayed at home and students in various cities saw the start of their school year postponed to next week. Trading on Hong Kong's stock market was suspended Friday and hundreds of people were stranded at the airport after about 460 flights were canceled in the key regional business and travel hub.

The Hong Kong Observatory had issued a No. 10 hurricane alert, the highest warning under the city's weather system. It was the first No. 10 warning since Super Typhoon Mangkhut hit Hong Kong in 2018.

By mid-afternoon, that had been reduced to the considerably less serious Strong Wind Signal No. 3, although the Observatory warned of continuing rough seas and urged people to stay away from the coastline and refrain from watersports.

The observatory said Saola — with maximum sustained winds of 195 kilometers (121 miles) per hour — came its closest to the financial hub at around 11 p.m. Friday, skirting about 30 kilometers (19 miles) south of the city's Tsim Sha Tsui shopping district. The storm's eyewall, which surrounds its eye, was moving across the city overnight, "posing a high threat" to the territory, the agency said.

By Saturday, morning, it said, maximum sustained wind speeds had fallen to 145 kilometers (90 miles) per hour, falling to 77 kilometers (47.85 miles) per hour later in the day.

In recent months, China has experienced some of its heaviest rains and deadliest flooding in years in various regions, with dozens killed, including in outlying mountainous parts of the capital, Beijing.

As the storm's heavy rains and strong winds closed in on Hong Kong, about 400 people sought refuge at temporary shelters and ferry and bus services halted. Residents of low-lying areas placed sandbags at their doors hoping to prevent their homes from being flooded.

The government said various departments received reports of a total of 1,206 uprooted trees and flooding was reported in 18 areas. It said 75 people, including 41 men and 34 women, sought medical treatments at public hospitals while the storm sideswiped the island.

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Sixty-three people were reported injured, mostly by falling trees, although none were reported in serious condition.

Classes at all schools were to remain suspended Saturday.

Weather authorities in the nearby gambling hub of Macao also warned of flooding, forecasting that water levels might reach 1.5 meters (5 feet) in low-lying areas Saturday morning. The cross-border bridge connecting Hong Kong, Macao and Zhuhai was closed at midafternoon. Macao leader Ho Iat Seng ordered a halt to casino operations.

Parts of Taiwan were already feeling the effects of Haikui's heavy rain and high winds, and dozens of domestic flights were canceled, along with air services to Hong Kong and Macao. The storm was packing maximum sustained winds of 137 kilometers (85 miles) per hour, gusting at up to 173 kilometers (107 miles) per hour, according to the island's meteorological bureau.

Despite the twin storms, China's military conducted more operations Friday night and early Saturday meant to intimidate Taiwan, a self-ruled island democracy that Beijing seeks to bring under Chinese sovereignty by force if necessary. Taiwan's Defense Ministry said it had detected six Chinese military aircraft and three naval vessels around Taiwan during the 24 hours leading up to 6 a.m. Saturday.

It said the island's armed forces were monitoring the situation and put aircraft, navy vessels and land-based missile systems on alert. However, it said there were no indications that the Chinese ships or aircraft had crossed the median line in the Taiwan Strait or entered Taiwan's air defense identification zone as they often do.

Saola passed just south of Taiwan on Wednesday before turning toward mainland China, with its outer bands hitting the island's southern cities with torrential rain. The typhoon also lashed the Philippines earlier this week, displacing tens of thousands of people in the northern part of the islands because of flooding.

As Taiwan's government races to counter China, most people aren't worried about war

By HUIZHONG WU Associated Press

TAIPEI, Taiwan (AP) — As People's Liberation Army fighter jets from China sped toward Taiwan on Friday, life on the self-governing island carried on as normal.

Andy Huang, a restaurateur in Taipei, said he has become desensitized to military threats from the mainland.

"I've been hearing about China invading for 30 years," he said.

Taiwan's government is racing to counter China, buying nearly \$19 billion in military equipment from the United States, and extending military conscription for men to a year starting in 2024. But many on the island say they don't feel the threat.

That may be partly due to the nuanced views many Taiwanese hold of China. While polls indicate most people on the island reject reunification, many say they are attracted to their much larger neighbor's dynamic economy, and its shared language and culture. Others are simply numb to hearing about the threat in their backyard.

Beijing claims Taiwan as its own territory, and its actions in recent years have led some to fear it is preparing to use force to try to take control of the island. Taiwan has been compared to Ukraine by American lawmakers and Taiwanese President Tsai Ing-wen.

The island's politicians have not been shy about sounding the alarm. "In order to keep the peace, we need to strengthen ourselves," Tsai said last month at a war memorial commemorating the last time Taiwan and China battled.

Members of the public don't feel that urgency.

Coco Wang is one of the many people who feel a connection to China without considering themselves Chinese. Her grandparents came to Taiwan among people fleeing the 1949 Communist victory in the Chinese Civil War, which left rival governments ruling the mainland and Taiwan. Her grandparents kept in touch with relatives in China, and she remembers summers traveling through the country's rural areas

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with her parents.

She considers herself Taiwanese, but worked in Shanghai for a year before the pandemic and is thinking of going back.

The opportunities in China are so much bigger, she said. "There's this feeling that if you just go in and you really work at it, then you can really achieve something," she said.

China is Taiwan's largest trading partner, receiving 39% of the island's exports in 2022 despite new trade barriers imposed amid rising tensions.

While Wang feels drawn to China, she acknowledged that it is not entirely possible to leave politics at the door when working there. Colleagues in Shanghai occasionally called her a "Taiwanese separatist."

She knew they meant it as a joke, but it made her uncomfortable. To herself, she thought: "We are already independent. Taiwan is just Taiwan."

Her viewpoint is widely shared.

Since polling began in the 1990s, majorities on Taiwan have said they favor the status quo, rejecting both proposals for unification with the mainland and a formal declaration of independence that could mean war.

But a closely watched poll question that asks people whether they consider themselves Chinese has shown the island's population growing further from the mainland, said Ching-hsin Yu, the head of National Chengchi University's Election Study Center. When polling began in 1992, over two-thirds of respondents said they were both Chinese and Taiwanese, or just Chinese. Today, close to two-thirds say they are just Taiwanese, while around 30% identify as both.

Those attitudes don't translate directly into views on relations with the mainland, Yu said, but among the majority who identify as Taiwanese there has been a subtle shift toward favoring the status quo for now, but with "eventual independence."

Huang, the restaurant owner, said he was taught in school that he was Chinese, but as an adult came to consider himself just Taiwanese.

His restaurant in Taipei, which specializes in Taiwanese cuisine, has a "Lennon Wall" dedicated to the now-banned Hong Kong democracy movement, decorated with hundreds of Post-It notes with messages from patrons.

Huang shut down in solidarity with protesters during Taiwan's Sunflower movement in 2014, when tens of thousands demonstrated against a trade deal with China. He says the Chinese population is "brainwashed."

Personally, he wants independence now, but he also said he can wait until more of Taiwan's public is convinced.

Nor does he think much about war, he said. "Whether they attack or not, that's for China's leaders to decide; it's pointless for us to worry," said Huang.

For others, like Chen Shih-wei, cultural and emotional ties to China are very strong. Chen's family immigrated to Taiwan during the Ming dynasty, which ended in 1644, and he considers himself both Chinese and Taiwanese.

"I'm Chinese and I'm Taiwanese. This can't be separated," he said. "We've read the history, including the clan records, and we are clear that we came from the mainland, and came from people who had landed in Taiwan, and grew up here."

Chen, who is from Taichung in central Taiwan, traveled to China many times as a young athlete, starting in 1990. On the mainland, he said, he encountered more similarities than differences. Chen is pro-unification, but doesn't believe it will happen in his lifetime.

Chen now lives in Matsu, a group of Taiwanese-held islands that are closer to China than the island of Taiwan. He said he is somewhat worried about the prospect of conflict. "This is not what the public on both sides want to see," he said.

No one sees an easy way out of the accumulated antagonism of the past several years, whether military, diplomatic or economic.

But Wang said the tensions are between the two governments, not between people.

"Taiwanese and mainlanders are largely friendly to each other. Why is it like this?" she said.

Novak Djokovic comes back after dropping the first 2 sets to beat Laslo Djere at the US Open

By HOWARD FENDRICH AP Tennis Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — Everyone should know by now to never count out Novak Djokovic. No matter how big a deficit he faces. No matter how poorly he might be playing.

And so it made sense that Djokovic would manage to come all the way back from a two-set deficit to beat Laslo Djere 4-6, 4-6, 6-1, 6-1, 6-3 in the third round of the U.S. Open, avoiding what would have been his earliest exit there since 2006.

"The message is sent to the rest of the field, obviously, that I'm still able to play five sets, deep (into the) night. Coming from two sets down always sends a strong message to future opponents," said Djokovic, who next faces Borna Gojo, a 25-year-old qualifier from Croatia making his U.S. Open debut.

"But I'm not really wanting to be in this position, to be honest," Djokovic said. "I prefer a straight-set win. So hopefully I can get back on that track in the next match."

This one began under the lights in Arthur Ashe Stadium on Friday night and did not wrap up until more than 3 1/2 hours later, concluding just after 1:30 a.m.

It was Djokovic's eighth career victory after dropping the opening two sets of a match. He also improved to 38-11 in five-setters.

Once he seized control, he held on tight and never let Djere recover. In the crucible of a fifth set, Djokovic was cool as can be, collecting 12 of the initial 14 points to leave no doubt how this would go.

He's won three of his men's-record 23 Grand Slam titles at Flushing Meadows and been the runner-up a half-dozen times, including in 2021. The 36-year-old from Serbia did not compete in the U.S. Open last year because he couldn't travel to the United States as a foreigner who is not vaccinated against COVID-19; that rule was lifted this May.

Djokovic is seeded No. 2 in New York behind Carlos Alcaraz, and pretty much everyone has been expecting the two of them to meet for the championship on Sept. 10. That appeared as if it might be derailed by Djere, a 28-year-old who is also from Serbia and was seeded 32nd.

"Trust me," Djokovic said, "it was nerve-racking all the way until the last shot."

This would have been by far the biggest victory of Djere's career: He was trying to reach the fourth round at a Grand Slam tournament for the first time and came into Friday with an 0-6 record at majors against opponents ranked in the Top 10.

Perhaps the intimidation factor that favors Djokovic in most matchups simply wasn't there. They have known each other for years, practicing together, spending time as Davis Cup teammates and competing on tour as a doubles pairing.

When it ended, they met at the net for a hug, and Djokovic applauded as Djere walked off the court.

With the temperature down around 65 degrees Fahrenheit (18 Celsius), Djere came out strong. He was outlasting Djokovic on the lengthiest baseline exchanges.

"Everything was kind of in his striking zone," Djokovic said. "It was very hard for me to find a solution."

Across the first two sets, Djere claimed 28 of 44 points that lasted five or more strokes. Djokovic's footwork seemed a bit off. His control of the ball did, too. He would throw up his arms after some misses or grimace after others.

When Djokovic halfheartedly pushed a forehand return long to end the second set, the match was 1 hour, 33 minutes old, and everything was going Djere's way.

As he often does when trailing, Djokovic headed to the locker room between sets to change his clothes.

And as he so often does, Djokovic came out a different player.

"I did a little pep talk in the mirror. I kind of laughed at myself, because I was so ... agitated," Djokovic said. "I forced myself to ... lift the spirits."

He finally broke for the first time all evening to lead 2-0 in the third set, winning a 27-stroke point when Djere capitulated with a forehand into the net.

Djokovic flapped his arms and waved his hands to ask the crowd to salute him. That set would be over

in a blink.

"Once I got the break in the third, I thought, 'OK. I have a shot. I have a chance. I might as well go after it,'" he said.

Djokovic broke to begin the fourth, using his trademark defensive skills to prolong a point until snapping a forehand winner as Djere lost his footing.

Djokovic turned toward his coach, Goran Ivanisevic, and the rest of his entourage in the stands, shouting and punching the air twice.

Later in that set, Djokovic ranged so far to his right to extend a point that he was wide of the doubles alley, and Djere — likely surprised to see the ball headed back at him — missed a forehand.

That was part of a pattern that would be repeated down the stretch. Message sent.

Family in central Mexico struggles to preserve the natural way of producing intense red dye

By FERNANDA PESCE Associated Press

SAN FRANCISCO TEPEYACAC, Mexico (AP) — One family in central Mexico is struggling to preserve the production of cochineal dye, an intense, natural red pigment so prized that, after gold and silver, it was probably the most valuable thing the Spaniards found in Mexico after the 1521 conquest.

For centuries, red clothing — along with purple — had been a sign of power and wealth because it was rare and expensive. An indigenous Mexican process deriving the pigment from insects gave the Spanish empire a new source of red dye.

Some of Mexico's most picturesque and imposing colonial cities, like Oaxaca, were essentially built on the wealth derived from cochineal dye, also called carmine, and known as "grana cochinilla" in Spanish. It was much prized by the Spanish nobility, and it would go on to dye, among other garments, the British empire's 'Redcoat' military uniforms, before it began to be replaced by synthetic dyes in the 1800s.

Obtaining the dye the old fashioned way is slow, tedious and painstaking. It comes from the crushed bodies of tiny female insects that contain carminic acid and feed on the pads of nopal cactus plants.

Each insect, known as *Dactylopius coccus*, must be bred to a larvae stage and "planted" on a previously wounded cactus pad, and then left for months to feed and mature.

Then each must be harvested by hand, usually with a tiny brush, sifted, cleaned and left to dry in the sun.

The Mixtecs of Oaxaca first developed the method to obtain the precious pigment centuries before the Spaniards arrived. A symbol of status, carmine red was already employed by the nobility of Mexico's Indigenous peoples to dye garments, and widely used in the arts, to write codices, decorate ceramics and paint murals.

Mayeli Garcia and her family run a greenhouse in the village of San Francisco Tepeyacac, east of Mexico City, which specializes in the slow, old production process.

At their greenhouse, rows of hundreds of cactus pads are held on racks suspended in the air and covered by a white powder. That is the sign of the insects working beneath, drawing nourishment from the juices of the nopal and protecting themselves with the waxy powder.

"You have to wait three or four months for them to complete their life cycle, and then we harvest," Garcia said. "You have to keep monitoring and watching every cactus pad."

That's essentially the way the best red was produced for three centuries.

By the 1800s, synthetic chemical dyes, cheaper to produce and more plentiful, began to replace cochineal dyes.

But the story doesn't end there. Artisans in Oaxaca maintained some production, because weavers of traditional clothing and rugs preferred it in handicrafts.

Some studies began suggesting that chemical dyes, and particularly some of the red ones, could have adverse health effects if consumed as food colorings or in cosmetics like lipstick. By 1990, U.S. authorities banned red dye No. 3 for use in cosmetics, though it is still allowed in food products.

Those concerns have begun to spur the demand for natural colorings — and there was Mexico's cochi-

neal dye all along.

Companies that might want it on an industrial scale are out of luck. It simply isn't available in such quantities.

"We have tried to automate a little bit to make it less manual work, with machinery we ourselves invented, to try some brushes" for brushing the insects off the cactus pads, Garcia said. The motor of their prototype burned out, she noted ruefully.

Garcia struggles to make a living off the 100 kilograms (220 pounds) of cochineal dye she produces each year, though she is trying to diversify into soaps, creams, cosmetics and other products derived from the nopal, such as jam.

Her family still grows fresh vegetables to make ends meet. Selling the dye for less isn't an option.

"It is a lot of work, very labor intensive. It costs too much to produce in terms of labor, so the cost is difficult," she said.

But she still has plenty of reasons for keeping on with the cochineal farm, a whole ecosystem designed to keep the tiny bugs happy, well fed and safe from predators.

"We are having problems with synthetics and chemicals," she said. "So I think that there is a revolution going on, of returning to what once was, what was once produced, because it kept us much healthier."

Children hit hardest by the pandemic are now the big kids at school. Many still need reading help

By HEATHER HOLLINGSWORTH Associated Press

They were the kids most disrupted by the pandemic, the ones who were still learning to write their names and tie their shoes when schools shut down in the spring of 2020.

Now, they're the big kids at elementary schools across the United States. Many still need profound help overcoming the effects of the pandemic.

To catch up, schools have deployed a wide range of strategies. And among some incoming fourth-graders, there are encouraging signs of gains. But as this generation progresses, many will need extra reading support that schools are not as accustomed to providing for older students.

Beyond third grade, fewer teachers each year know how to help students who are lacking key foundational reading skills, said Elizabeth Albro, an executive at the U.S. Department of Education's independent research arm, the Institute of Education Sciences.

"Middle and high school teachers aren't expecting to have to teach kids how to read," Albro said.

Nationally, students suffered deep learning setbacks in reading and math during the pandemic. Last year's third-graders, the kids who were in kindergarten when the pandemic started, lost more ground in reading than kids in older grades and were slower to catch up. With federal pandemic relief money, school systems added class time, brought on tutors, trained teachers in phonics instruction and found other ways to offer extra support to struggling readers.

But even after several years of recovery, an analysis of last year's test scores by NWEA found that the average student would need the equivalent of 4.1 additional months of instruction to catch up to pre-COVID reading levels.

The one bright spot was for incoming fourth-graders, who made above-average gains and would need about two months of additional reading instruction to catch up. Karyn Lewis, who leads a team of education policy researchers at NWEA, described them as "a little bit less worse off."

The school system in Niagara Falls, New York, is seeing similar results, said Marcia Capone, the district's assessment administrator. The district brought on additional reading specialists, but Capone said it will take time to bring struggling students up to speed.

"I do not believe it's hopeless, but it's not something that's going to occur in, say, three years' time," Capone said.

The problem for children who don't master reading by third grade: School becomes that much harder

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in later grades, as reading becomes the foundation for everything else.

Schools have plenty of experience with older students who struggle. Even before the pandemic, only about a third of fourth graders scored as proficient in reading in the National Assessment of Educational Progress, known as the "nation's report card."

But the pandemic made it worse, particularly for low-income students and kids of color.

So some schools are targeting some upper-grade students with the "science of reading," a push to embrace research-backed strategies for reading based on phonics. Many new laws endorsing the phonics-based approach target students beyond third grade, according to a July report from the nonpartisan Albert Shanker Institute.

In Virginia, for instance, a law signed in March mandates extra help for struggling readers through eighth grade. It is one of the most aggressive efforts yet.

"There's an implicit recognition," wrote the authors of the Shanker report, "that reading improvement needs to address a greater span of grades, and that reading difficulties do not necessarily end in 3rd grade."

That will require a major shift. Historically, phonics and help decoding words have gradually disappeared in the upper grades.

Most English teachers at that level are no more prepared to teach a student to read than a math teacher would be, said Miah Daughtery, who advocates for effective literacy instruction for the NWEA research organization.

"They're prepared to teach text," she said. "They're prepared to teach literature, to analyze ideas, craft, story structure, make connections."

The federal pandemic relief money that bolstered many schools' academic recovery efforts soon will run out, leaving some experts less optimistic.

"We're past the point where we're likely to see a quick rebound," said Dan Goldhaber, of the American Institutes for Research.

Teachers are reporting it is taking more time to get through material, according to Tonya Perry, the vice president of the National Council of Teachers of English. Some school systems are turning to programs that break grade-level subject matter down into a variety of reading levels, so strong and weak readers can still learn the concepts, she said.

"Now we have to spend more time building the foundation for what we're asking students to do," she said.

Early in the pandemic, some students repeated a grade. But that was only a short-term solution, often taken reluctantly because of concerns about the effect on kids' social lives and academic futures. By last year, grade retention numbers were trending downward again.

One thing teachers can do is rely less on silent reading in class, and instead have small group activities in which strong and weak readers can be paired together, Daughtery said.

Lewis, of the NWEA, said the takeaway should not be that the COVID kids are beyond help.

"The message has to be: We're doing the right things. We're just not doing enough of it," she said. "And we need to amp up and certainly not take our foot off the gas pedal anytime soon."

Texas AG Ken Paxton's impeachment trial is in the hands of Republicans who have been by his side

By PAUL J. WEBER and JAKE BLEIBERG Associated Press

AUSTIN, Texas (AP) — Billionaires, burner phones, alleged bribes: The impeachment trial of Texas Attorney General Ken Paxton is going to test the will of Republican senators to oust not only one of their own, but a firebrand who has helped drive the state's hard turn to the right for years.

The historic proceedings set to start in the state Senate Tuesday are the most serious threat yet to one of Texas' most powerful figures after nine years engulfed by criminal charges, scandal and accusations of corruption. If convicted, Paxton — just the third official in Texas' nearly 200-year history to be impeached — could be removed from office.

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Witnesses called to testify could include Paxton and a woman with whom he has acknowledged having an extramarital affair. Members of the public hoping to watch from the gallery will have to line up for passes. And conservative activists have already bought up TV airtime and billboards, pressuring senators to acquit one of former President Donald Trump's biggest defenders.

"It's a very serious event but it's a big-time show," said Bill Miller, a longtime Austin lobbyist and a friend of Paxton. "Any way you cut it, it's going to have the attention of anyone and everyone."

The build-up to the trial has widened divisions among Texas Republicans that reflect the wider fissures roiling the party nationally heading into the 2024 election.

At the fore of recent Texas policies are hardline measures to stop migrants at the U.S.-Mexico border, battles over what is taught in public schools, and restrictions on LGBTQ+ rights — many of which are championed loudest in the Senate, where Republicans hold a dominant 19-12 majority and have Paxton's fate in their hands.

The Senate has long been a welcoming place for Paxton. His wife, Angela, is a state senator, although she is barred from voting in the trial. Paxton also was a state senator before becoming attorney general in 2015 and still has entanglements in the chamber, including with Lt. Gov. Dan Patrick, who will preside over the trial and loaned \$125,000 to Paxton's reelection campaign.

If all 12 Democrats vote to convict Paxton, they would still need at least nine Republicans on their side. Or the Senate could vote by a simple majority to dismiss the charges altogether. It was a GOP-dominated House that decided by an overwhelming majority that Paxton should be impeached.

"You're seeing a fracture within the party right now," said Matt Langston, a Republican political consultant in Texas. "This is going to impact the leadership and the party for a long time."

The trial also appears to have heightened Paxton's legal risks. The case against him largely centers on his relationship with Nate Paul, an Austin real estate developer who was indicted this summer after being accused of making false statements to banks to secure \$170 million in loans.

Last month, federal prosecutors in Washington kicked a long-running investigation of Paxton into a higher gear when they began using a grand jury in San Antonio to examine his dealings with Paul, according to two people with knowledge of the matter who spoke on condition of anonymity because of secrecy rules around grand jury proceedings. The grand jury's role was first reported by the Austin American-Statesman.

Chris Toth, the former executive director of the National Association of Attorneys General, said Paxton has for years weathered scandals unique among top state lawyers. He said the outcome of the trial will send a message about what is acceptable to elected officials across the country.

Impeachment managers in the GOP-controlled Texas House filed nearly 4,000 pages of exhibits ahead of the trial, including accusations that Paxton hid the use of multiple cellphones and reveled in other perks of office.

"There's very much a vile and insidious level of influence that Ken Paxton exerts through continuing to get away with his conduct," Toth said.

Part of Paxton's political durability is his alignment with Trump, and this was never more apparent than when Paxton joined efforts to overturn the 2020 election. Like Trump, Paxton says he is a victim of politically motivated investigations.

But James Dickey, a former chairman of the Republican Party of Texas, said the base of the GOP sees Paxton's impeachment as different from legal troubles facing Trump.

"Exclusively, the actions against President Trump are from Democrat elected officials and so it can't avoid having more of a partisan tone," he said. "Therefore, Republican voters have more concern and frustration with it."

Patrick, in a rare television interview last month, was explicit in what the trial is and is not.

"It's not a criminal trial. It's not a civil trial," he told Houston television station KRIV. "It's a political trial."

Maui fire missing list falls slightly to 385. Governor had indicated it would be below 100

By AUDREY McAVOY Associated Press

HONOLULU (AP) — The number of people on the official list of those missing from the Maui wildfire stood at 385 on Friday, nearly unchanged from a week earlier.

In a news release, the Maui Police Department and the Federal Bureau of Investigation said 245 people on the list of 388 made public the previous week were located and removed. However, a nearly equal number of new names were added.

The updated total was a startling departure from what had been expected — a day earlier Gov. Josh Green said he believed the number would fall below 100.

“We think the number has dropped down into the double digits, so thank God,” Green said in a video posted to his account on X, formerly known as Twitter.

After Maui police released the updated list, the governor said the numbers of fatalities and missing are often in flux in mass casualty events until investigations are completed.

“Exact numbers are going to take time, perhaps a long time, to become finalized,” Green said in a statement provided through a spokesperson.

He said there are less than 50 “active missing person cases.” He didn’t elaborate but indicated those are the people for whom more information was provided than the minimum to be on the missing list compiled by the FBI. It only requires a first and last name provided by a person with a verified contact number.

Authorities have said at least 115 people died in the blaze that swept through Lahaina, the deadliest wildfire in the U.S. in more than a century. So far, the names of 50 people have been publicly released and five others have been identified but their identities withheld because next of kin haven’t been reached. The rest have yet to be identified.

The flames turned the picturesque seaside town into rubble in a few short hours on Aug. 8. Wind gusts topping 60 mph (97 kph) ripped through the town, causing the flames to spread exceptionally quickly.

Lahaina has deep significance in Hawaiian history as the one-time capital of former Hawaiian kingdom and as the home to high-ranking chiefs for centuries. In recent decades, the town became popular with tourists, who ate at its oceanfront restaurants and marveled at a majestic 150-year-old banyan tree.

Half the town’s 12,000 residents are now living in hotels and short-term vacation rentals. The Environmental Protection Agency is leading an effort to clean hazardous waste left in a burn zone stretching across some 5 square miles (13 square kilometers).

Reconstruction is expected to take years and cost billions.

Initially more than 1,000 people were believed unaccounted for based on family, friends or acquaintances reporting them as missing. Officials narrowed that list down to 388 names who were credibly considered missing and released the names to the public last week.

New names on Friday’s updated list were added from the Red Cross, shelters and interested parties who contacted the FBI, Maui Police Chief John Pelletier said. He urged family members of the missing to submit their genetic data to help identify their relatives.

“If you have a loved one that you know is missing and you are a family member, it’s imperative that you get a DNA sample,” Pelletier said in a video posted to Instagram.

The cause of the fire hasn’t been determined, but it’s possible powerlines from downed utility poles ignited the blaze. Maui County has sued Hawaiian Electric, the electrical utility for the island.

The utility acknowledged its power lines started a wildfire early on Aug. 8 but faulted county firefighters for declaring the blaze contained and leaving the scene, only to have a second wildfire break out nearby.

Texas wanted armed officers at every school after Uvalde. Many can't meet that standard

By PAUL J. WEBER, ACACIA CORONADO and KENDRIA LaFLEUR Associated Press

AUSTIN, Texas (AP) — A vision of armed officers at every school in Texas is crashing into the reality of not enough money or police as a new mandate took effect Friday, showing how a goal more states are embracing in response to America's cycle of mass killings is proving unworkable in many communities.

Dozens of Texas' largest school districts, which educate many of the state's 5 million students, are re-opening classrooms without meeting the state's new requirements of armed officers on every campus. The mandate is a pillar of a safety bill signed by Republican Gov. Greg Abbott, who rejected calls this year for gun control despite angry pleas from parents of children killed in the Uvalde school massacre.

Texas has nearly 9,000 public school campuses, second only to California, making the requirement the largest of its kind in the U.S.

"We all support the idea," said Stephanie Elizalde, superintendent of the Dallas Independent School District, which has more than 140,000 students. "The biggest challenge for all superintendents is that this is yet again an unfunded mandate."

The difficulties lay bare limits of calls to put armed guards at every school, more than a decade after the National Rifle Association championed the idea in the face of an intense push for stronger gun laws following the Sandy Hook Elementary massacre in 2012.

The new Texas law allows exceptions but also does not require districts to report compliance, making it unclear how many schools are meeting the standard.

But by all accounts, many are not.

The Associated Press contacted 60 of Texas' largest school districts about whether they were able to start the school year in compliance. The districts, which cut across a wide swath of Texas, from rapidly growing suburbs to the U.S.-Mexico border, enroll more than 2.7 million students combined.

Not all districts responded and some declined to discuss staffing levels, citing security concerns. But statements to the AP, along with a review of school board meeting actions and statements made to local media, show at least half have been unable to comply with the law's highest standard.

A major struggle is staffing elementary schools, where officers are traditionally less common. But those campuses came under calls for more protection after a gunman killed 19 fourth-graders and two teachers last year at Robb Elementary School — a tragedy in which the failures were not over a lack of police, who were on the scene within minutes, but the inaction of hundreds of officers once they arrived.

Local school officials say the additional funding Texas gave districts under the new law, about \$15,000 per campus, is hardly sufficient. In Dallas, Elizalde said an extra \$75,000 is needed for each additional officer in Texas' second-largest district.

In the scramble to comply with Texas' new standards, options some districts previously never considered are now on the table: Some are turning to private security firms or arming more staff and teachers.

"This is probably new to everybody at this stage of the game. It's expensive," said Charles Hollis, director of operations at L&P Global Security in Dallas, which until this year had not put guards at public schools. The company now has contracts with four booming districts and is in talks with four others.

In response to questions about cost concerns raised by districts, or whether Texas had enough officers to meet the intent of the law, Abbott spokesman Andrew Mahaleris said in a statement that the law allows for flexibility, including arming school employees.

"Governor Abbott will continue working with the legislature to expand school safety initiatives and ensure all Texas students can thrive," Mahaleris said.

The combination of not enough money for officers, and not enough of them to fill thousands of openings across the U.S., is an ongoing struggle in cities nationwide. Last month, a small Minnesota town lost its police department altogether after officers resigned over low pay and pursued better opportunities elsewhere.

The national shortfall of officers has hampered other states' attempts to patrol all schools. Florida

struggled in 2018 when the state became the nation's first to require an armed officer on every campus following the shooting at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School.

In Tennessee, following an elementary school shooting in March, the state offered police departments extra funding to staff every school. But police in Nashville, Tennessee's largest city, rejected most of the money.

"With the level of our staffing, we can't pull 70 officers from the streets of Nashville," Metro Nashville Police Chief John Drake told reporters in July.

Joy Baskin, education counsel for the Texas Association of School Boards, said all mandates come with a price tag. "But I think this is the biggest one I can remember in more than 25 years of talking to districts," she said.

In San Antonio, the Southside Independent School District was able to start the year with enough officers, who make between \$23 and \$30 an hour. Don Tijerina, the district's police chief, said it wouldn't take any of them long to find jobs elsewhere.

"Bottom line: The demand is so high right now," he said.

States and families wrestle over compassion in transgender youth care bans in Tennessee, Kentucky

By KIMBERLEE KRUESI and GEOFF MULVIHILL Associated Press

Questions over which side was being more compassionate emerged as a key fault line in a federal appeals court Friday, as judges heard arguments on whether to block transgender youth from receiving gender-affirming care in Kentucky and Tennessee.

Supporters of trans kids being able to get puberty blockers and hormone therapy argued that it is safe, necessary health care that's backed by every major medical group. Advocates of state-level bans on children seeking the care countered that these are experimental and life-altering procedures that young people shouldn't be exposed to.

U.S. District Judge Amul Thapar said concern over the child's well-being is the "nut of the case."

"I feel like there's compassion in both directions," Thapar said. "It's not crazy to say that there's a compassionate component to the other side of this — that maybe this is the kind of thing people might regret if they do it at age 14, 15."

Earlier this year, the Sixth U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals in Cincinnati reversed lower court decisions and allowed both Kentucky and Tennessee to move ahead with preventing transgender minors from accessing the care. The move sparked alarm among advocates, who countered that doing so would immediately harm transgender young people currently receiving gender-affirming care, as well as those who may need to access it in the future.

Yet attorneys representing Kentucky and Tennessee argued that since the U.S. Supreme Court has ruled states can prohibit abortion, states are free to regulate gender-affirming care procedures as they see fit.

Friday's hearing, which was held over video, comes amid a flurry of rulings this week stemming from disputes over limits on transgender and LGBTQ+ rights across the country over new laws in Republican-led states.

"The states play a front line in the indispensable role in regulating the practice of medicine," said Solicitor General Matthew Kuhn, representing the Kentucky attorney general's office.

But lawyers for transgender youth and their families said the teenage years are exactly when gender-affirming care should be administered.

"The evidence in this record shows that withholding treatment of even up to until the age of 18, and allowing puberty to occur consistent with the sex identified at birth, is extraordinarily harmful to these children," said Stephanie Schuster, an attorney for Kentucky families.

Elsewhere in the U.S., the Texas Supreme Court allowed a law against gender-affirming care for youth to take effect Friday, while a federal court on Thursday blocked enforcement of a Texas anti-drag law

that performers fear could shut them down or put them in jail. A federal judge in Kansas on Thursday told the state to stop letting transgender people change their birth certificates so the documents reflect their gender identities. Canada this week updated its travel advisory to the U.S., warning members of the LGBTQ+ community that they could face barriers and risks in American states that have enacted laws that may affect them.

And in Florida, a federal judge on Friday rejected requests to make it easier for transgender adults and children in the state to access gender-affirming care, at least for now.

Tallahassee-based U.S. District Judge Robert Hinkle said he would not immediately block enforcement of provisions of a new state law that is resulting in transgender adults continuing to receive hormone treatments. He might reconsider, he said, if he is given more medical evidence about the harm of halting treatments.

Florida is one of 22 states to adopt a law in the last few years banning gender-affirming care for children, including Texas, where enforcement began on Friday. But unlike others, the one signed by Republican Gov. Ron DeSantis in May also has provisions aimed at care for transgender adults.

The law requires that they give consent to treatment in person and with a physician present. Advocates say that's a problem because much of the care is prescribed by nurse practitioners and/or through telehealth – and that it's too hard for many patients to get or get to in-person appointments with physicians.

Hinkle also heard arguments Friday on whether to certify a group of transgender people as a class that rulings in the case would cover. He said he was willing to do that, but only with a clear definition of the class. But he said the hold on enforcement of the law for the plaintiffs in the case would not extend to other minors in the class.

Hinkle noted that he has a trial scheduled to start Nov. 13 to determine whether the law is constitutional.

He told lawyers for Florida that there are some problems with the law. "It is fairly remarkable that the state of Florida would tell a 40-year-old trans woman who has a doctor who says 'You can take estrogen and it will improve your life,' and the state of Florida says, 'No you can't take that.'"

Former Harrods owner Mohamed Al Fayed, whose son died in car crash with Princess Diana, dies at 94

By DANICA KIRKA, CARA RUBINSKY and JILL LAWLESS undefined

LONDON (AP) — Mohamed Al Fayed, the flamboyant Egypt-born businessman whose son was killed in a car crash with Princess Diana, died this week, his family said Friday. He was 94.

Al Fayed, the longtime owner of Harrods department store and the Fulham Football Club, was devastated by the death of son Dodi Fayed in the car crash in Paris with Diana 26 years ago. He spent years mourning the loss and fighting the British establishment he blamed for their deaths.

"Mrs Mohamed Al Fayed, her children and grandchildren wish to confirm that her beloved husband, their father and their grandfather, Mohamed, has passed away peacefully of old age on Wednesday August 30, 2023," his family said in a statement released by the Fulham club. "He enjoyed a long and fulfilled retirement surrounded by his loved ones."

Al Fayed was convinced Dodi and Diana were killed in a conspiracy masterminded by Prince Philip, the husband of Queen Elizabeth II. He maintained the royal family arranged the accident because they did not like Diana dating an Egyptian. Al Fayed claimed that Diana was pregnant and planning to marry Dodi and that the royal family could not countenance the princess marrying a Muslim.

In 2008, Al Fayed told an inquest the list of alleged conspirators included Philip, two former London police chiefs and the CIA.

The inquest concluded that Diana and Dodi died because of the reckless actions of their driver — an employee of the Ritz Hotel owned by Al Fayed — and paparazzi chasing the couple. Separate inquiries in the U.K. and France also concluded there was no conspiracy.

Al Fayed's relationship with the royal family was recently depicted in season five of "The Crown," in which

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the billionaire, played by Salim Daw, gets to know Diana.

The son of a school inspector, Al Fayad was born on Jan. 27, 1929, in Alexandria, Egypt. After early investments in shipping in Italy and the Middle East, he moved to Britain in the 1960s and started building an empire.

At the height of his wealth, Al Fayed owned the Ritz hotel in Paris and Fulham soccer team in London as well as Harrods, the luxury department store in the capital's tony Knightsbridge neighborhood.

The Sunday Times Rich List, which documents the fortunes of Britain's wealthiest people, put the family's fortune at 1.7 billion pounds (\$2.1 billion) this year, ranking Al Fayed as the 104th richest person in the country.

Al Fayed first hit the headlines in the 1980s when he battled with rival tycoon "Tiny" Rowland for control of the House of Fraser group, which included Harrods.

Al Fayed and his brother bought a 30% stake in House of Fraser for 130 million pounds in 1985. They paid an additional 615 million pounds to take full control the following year.

That transaction sparked an investigation by the Department of Trade and Industry, which concluded Al Fayed and his brother had "dishonestly misrepresented their origins, their wealth, their business interests and their resources." Despite those findings, the deal was allowed to go through.

Al Fayed was also a key player in the "cash for questions" scandal that roiled British politics in the 1990s.

Al Fayed was sued for libel by a British lawmaker, Neil Hamilton, after the businessman claimed he had given Hamilton envelopes of cash and a lavish stay at the Ritz in Paris, in return for asking questions in the House of Commons.

Hamilton's lawyer, Desmond Browne, claimed the allegation was fantasy, saying: "If there were Olympic medals for lying, Mr. Fayed would be a prime contender for a gold one."

A jury found in Al Fayed's favor in December 1999.

But he was never accepted by the British establishment. The government twice rejected his applications for citizenship, though the reasons were never released publicly.

Al Fayed bought underdog London soccer team Fulham in 1997, and spent lavishly on coaches and players to improve its performance. It was a success, with the club winning promotion to the Premier League in 2001.

Al Fayed was also friends with Michael Jackson and had a statue of the pop star erected outside Fulham's London stadium in 2011, two years after Jackson's death.

Never popular with Fulham fans, it was removed in 2013 by Al Fayed's successor as team owner, Shahid Khan.

Proud Boy convicted of helping spearhead Capitol attack ties Jan. 6 sentence record with 18 years

By LINDSAY WHITEHURST Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — A one-time leader in the Proud Boys far-right extremist group was sentenced Friday to 18 years in prison for his role in the Jan. 6 riot at the U.S. Capitol, tying the record for the longest sentence in the attack.

Ethan Nordean was one of five members convicted of spearheading an attack on the U.S. Capitol to try to prevent the peaceful transfer of power from Donald Trump to Joe Biden after the 2020 presidential election.

"He is the undisputed leader on the ground on Jan 6," said prosecutor Jason McCullough.

The Seattle-area chapter president was one of two Proud Boys sentenced Friday. Dominic Pezzola was convicted of smashing a window at the U.S. Capitol in the building's first breach on Jan. 6, 2021. He defiantly raised a fist and declared "Trump won!" as he walked out of the courtroom after being sentenced to 10 years in prison, also among the longest sentences in the Jan. 6 attack.

The 18-year record for a Jan. 6 sentence was set by Stewart Rhodes, founder of another far-right extremist group the Oath Keepers. Members of both groups were convicted separately of seditious conspiracy,

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a rarely brought Civil War-era offense.

The highest ranking Proud Boy convicted after a monthslong trial earlier this year, Proud Boys leader Enrique Tarrío, is scheduled to be sentenced Tuesday.

Prosecutors said Nordean's words and online posting grew increasingly violent leading up to Jan. 6. On that day, he led a group of nearly 200 men toward the Capitol, then moved to the front of the mob and helped tear down a fence, allowing rioters to pour onto the grounds and confront police, according to court documents. Prosecutors had asked for a 27-year sentence.

Defense attorneys have argued there was no plan to storm the Capitol that day and pushed back against the idea that Nordean tore down the fence or that his rhetoric was specifically about Jan. 6. They asked for less than two years.

For his own part, the 33-year-old from Auburn, Washington, told the judge he now sees Jan. 6 as a "complete and utter tragedy" and he regretted not trying to use his leadership role to stop what happened.

"There is no rally or political protest that should hold value over human life," he said. "To anyone who I directly or even indirectly wronged, I'm sorry."

The sentence was handed down by U.S. District Judge Timothy Kelly, a Trump appointee who also sentenced Pezzola earlier in the day and applied a terrorism enhancement in both cases.

Pezzola, 46, took a police officer's riot shield and used it to smash the window, allowing rioters to make the first breach into the Capitol, and he later filmed a "celebratory video" with a cigar inside, prosecutors said. He was a recent Proud Boys recruit, however, and a jury acquitted him of seditious conspiracy. He was convicted of other serious charges and prosecutors had asked for 20 years in prison.

"He was an enthusiastic foot soldier," prosecutor Erik Kenerson said.

Kelly noted that Pezzola, of Rochester, New York, was a newcomer to the group who didn't write the kind of increasingly violent online messages that his co-defendants did leading up to the Jan. 6 attack. Still, he was in some ways a "tip of the spear" in allowing rioters to get into the Capitol, Kelly said.

"The reality is you smashed that window in and let people begin to stream into the Capitol building and threaten the lives of our lawmakers," the judge told Pezzola. "It's not something that I ever dreamed I would have seen in our country."

Defense attorneys had asked for five years for Pezzola, saying that he got "caught up in the craziness" that day.

Pezzola testified at trial that he originally grabbed the officer's shield to protect himself from police riot control measures, and his lawyers argued that he broke only one pane of glass and that it was other rioters who smashed out the rest of the window.

He told the judge that he wished he'd never crossed into a restricted area on Jan. 6, and he apologized to the officer whose shield he took. "There is no place in my future for groups or politics whatsoever," he said.

But a few minutes later, as he was led out of the courtroom, he raised a fist and said, "Trump won!"

Former President Donald Trump and his allies have repeatedly and falsely claiming the 2020 election was stolen. A series of federal and state investigations and dozens of lawsuits have not uncovered any evidence the election was rigged.

Four Proud Boys have now been sentenced after a monthslong trial that ended in May. Joseph Biggs, an organizer from Ormond Beach, Florida, got 17 years on Thursday, marking the second-longest sentence so far in the Jan. 6 attack. Zachary Rehl, a leader of the Philadelphia chapter, got 15 years. The sentencings come after the Proud Boys trial laid bare far-right extremists' embrace of lies by Trump, a Republican, that the 2020 election was stolen from him.

More than 1,100 people have been charged with Capitol riot-related federal crimes. Over 600 of them have been convicted and sentenced. In addition to Rhodes, several other members of the anti-government Oath Keepers have also been convicted of seditious conspiracy after a trial last year.

Ecuador says 57 guards and police officers are released after being held hostage in several prisons

QUITO, Ecuador (AP) — Ecuadorian authorities announced Friday the release of 50 guards and seven police officers who were taken hostage for more than a day, in what the government described as a response by criminal groups to its efforts to regain control of several large correctional facilities in the South American country.

The country's corrections system, the National Service for Attention to Persons Deprived of Liberty, said in a statement that the 57 law enforcement officers — who were held in six different prisons — are safe, but it didn't offer details about how they were released.

Early Friday, criminal groups in Ecuador used explosives to damage a bridge, the latest in a series of attacks this week. Nobody was injured in the explosion.

Government officials have described the violent acts as the work of criminal gangs with members in prisons responding to efforts by authorities to retake control of several penitentiaries by relocating inmates, seizing weapons and other steps.

Four car bombs and three explosive devices went off across the country in less than 48 hours. The latest explosion with dynamite happened early Friday on a bridge linking two cities in the coastal province of El Oro, National Police commander Luis García told The Associated Press.

Hours earlier, a domestic gas tank with wads of dynamite attached exploded under a different bridge in Napo province of Napo, located within Ecuador's portion of the Amazon rainforest.

Consuelo Orellana, the governor of Azuay province, reported early Friday that 44 of the hostages at a prison in the city of Cuenca had been released. The country's correction system said later that all 57 were freed.

Security analyst Daniel Pontón said the chain of events, which took place three weeks after the slaying of presidential candidate Fernando Villavicencio was a "systematic and clearly planned" attack that had shown the state was ineffective in preventing violence.

"What does state intelligence do in these situations? It has not done anything, although the orders (for explosions) surely come from the prisons through cellphones," he said.

Pontón thinks the strikes are intended to generate fear among the population and influence politics. Ecuador is set to elect a president in an Oct. 15 runoff vote.

"The issue is that we are seeing an escalation of the problem, and given the level of incompetence of the state, later we can expect attacks against the population," Pontón said. "It is a predictable scenario that would be terrible."

The series of explosions began Wednesday night, when a car bomb exploded in Quito, Ecuador's capital, in an area where an office of the country's corrections system was previously located. Two other car bombs then went off in El Oro province, which is in the country's southwest.

Another vehicle in Quito exploded Thursday, this one outside the corrections system's current offices. An explosive device also went off in Cuenca, located in southern Ecuador's Andes mountains. A judge ordered six people suspected of involvement in the capital blasts kept in custody while an investigation continued.

Police commander Fausto Martínez said four suspects were arrested in connection with the explosions in Napo. He said three adults and a minor were arrested while they were traveling in a taxi in which authorities discovered blocks of dynamite that "were already synchronized to an explosive device" with a slow fuse. The finding prompted agents to perform two controlled detonations.

Ecuadorian authorities attribute a spike in violence over the past three years to a power vacuum triggered by the 2020 killing Jorge Zambrano, alias "Rasquiña" or "JL," the leader of the local Los Choneros gang.

Los Choneros and similar groups linked to Mexican and Colombian cartels are fighting over drug-trafficking routes and control of territory, including within detention facilities, where at least 400 inmates have died since 2021, according to authorities.

Gang members carry out contract killings, run extortion operations, move and sell drugs, and rule the prisons.

Villavicencio, the presidential candidate, had a famously tough stance on organized crime and corruption. He was killed Aug. 9 at the end of a political rally in Quito despite having a security detail that included police and bodyguards.

He had accused Los Choneros and its imprisoned current leader, Adolfo Macías, alias "Fito," of threatening him and his campaign team days before the assassination.

Authorities detained six Colombian men in connection with Villavicencio's slaying.

Rudy Giuliani pleads not guilty in Georgia election case, won't attend arraignment hearing

By KATE BRUMBACK Associated Press

ATLANTA (AP) — Rudy Giuliani on Friday pleaded not guilty to Georgia charges that accuse him of trying, along with former President Donald Trump and others, to illegally overturn the results of the 2020 election in the state.

In filing his not guilty plea with the court, the former New York mayor and Trump attorney also waived his right to appear at an arraignment hearing set for Sept. 6. He joins the former president and at least 10 others in forgoing a trip to Atlanta to appear before a judge in a packed courtroom with a news camera rolling.

Trump and Giuliani are among 19 people charged in a sprawling, 41-count indictment that details a wide-ranging conspiracy to thwart the will of Georgia's voters who had selected Democrat Joe Biden over the Republican incumbent.

The charges against Giuliani, along with other legal woes, signal a remarkable fall for a man who was celebrated as "America's mayor" in the aftermath of the 9/11 terrorist attack. He now faces 13 charges, including violation of Georgia's anti-racketeering law, the federal version of which was one of his favorite tools as prosecutor in the 1980s.

Fulton County District Attorney Fani Willis has said she wants to try all 19 defendants together. But the legal wrangling has already begun in a slew of court filings since the indictment was filed Aug. 14.

Several of those charged have filed motions to be tried alone or with a small group of other defendants, while others are trying to move their proceedings to federal court. Some are seeking to be tried quickly under a Georgia court rule that would have their trials start by early November, while others are already asking the court to extend deadlines.

Due to "the complexity, breadth, and volume of the 98-page indictment," Giuliani asked the judge in Friday's filing to give him at least 30 days after he receives information about witnesses and evidence from prosecutors to file motions. Normally, pretrial motions are to be filed within 10 days after arraignment.

Also Friday, Georgia Gov. Brian Kemp appointed a three-person panel to consider whether Shawn Still should be suspended from his state Senate post while his prosecution is ongoing. Under Georgia law, Kemp is supposed to appoint such a panel within 14 days of receiving a copy of the indictment. The panel, in turn, has 14 days to make a written recommendation to Kemp. The Republican governor named Attorney General Chris Carr, as required by the law, as well as Republican state Senate Majority Leader Steve Gooch and Republican state House Majority Leader Chuck Efration.

Still is a swimming pool contractor and former state Republican Party finance chairman. He was one of 16 Georgia Republicans who signed a certificate falsely stating that Trump had won the state and declaring themselves the state's "duly elected and qualified" electors. Still was one of only three members of that group who was indicted.

Still was elected to the Georgia state Senate in November 2022 and represents a district in Atlanta's northern suburbs. It's unclear whether the panel will find grounds to suspend Still, because the constitution specifies that officials should be suspended when a felony indictment "relates to the performance or activities of the office." The three-person commission can have a hearing for Still including lawyers.

Ta'Kiya Young's family urges officer's arrest after video shows him killing the pregnant Black woman

By SAMANTHA HENDRICKSON Associated Press/Report For America

COLUMBUS, Ohio (AP) — Ohio authorities on Friday released bodycam video showing a police officer fatally shooting Ta'Kiya Young in her car in what her family denounced as a "gross misuse of power and authority" against the pregnant Black mother.

Sean Walton, an attorney representing Young's family, said the video clearly shows that the Aug. 24 shooting of the 21-year-old woman was unjustified and he called for the officer to be fired and charged immediately. Walton also criticized police for not releasing the video footage for more than a week after the shooting.

"Ta'Kiya's family is heartbroken," Walton said in an interview with The Associated Press. "The video did nothing but confirm their fears that Ta'Kiya was murdered unjustifiably ... and it was just heartbreaking for them to see Ta'Kiya having her life taken away under such ridiculous circumstances."

Young's death follows a troubling series of fatal shootings of Black adults and children by Ohio police and numerous occurrences of police brutality against Black people across the nation in recent years, events that have prompted widespread protests and demands for police reform.

The officer who shot Young is on paid administrative leave while the Ohio Bureau of Criminal Investigation examines the shooting, which is standard practice. A police union official said calls to charge the officer before an investigation is complete are premature. A second officer who was on the scene has returned to active duty. Their names, races and ranks have not been released.

Blendon Township Police Chief John Belford called the shooting a tragedy.

"Ms. Young's family is understandably very upset and grieving," he said in a written statement released Friday morning. "While none of us can fully understand the depths of their pain, all of us can remember them in our prayers and give them the time and space to deal with this heartbreaking turn of events."

Young's father, grandmother and other relatives watched the video before its public release and released a statement Friday through Walton.

"It is undeniable that Ta'Kiya's death was not only avoidable, but also a gross misuse of power and authority," the statement said.

While viewing the video, the family felt "a lot of anger, a lot of frustration," Walton told the AP. "More than anything, there was ... a sense of just devastation, to know that this power system, these police officers, could stop her and so quickly take her life for no justifiable reason."

The video shows an officer at the driver's side window telling Young she has been accused of theft and repeatedly demanding that she get out of the car. A second officer is standing in front of the car.

Young protests, and the first officer repeats his demand. Then both officers yell at her to get out. At that point, Young can be heard asking them, "Are you going to shoot me?" seconds before she turns the steering wheel to the right and the car moves toward the officer standing in front of it. The officer fires his gun through the windshield and Young's sedan drifts into the grocery store's brick wall.

Officers then break the driver's side window, which Belford said was to get Young out of the car and render medical aid, though footage of medical assistance was not provided.

In his interview with the AP on Friday, Walton denied that Young had stolen anything from the grocery store. He said his firm found a witness who saw Young put down bottles of alcohol as she left the store.

"The bottles were left in the store," he said. "So when she's in her car denying that, that's accurate. She did not commit any theft, and so these officers were not even within their right to place her under arrest, let alone take her life."

Brian Steel, executive vice president of the union representing Blendon Township police, criticized Walton's characterization of the shooting as murder before all the facts are in. He said an investigation will determine whether the shooting was justified. "The fact is, (the officer) had to make a split-second decision while in front of a moving vehicle, a 2,000-pound weapon," he said.

But Edward Obayashi, a national use-of-force expert and attorney who specializes in vehicle-related

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police shootings, said that while the officer who shot Young may have reasonably feared for his safety, it went against all his law enforcement training to be in front of her car in the first place.

"The best practice in these matters nationwide is that you do not put yourself in a position of danger," said Obayashi, especially given that it was a minor crime Young was being accused of. "The results are predictable. ... Based on your training, why are you going to put yourself in front of a vehicle, in front of an individual that does not want to cooperate?" Obayashi said. "There was no urgent need for him to position himself the way he did."

The Blendon Township police department's use of force policy states that officers should try to move away from an approaching vehicle instead of firing their weapons. An officer should only shoot when he or she "reasonably believes there are no other reasonable means available to avert the imminent threat of the vehicle, or if deadly force other than the vehicle is directed at the officer or others."

Responding to criticism of the delay in releasing the video, Belford said it took time for his small staff to process it and properly redact certain footage, such as officers' faces and badge numbers, in accordance with Ohio law.

He said the officers' names cannot be released at this point because they are being treated as assault victims. He said one of the officer's arms was still partially in the driver's side window and a second officer was still standing in front of the car when Young moved the car forward.

Young's death is one of numerous deaths of Black adults and children at the hands of police across the nation that have drawn protests and demands for more accountability. Among the most prominent cases was George Floyd's death on May 25, 2020. Floyd died after then-Minneapolis Police Officer Derek Chauvin, who is white, pressed a knee on his neck for 9 1/2 minutes on the street outside a convenience store where Floyd tried to pass a counterfeit \$20 bill. Chauvin was convicted of second-degree murder.

In Ohio, Donovan Lewis was lying on his bed in August 2022 when he was shot by a K-9 officer serving a warrant. Ma'Khia Bryant, a 16-year-old girl in foster care who was accused of swinging at two people with a knife, was fatally shot in April 2021. In December 2020, Casey Goodson Jr., was shot five times in the back by a Franklin County sheriff's deputy.

Ohio Families Unite for Political Action and Change, a grassroots organization focused on eradicating police brutality, said the footage of Young's shooting shows officers' conduct was "violent, defenseless, and egregious" and that they acted as "judge, jury and executioner."

Young was expected to give birth to a daughter in November. Family and friends held a private vigil a day after Young was killed, releasing balloons and lighting candles spelling out "RIP Kiya." An online effort to pay her funeral expenses has raised over \$7,000.

Ta'Kiya's siblings, cousins, grandmother and father have rallied around her sons, 6-year-old Ja'Kobie and 3-year-old Ja'Kenlie, who don't yet understand the magnitude of what happened to their mother, Walton said.

"It's a large family and Ta'Kiya has been snatched away from them," Walton said. "I think the entire family is still in shock."

Young's grandmother, Nadine Young, described her granddaughter as a family-oriented prankster who was a loving older sister and mother.

"She was so excited to have this little girl," the grandmother said at a news conference Wednesday. "She has her two little boys, but she was so fired up to have this girl. She is going to be so missed."

"I'm a mess because it's just tragic," she said, "but it should have never, ever, ever happened."

No power and nowhere to stay as rural Florida starts recovering from Hurricane Idalia

By REBECCA BLACKWELL and LAURA BARGFELD Associated Press

HORSESHOE BEACH, Fla. (AP) — The worst of Hurricane Idalia left residents of a region of tight-knit communities trying to find places to live as they rebuild — if they decide it's even worth it — and waiting potentially weeks for electricity to be restored after winds and water took out entire power grids.

Idalia came ashore Wednesday in Florida's sparsely populated Big Bend region, where places to fish and paddle are connected by swamps.

The scope of the disaster came into sharper focus Friday. A power cooperative warned its 28,000 customers it might take two weeks to restore electricity. Emergency officials promised trailers would arrive over the weekend to provide housing in an area that didn't have much to begin with.

"We'll build back. We'll continue to fish and enjoy catching the redfish and trout and eating oysters and catching scallops and eating them," said real estate agent Jimmy Butler, who lives in Horseshoe Beach, which saw some of the worst damage.

Idalia made landfall Wednesday near Keaton Beach with winds of 125 mph (200 kph) and a 6-foot (1.8-meter) storm surge. The fast-moving storm then tore through largely rural stretches of inland Florida and southern Georgia.

While the storm wreaked havoc on a slice of old Florida that has escaped massive coastal development, its path and forward speed spared the state's insurance industry a huge financial hit, said elected Chief Financial Officer Jimmy Patronis, whose agency oversees the state Office of Insurance Regulation.

Two days after the more powerful Hurricane Ian hit southwest Florida last year around Fort Myers, for instance, the state reported more than 62,000 insurance claims. In the two days after Idalia, there have been about 3,000, Patronis said.

But some of the Big Bend's older homes may have been passed down for generations, owned outright and not insured. People who lost everything may decide they can't afford or it is not worth it to rebuild, leaving a bigger cultural impact than a financial one, Patronis said.

"This is somebody's way of life. This is the way somebody took care of their families and their families took care of them and they're hard working people," Patronis said. "Mother Nature's going to wipe them off the map and they're going to say, 'You know what? Maybe this is a sign for us to cash out.'"

Theresa Rae Gay's neighborhood in St. Petersburg filled with a mix of ocean water, fresh water and sewage as the storm passed to the east. She lost many of her appliances and probably her furniture. It's expensive but "part of the game," she said.

"Still worth it to live in this neighborhood and we're still happy to be here," Gay said.

More than 100,000 homes and businesses in Florida and Georgia remained without power Friday, according to PowerOutage.us. And even with high temperatures below normal, the high humidity meant sweltering late-summer days and nights, with no power to run air conditioners.

The Suwannee Valley Electric Cooperative warned its 28,000 customers to prepare to be without power for two weeks after hundreds of poles snapped, with thousands of reports of damage and downed lines. The utility was bringing in hundreds more workers for repairs and setting up generators for some restaurants and others.

"It's going to take a while to get everyone's power back on," co-op CEO Mike McWaters wrote to customers.

It wasn't as grim to the west, where Tri-County Electric Cooperative initially warned its 14,500 customers of two-week outages, but later said all but the worst-damaged homes, a few hundred, would be back online by Tuesday.

The key has been adding workers and quickly restoring the main transmission lines that bring power generated elsewhere in the state, spokesperson Kaitlyn Culpepper said. The Florida National Guard and the state Forestry Department are helping clear trees, Culpepper said.

One Georgia resident died when a tree fell on him as he tried to clear another tree from a road. Officials said there appeared to be a storm-related death around Gainesville, Florida, but did not release details.

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Democratic President Joe Biden planned to visit Florida on Saturday and survey the damage with Republican Gov. Ron DeSantis — who is campaigning to unseat Biden — but details were still being worked out.

“What we want to do is make sure that power restoration continues, that the relief efforts continue, and we don’t have any interruption to that,” DeSantis said Friday. “I’m sure they’ll be sensitive to that.”

Recovery continued in other places, too. In hard-hit Valdosta, Georgia, where nearly half the surrounding county’s 32,000 electric customers remained without power, the local university stuck with its plans to play football Saturday but moved the game from the evening to the afternoon because of power issues.

Not only was about half of south Georgia’s pecan crop damaged — Idalia knocked over entire trees, ruining farms for many years, Georgia Agricultural Commissioner Tyler Harper said.

Georgia is the largest U.S. pecan producer, averaging about 88 million pounds of the nuts per year, about one-third of all of U.S. production, according to the University of Georgia Extension Service.

Idalia was a tropical storm by the time it reached South Carolina, but it brought a storm surge that — along with a periodic, unusually high tide — flooded Charleston and almost every beach community.

The storm eroded many of the dunes on the Isle of Palms, leaving crews scrambling to smooth out large drop-offs on beach access paths ahead of Labor Day weekend.

Beaches in Florida south of where Idalia’s center struck also suffered serious erosion. Pinellas County closed off 14 of 28 beach access walkovers in Indian Rocks Beach alone. The wooden walkway to the beach is now 4 feet (1.2 meters) above the sand in some places.

“We’ve probably lost about a third of the beach, if not more,” said Indian Rocks Beach City Manager Greg Mims.

The remnants of Idalia continued moving away from the U.S. on Friday. Forecasters warned it could become a tropical storm again Saturday and bring winds and rains to Bermuda, which also this week was lashed by winds and rain from the outer bands of Hurricane Franklin.

In final hours before landfall, Hurricane Idalia stopped intensifying and turned from Tallahassee

By JEFF MARTIN and ISABELLA O’MALLEY Associated Press

ATLANTA (AP) — In the final hours before Hurricane Idalia struck Florida the storm had grown into a Category 4 beast lurking off the state’s west coast, and the forecast called for it to continue intensifying up until landfall.

An Air Force Reserve Hurricane Hunter aircraft had recorded winds up to 130 mph (215 kph), the National Hurricane Center said in an ominous bulletin at 6 a.m. Wednesday.

As the sun rose an hour later, however, there was evidence the hurricane began replacing the wall around its eye — a phenomenon that experts say kept it from further intensifying. Maximum winds had dropped to near 125 mph (205 kph), the Hurricane Center said in a 7 a.m. update.

Then came another surprising twist: A last-minute turn sparing the state’s capital city of Tallahassee from far more serious damage.

“Eyewall replacement cycles are common in major hurricanes, and so when you see that, it does lead to some temporary weakening,” said Kelly Godsey, one of the meteorologists tracking the storm at the National Weather Service in Tallahassee, where his colleagues slept inside the weather office so they could be at work in case the city was devastated.

The eyewall essentially begins collapsing, and that “was beneficial from a timing perspective,” said Donald Jones, a National Weather Service meteorologist in Lake Charles, Louisiana. Several hours after the process begins, a new eyewall forms and the hurricane can then quickly intensify — which didn’t happen to Idalia as there wasn’t enough time before landfall, Jones said.

“Like a figure skater pulling in her arms versus holding her arms out, the hurricane spins with a lot more energy, power, and ferocity when it has a tighter eye,” said Ryan Maue, a meteorologist and former chief scientist with the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration.

After a successful completion of an eyewall replacement cycle, the hurricane has a larger eye and overall

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expanded wind field, extending the potential for damage over a larger area. Instead, Idalia tracked over land where friction immediately reduced the wind speeds near the surface.

Then, after the eyewall replacement had begun, the hurricane took a last-minute turn away from Tallahassee, home to about 200,000 people, Florida State University and thousands more people in the metro area. Instead of striking the capital city, it wobbled to the north-northeast and made landfall near Keaton Beach, Florida, the Hurricane Center announced at 7:45 a.m.

"Had that turn not occurred, there would have been much more devastating impacts here in Tallahassee," Godsey said.

Despite the eyewall replacement cycle's effects, Idalia was still a major hurricane threatening storm surges of up to 15 feet (4.6 meters) along some parts of Florida's coast.

"All of that energy has already been transferred to the water surface and the devastating storm surge is already on its way," Godsey said.

A hurricane undergoing an eyewall replacement cycle can also see an expansion of its wind field, meaning that a larger area could be struck with hurricane-force winds, said Allison Michaelis, an assistant professor in the Department of Earth, Atmosphere, and Environment at Northern Illinois University.

During the eyewall replacement, there isn't much difference in the amount of thunderstorms or tornadoes the hurricane generates because that type of weather occurs in the storm's outer bands hundreds of miles from the eye, Maue said.

Farther south in Tampa, the mood was intense as forecasters tracked the storm while it moved up the coast and took aim at the Big Bend region, said Christianne Pearce, a meteorologist at the National Weather Service office in Tampa.

"The stress level is definitely elevated, but everyone is very alert and very attentive," she said. "You know, what you're putting out there is about making decisions to help people save lives."

One of the hurricane hunter airplanes — a P-3 turboprop plane that flies directly into hurricanes to collect data — typically flies out of Lakeland, Florida, when it investigates Gulf of Mexico storms. But with Lakeland near Idalia's potential path, those operations moved to Fort Lauderdale, said Michael Fischer, a University of Miami associate scientist.

"That aircraft data is really important in helping understand the structure of the storm," said Fischer, who helps to ensure the airplane's data is transmitted in real time to the National Hurricane Center and emergency managers.

As Idalia advanced toward Florida, Fischer said he was impressed by some of the high-resolution hurricane models used by meteorologists. They have advanced over the years and now give scientists a better picture of the processes taking place inside hurricanes — including signs an eyewall replacement cycle might begin, he said.

Once the storm made landfall, it was moving fast with a forward speed of around 18 mph (30 kph), the National Hurricane Center said.

The fast forward speed "was good and bad at the same time," Pearce said. It didn't linger long enough to drop copious amounts of rain on the region, but it was fast enough that it could maintain much of its intensity and remained a hurricane as it moved across south Georgia.

Idalia's inland track was fairly straightforward for a storm moving near the coast across the Southeast U.S., said Bob Henson, a meteorologist and journalist with Yale Climate Connections.

"The most unusual aspect was the especially high water recorded at Charleston, South Carolina, and other places along the Southeast coast," he said. "These high waters were a combination of a 'supermoon' high tide, the storm-surge effects of Idalia, and a long-term component from sea level rise associated with human-produced climate change."

There are several aspects of Idalia that have weather experts intrigued, Michaelis noted.

"It's interesting that we had a drought of major hurricanes making landfall from 2006 to 2016, but since the 2017 season, we've had six major hurricanes make landfall across the Gulf Coast," said Michaelis, who added that the location where Idalia made landfall in Big Bend Coast, Florida, rarely sees a direct hit from

hurricanes.

"To me, this underscores the main message we try to communicate before and during every hurricane season: It only takes one," he said. "Aside from how quiet or active a season is, aside from how quiet or active previous seasons have been, and aside from where we traditionally see major landfalls, it only takes one storm to make an impact."

US will regulate nursing home staffing for first time, but proposal lower than many advocates hoped

By MATT SEDENSKY AP National Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — The federal government will, for the first time, dictate staffing levels at nursing homes, the Biden administration said Friday, responding to systemic problems bared by mass COVID-19 deaths.

While such regulation has been sought for decades by allies of older adults and those with disabilities, the proposed threshold is far lower than many advocates had hoped. It also immediately drew ire from the nursing home industry, which said it amounted to a mandate that couldn't be met.

With criticism expected, a promise made with fanfare in President Joe Biden's 2022 State of the Union speech had its details revealed as many Americans turned away from the news for a holiday weekend.

"We are working to make sure no nursing home can sacrifice the safety of their residents just to add some dollars to their bottom line," the president said in a USA Today opinion piece.

The American Health Care Association, which lobbies for care facilities, called the proposal "unfathomable," saying it will worsen existing problems and cost homes billions of dollars.

"We hope to convince the administration to never finalize this rule as it is unfounded, unfunded, and unrealistic," said AHCA's president, Mark Parkinson, the former Democratic governor of Kansas.

The proposed rules, which now enter a public comment period and would take years more to fully take effect, call for staffing equivalent to 3 hours per resident per day, just over half an hour of it coming from registered nurses. The rules also call for facilities to have an RN on staff 24 hours a day, every day.

The average U.S. nursing home already has overall caregiver staffing of about 3.6 hours per resident per day, according to government reports, including RN staffing just above the half-hour mark.

Still, the government insists a majority of the country's roughly 15,000 nursing homes, which house some 1.2 million people, would have to add staff under the proposed rules.

Chiquita Brooks-LaSure, who heads the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services, or CMS, called the move "an important first step." CMS oversees nursing homes.

A senior White House official, speaking on the condition of anonymity ahead of the announcement, said the Biden administration was open to revisiting the staffing threshold once implemented.

"I would caution anyone who thinks that the status quo — in which there is no federal floor for nursing home staffing — is preferable to the standards we're proposing," said Stacy Sanders, an aide to Health Secretary Xavier Becerra. "This standard would raise staffing levels for more than 75% of nursing homes, bringing more nurse aides to the bedside and ensuring every nursing home has a registered nurse on site 24/7."

The new thresholds are drastically lower than those that had long been eyed by advocates after a landmark 2001 CMS-funded study recommended an average of 4.1 hours of nursing care per resident daily.

Most U.S. facilities don't meet that threshold. Many advocates said even it was insufficient, not taking into account quality of life, simply determining the point at which residents could suffer potential harm.

After the Democratic president elevated the issue in his State of the Union speech, advocates were initially elated, expecting the most significant change for residents since the Nursing Home Reform Act of 1987. That changed after a copy of a new CMS-funded study on the subject was inadvertently posted this week, claiming there is "no obvious plateau at which quality and safety are maximized."

Advocates were bereft, saying they felt betrayed by administration officials they thought to be allies. As word of the proposal became public early Friday some were even more blistering.

Richard Mollot, who leads the Long Term Care Community Coalition, called it "completely inadequate"

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and a blown chance of “a once-in-a-generation opportunity” that “flouts any evidence” of what residents need and fails to make good on the heart of Biden’s promise. He begrudgingly acknowledged the 24/7 RN rule could bring small improvements to the worst facilities, but he otherwise was withering in his criticism.

Calling the move “heartbreaking” and “nauseating,” he said it would do more harm than good, putting a government imprimatur on poorly staffed homes and imperiling wrongful-death lawsuits.

“It is a tremendous dereliction of duty,” he said. “We are continuing to allow nursing homes to warehouse people and to rip the public off.”

Current law requires only that homes have “sufficient” staffing, but it leaves nearly all interpretation to states. Thirty-eight states and the District of Columbia have their own staffing regulations. Some are so low that advocates say they’re meaningless, and, across the board, enforcement is often toothless.

The problem has long been apparent to front-line nurse aides — the low-paid, overwhelmingly female and disproportionately minority backbone of facility staffs — and to residents themselves, whose call bells go unanswered, whose showers become less frequent and who lie hungry, awaiting help with meals.

The coronavirus pandemic, which claimed more than 167,000 U.S. nursing home residents, brought the greatest attention to poor staffing in history. But, in its wake, many homes saw their staffing grow even thinner.

Across all job types, Bureau of Labor Statistics data shows nursing homes have 218,200 fewer employees than in February 2020, when the first U.S. outbreak of the coronavirus arrived at a nursing home outside Seattle.

AHCA has waged a relentless campaign claiming facilities were teetering, with Medicaid subsidies insufficient, widespread hiring issues and rampant home closures. While there have been scattered closures, the profitability of homes has repeatedly been exposed and critics have argued, if they just paid better, the workers would come.

Katie Smith Sloan, the head of LeadingAge, which represents nonprofit nursing homes, said it was meaningless to create a rule requiring facilities to hire additional staff when the industry was already in a workforce crisis and “there are simply no people to hire.”

“To say that we are disappointed that President Biden chose to move forward with the proposed staffing ratios despite clear evidence against them is an understatement,” she said.

After outrage over Taylor Swift tickets, reform has been slow across the US

By ADAM BEAM Associated Press

SACRAMENTO, Calif. (AP) — When thousands of fans couldn’t get tickets for megastar Taylor Swift’s summer stadium tour, some diehards paid upwards of 70 times face value to see their favorite artist in person — an outrage that prompted congressional hearings and bills in state legislatures to better protect consumers.

After 10 months, Swift’s U.S. tour is finished, but so are most of the meaningful reforms consumer advocates and industry groups had hoped to pass this year. A proposal has so far failed to advance in the U.S. Senate. Legislation in Colorado was vetoed by the Democratic governor at the urging of some consumer groups.

And in California, home to iconic recording studios like Capitol Records and influential clubs like the Whiskey A Go Go and Hollywood Bowl, none of the ticketing proposals will pass this year in the aftermath of an intense lobbying campaign by both industry and consumer groups.

“We should do so much better than this,” said Robert Herrell, executive director of the Consumer Federation of California.

The slow progress over changing how tickets should be sold and resold highlights not just the strength of industry opposition, but the regulatory difficulties in a market upended by technology. Gone are the days of standing in line at a box office to find out what seats were available and how much they cost.

Today, nearly all tickets are sold online and downloaded to phones or other devices. Consumers often

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don't know how much they will pay until just before they click the purchase button and fees and charges, which can sometimes be almost as much as the ticket price, are applied.

Venues often don't say how many seats are available for a specific event, according to consumer groups, but instead release tickets in batches, making consumers spend more out of the mistaken fear they'll miss out.

Some bad actors use software to quickly bulk-buy tickets for resale at much higher prices. They will even sell tickets before they have them, a practice known as "speculative ticketing" that consumer groups say is dangerous and does not guarantee the ticket. Some go so far as to mimic venue websites so consumers believe they are buying tickets directly.

Some states, including New York and Connecticut, have passed bills to ban hidden fees. But all of the major players in the ticketing industry have already agreed to do that, minimizing its impact.

Addressing the other problems have been more difficult. Sharp disagreements among venues, ticket sellers, consumer groups and artists have muddied what may seemingly straightforward consumer rights issues.

Artists and venues want to restrict how fans can resell tickets, an attempt to crack down on "the secondary market to sweep the inventory, inflate the price and price gouge our fans," said Jordan Bromley, who sits on the board of the Music Artist Coalition, an advocacy group representing artists.

Consumer groups argue buyers can do what they want with their tickets, including selling them for a profit. That disagreement is partly why Colorado Democratic Gov. Jared Polis vetoed a bill earlier this year, despite the bill also containing consumer-friendly policies like banning hidden fees, price increases and speculative ticket sales.

In California, consumer groups have mostly focused their ire on Live Nation Entertainment, the company that owns Ticketmaster and controls the bulk of ticket sales and venues in the U.S. for touring music artists. But the debate is spreading to artists, major men's professional sports teams like the Los Angeles Dodgers and San Francisco 49ers, and independent venues with capacity for 1,000 people or fewer, including more than 600 in California alone.

Most people are being vocal about "how this is an attempt to shoot at Ticketmaster and Live Nation," said Julia Heath, president of the California chapter of the National Independent Venue Association. "What's actually happening is they are aiming at them, but they are hitting everybody else, too."

The biggest disagreement was over whether to allow teams, venues and artists to restrict how fans could resell tickets they purchased. A bill that would have allowed restrictions on resales passed the state Senate but failed to pass the Assembly this year after drawing concerns from consumer groups.

A bill by Assemblymember Laura Friedman would have banned venues and artists from restricting resales. That measure also would have required venues to disclose how many tickets were available for an event to prevent "holdbacks." Ultimately, the bill was changed to remove both of those provisions after attracting strong industry opposition.

"It's been very difficult. It had a very strong and concerted effort from the very beginning lobby against this bill," Friedman said.

California lawmakers have vowed to continue working on the issue next year. But by then, the memory of the outrage over Taylor Swift's concern tickets will have likely faded, depriving consumer advocates of the public pressure they had hoped would spur change.

Herrell, director of the Consumer Federation of California, cited a quote that has been attributed to such people as former British Prime Minister Winston Churchill and former Chicago Mayor Rahm Emanuel: "Never let a crisis go to waste."

"I felt like that was true here," Herrell said. "I thought there was a moment there."

One dead, four injured in stabbings at notorious jail in Atlanta that's under federal investigation

ATLANTA (AP) — Five people were stabbed, one fatally, during a dispute among men being held at an overcrowded jail in Atlanta that is already the subject of a federal civil rights investigation, authorities said Friday.

Dayvion Blake, 23, was pronounced dead around 3:30 p.m. Thursday after the stabbings at the Fulton County Jail, the sheriff's office said in a news release. Blake and three others were taken to Grady Memorial Hospital, while a fifth man was treated at the jail by medical staff. The sheriff's office didn't provide any information on what led to the stabbings.

Five people, including Blake, have died in Fulton County custody in just over a month. The county medical examiner's office plans to do an autopsy on Blake.

"The recent outbreak of violence at the Fulton County Jail is of grave concern but unfortunately is not surprising considering the long-standing, dangerous overcrowding and the crumbling walls of the facility that are literally being crafted into makeshift weapons that inmates use to attack each other and staff," Sheriff Pat Labat said in the release.

"We have had an unfortunate series of deaths this year that range from natural causes, to pre-existing health conditions, to homicide."

There were 2,523 people being held in the main county jail on Friday, nearly 270 above its operational capacity of 2,254, according to data from the sheriff's office. Labat said his office "is in constant negotiations" with other jails to try to house detainees elsewhere to mitigate violence and overcrowding. He said he has also been doing shakedowns at the jail to seize contraband.

Labat, who took office in January 2021, has been pushing for a new jail.

Critics, including the Southern Center for Human Rights, have said that will not fix the problems. The organization, which has successfully sued the county multiple times over jail conditions, said in an April letter to the U.S. Department of Justice that Labat has demonstrated a "clear inability to remedy the conditions of people currently in his care" and that human rights violations at the jail are "the result of a staff culture of cruelty and violence."

The U.S. Department of Justice opened its civil rights investigation into jail conditions in the county in July.

Blake had been arrested by Atlanta police on Jan. 25 on a variety of charges, including possession of cocaine and battery, jail records show. The sheriff's office said he was being held on previous charges because of the January arrest and also had a warrant in Sumter County for aggravated assault.

The Fulton County Jail is where former President Donald Trump and 18 others indicted along with him surrendered last week for booking on charges related to an alleged illegal scheme to overturn the results of the 2020 election in Georgia.

Samuel Lawrence, 34, Sept. 26 at Grady Memorial Hospital after he was found unresponsive in his cell at the jail. The other three people who died in the last month include 66-year-old Alexander Hawkins, 34-year-old Christopher Smith and 40-year-old Montay Stinson.

Lashawn Thompson, 35, died last September in a bedbug-infested cell in the Fulton County Jail's psychiatric wing. An independent autopsy done at his family's request found he died from severe neglect. His family has since reached a settlement with the county.

Russian students are returning to school, where they face new lessons to boost their patriotism

By DASHA LITVINOVA Associated Press

TALLINN, Estonia (AP) — Clad in white shirts and carrying bouquets, children across Russia flocked back to school Friday, where the Kremlin's narratives about the war in Ukraine and its confrontation with the West were taking an even more prominent spot than before.

Students are expected each week to listen to Russia's national anthem and watch the country's tricolor

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flag being raised. There's a weekly subject loosely translated as "Conversations about Important Things," which was introduced last year with the goal of boosting patriotism.

A new high school history textbook has a chapter on the annexation of the Crimean Peninsula and the "special military operation" — the Kremlin's euphemism for the war, and some basic military training is included in a course on self-defense and first aid.

President Vladimir Putin even got involved, personally meeting Friday with 30 school students from different regions and describing Russians as "an invincible nation." The Kremlin called it "an open lesson" as part of the "Conversations About Important Things" program of studies.

"School ... is a powerful mechanism for raising a person subordinate to the state," said Nikolay Petrov, visiting researcher at the German Institute for International and Security Affairs. "For a while the school was outside the active attention of the state. Today, it's all coming back."

The Kremlin became preoccupied with what was on the minds of young people several years ago, when teenagers and students flocked to unauthorized protests organized by now-imprisoned opposition leader Alexei Navalny.

"The Kremlin suddenly began to pay a lot of attention to children and the youth," Petrov noted.

Putin started meeting with young people regularly, and authorities started investing in pushing its political narrative. The effort appeared to be driven by the realization that a whole generation of people who grew up with Putin as president "can think differently than the Kremlin wants them to," the analyst said.

There have been frequent media reports in recent years about teachers dressing down, shouting at or calling police on students who express support for the opposition or anti-government views.

The crackdown intensified after Moscow sent troops to Ukraine, and teachers were fired or forced to quit after refusing to hold sessions of the "Conversations About Important Things." Parents faced pressure from school administrators and authorities if their children skipped those lessons.

Earlier this year, authorities the town of Yefremov, south of Moscow, convicted and imprisoned a single father whose daughter drew an antiwar sketch at school.

The Education Ministry has unveiled an 11th grade history textbook, with a chapter covering Russia from 2014 to the present. It justifies the annexation of Crimea and the invasion of Ukraine, and paints the West as hostile toward Moscow. Questions about the fighting were featured in a sample of the final history exam that authorities recently released.

The practical course on self-defense and first aid now includes some basic military training, with students being taught about various weapons and lectures on information warfare and the dangers of extremist groups.

Some parents say they are rattled by these mandatory lessons.

"I've discovered that, to my horror, ideological lessons have become mandatory for my daughters and there is no chance of avoiding that," said Sergei, a Muscovite whose two daughters have just started high school. He and other parents spoke to The Associated Press on the condition that their last names not be revealed out of concerns for their safety.

"I now have to explain and ask the girls to be more careful with what they say in school in order to not inflict harm on themselves," he said.

Sergei said his daughters, whose hobby is ballroom dancing, are "all of a sudden asking questions about the flight range of missiles and drones."

"The mind of school students becomes militarized, history textbooks are being rewritten, mandatory ideology is being imposed," he said. "Russian schools rapidly turn back to the worst Soviet examples, when two histories and two truths existed."

A parent now has fewer opportunities to protect kids "from brainwashing," he added.

Other Muscovites told AP they were lucky to have their children attend schools where teachers weren't following the directives to the letter, trying to stay away from politics.

"We got teachers who understand everything. They won't say out loud that they're against 'Conversations About Important Things,'" said Vladimir, whose daughter is in a Moscow school.

"We got a teacher who came up with her own content for the lesson and talked about, for example,

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Non-governmental organizations stepped in to help survivors with temporary accommodation, while religious leaders held prayer services outside the burned-out building.

Attention in South Africa also turned to who would be held responsible for the tragedy. Emergency workers and witnesses painted a picture of a building full of shacks and other temporary structures, and where multiple families were crammed into rooms. Some people stayed in the basement parking garage.

Local government officials said that people were trapped inside the building because security gates were locked and there were no proper fire escapes. Many bodies were reportedly found on top of each other near one locked gate where they became trapped. Others jumped out windows and died in the fall, witnesses and officials said.

At the building, twisted sheets and blankets still hung like ropes out of windows a day after, showing how desperately some had tried to flee the flames and smoke.

The police have opened a criminal case, although it was unclear who might face any charges over the deaths as no official authority ran the building. South Africa's Parliament has called for a wider investigation.

South African President Cyril Ramaphosa, who visited the scene on Thursday, said the tragedy was partly caused by "criminal elements" who had taken over the building and charged people to live there.

"The lesson for us is that we've got to address this problem," Ramaphosa said.

Ramaphosa's call was repeated by many figures from national and local government, who said it was time to resolve Johannesburg's housing crisis. People living in broken-down structures known as "hijacked buildings" is common in Johannesburg

The focus on the issue only after so many people were killed angered some in the city.

"We have seen the president calling this incident tragic," said Herman Mashaba, a former mayor of Johannesburg and now the leader of an opposition political party. "What do you mean tragic? You've been aware of this. We have seen the decay of this city over 25 years. It's not something that just happened overnight."

Russia's Putin and Turkey's Erdogan set to meet amid efforts to repair Ukraine grain deal

Russian President Vladimir Putin will host Turkish leader Recep Tayyip Erdogan for talks next week, the Kremlin announced Friday, just over six weeks after Moscow broke off a deal brokered by Ankara and the U.N. that allowed Ukrainian grain to reach world markets safely despite the 18-month war.

Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov said Putin and Erdogan would meet Monday in Russia's Black Sea resort of Sochi.

The announcement ended weeks of speculation about when and where the two leaders might meet next, while international efforts continue to try to patch up the Black Sea Grain Initiative, which sent grain to parts of Africa, the Middle East and Asia where hunger is a growing threat.

Ukraine and Russia are both major global suppliers of wheat, barley, sunflower oil and other commodities that developing nations rely on.

Turkey, together with the United Nations, brokered the deal in July 2022 that allowed Ukraine to resume shipping foodstuffs from three Black Sea ports. Under the initiative, ship and cargo inspections were overseen from Turkey, and vessels sailed to and from Ukraine from there. Almost 33,000 tons of grain left Ukraine while the agreement was in effect.

Ankara's role was key. Turkey is one of Russia's main trading partners and a logistical hub for Russia's foreign trade amid Western sanctions. Erdogan calls Putin "my dear friend."

A separate memorandum that Moscow and the U.N. agreed to at the same time as the Ukraine initiative pledged to help to overcome wartime obstacles to Russian exports of food and fertilizer. Russian officials repeatedly threatened to pull out of the deals and finally did in July, alleging its conditions hadn't been met.

Russia has complained that restrictions on shipping and insurance have hampered its agricultural exports, but it has shipped record amounts of wheat since last year.

U.N. Secretary-General Antonio Guterres sent Russia a new proposal in hopes of reviving the deal but it

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didn't satisfy Moscow's demands, Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov said while hosting his Turkish counterpart, Hakan Fidan, for talks in Moscow on Thursday.

Lavrov said he gave the Turkish government a list of actions that the West would have to take in order for Ukraine's Black Sea exports to resume. The scheduled talks between Putin and Erdogan could help unlock that.

The announcement of Monday's meeting coincided with the departure of two bulk cargo ships Friday from the Ukrainian port city of Yuzhne.

The Liberia-flagged Anna-Theresa and the Ocean Courtesy, traveling under a Marshall Islands flag, were carrying pig iron and iron ore concentrate, Ukrainian Minister of Infrastructure Oleksandr Kubrakov said.

It was not clear under what legal and security circumstances the ships had sailed.

The Ocean Courtesy was headed to Romania's Black Sea port of Constanta and is estimated to arrive there Saturday afternoon, according to the global ship tracking website MarineTraffic. The website said the Anna-Theresa would reach Varna in Bulgaria the same day.

Meanwhile, Russian officials said Friday that air defenses intercepted drones heading toward three of the country's western regions. Regional governors said defense systems stopped three drones in the Kursk, Belgorod and Moscow regions.

Moscow airports briefly halted flights but no major damage or injuries were reported, according to Russian authorities.

Drones aimed at targets inside Russia — and blamed by Moscow on Ukraine — have become almost daily occurrences as the war has entered its 19th month and Kyiv's forces pursue a counteroffensive. Recently, the drones have reached deeper into Russia.

The apparent Ukrainian strategy is to unnerve Russia and pile pressure on Russian President Vladimir Putin, although Kyiv officials normally neither claim nor deny responsibility for attacks on Russian soil.

The Associated Press has not been able to determine whether the drones were launched from Ukraine or inside Russia.

Ukraine's military intelligence chief, Maj. Gen. Kyrylo Budanov, said in an interview with online outlet The War Zone that "we work from the territory of Russia." He did not elaborate.

Meanwhile, satellite images analyzed by the AP show that suspected Ukrainian drone attacks late Tuesday destroyed at least two Ilyushin Il-76 military transport planes at a Russian air base.

The transport planes were deliberately targeted, according to Budanov.

The images taken Thursday show Princess Olga Pskov International Airport, which is a dual military-civilian airport about 700 kilometers (400 miles) north of the Ukrainian border and near Estonia and Latvia.

The four-engine Il-76 is the workhorse of the Russian military's airlift capacity and is able to land and take off in rugged conditions. The Russian military is believed to have over 100 of them in its fleet.

The AP analysis, conducted Friday, showed what appeared to be the blackened hulks of two Il-76s on separate parking pads on the air base's apron. One included the plane's tail, the other appeared to show pieces of another aircraft. Fire damage could be seen around the pad.

Eleven other Il-76s were moved off their parking pads into different positions on the airport's taxiways, possibly in an attempt to make it more difficult for them to be struck again. One was on the runway itself. Another Il-76 remained on the pad, though it wasn't clear why.

The satellite image was taken at 1:03 p.m. GMT Thursday. Videos on social media Thursday night showed anti-aircraft fire going off around the air base again, though it remained unclear whether it was another attack.

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy said Thursday that his country had developed a weapon that hit a target 700 kilometers (400 miles) away, apparently referencing the air base attack. He described the weapon as being produced by Ukraine's Ministry of Strategic Industries but gave no other details.

Oleksiy Danilov, secretary of the National Security and Defense Council of Ukraine, suggested on television Friday that the weapon can fly even further than the distance Zelenskyy mentioned.

theater, history of Moscow, other depoliticized topics without ideology," he said.

Anna, whose son attends middle school in Moscow, also said she is grateful to the school and its administrators for not taking "an aggressive stance" and not resorting to propaganda. She said the school has the weekly anthem ceremony and featured a lesson about Crimea last year, but little else, "so I'm not worried about it."

Vladimir believes that teachers who are well-educated, critical thinkers will be able to circumvent the requirements. If they are "crafty and flexible," he said, they will probably "formally implement what they're being told, but in reality quietly sabotage it."

Death toll from Johannesburg fire rises to 76 as city turns to tough job of identifying victims

By GERALD IMRAY and MOGOMOTSI MAGOME Associated Press

JOHANNESBURG (AP) — Search teams finished checking a derelict Johannesburg apartment building a day after one of South Africa's deadliest fires broke out there as pathologists faced the grisly task Friday of identifying charred bodies and body parts that were transported in large trucks to mortuaries across the city.

The death toll from Thursday's predawn blaze rose to 76 after two people died in a hospital overnight, Health Minister Joe Phaahla told reporters. At least 12 of the victims were children, authorities said.

Homeless South Africans, poor foreign migrants and others who found themselves marginalized in a city often referred to as Africa's richest but which has deep social problems inhabited the downtown building.

The number of injured people hospitalized from the fire also increased to 88, according to a provincial health official.

After conducting three searches through each of the building's five stories, emergency services personnel believed that all human remains were recovered from the site, Johannesburg Emergency Services spokesperson Nana Radebe said.

Police and forensic investigators took over the scene for their own examinations, Radebe said.

The remains of some of the victims were taken to a mortuary in the township of Soweto, in the southwestern outskirts of South Africa's economic hub, where people began to gather as authorities called for family members to help identify the dead.

Motalatale Modiba, a Gauteng province health department spokesperson, said 62 of the bodies were so badly burned as to make them unidentifiable and the city's pathology department faced using painstaking DNA analysis to officially identify the majority of victims.

"Even if the family were to come, there is no way of them being able to identify that body," Modiba said.

Thembaletu Mpahlaza, the CEO of Gauteng's Forensic Pathology Services, said at a Thursday evening news conference that numerous unidentified body parts were found in the remnants of the building and his investigators needed to establish if they were from people already counted as dead or came from additional fire victims.

Many of the dead were believed to be foreign nationals and possibly in South Africa illegally, making it more difficult to identify them, city officials said.

Local media reports, quoting residents of the building, said at least 20 of the dead were from the southern African nation of Malawi. At least five were Tanzanian nationals, the Tanzanian High Commission in South Africa said.

The fire ravaged a city-owned building that had effectively been abandoned by authorities and had become home to poor people desperately seeking some form of accommodation in the rundown Johannesburg central business district. The building was believed to be home to around 200 families.

Senior city officials conceded they had been aware of problems at the building since at least 2019.

Many witnesses said in the immediate aftermath of the fire that they were separated from family members in the chaos of escaping the inferno. Some said there were children walking around alone outside the building, with no idea if their parents or siblings had survived.

Smugglers are steering migrants into the remote Arizona desert, posing new Border Patrol challenges

By ANITA SNOW Associated Press

ORGAN PIPE CACTUS NATIONAL MONUMENT, Ariz. (AP) — Border Patrol agents ordered the young Senegalese men to wait in the scant shade of desert scrub brush while they loaded a more vulnerable group of migrants — a family with three young children from India — into a white van for the short trip in triple-degree heat to a canopied field intake center.

The migrants were among hundreds who have been trudging this summer in the scorching sun and through open storm gates in the border wall to U.S. soil, following a remote corridor in the sprawling Organ Pipe Cactus National Monument that's among the most desolate and dangerous areas in the Arizona borderlands. Temperatures hit 118 degrees Fahrenheit (47.7 degrees Celsius) just as smugglers abruptly began steering migrants from Africa and Asia here to request asylum.

Suddenly, the Border Patrol's Tucson Sector, which oversees the area, in July became the busiest sector along the U.S-Mexico border for the first time since 2008. It's seen migrants from faraway countries like Pakistan, China and Mauritania, where social media is drawing young people to the new route to the border that begins in Nicaragua. There are large numbers from Ecuador, Bangladesh and Egypt, as well as more traditional border crossers from Mexico and Central America.

"Right now we are encountering people from all over the world," said Border Patrol Deputy Chief Justin De La Torre, of the Tucson Sector. "It has been a real emergency here, a real trying situation."

The patrol is calling on other agencies, including Immigration and Customs Enforcement and the Transportation Security Administration, for help in getting migrants "out of the elements and into our processing centers as quickly as possible," De La Torre said.

During a recent visit, Associated Press journalists saw close to 100 migrants arrive in just four hours at the border wall near Lukeville, Arizona, inside Organ Pipe, as temperatures hit 110 degrees Fahrenheit (43.3 degrees Celsius). The next morning, several hundred more migrants lined up along the wall to turn themselves in.

"Welcome to America, that's good person," a young Senegalese man said in his limited English, beaming as he crunched across the desert floor after Tom Wingo, a humanitarian aid volunteer, gave him some water and snacks. "I am very, very happy for you."

The storm gates in the towering steel wall have been open since mid-June because of rains during the monsoon season. Rushing water from heavy downpours can damage closed gates, the wall, a rocky border road, and flora and fauna. But migrants get in even when the gates are closed, sometimes by breaking locks or slipping through gaps in the wall.

Agents from the Border Patrol's small Ajo Station a half hour's drive north of the border encountered several large groups the first weekend of August, including one of 533 people from 17 countries in the area that includes the national monument, an expanse of rugged desert scattered with cactus, creosote and whip-like ocotillo. The Tucson Sector registered 39,215 arrests in July, up 60% from June. Officials attribute the sudden influx to false advertising by smugglers who tell migrants it's easier to cross here and get released into the United States.

Migrants are taken first to the intake center, where agents collect people's names, countries of origin and other information before they are moved to the Ajo Station some 30 miles (48 kilometers) up a two-lane state highway.

Arrests for illegally crossing anywhere along the nearly 2,000-mile (3,200-kilometer) U.S.-Mexico border soared 33% from June to July, according to U.S. government figures, reversing a plunge after new asylum restrictions were introduced in May. President Joe Biden's administration notes illegal crossings were still down 27% that month from July 2022 and credits the carrot-and-stick approach that expands legal pathways while punishing migrants who enter illegally.

De La Torre said most migrants in the area request asylum, something far from guaranteed with the

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recent restrictions.

The Ajo Station's area of responsibility is currently the busiest inside the Tucson Sector, De La Torre said. It includes the border areas of Organ Pipe and the Cabeza Prieta Wildlife Refuge, isolated areas with rough roads and scarce water and shade. They include the Devil's Highway region, where 14 border crossers in a group of 26 died in 2001 after smugglers abandoned them.

CBP rescues by air and land along the border are soaring this year, with 28,537 counted during the 10-month period ending July 31. That compares with 22,075 for the 12-month period ending Sept. 30, 2022, the agency said. There were 2,776 migrant rescues in July.

The rescues continued in August, including one especially busy day when a Black Hawk helicopter hoisted a 15-year-old Guatemalan boy from a remote southern Arizona mountain to safety. A short time later, the chopper rescued a Guatemalan man who called 911 from the vast Tohono O'odham Nation just east of Organ Pipe.

Some activists recently protested outside the Ajo Station, saying migrants kept in an outdoor enclosure there didn't have enough shade. Patrol officials say that only adult men waiting to be transported to bigger facilities for processing are kept outside for a few hours, and under a large canopy with fans. Women, children and vulnerable people stay inside. The average wait time the facility is 15 hours.

The influx has also presented challenges for humanitarian groups.

Wingo, a retired schoolteacher working with Samaritanos Sin Fronteras, or Samaritans Without Borders, travels to the border several times a week to fill bright blue plastic barrels at six water stations. He and other volunteers distribute hats, bandanas, snacks and ice-cold bottled water to migrants they encounter.

"A lot of these people go out into the desert not knowing the trouble they are getting themselves into," said Wingo.

During a recent border visit, Wingo handed bottled water to people from India waiting for help by the wall after a woman they were traveling twisted her ankle. He gave water and granola bars to a Guatemalan couple with three young children who were traveling with a Peruvian man.

Wingo said he pays especially close attention to those who may be more susceptible to the torrid heat, such as pregnant and nursing women and the elderly. He recently encountered an 89-year-old diabetic woman from India about to go into shock. When he called Border Patrol agents on that especially busy day, he said, they asked him to bring the woman himself to their intake center for medical care. The woman is recovering in a Phoenix hospital.

Many others don't survive.

The remains of 43 suspected border crossers were found in southern Arizona in July, about half of them recently dead, according to the non-profit organization Human Borders, which works with the Pima County Medical Examiner's Office to track and map the numbers.

They included two found in Organ Pipe: Hilda Veliz Maas de Mijangos, 36, from Guatemala City, dead about a day; and Ignacio Munoz Loza, 22, of the Mexican state of Jalisco, dead for about a week. Both succumbed to heat exposure.

US employers added a solid 187,000 jobs in August in sign of a still-resilient labor market

By PAUL WISEMAN and ANNE D'INNOCENZIO AP Business Writer

WASHINGTON (AP) — America's employers added 187,000 jobs in August, evidence of a slowing but still-resilient labor market despite the high interest rates the Federal Reserve has imposed.

Last month's job growth marked an increase from July's revised gain of 157,000 but still pointed to a moderating pace of hiring compared with the sizzling gains of last year and earlier this year. From June through August, the economy added 449,000 jobs, the lowest three-month total in three years. In addition, the government revised down the gains for June and July by a combined 110,000.

Friday's report from the Labor Department also showed that the unemployment rate rose from 3.5%

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to 3.8%, the highest level since February 2022 though still low by historical standards. But the rate rose for an encouraging reason: A sizable number of people — 736,000 — began looking for work last month, the most since January, and not all of them found jobs right away. Only people who are actively looking for a job are counted as unemployed.

Indeed, the proportion of Americans who either have a job or are looking for one rose in August to 62.8%, the highest level since February 2020, before COVID-19 slammed into the U.S. economy.

The Fed's streak of 11 interest rate hikes has helped slow inflation from a peak of 9.1% last year to 3.2% now. A decelerating job market could help shift the economy into a slower gear and reassure the Fed that inflation will continue to ease. For that reason, many economists think the central bank may decide that no further rate hikes are necessary.

Friday's jobs report also showed that wage gains are easing, a trend that may help provide reassurance that inflation pressures are cooling: Average hourly pay rose 0.2% from July to August, the smallest such gain in a year and a half. Measured year over year, wages last month were up 4.3% from August 2022, slightly below the 4.4% increase in both July and June.

The Fed wants hiring to slow because intense demand for labor tends to inflate wages and feed inflation. The central bank hopes to achieve a rare "soft landing," in which its rate hikes would manage to slow hiring, borrowing and spending enough to curb inflation without causing a deep recession.

"This is close to what the Fed wants to see," said Gus Faucher, chief economist at PNC Financial Services Group. The August jobs report "could be a way to a soft landing."

Still, Faucher cautioned that the economy may not have yet absorbed the full impact of the Fed's rate hikes, which is why he still expects a recession in early 2024.

So far, the job market has been cooling in the least painful way possible — with few layoffs. The Labor Department reported Thursday that the number of Americans applying for unemployment benefits — a proxy for job cuts — fell for a third straight week.

Among sectors of the economy, by far the biggest hiring gain last month — 97,000 — came in the health care industry, which does not depend on the rise and fall of the economy. Construction companies added 22,000, factories 16,000, bars and restaurants nearly 15,000.

By contrast, trucking companies shed 37,000 jobs, reflecting the shutdown of the Yellow trucking firm. And music and movie companies lost 17,000, a drop that the Labor Department attributed to striking Hollywood actors and writers.

Taken as a whole, some economists saw Friday's report as reflecting an economy that is returning to its pre-COVID state, before the pandemic recession struck in 2020, followed by an explosive economic recovery.

"The 187,000 gain in non-farm payrolls, jump in the unemployment rate and slowdown in wage growth in August all add to the evidence that labor market conditions are approaching pre-pandemic norms," Andrew Hunter of Capital Economics wrote in a research note.

Optimism about a soft landing has been growing. The economy, though expanding more slowly than it did in the boom that followed the pandemic recession of 2020, has defied the squeeze of increasingly high borrowing costs. The gross domestic product — the economy's total output of goods and services — rose at a respectable 2.1% annual rate from April to June. Consumers continued to spend, and businesses increased their investments.

Economists and financial market analysts increasingly think the Fed may be done raising interest rates: According to data tracked by the CME Group, traders in futures markets see a greater than 90% likelihood that the Fed's policymakers will leave rates alone at their next meeting, Sept. 19-20.

Even with the slowdown in job growth, many employers are still hiring, and some are having trouble filling positions. One such company, InCharge, which develops charging systems for electric vehicles, is adding 6-10 employees each month to its roughly 200-strong workforce. The company, based in Santa Monica, California, has hired two in-house recruiters, in addition to working with employment agencies and offering bonuses to employees who bring on new staffers.

Still, Terry O'Day, the chief operating officer, said he does see signs that the job market is slowing. He's

hearing from more recruiting companies that represent people looking for work.

Another company, Oransi a maker of air purifiers, plans to hire 100 workers in the United States over the next two years, reflecting a shift in its manufacturing from China to Radford, Virginia. CEO Peter Mann said the shift was propelled by the pandemic, which intensified consumer demand for air purifiers and consequently a surge in competitors.

Given what Mann says is now a saturation of air purifier makers, Oransi has redesigned its product to be less-labor intensive. Its retail price will be about \$200, instead of roughly \$300.

Other companies are struggling with inflated costs. Among them is Halliday Brothers Contracting, a roofing business that's run by two brothers, John and Mike Halliday. The company, based in Mesa, Arizona, is holding off on hiring contractors until the cost of materials like shingles and tar paper come back down.

Initially, the pandemic delayed projects because of worries of infection. Then costs surged. The price of one popular brand of roofing shingles has shot up nearly 90% since the pandemic, fueling a jump in the cost of roof replacements — from \$10,000 to \$12,000 to as much as \$17,000.

Having reduced the number of its roofing projects, the company now contracts with about 20 workers, down from 30 to 35.

Mike Halliday said customers are growing nervous about the outlook for the economy.

"When they're not sure about what the economy's going to look like and what's going to happen with banks," he said, "people don't want to spend."

After Maui's wildfires, thousands brace for long process of restoring safe water service

By BRITTANY PETERSON Associated Press

Maggie T. Sutrov showered, drank treated tap water and watered her garden before she learned that she shouldn't be using the water in her home on Maui after wildfires devastated the island. Concerned about others making the same mistake, she quickly created a flier on water contamination from guidance she'd found on the county's website and worked with a pop-up community center to get the word out.

"Every day, people were showing up there going 'What, I can't drink the water? I didn't know that,'" Sutrov said. Three weeks after the fire, Sutrov and others are anxious to know when the island's water will be safe.

"When is this over?" Sutrov wondered.

So far, tests have found no concerning levels of contaminants in the drinking water. But extensive testing is still needed, with access to most of Lahaina slowed by hazardous conditions and the search for human remains.

Some areas under the unsafe water advisory could be cleared to use their tap water in a couple of weeks, said John Stufflebean, director of the Maui County Department of Water Supply.

But experts and history suggest it could take months or years before the worst of the damaged areas have safe water fully restored.

"We have a way to go before we can say that it's safe," Stufflebean said.

The county first told people in Upper Kula and Lahaina not to use their water on Aug. 11 shortly after fire damaged water pipes as it sped across the land. So far, one water quality test on the northwest edge of Lahaina showed low levels of benzene, a chemical known to cause cancer, but it was within federal safety limits.

That's likely a clue to what more testing will find, said Andrew Whelton, a Purdue University professor who studied drinking water contamination following California's 2018 Camp Fire and Colorado's 2021 Marshall Fire.

"As you move closer to the middle of the water system where structures were destroyed, you'll likely see higher levels of contamination," he said.

Where homes and other structures burned, so did their interior pipes, along with shallow-buried exterior

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ones that connected them to the public water line, and the water meters, Stufflebean said. The utility's networks of reservoirs, pumps, wells and treatment plants on Maui weren't affected, and it's unlikely that main lines — thick pipes buried more deeply — burned, he said.

"What other places have found in fires is that the main lines tend not to get damaged because they are buried," he said.

That was the case in Paradise, California, the city almost completely destroyed in the Camp Fire. Main lines buried several feet underground were OK, though water utility assistant district manager Mickey Rich said small sections were damaged when lost pressure sucked in smoke and contaminants. Seventeen miles of the town's 172 miles of main lines were contaminated and await replacement, and the city is still replacing service lines five years after the blaze.

Kurt Kowar, director of public works and utilities in Louisville, Colorado, said it took just a week to get parts of the water system there back online after the Marshall Fire. But in more severe burn areas, it took months to assess the damage, including where contamination had occurred, and flush it from the system. The city distributed bottled water and set up refill stations to hold residents over.

"We're almost approaching our two-year mark. And as we've cleaned up the properties and people are starting to rebuild, we are still doing protocols of testing service lines to verify there's no contamination," he said.

Kowar just returned from a trip to Maui alongside others from Louisville and Paradise where they met with the Department of Water Supply to share knowledge about what to test for and how to decontaminate the system.

"It was very emotional to see all that again," he said of the damage. "It was kind of healing to be able to give our knowledge back and help them move faster or give them an idea of what's coming in the future."

Stufflebean's department will soon expand the number of chemicals it's testing for, he told a room packed with residents in Kula, a mountainside community about 24 miles from Lahaina, last week. The residents were told not to drink or bathe in their water until further testing is completed.

When Stufflebean mentioned that a map for the water advisory was on the department's website, some frustration could be heard: "Some people do not have internet," one person responded.

The county-run utility is stretched thin trying to restore the water system and doesn't have a lot of time for outreach, said Chris Shuler, a hydrologist at the University of Hawaii at Mānoa, who lives on Maui. To try to fill the information gap, he's part of a team from the university's Water Resources Research Center that has set up a community tap water monitoring program.

They offer free testing for 88 compounds to residents within the unsafe water advisory area.

"People want to know what's in their water, but at the same time they just want to have information and help them navigate through this difficult time," he said.

As with the county, the research center's first round of results didn't find concerning levels of contamination, but they've only just begun. They have more than 200 requests for sampling. Any significant results would be reported to the county.

Sutrov was lucky. Her family's home, where she was born and raised, survived the fire while some of her neighbors' homes did not. Now, as the island community still reels in the traumatic aftermath, her patience for slow information is waning.

"Everyone in whatever their role is is doing the best they can, but there are also distinct gaps that have been uncovered in this," Sutrov said.

Stufflebean acknowledged as much at the community water meeting she attended.

"We're enhancing our communication, which has not been terrific, I admit," Stufflebean said.

It's joy mixed with sorrow as Ukrainian children go back to school in the midst of war

By HANNA ARHIROVA Associated Press

BUCHA, Ukraine (AP) — In a small courtyard at a school in Bucha, scene of some of the worst atrocities committed by Russian soldiers during the war, Ukrainian children gathered Friday to celebrate the first day of the new school year.

First graders dressed in Ukrainian embroidered costume shirts known as vyshyvankas, with neat hairstyles and holding bouquets of flowers, line up hesitantly along an improvised stage. Parents, many struggling to contain their emotions, smile and wave from the crowd, constantly taking photos.

But the festive ambiance quickly shifts as the Ukrainian national anthem is played, followed by a solemn minute of silence in memory of fallen Ukrainian soldiers. Onstage, the children stand quietly, and in the audience, some parents quietly wipe away tears.

"We are not afraid of war or missiles, because we will overcome everything!" a final year student shouts from the stage.

This atmosphere of joy mixed with sorrow sets the tone for the start of the new school year in Ukraine.

Despite many schools being renovated, the educational process here in this is far from normal. Due to constant missile threats and air raid sirens, students are compelled to learn partially in bomb shelters and remotely.

Many schools in Ukraine lack the capacity to provide a safe space for all students, leading them to implement a hybrid learning model. Under this approach, students alternate between learning at school one week and at home the next. This allows children to take turns so that each of them has the opportunity to attend in-person classes for at least two weeks per month.

Schools that offer in-person lessons, even in a hybrid model, have their own shelter or shelters nearby that could be used.

Continued attacks on education inside Ukraine and low-level enrolment in host countries have left many of Ukraine's 6.7 million 3- to 18-year-olds struggling to learn, said UNICEF's regional director for Europe and Central Asia, Regina De Dominicis.

According to UNICEF, in Ukraine, children are experiencing widespread learning loss in the Ukrainian language, reading, and mathematics due to the combined impact of the COVID-19 pandemic and the war, resulting in a fourth year of disrupted education.

At the school in Bucha, in the suburbs of Kyiv, only first graders and those in their senior year and their parents attended Friday's back to school celebration, to minimize crowds.

"We are beginning the second year under wartime conditions," school director Mykhailo Nakonechnyi said, addressing the children during the ceremony.

The school underwent repairs to the roof, which was damaged by shrapnel during the early stages of the war when Bucha was occupied. Graphic evidence of killings and torture emerged following the withdrawal of Russian forces in the spring of 2022.

Once the Russians had gone, life in this school, which now educates over 1,700 students, gradually began to recover. The educational institution has welcomed approximately 200 internally displaced children from Kharkiv, Kherson, Luhansk, and Donetsk regions that are close to the front line.

Nakonechnyi says he is apprehensive that Russians might attack the energy infrastructure of Ukraine the same way they did last winter.

"And under these conditions, we are not prepared to teach," he said, explaining that the school lacks an adequate number of generators to ensure its autonomy during blackouts.

"Learning in shifts is more manageable, but it's not real learning," said Anna Chornobai, 16, a senior year student.

She described the war as a "catastrophe" that has altered her present and future plans. Before the Russian invasion, she had plans to study design in Kyiv. Now she finds challenging to focus and struggles to finish a single drawing.

"Now I have only one option - to go abroad and study there because here there is war and air raid sirens," she said.

Nakonechnyi also mentioned approximately 500 students from his school who fled the war to countries abroad.

"We are waiting for them," he spoke loudly, but with a hint of sadness.

From strikes to new union contracts, Labor Day's organizing roots are especially strong this year

By WYATTE GRANTHAM-PHILIPS AP Business Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — Labor Day is right around the corner, along with the big sales and barbecues that come with it. But the activist roots of the holiday are especially visible this year as unions challenge how workers are treated — from Hollywood to the auto production lines of Detroit.

The early-September tribute to workers has been an official holiday for almost 130 years — but an emboldened labor movement has created an environment closer to the era from which Labor Day was born. Like the late 1800s, workers are facing rapid economic transformation — and a growing gap in pay between themselves and new billionaire leaders of industry, mirroring the stark inequalities seen more than a century ago.

"There's a lot of historical rhyming between the period of the origins of Labor Day and today," Todd Vachon, an assistant professor in the Rutgers School of Management and Labor Relations, told The Associated Press. "Then, they had the Carnegies and the Rockefellers. Today, we have the Musks and the Bezoses. ... It's a similar period of transition and change and also of resistance — of working people wanting to have some kind of dignity."

Between writers and actors on strike, contentious contract negotiations that led up to a new labor deal for 340,000 unionized UPS workers and active picket lines across multiple industries, the labor in Labor Day is again at the forefront of the holiday arguably more than it has been in recent memory.

Here are some things to know about Labor Day this year.

WHEN WAS THE FIRST LABOR DAY OBSERVED?

The origins of Labor Day date back to the late 19th century, when activists first sought to establish a day that would pay tribute to workers.

The first U.S. Labor Day celebration took place in New York City on Sept. 5, 1882. Some 10,000 workers marched in a parade organized by the Central Labor Union and the Knights of Labor.

A handful of cities and states began to adopt laws recognizing Labor Day in the years that followed, yet it took more than a decade before President Grover Cleveland signed a congressional act in 1894 establishing the first Monday of September as a legal holiday.

Canada's Labour Day became official that same year, more than two decades after trade unions were legalized in the country.

The national holidays were established during a period of pivotal actions by organized labor. In the U.S., Vachon points to the Pullman Railroad Strike that began in May 1894, which effectively shut down rail traffic in much of the country.

"The federal government intervened to break the strike in a very violent way — that left more than a dozen workers dead," Vachon says. Cleveland soon made Labor Day a national holiday in an attempt "to repair the trust of the workers."

A broader push from organized labor had been in the works for some time. Workers demanded an 8-hour workday in 1886 during the deadly Haymarket Affair in Chicago, notes George Villanueva, an associate professor of communication and journalism at Texas A&M University. In commemoration of that clash, May Day was established as a larger international holiday, he said.

Part of the impetus in the U.S. to create a separate federal holiday was to shift attention away from May Day — which had been more closely linked with socialist and radical labor movements in other countries, Vachon said.

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HOW HAS LABOR DAY EVOLVED OVER THE YEARS?

The meaning of Labor Day has changed a lot since that first parade in New York City.

It's become a long weekend for millions that come with big sales, end-of-summer celebrations and, of course, a last chance to dress in white fashionably. Whether celebrations remain faithful to the holiday's origins depends where you live

New York and Chicago, for example, hold parades for thousands of workers and their unions. Such festivities aren't practiced as much in regions where unionization has historically been eroded, Vachon said, or didn't take a strong hold in the first place.

When Labor Day became a federal holiday in 1894, unions in the U.S. were largely contested and courts would often rule strikes illegal, Vachon said, leading to violent disputes. It wasn't until the National Labor Relations Act of 1935 that private sector employees were granted the right to join unions. Later into the 20th century, states also began passing legislation to allow unionization in the public sector — but even today, not all states allow collective bargaining for public workers.

Rates of organized labor have been on the decline nationally for decades. More than 35% of private sector workers had a union in 1953 compared with about 6% today. Political leanings in different regions has also played a big roll, with blue states tending to have higher unionization rates.

Hawaii and New York had the highest rates of union membership in 2022, respectively, followed by Washington, California and Rhode Island, according to data from the Bureau of Labor Statistics,

Nationwide, the number of both public and private sector workers belonging to unions actually grew by 273,000 thousand last year, the Bureau of Labor Statistics found. But the total workforce increased at an even faster rate — meaning the total percentage of those belonging to unions has fallen slightly.

WHAT LABOR ACTIONS ARE WE SEEING THIS YEAR?

Despite this percentage dip, a reinvigorated labor movement is back in the national spotlight.

In Hollywood, screenwriters have been on strike for nearly four months — surpassing a 100-day work stoppage that ground many productions to a halt in 2007-2008. Negotiations are set to resume Friday. Actors joined the picket lines in July — as both unions seek better compensation and protections on the use of artificial intelligence.

Unionized workers at UPS threatened a mass walkout before approving a new contract last month that includes increased pay and safety protections for workers. A strike at UPS would have disrupted the supply chain nationwide.

Last month, auto workers also overwhelmingly voted to give union leaders the authority to call strikes against Detroit car companies if a contract agreement isn't reached by the Sept. 14 deadline. And flight attendants at American Airlines also voted to authorize a strike this week.

"I think there's going to be definitely more attention given to labor this Labor Day than there may have been in many recent years," Vachon said. Organizing around labor rights has "come back into the national attention. ... And (workers) are standing up and fighting for it."

Today in History: September 2, Japan surrenders to end World War II

By The Associated Press undefined

Today in History

Today is Saturday, Sept. 2, the 245th day of 2023. There are 120 days left in the year.

Today's Highlight in History:

On Sept. 2, 1945, Japan formally surrendered in ceremonies aboard the USS Missouri in Tokyo Bay, ending World War II.

On this date:

In 1789, the United States Treasury Department was established.

In 1864, during the Civil War, Union Gen. William T. Sherman's forces occupied Atlanta.

In 1935, a Labor Day hurricane slammed into the Florida Keys, claiming more than 400 lives.

In 1958, President Dwight D. Eisenhower signed the National Defense Education Act, which provided aid to public and private education to promote learning in such fields as math and science.

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In 1963, Alabama Gov. George C. Wallace prevented the integration of Tuskegee High School by encircling the building with state troopers.

In 1964, one of America's most decorated military heroes of World War I, Medal of Honor recipient Alvin C. York, died in Nashville at age 76.

In 1969, in what some regard as the birth of the Internet, two connected computers at the University of California, Los Angeles, passed test data through a 15-foot cable.

In 1998, a Swissair MD-11 jetliner crashed off Nova Scotia, killing all 229 people aboard.

In 2005, a National Guard convoy packed with food, water and medicine rolled into New Orleans four days after Hurricane Katrina.

In 2008, Republicans assailed Barack Obama as the most liberal, least experienced White House nominee in history at their convention in St. Paul, Minnesota, and enthusiastically extolled their own man, John McCain, as ready to lead the nation.

In 2019, a fire swept a boat carrying recreational scuba divers that was anchored near an island off the Southern California coast; the captain and four other crew members were able to escape the flames, but 34 people who were trapped below died.

Ten years ago: France released an intelligence report alleging chemical weapons use by Syria that dovetailed with similar U.S. claims, as President Bashar Assad warned that any military strike against his country would spark an uncontrollable regional war. On her fifth try, U.S. endurance swimmer Diana Nyad became the first person to swim from Cuba to Florida without the help of a shark cage.

Five years ago: Sen. John McCain was laid to rest on a grassy hill at the U.S. Naval Academy, after a horse-drawn caisson carrying the senator's casket led a procession of mourners from the academy's chapel to its cemetery. A huge fire engulfed Brazil's 200-year-old National Museum in Rio de Janeiro, as firefighters and museum workers raced to save historical relics.

One year ago: Actor Jane Fonda revealed that at age 84 she had been diagnosed with cancer. Fonda said she was undergoing chemotherapy for non-Hodgkin lymphoma. Barbara Ehrenreich, the author, activist and self-described "myth buster" who in such notable works as "Nickel and Dimed" and "Bait and Switch" challenged conventional thinking about class, religion and the very idea of an American dream, died at age 81.

Today's Birthdays: Former Sen. Alan K. Simpson, R-Wyo., is 92. Former United States Olympic Committee Chairman Peter Ueberroth is 86. Singer Jimmy Clanton is 85. R&B singer Rosalind Ashford (Martha & the Vandellas) is 80. Pro and College Football Hall of Famer Terry Bradshaw is 75. Basketball Hall of Famer Nate Archibald is 75. Actor Mark Harmon is 72. Former Sen. Jim DeMint, R-S.C., is 72. International Tennis Hall of Famer Jimmy Connors is 71. Actor Linda Purl is 68. Rock musician Jerry Augustyniak (10,000 Maniacs) is 65. Country musician Paul Deakin (The Mavericks) is 64. Pro Football Hall of Famer Eric Dickerson is 63. Actor Keanu Reeves is 59. International Boxing Hall of Famer Lennox Lewis is 58. Actor Salma Hayek is 57. Actor Tuc Watkins is 57. Actor Kristen Cloke is 55. Actor Cynthia Watros is 55. R&B singer K-Ci is 54. Actor-comedian Katt Williams is 50. Actor Nicholas Pinnock is 50. Actor Michael Lombardi is 49. Actor Tiffany Hines is 46. Rock musician Sam Rivers (Limp Bizkit) is 46. Actor Jonathan Kite is 44. Actor Joshua Henry is 39. Actor Allison Miller is 38. Rock musician Spencer Smith is 36. Electronic music DJ/producer Zedd is 34.