

Groton Daily Independent

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Friday, Sept. 15

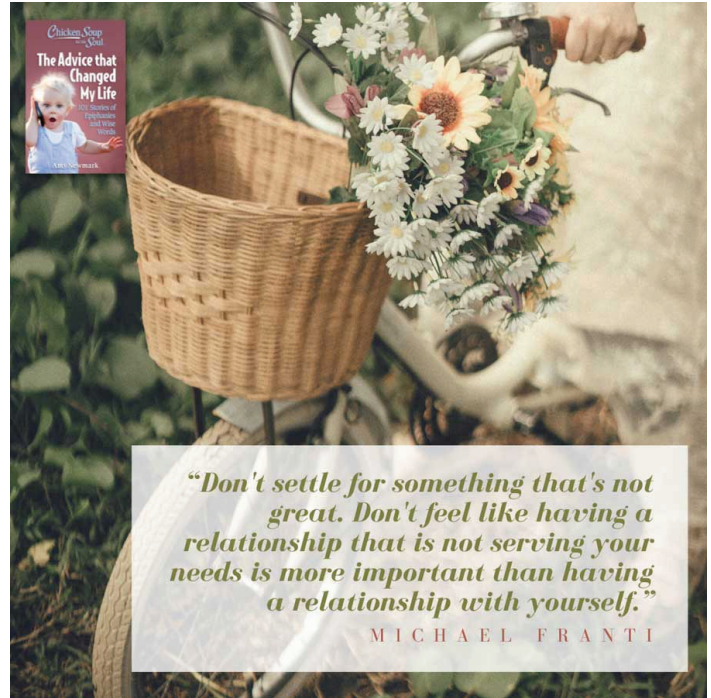
Spirit Day!
Senior Menu: Chicken pasta salad, grape juice, muffin, watermelon, carrots.
Homecoming Parade: 1 p.m.
Football hosts Deuel, 7 p.m.
TigerPalloza

Saturday, Sept. 16

Common Cents Community Thrift Store, 209 N Main, open 10 a.m. to 1 p.m.
Catholic: SEAS Confession, 3:45-4:15 p.m.; SEAS Mass, 4:30 p.m.
Junior High Volleyball Tournament at Matchbox in Aberdeen.

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

OPEN: Recycling Trailer in Groton
The recycling trailer is located west of the city shop. It takes cardboard, papers and aluminum cans.



"Don't settle for something that's not great. Don't feel like having a relationship that is not serving your needs is more important than having a relationship with yourself."

MICHAEL FRANTI

Volleyball Tournament at Hamlin, 9 a.m.
Junior High Football Jamboree at Webster, 10 a.m.
Youth Football jamboree in Groton.

Sunday, Sept. 17

St. John's Lutheran/Zion worship with communion.
St. John's at 9 a.m., Sunday school at 9:34 a.m.,
Zion at 11 a.m.

Emmanuel Lutheran: Worship with communion, 9 a.m.; Sunday school, 10:15 a.m.; Choir, 7 p.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: Conde worship, 8:30 a.m.;
Coffee Hour, 9:30 a.m.; Sunday School, 9:30 a.m.;
Groton worship, 10:30 a.m.

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The Bulletin by Newsweek

World in Brief

North Korean leader Kim Jong Un arrived in the far eastern Russian city of Komsomolsk-on-Amur, where he visited an aviation facility that builds warplanes.

President Joe Biden vowed to lower gas prices during his speech on 'Bidenomics' in Maryland, touting his economic plan in the shadow of a looming government shutdown.

Justice Department Special Counsel Jack Smith insisted that Judge Tanya Chutkan, who is overseeing Donald Trump's election interference case, not step down after Trump's legal team requested that she recuse herself over alleged bias.

Gov. Janet Mills declared a State of Emergency for Maine in anticipation of Hurricane Lee's arrival. Mills requested a preemptive Presidential Emergency Disaster Declaration amid conditions that pose "an imminent threat to public safety."

The death toll has risen to at least 11,300 in the devastating flooding in Libya. The U.N. has said that "most of the human casualties" could have been avoided had warnings been issued by the government.

The Dominican Republic said it will close borders with Haiti for "as long as necessary" amid a conflict over a canal construction from a shared river, a move that could impact the economy of both nations but could be felt more in Haiti as it deals with growing hunger and gang violence.

In the ongoing war in Ukraine, Kyiv's military said its troops have captured Andriivka, a village that lies south of the Russian-held eastern city of Bakhmut. The General Staff of Ukraine's armed forces also claimed "partial success" near Klishchiivka village..

TALKING POINTS

"Age is interesting because some people are very sharp, and some people do lose it, but you lose it at 40 and 50, also. But no, he's not too old at all. He's grossly incompetent." Former President Donald Trump said President Joe Biden isn't too old for the Oval Office in an interview with Megyn Kelly.

"I knew change in Washington would not be easy. I knew people would fight... I'm going to continue [to focus] on what's the right thing to do for the American people. And you know what, if it takes a fight, I'll have a fight," House Speaker Kevin McCarthy, who reportedly lashed out at GOP colleagues in a closed-door meeting over spending bills to avert a looming government shutdown.

What to Watch in the Day Ahead

Several Republican presidential hopefuls are set to address the 3rd Pray Vote Stand Summit in Washington, D.C., beginning tonight. Donald Trump, Florida Gov. Ron DeSantis, former Vice President Mike Pence, and Vivek Ramaswamy are among the scheduled speakers.

Rosh Hashanah, the Jewish New Year, begins at sunset and continues through sundown on Sunday, Sept. 17.

Consumer sentiment figures and industrial production for August are among key economic data releases due from 8:30 a.m. ET.

Prince Harry is expected to celebrate his 39th birthday in Dusseldorf, where the Invictus Games continue.

About 13,000 members of the United Auto Workers went on strike Friday against the "Big Three" for the first time in history. Work will halt in three plants owned by General Motors, Ford, and Stellantis. As reported yesterday in The Bulletin, a 10-day strike could cost the U.S. economy \$5 billion.

Hunter Biden has been indicted on federal gun charges, court documents show. The decision from special counsel David Weiss comes after a plea deal between Biden and prosecutors fell apart last month.

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VA PACT Act Groton Legion Hall

Veterans, Bring Your Families to VA's
PACT Act Presentation
(Legion Membership not required)

Monday September 18th 7:00PM

Aaron Walburg (Brown County) Veterans Service Officer

Open to: Vietnam, Gulf War, Cold War, Post 9/11 Veterans and Survivors

Family Members or dependents of a deceased Veteran may qualify for various VA benefits due to the additional disabilities defined in the PACT Act if they meet eligibility requirements. More information for survivors is available online at [VA.gov/PACT](https://www.va.gov/PACT)



**GHS 50th
Class
Reunion**

The GHS Class of 1973 will be celebrating 50 years. Anyone can come down to the Legion the evening of Saturday, Sept. 16 to visit the members of the class.

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Weekly Vikings Recap - Vikings vs. Eagles

By Jack & Duane Kolsrud

Coming off a short week of rest after a tough loss to the Tampa Bay Buccaneers, the Minnesota Vikings headed out to Philadelphia to face the defending NFC champion Eagles on Thursday night. Given the short week, the Vikings were without offensive lineman, Garrett Bradbury and Christian Darrisaw, which would show Thursday night against arguably the best defensive line in football. Like last week, the story of the game for the Vikings was the backbreaking turnovers. It is starting to make Vikings fans wonder if the Vikings' luck from last year has not only run out but that it has completely flipped into making the Vikings the unluckiest team in the NFL this year.

Despite the turnovers, the Vikings played well in the first half. For the most part, the defense was able to contain Jalen Hurts in the passing game and when he did break out of the pocket, Jordan Hicks did a great job of chasing him down to force only short runs. As mentioned though, for all the defense's successes in the first half, they were quickly tainted by the offense and special teams' inability to hold onto the ball.

It is not great when a team turns the ball over, but for some reason, the Vikings find a way to make them a little bit worse. Two of the Vikings' turnovers came on fumbles right after the Vikings' defense made a key stop on the Eagles' offense. Not only did these fumbles kill momentum for the Vikings but they gave the Vikings' defense little to no rest on the sideline. When playing a team like the Eagles who can wear you down running the ball, a defense like the Vikings needs as much rest as they possibly can throughout the game.

The biggest turnover of the game for the Vikings, however, came at the end of the first half. With under 1:00 in the first half, the Vikings found themselves trailing 7-3 with a chance to take the lead into halftime. Instead, the football gods would have other thoughts as Justin Jefferson, who might I add is the best non-quarterback in the NFL right now, fumbled the ball into the back of the endzone, leading to a touch-back and the Eagles' ball. Instead of leading 10-7 at the half, the Vikings instead were down 10-3 after a Jake Elliott field goal as the first half expired.

The second half was not much different for the Vikings as Kirk Cousins fumbled the ball on a strip sack by Eagles' edge rusher, Josh Sweat. The Eagles quickly turned the Vikings' mistake into an Eagles' touchdown and the game was never really close again. After being on the field so much in the first half, the Vikings' defense started to wear down to the Eagles' run game. Eagles' running back, D'Andre Swift, who coming into this game had only four 100-yard rushing games in his four-year career, had an easy 100 rushing yards by the midway point of the third quarter. And if the Eagles got in 3rd and short position, they could pull out their patented quarterback sneak, which was a guaranteed first down every time Thursday night. In totality, the Eagles rushed for over 250 yards on the ground.

Despite their best efforts, the Vikings could not mount a comeback as they fell to the Eagles for the second year in a row. If you remove the four turnovers, the Vikings did feel like a team that was just as good as the Eagles on Thursday night.

Eagles 34 - Vikings 28

Looking ahead, the Vikings will host Justin Herbert and the Los Angeles Chargers next Sunday. This will be a must-win for the Vikings as an 0-3 start to the season is pretty much a death sentence for an NFL team, especially one in a tough division like the NFC North. Hopefully, the Vikings can finally get in the win column, or else Vikings fans might start looking toward 2024 NFL quarterback draft prospects already three weeks into the season.

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Fliehs leads Groton Area to first place at Tiospa Zina Golf Tourney

Brevin Fliehs took first place at the Tiospa Zina Golf Tournament held Thursday at the Dakota Magic Golf. He shot a 72 while Logan Pearson was 4th with an 83, Carter Simon was fifth with an 85 and Jace Johnson was sixth with an 85. Groton Area had 324 points for the first place finish.

Runners take part at Aberdeen Roncalli Invite

The Aberdeen Roncalli invitational cross country meet was held Thursday at Lee Park. Gavin Kroll ran the boys varsity 5K race in 22:39.51 for 40th place. Jayden Schwan was 48th with a 23:38.19; Nathan Unzen was 58th with a 25:26.60; Kason Oswald was 62nd with a 32:28.69 and Logan Clocksene was 63rd with a 37:22.80.

In the girls varsity 5K race, Sydney Holmes was 33rd with a 26:48.92 and Emily Clark was 39th with a 32:20.78.

Groton Area volleyball team nets win over Clark-Willow Lake

After getting off to a slow start, the Groton Area Tiger volleyball team put things into high gear and cruised to a 3-1 win over Clark-Willow Lake.

The first set was tied 11 times with four lead changes as the Cyclones pulled out a 25-21 win.

The second set was tied four times and there was just one lead change and that came when the Tigers took the lead for good at 12-11 en route to a 24-21 win. Groton Area won the third set, 25-17, and the fourth set, 25-12.

Anna Fjeldheim and Chesney Weber each had 13 kills and six ace serves with Fjeldheim also having 20 digs, Jaedyn Penning had 10 kills, Rylee Dunker had nine kills and a block, Sydney Leicht had two kills and three ace serves, Carly Guthmiller had three ace serves and 18 digs, Elizabeth Fliehs had two kills and 15 digs and Jerica Locke had two ace serves.

The match was broadcast live on GDILIVE.COM with Ryan Tracy doing the play-by-play. The broadcast was 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, Harry Implementation, John Sieh Agency and Locke Electric.

The junior varsity team has not lost a set this season as the Tigers defeated Clark/Willow Lake, 25-18 and 25-21. Emma Kutter had eight kills and one ace serve, Talli Wright had seven kills and one block, Chesney Weber had five kills and five ace serves, Emerlee Jones had one kill, Kella Tracy had two kills and Sydney Locke had one ace serve.

That match was broadcast live on GDILIVE.COM with Ryan Tracy doing the play-by-play. It was sponsored by the Groton Chiropractic Clinic.

Groton Area made it a clean sweep with a 26-16 and 25-21 win in the C match. Emerlee Jones had six kills and one ace serve, Hannah Sandness had seven ace serves, Liby Althoff had four kills, an ace serve and a block, McKenna Tietz and Taryn Traphagen each had five kills, Avery Crank had four ace serves, Brenna Imrie and Ashlynn Warrington each had an ace serve and Teagan Hanten had a kill.

The match was broadcast live on GDIVLIVE.COM, sponsored by fans of Emerlee Jones.



Full time shift supervisor opening at Ken's Food Fair, Groton SD.

Looking for a hard working self motivated individual with leadership skills and willing to take on responsibilities.

Pay will depend on experience. Benefits available will discuss at interview.

Apply at Ken's in Groton SD.

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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

Editorial: Empowering Futures Through Literacy

By: Dr. Katie Anderson

Assistant Professor - Dakota State University College of Education

No matter their chosen career path, the ability to read is the backbone of a child's future success. Literacy forms the foundation upon which we construct all other skills. It is the gateway to learning, critical thinking, and effective communication. Children who read proficiently are better equipped to excel in various subjects and solve complex problems. In a world driven by technology and innovation, literacy is the key that unlocks a world of knowledge, opportunities, and personal growth.

South Dakota universities are critical in equipping future educators in our state to impart this invaluable skill to the next generation. Dakota State University is taking significant steps to prepare future educators to be effective reading teachers, equipping teacher candidates with evidence-based strategies and a deep knowledge of the science of reading. This approach emphasizes phonics, phonemic awareness, vocabulary development, fluency, and comprehension – all critical literacy components. It is imperative that all teachers, including our newest teachers, understand the science of reading. The science of reading helps to bridge the gap between research and practice in literacy instruction, ensuring that teachers have access to the most effective methods for teaching reading.

Learning to read has historically been a challenge for many children; however, one of the major underpinnings of the science of reading, as documented by research, is that reading difficulties, including difficulties caused by learning disabilities like dyslexia, are rooted in neurological differences. Research has shown that almost all children, even those with a neurological tendency to struggle, can learn to read when they receive evidence-based instruction. This instruction must include explicit and systematic instruction in phonemic awareness and phonics, ideally in the earliest years of school. I am thrilled that this understanding is at the heart of the South Dakota Literacy Framework. It will lead both teacher preparation programs and SD schools to adopt compassionate, evidence-based approaches to support struggling readers. Ultimately, the Literacy Framework ensures that all students get the type of instruction that is most likely to help them develop the foundational skills required to become skilled readers.

Moreover, the science of reading emphasizes early intervention, based on the understanding that the earlier children receive effective reading instruction, the more likely they will be to succeed. It is critical that SD teacher preparation programs incorporate this knowledge into their programs to equip future teachers with the skills to identify and address reading difficulties in their students as early as possible.

The impact of effective reading instruction extends beyond the classroom walls. Whether a child aspires to be a scientist, artist, nurse, or entrepreneur, the ability to read well is a fundamental tool that opens the doors to a world of possibilities. By investing in literacy education, we are not only shaping our children, but also building a society that is more informed, empathetic, and capable of facing the challenges of our world today.

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GDILIVE.COM

GT
Groton Area
Tigers

**Homecoming
Parade
Friday, Sept. 15
1 p.m.**

GDI Subscribers can watch for free; otherwise a \$5 ticket is required. The ticket can be purchased online at GDILIVE.COM. Once purchased, you can log in and the link will appear in the black horizontal bar. You can purchase your ticket any time on Friday.

GDILIVE.COM

GT
Groton Area
Tigers

Friday Sept. 15, 2023
Deuel at Doney Field



Football game 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 Dairy Queen, Groton Ford, Harry Implement, John Sieh Agency, Krueger Brothers, Locke Electric and Rix Farms/R&M Farms

Name Released in Charles Mix County Fatal Crash

What: Single-vehicle crash

Where: 299th Street and S.D. Highway 50, Eight miles southeast of Wagner, S.D.

When: 4:17 a.m., Sunday, September 10, 2023

Driver: Jacqueline Murphy, 63, Stuart, NE., Fatal injuries

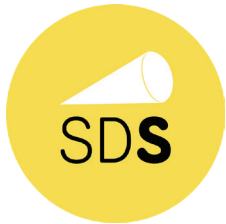
Vehicle: 2007 Chevrolet Trailblazer

CHARLES MIX COUNTY, S.D.- A Stuart, Nebraska woman has been identified as the person who died early Sunday morning in a one-vehicle crash eight miles southeast of Wagner, S.D.

Preliminary crash information indicates a 2007 Chevrolet Trailblazer was traveling westbound on 299th Street west of S.D. Hwy. 50. The 63-year-old female driver lost control of the Trailblazer on the gravel road and the vehicle began to yaw. The Trailblazer left the gravel road, entered the south ditch, and rolled. The driver was not wearing a seatbelt and was ejected from the vehicle. The Trailblazer came to a final rest on the driver side.

The driver Jacqueline Murphy, age 63, sustained fatal injuries. She was not wearing a seatbelt.

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



SOUTH DAKOTA SEARCHLIGHT

<https://southdakotasearchlight.com>

'Future' of voting unrealized: Few counties adopt vote centers and e-poll books

BY: MAKENZIE HUBER - SEPTEMBER 15, 2023 4:01 AM

Vote centers and electronic poll books were touted as the future of voting in South Dakota more than a decade ago.

The state was one of the first to allow counties to establish vote centers where anyone in the county could vote on Election Day, regardless of their residential address or precinct.

Vote centers require electronic poll books, which replace large paper volumes of voters' names, allowing election officials to scan a driver's license to more quickly verify people's eligibility to vote. The software prevents people from voting twice in different locations and allows officials to get live updates about voter turnout. An e-poll book is not electronic voting.

Advocates of vote centers say the switch makes voting easier and more accessible, possibly leading to an increase in voter turnout, and say that vote centers and electronic poll books save on election costs.

The Legislature resoundingly supported the enabling vote center legislation in 2012, with only one nay vote out of 105 legislators.

"The idea behind it is that people are busy with their lives. Let's make voting as convenient as possible," said prime sponsor of the 2012 bill and former Sen. Todd Schlekeway, R-Sioux Falls, at the time.

Yet the technological wave anticipated a decade ago has been slow to build. Only nine of South Dakota's 66 counties switched to vote centers, and only 10 counties use electronic poll books. South Dakota is one of 17 states to allow counties to use vote centers on Election Day.

Costs for purchasing electronic poll books are one of the biggest factors affecting a county's decision to switch, while some counties use alternative voting methods to improve voter accessibility.

Vote centers favored in rural areas with long commute times

Oglala Lakota County, which is on the Pine Ridge Reservation in southwest South Dakota, consistently has the lowest voter turnout in the state. General elections hover around 30-35% turnout.

South Dakota counties using vote centers

Brookings

Brown

Haakon

Hughes

Hyde

Oglala Lakota

Potter

Sully

Yankton

The county commission switched to vote centers in 2022, after nearly a decade of saving money for the expense and persuasion from Sue Ganje, auditor for Fall River and Oglala Lakota counties.

"It was a no-brainer," said Ganje, who is based in Hot Springs. "It's such a large county and there's such distance between polling locations. It allows them to vote where it's convenient."

Oglala Lakota went from nine precincts across the 2,097-square-mile county to eight vote centers. The move wasn't focused on saving money (usually by significantly cutting down on polling locations), but rather on voting accessibility.

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For example, Ganje said, people commuting to work from Kyle to Pine Ridge, which is fairly common in the area, had a 50-minute commute to get back to their precinct before polls closed. She also sees several residents driving to or from Rapid City for appointments or work, so stopping at a vote center on the way to or from Rapid City is more convenient than scheduling their day around voting at their precinct.

While the county didn't see an immediate improvement in voter turnout, Ganje is hopeful it'll improve over the next few election cycles.

"It's the best thing I think that could happen for them down there," Ganje said.

Haakon County, on the other hand, switched to vote centers in 2020 and saw an increase in its 2022 voter turnout from the 2014 and 2018 midterm elections. Auditor Stacy Pinney said the county won't go back.

"Not if I can help it," Pinney said.

Tuesday is sale day in the western South Dakota county, home to Philip, where ranchers sweep into town each week to visit the auction barn. Instead of driving back to their rural precincts in time to vote, ranchers and their families can vote while they're in town, Pinney said.

Vote centers prioritize convenience over accessibility, official says

Sioux Falls School District has used vote centers since the Legislature approved a pilot project in 2010. But the school district's voter turnout remains in the single digits despite the switch.

"Turnout might not have increased significantly, but that's because of the voters and not the opportunities," said former Secretary of State Jason Gant, who was a proponent of vote centers in the early 2010s. "It's all about making sure we can do anything to help people vote if they choose to vote."

Gant currently serves as Charles Mix County auditor in south-central South Dakota. While the county still adheres to traditional precinct polling, Gant is hoping to switch to vote centers during his tenure.

In 2012, the City of Sioux Falls used vote centers, cutting precincts from 59 to 12.

"We lost voters, if I recall," said former City Councilman and current Minnehaha Commissioner Dean Karsky, "because they went to where they normally voted and no one was there. It confused people more than it helped."

The city quickly pivoted back to precincts and does not use electronic poll books. Minnehaha County has never used electronic poll books or vote centers.

Bob Litz, former Minnehaha County auditor, introduced the idea of e-poll books and vote centers to county commissioners when it first became an option in 2012. He planned to cut the county from 71 precincts to 22 vote centers, he told South Dakota Searchlight. But commissioners did not support the idea.

Current Minnehaha Auditor Leah Anderson is planning to increase the number of precincts in the county from 75 to 83.

"I believe precincts uphold the integrity of our elections," she said.

Karsky agreed. Vote centers prioritize convenience over accessibility, he said, specifically in urban areas. Ideally, he believes residents should be able to walk to their polling place from their homes.

"If you went down from 80 precincts by neighborhood to 20 regionalized vote centers, you're going to limit people who have mobility and transportation issues," Karsky said. "You're taking voting accessibility away from those people more than you're giving it to others."

Cell service, costs & drive time deterrents in switch

Some counties have shied away from vote centers and e-poll books because of a lack of internet and cell service accessibility. Beadle County, for example, relies on polling places in tin buildings in rural parts of the county, which interferes with connectivity, said Auditor Jill Hanson.

In 2018, eight counties using e-poll books couldn't properly connect during the primary that year, leaving citizens to cast provisional ballots. The snafu led to a law requiring counties using e-poll books to keep paper poll books on hand in case internet service is cut off.

Pennington County used e-poll books that year, but the county has never switched back to e-poll books. Auditor Cindy Mohler said she's not entirely opposed to e-poll books and vote centers, but she's concerned about providing enough ballots to all vote centers across the third largest and second most populated county in the state — especially since it would be a 50-mile drive from Rapid City to deliver more ballots

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to Wall, on the eastern edge of the county.

The greatest election expense for counties switching to vote centers is purchasing or leasing e-poll books. Brown County, which is home to Aberdeen, bought 33 electronic poll books for 12 vote centers in 2021 for a total of roughly \$45,000.

Hughes County, home to Pierre, bought 23 e-poll books for five vote centers for about \$41,000.

Sully County, where some residents commute to Pierre for work, has a quote from an election technology company to replace its e-poll books: seven e-poll books for three vote centers will cost around \$14,000 total. Auditor Susan Lamb said it's a worthwhile investment.

"I think we'd have a hard time if we went back to voting by precinct," Lamb said. "I don't think our taxpayers would be very happy with us. It'd cost them more time and it'd be more of an issue where they like the convenience of vote centers."

Vote centers could cut election costs in half, officials say

In the first year the Sioux Falls School District switched to vote centers, it cut costs by about \$38,000, Rep. Charles Hoffman, R-Eureka, told legislators in support of the 2012 bill. The county cut polling places from 58 to 10 across the district, cutting 262 precinct workers to 72.

Each precinct or vote center across South Dakota typically has between three to five poll workers on Election Day.

"Those are real dollars, my friends, that can be spent somewhere else," Hoffman told legislators in 2012.

Sioux Falls School District Business Manager Todd Vik, who has been with the district for over two decades, guessed that it would cost the district double each election if they switched back to precincts.

The district leases e-poll books for each election, Vik said. He estimated it costs over \$20,000 to lease the devices, which includes support and software, for one election.

Minnehaha County employed 346 poll workers during the 2022 election, costing nearly \$68,000 for their time, according to data received by South Dakota Searchlight. The cost to rent space for 61 polling locations (some precincts are combined at one building) was just under \$5,000.

If the county cut its precincts nearly in half to 40 vote centers it'd save \$36,800 in labor, though it would still have printed poll book and ballot costs. Auditor Anderson received a quote for e-poll books earlier this year, estimating a cost of \$390,625 upfront for 225 e-poll books and \$32,000 a year for software updates. Even with a cut to 108 e-poll books among 40 vote centers, it'd cost the county \$187,500 upfront.

Anderson added that a switch to vote centers would increase the cost of ballots because the county would print more, since they wouldn't know how many people to plan for at each vote center.

Although the e-poll books would only be used every other year, the county still has to pay for yearly software updates, Anderson said, just as the county already does for its other election technology.

"We spend about \$40,000 in a non-election year just to have tabulators and express vote machines sitting in storage," Anderson said.

Alternatives to vote centers

Custer County in western South Dakota has invested the money into e-poll books for its 10 precincts. Yet the county hasn't considered switching to vote centers.

Instead, the county combines three of its 10 polling places into the same building in the city of Custer as a super precinct, said Deputy Auditor Barb Cox. That's not the same as vote centers, though, since county residents must still vote in their assigned precinct.

Beadle County also uses a super precinct in the Huron arena, combining six of its nine precincts in the same building.

"If you're at the wrong polling place you just go across the arena floor to another," Auditor Hanson explained.

The county uses the super precinct method because it's more convenient for in-town voters and requires less organization to rent out locations. However, it still requires the same amount of poll workers required of the precinct system.

Hanson hasn't considered vote centers because they'd require purchasing e-poll books and wouldn't be

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accessible with poor cell service in rural areas of the county.

Auditors in some counties that haven't switched to e-poll books or vote centers said it's because they can't use federal funds to purchase e-poll books, and some said they wish the state had grants to supplement material costs.

Bob Litz, former Minnehaha County auditor, pushed for more technology to be used in the county during his tenure. Now retired in Arizona and working as a private contractor on election machines across the country, Litz predicts that the electronic wave will still come, just more slowly than anticipated. Current political pressure from an "election integrity" movement to move away from technology and back to paper ballots could slow down the transition, Litz said.

"I think when more people involved with technology come into being and help with elections, you'll see that switch to e-poll books and vote centers," Litz said. "I think the people who don't like vote centers will age out."

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.

COMMENTARY

Democracy demands less time behind closed doors for local governments by DANA HESS

Hear about something called "Democracy Day" and it's easy to imagine it refers to the U.S. Capitol in Washington, D.C., the White House and the federal government. But democracy isn't limited to the halls of Congress. Democracy plays just as big a role in the county courthouse and city hall.

The most common display of democracy at the local level can be found in the public meetings of school boards, city councils and county commissions. Those meetings, and public access to them, are an important part of the democratic process.

In the recent past there have been some favorable changes to the laws governing open meetings in South Dakota. One change determined that meeting times and agendas be posted far enough ahead of the meeting so that members of the public and the media could make plans to attend.

In the last legislative session, a provision that calls for a time for comment from the public was mandated for the agendas of almost all public meetings. Assuring that the public knows when their local boards will meet and that they're assured of a chance to speak at that meeting are fine symbols of democracy in action. It's when the door closes on the public that the threat to democracy grows.

The state's laws governing executive sessions — those times when local boards and commissions can discuss issues behind closed doors — is an area of frequent complaint by reporters and editors. Often it's left to journalists to raise the issue of open meetings violations because they are likely to be the only members of the public in attendance.

A local elected board can meet in executive session to consult with its attorney about a lawsuit or pending litigation or discuss personnel issues. There are some provisions in the law for discussing security matters and union negotiations. Schools can deal with student issues in closed session.

In too many cases the board will allow itself the luxury of closing out the prying eyes of the public simply by virtue of having their attorney in the room. Personnel issues discussed behind closed doors should be restricted to hiring and firing. Yet elected officials may take that broad category to mean that they can shut out the public while they discuss with the highway superintendent the awful job his crew did filling potholes — an item in which the public has a keen interest.

The often unspoken quality of the open meetings law is that it is written with permissive language. Boards and councils may go into executive session to discuss certain subjects, but there's nothing in the law that says they have to close out the public.

One subject that's routinely closed to the public but could be held in open session is school board negotiations with teachers. Traditionally, those talks are held away from public view. When successfully completed, the school offers a two or three line news release to say that all is well. The single largest

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line item in a school budget is teacher pay, yet when negotiations on a new salary package are finished, the public is left with no context as to how or why an agreement was reached. Clueless as to what just happened, the public's only role is to pay.

A solution to executive session violations — which hasn't gained any traction in the Legislature — is having local boards and commissions record and archive their closed meetings. Should a complaint be filed about the misuse of executive session, a judge could review the recording to determine if a violation took place.

While this seems like a common sense solution, it was beaten back by lobbyists for cities, counties and schools. They claimed such a provision would place a too big a burden on small local governmental bodies who wouldn't have the funds or the technical know-how for such a system. That argument doesn't hold much weight after the pandemic when local meetings were often available on Zoom. In today's technological age, it's not that great a leap from broadcasting on the internet to making and saving digital recordings.

One idea floating around about how to enhance the open meetings law wouldn't cost local governments a cent. All it calls for is a small investment of time. In a perfect world the open meetings law would include a provision that whenever a new member joins a local board or commission, that group's lawyer must take some time to review with all the elected officials the open meetings law and the provisions governing the proper use of executive session.

A provision like that could help keep violations from happening, and it would be an important step toward enhancing democracy at the local level.

Dana Hess spent more than 25 years in South Dakota journalism, editing newspapers in Redfield, Milbank and Pierre. He's retired and lives in Brookings, working occasionally as a freelance writer.

Task force will ask Legislature for millions to help with county legal costs **Other suggestions include creation of state-run cybersecurity program**

BY: MAKENZIE HUBER - SEPTEMBER 14, 2023 2:50 PM

The top proposal to come out of the legislative summer study on county funding has about a \$45 million annual price tag.

The proposal would set a cap on public defender and court-appointed attorney costs for counties, likely around \$10,000 for each case, while the state would cover the rest of the expenses.

Meanwhile, another summer task force has endorsed the creation of a state public defender's office to handle some of the cases that counties currently pay for when defendants can't afford an attorney; that proposal's estimated cost is \$1.4 million annually.

The county funding committee, chaired by Rep. Roger Chase, R-Huron, and Sen. Randy Deibert, R-Spearfish, whittled more than 20 proposals down to eight bills and two resolutions to be pursued during the next legislative session in Pierre, which begins in January.

The chairs will deliver a report to the legislative Executive Board in November. If approved, the Legislative Research Council will draft the bills.

"It's going to be a tough pull," Chase admitted.

But he's confident the bills will be carried through the Legislature, noting there are influential committee members standing behind the bills, such as appropriators and longtime legislators.

"This is the year," Chase said, "to do something for the counties."

The top five proposals with the most support from the committee are:

Capping indigent legal defense costs for counties.

Increasing the portion of alcohol sales taxes received by counties.

Creating a state cybersecurity grant program for local governments.

Allowing counties to charge administrative fees to schools and cities for property tax collection.

Funding veteran service officers through the state instead of through counties.

Sen. Jim Mehlhaff, R-Pierre, said he wants to see an annual total cap on what counties would pay each year for indigent defense. Individual case caps and annual caseload caps would have a two-fold impact for counties, legislators said: lessening their financial burden and allowing them to budget more effectively.

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Deibert's district in Lawrence County, for example, is budgeting over \$619,000 for its public defender costs for fiscal year 2024 and another \$300,000 for its court-appointed attorney costs. Court-appointed attorneys cost the county over \$200,000 alone in the first six months of 2023.

Despite a \$100 million sales tax reduction passed last legislative session, Deibert said he believes there will be room in the state's revenue for the cap program. The state ended the year with a \$98.6 million surplus.

"We have to find a way to fund programs that assist counties other than through property tax," Deibert said.

The second proposal on the list is a plan to switch the distribution of alcohol sales tax between the state and counties. Alcohol tax revenues are divided among cities, counties and the state. Cities and counties get 25% each, while the state gets 50%.

Sen. Jim Bolin, R-Canton, wants to flip it: increase counties to 50% and decrease the state to 25%.

The switch would cost the state roughly \$4.5 million. Counties are commonly the "first line of influence" in the criminal justice system, which is heavily impacted by the misuse of drugs and alcohol, Bolin said.

"When I heard about this committee and realized I might get appointed to it, this was my No. 1 priority to try and bring this bill forward to add some more money to counties and make it a much fairer situation," Bolin said.

Committee members aren't hopeful Gov. Kristi Noem will change her mind and apply for a federal grant intended to boost cybersecurity for local governments. Instead, the committee plans to propose a state-run cybersecurity grant program. The proposal did not have a dollar amount attached to it.

"If we're not going to accept the grant, then we'll legislate an appropriation on a similar program and use South Dakota taxpayer money to do it instead, because it's so important," Deibert told South Dakota Searchlight earlier this year.

Legislators hope the proposal to fund veteran service officers through the state rather than counties will lead to better support for veterans and better training for officers. Several counties only employ part-time VSOs instead of offering full-time support to its veterans. There was not a dollar amount attached to that proposal.

Two topics heavily talked about as problems for counties throughout the summer — the consequences of a criminal justice and jail overhaul bill from the 2010s, and counties' ineligibility to receive sales tax revenue — did not move forward.

Sen. Helene Duhamel, R-Rapid City, was one of the few legislators supportive of a county sales tax proposal, saying it would force tourists to "have skin in the game" when they drive on county roads and use other county services. She said implementing sales tax for counties could be a component of property tax relief.

But legislators decided both issues need further study before any legislation is introduced.

The legislative Executive Board will meet Nov. 14 and 15 in Pierre.

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.

U.S. Senate to examine AI's wide-ranging impact, Schumer and Rounds say

BY: JACOB FISCHLER - SEPTEMBER 14, 2023 12:45 PM

WASHINGTON — U.S. Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer and South Dakota Republican Sen. Mike Rounds said Thursday they're part of a bipartisan and private-sector consensus about the need for government oversight of artificial intelligence on a range of issues.

Schumer, a New York Democrat, and Rounds held an informal bipartisan news conference Thursday to discuss the Senate's outlook on AI, following a forum Wednesday with more than 20 technology and advocacy leaders. Schumer told reporters the Senate is off to a "a great start" in establishing a legislative approach to AI, a technology both senators said held numerous potential benefits but also presented a host of new challenges.

Partly because of the range of affected areas — elections, defense, health care, labor, intellectual prop-

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erty, data privacy and others — AI is “one of the hardest issues we will ever tackle,” Schumer said.

AI refers to advanced software or machines that are capable of learning, making them capable of imitating human thinking and problem-solving. The recent growth of ChatGPT, a “generative AI” device that can generate its own content, has sparked wider interest in the technology.

About 70 senators attended Wednesday’s forum, which was closed to the press, Schumer said. The industry leaders reached an early consensus that government should play some role in the technology’s development, he said.

The senators on Thursday described AI as a wide-ranging issue that would impact every part of society for decades to come.

“AI is probably going to affect this generation and the next generation more than just about any issue that we will have to deal with,” Schumer said.

Elections a priority

Because of how many different issues intersect with AI, it’s likely impractical to devise a universal policy around the technology, Schumer said.

Congress’ approach, then, may be to take a piecemeal approach and set rules for AI involvement in individual issues.

Election interference may be among the first, he said.

“We’d like to do everything at once,” Schumer said. But the “difficulty and the enormity of the task may not allow us to do that. Some things may have to go sooner than others and elections is one of the things that we may have to try to do soonest.”

Rounds said he couldn’t speak for other Republicans, but agreed on the need to prioritize elections. Foreign adversaries and other bad actors could use AI to create fraudulent images and videos or otherwise meddle in elections.

“We’re going to have to do everything we can to make sure that those elections absolutely are fair and misinformation is identified,” he said. “How you go about doing that, with an agreement by both sides, is going to be a real challenge. First Amendment rights are critical. But make sure that if somebody’s going to implicate or play games or make clearly illusionary messages, there’s got to be a way in this society to address it.”

Speed v. deliberation

The Senate will have to balance the need to quickly establish rules in a fast-growing technology, while also taking time to be as thoughtful as possible, Schumer said.

“If you move too slowly, the horse is out of the barn,” he said. “But if you move too quickly, you may screw it up.”

Some senators at Wednesday’s meeting called for a new federal agency to regulate AI.

“Today’s forum reinforced that we need a new, independent agency to regulate AI and social media,” Sen. Michael Bennet, a Colorado Democrat, said in a statement Wednesday. “This will best enable us to engage with new technologies while mitigating potential harms. Big Tech has written its own rules for too long.”

There did not appear to be consensus for that step Thursday, but Rounds said the breadth of the impacts of AI would require several different federal agencies and Senate committees to quickly gain expertise on the technology. There was a suggestion during the closed-door meeting that a single federal body could be responsible for gathering and developing experts to advise others, he said.

“One of the suggestions was, maybe you should be developing the experts that then can advise all of these agencies or these committees,” he said. “Our national labs have got experts. A lot of the universities have got experts. Is there a way we can put together a body of these folks to actually help us understand it as we look at the policy implications, committee-by-committee?”

Next steps

At least while Congress remains in the information-gathering stage, AI has not seen the partisan division that plagues other major national issues.

New Mexico Democrat Martin Heinrich and Indiana Republican Todd Young helped Schumer and Rounds

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organize Wednesday's forum. Republican leaders in both chambers, Kentucky's Mitch McConnell in the Senate and House Speaker Kevin McCarthy of California, both expressed support for the Senate's effort, Schumer and Rounds said.

This week marked the Senate's first coordinated move to examine AI. In addition to Wednesday's forum, two committees held hearings on the subject Tuesday and Schumer offered floor remarks throughout the week.

The White House, too, has been working on the issue, announcing new commitments from key companies to respect certain guidelines.

Schumer and Rounds said they'd try to hold more meetings like Wednesday's. At least some would likely have open press access, they said.

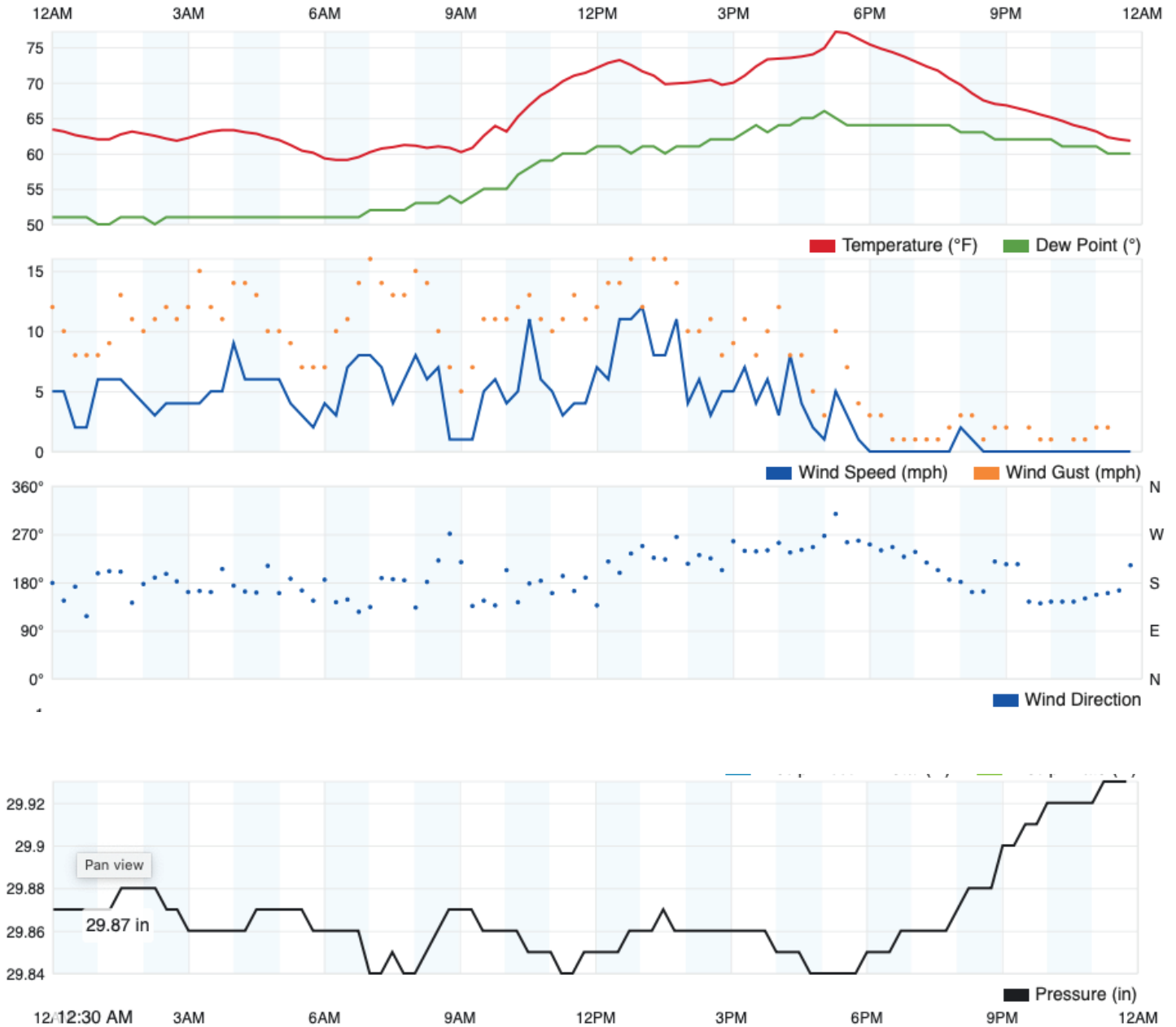
The next meeting, which the senators would soon announce a date for, will be on examining the benefits and potential pitfalls of the technology, Schumer said.

Jacob covers federal policy as a senior reporter for States Newsroom. Based in Oregon, he focuses on Western issues. His coverage areas include climate, energy development, public lands and infrastructure.

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Yesterday's Groton Weather Graphs



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Today



Sunny

High: 75 °F

Tonight



Mostly Clear

Low: 46 °F

Saturday



Sunny

High: 71 °F

Saturday Night



Mostly Clear

Low: 43 °F

Sunday



Sunny

High: 74 °F

Sunday Night



Mostly Clear

Low: 51 °F

Monday



Mostly Sunny

High: 82 °F

This Evening into early Friday Morning
 Showers & Storms lingering over far eastern SD
 & western MN. Dry overnight.
 Lows in the 50s.



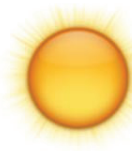
Friday



Saturday



Sunday



Dry

Maximum Temperature Forecast

	Fri	Sat	Sun	Mon	Tue
Aberdeen	76	74	77	86	82
Britton	73	69	73	83	84
Brookings	76	72	73	82	86
Chamberlain	80	78	81	90	85
Clark	75	70	74	83	85
Eagle Butte	75	74	80	87	77
Ellendale	73	71	75	83	79
Eureka	72	71	75	83	76
Gettysburg	75	74	78	86	78
Huron	79	76	79	87	85
Kennebec	80	77	82	89	83
McIntosh	71	71	78	84	76
Milbank	78	71	74	85	87
Miller	77	74	77	86	81
Mobridge	74	74	80	86	80
Murdo	79	78	85	89	85
Pierre	81	79	85	91	83
Redfield	78	74	77	86	82
Sisseton	75	69	73	83	85
Watertown	77	71	75	84	87
Webster	73	67	71	81	82
Wheaton	76	69	73	83	82



Aberdeen, SD

Scattered showers and storms will exit eastern South Dakota and western Minnesota this evening, with dry weather returning through the weekend. Expect highs mainly in the 70s through Sunday. 80s and even a few 90-degree readings will be possible Monday.

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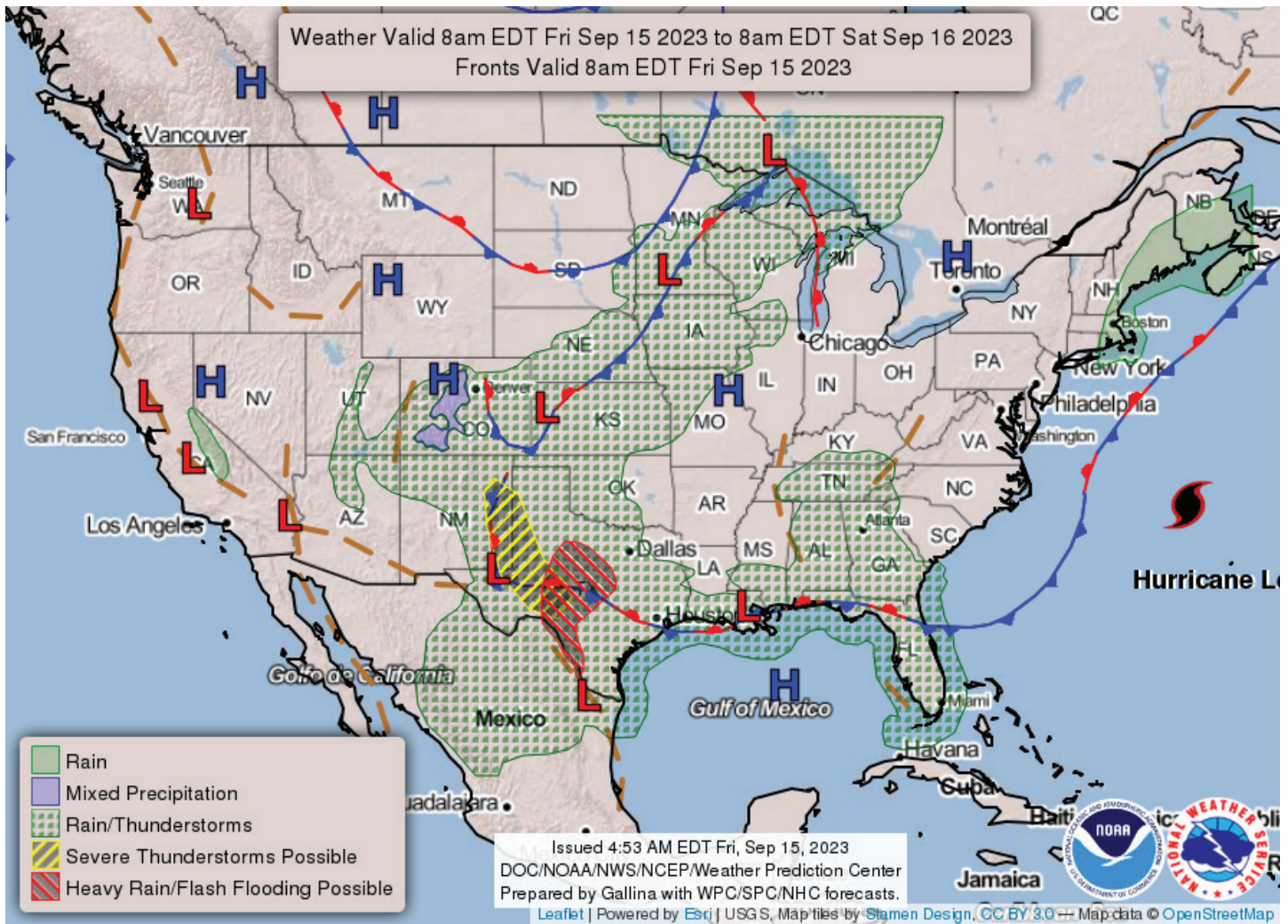
Yesterday's Groton Weather

High Temp: 77 °F at 5:13 PM
Low Temp: 59 °F at 6:06 AM
Wind: 17 mph at 1:21 PM
Precip: : 0.00

Day length: 21 hours, 36 minutes

Today's Info

Record High: 100 in 1955
Record Low: 28 in 1964
Average High: 76
Average Low: 47
Average Precip in Sept.: 1.02
Precip to date in Sept.: 0.57
Average Precip to date: 17.36
Precip Year to Date: 19.16
Sunset Tonight: 7:45:42 PM
Sunrise Tomorrow: 7:10:41 AM



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Today in Weather History

September 15, 1977: Sioux Falls residents received a rude awakening during the morning hours as thunderstorms rolled through the city. Over two and one-half inches of rain fell in the town in an hour and 15 minutes. A large amount of rain in a short period led to street flooding in some areas. Lightning strikes from the storms also started several small fires.

1747: Some historical accounts of a hurricane caused flooding on the Rappahannock River in Virginia. A slave ship was overturned, and several fatalities were reported.

1752 - A great hurricane produced a tide along the South Carolina coast which nearly inundated downtown Charleston. However, just before the tide reached the city, a shift in the wind caused the water level to drop five feet in ten minutes. (David Ludlum)

1910 - Rains of .27 inch on the 14th and .73 inch on the 15th were the earliest and heaviest of record for Fresno CA, which, along with much of California, experiences a "rainy season" in the winter. (The Weather Channel)

1939 - The temperature at Detroit MI soared to 100 degrees to establish a record for September. (The Weather Channel)

1945: A hurricane entered the south Florida coast at Homestead, curving northward right up through the center of Florida, remaining over land, and exited near Jacksonville Beach with winds gusting to 170 mph. The following is from the Homestead Air Reserve Base. "On Sept. 15, 1945, three years to the day after the founding of the Homestead Army Air Field, a massive hurricane roared ashore, sending winds of up to 145 miles per hour tearing through the Air Field's buildings. Enlisted housing facilities, the nurses' dormitory, and the Base Exchange were all destroyed. The roof was ripped from what would later become building 741, the Big Hangar. The base laundry and fire station were both declared total losses. The few remaining aircraft were tossed about like leaves."

1982 - A snowstorm over Wyoming produced 16.9 inches at Lander to establish a 24 hour record for September for that location. (13th-15th) (The Weather Channel)

1987 - The first snow of the season was observed at the Winter Park ski resort in Colorado early in the day. Eight inches of snow was reported at the Summit of Mount Evans, along with wind gusts to 61 mph. Early morning thunderstorms in Texas produced up to six inches of rain in Real County. Two occupants of a car drowned, and the other six occupants were injured as it was swept into Camp Wood Creek, near the town of Leakey. Late afternoon and evening thunderstorms produced severe weather in central and northeastern Oklahoma. Wind gusts to 70 mph and golf ball size hail were reported around Oklahoma City OK. (National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1988 - Thunderstorms brought much needed rains to parts of the central U.S. Rainfall totals of 2.87 inches at Sioux City IA and 4.59 inches at Kansas City MO were records for the date. Up to eight inches of rain deluged the Kansas City area, nearly as much rain as was received the previous eight months. Hurricane Gilbert, meanwhile, slowly churned toward the U.S./Mexican border. (The National Weather Summary)

1989 - Showers and thunderstorms produced locally heavy rain in the Central Appalachians. Virgie VA received 2.60 inches of rain during the evening hours, and Bartlett TN was deluged with 2.75 inches in just ninety minutes. Heavy rain left five cars partially submerged in high water in a parking lot at Bulls Gap TN. Thunderstorms over central North Carolina drenched the Fayetteville area with four to eight inches of rain between 8 PM and midnight. Flash flooding, and a couple of dam breaks, claimed the lives of two persons, and caused ten million dollars damage. Hugo, churning over the waters of the Caribbean, strengthened to the category of a very dangerous hurricane, packing winds of 150 mph. (Storm Data) (The National Weather Summary)

2011: An EF0 Waterspout moved ashore in Ocean City, Maryland. Click [HERE](#) for more information from the Capital Weather Gang.

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Daily Devotionals

Seeds of Hope

DANGER AHEAD!

A battered, old truck was rambling down a country road and approached a sharp right turn. Unfortunately, the driver applied the brakes but nothing happened. It missed the turn and ended up in a field.

Fortunately, the driver climbed out of the cab uninjured. Dusting himself off, he said to the crowd that gathered around him, "I reckon I should've bought brake fluid before I needed it!"

Procrastination presents problems. One of the problems for procrastinators is that what they tend to put off leads to crises, like the truck driver ending up in a field. Fortunately, he ended up with no injury to himself.

One unfortunate result of procrastinating is that it can result in irreversible consequences. This is true of those who face death thinking there will always be time to make things right with God. This is certainly one of Satan's greatest accomplishments: convincing the lost to believe that "there will be time tomorrow. And if not tomorrow, the next day. Perhaps next week." Not wise!

Satan takes great pleasure when he gets us to focus on tomorrow instead of today. He rejoices when we have "spiritual intentions" that we "reserve" for "tomorrow." Those "intentions" also include our promises to read His Word, pray, attend church and witness. He who hesitates loses everything!

Prayer: We pray, Father, for those who have delayed accepting You as Savior. May Your Spirit work in their hearts and, also please help all of us to turn our intentions into actions. In Jesus' Name, Amen.

Scripture For Today: Don't be like your ancestors who would not listen or pay attention when the earlier prophets said to them, "This is what the Lord of Heaven's Armies says: Turn from your evil ways, and stop all your evil practices." Zechariah 1:4



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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The Groton Independent Printed & Mailed Weekly Edition

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WINNING NUMBERS

MEGA MILLIONS

WINNING NUMBERS:
09.12.23

2 14 21 42 67 18

MegaPlier: 5x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:
\$162,000,000

NEXT 17 Hrs 32 Mins 48
DRAW: Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

LOTTO AMERICA

WINNING NUMBERS:
09.13.23

11 12 25 36 40 4

All Star Bonus: 4x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:
\$2,100,000

NEXT 1 Days 16 Hrs 47
DRAW: Mins 48 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

LUCKY FOR LIFE

WINNING NUMBERS:
09.14.23

9 19 23 26 47 18

TOP PRIZE:

\$7,000/week

NEXT 17 Hrs 2 Mins 48
DRAW: Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

DAKOTA CASH

WINNING NUMBERS:
09.13.23

1 7 10 27 29

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:
\$43,000

NEXT 1 Days 17 Hrs 2
DRAW: Mins 48 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

POWERBALL

DOUBLE PLAY

WINNING NUMBERS:
09.13.23

3 12 28 58 62 24

TOP PRIZE:
\$10,000,000

NEXT 1 Days 17 Hrs 31
DRAW: Mins 48 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

POWERBALL

WINNING NUMBERS:
09.13.23

22 30 37 44 45 18

Power Play: 3x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:
\$596,000,000

NEXT 1 Days 17 Hrs 31
DRAW: Mins 48 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

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News from the Associated Press

Thursday's Scores

The Associated Press

PREP FOOTBALL

Crow Creek Tribal School 56, Flandreau Indian 8
Lower Brule 54, McLaughlin 16

PREP VOLLEYBALL

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

Blinded by a Russian shell, this Ukrainian soldier couldn't see his wedding. But cried at new love

By SAMYA KULLAB Associated Press

KYIV, Ukraine (AP) — Blinded by a Russian mortar shell, Ukrainian veteran Ivan Soroka couldn't see his bride when she walked into his family home in a shoulderless white dress, a bouquet of white flowers in her right hand.

But when Vladislava Ryabets, 25, stepped toward him, Soroka wept with joy at the new chapter of life starting months after enemy artillery stole his sight.

"The first thing I said after I was wounded was, who will want me now?" said Soroka, 27, sitting inside his family home in a village in the outskirts of Kyiv.

"I succeeded in rebuilding myself," he said. "I am seeing with my feelings, with my emotions."

Dozens sat around a garden table in Bortnychi village under a tent decorated with balloons and garlands for a day of festivity steeped in Ukrainian rural tradition. Folk songs and laughter filled the air as neighbors and friends poured into the humble pastoral home, gulped drinks and toasted the young newlyweds. A round loaf decorated with viburnum berries — a symbol of fertility in local tradition — lay on the table.

Beneath the gaiety and carousing ran an undercurrent of anguish: The country remains locked in a ferocious war with Russia.

The Associated Press first met Soroka at a rehabilitation camp for ex-soldiers who lost their vision in combat. The courtship was not unusual in wartime Ukraine: Throughout the capital young men with prostheses hold hands with their partners and family members.

Many couples have fleeting encounters between rare visits home from the front line. Spouses sometimes travel to cities near combat areas to see their loved ones for a few hours between time fighting. The onset of Russia's invasion also saw a surge in marriages, as many came to realize the future would be uncertain, and even cut short.

"I feel such pity for my grandson, he's not seeing what's around, the beauty," cried Soroka's 86-year old grandmother Nataliia, her voice trailing off as she wiped away tears.

"Thank God he has this golden woman in his life," she said.

Soroka and Ryabets met online on April 6, 2022, less than two months after Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine. Soroka was recovering from pneumonia at a military hospital. He logged into a dating app and saw Ryabets' profile photo.

"Hello," he messaged her.

He was ambitious and driven. She was patient and graceful, working with autistic children in a clinic.

"You're mine now," he told her, after weeks of chatting in May.

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In response, she sent him her ring size measurements as a joke.

Only six weeks after they met, they were having a coffee together during one of Soroka's short leaves from the front.

"So, where is my ring?" asked Ryabets, again, in jest.

"It's right here," Soroka said, and produced the gleaming engagement ring.

But Soroka's unit was moved to Bakhmut in the Donetsk region for the war's longest and bloodiest battle.

On Aug. 2, near the village of Horlivka, his unit received an order to withdraw to reserve positions because their section of the front line had been destroyed.

They began their retreat at night. By the light of dawn they were shelled by Russian troops. Soroka's eyes were struck with shrapnel. His leg was also wounded but didn't need to be amputated.

The wounded soldier's phone was punctured and shattered by the blast wave. Ryabets couldn't reach Soroka, and worried.

At the hospital a nurse helped him retrieve his SIM and he was able to open messages and get back in touch with his fiancée.

At the hospital in Vinnytsia, Soroka was barely recognizable. Ryabets visited him every weekend until he was discharged nearly a year ago. They had hoped his eyes would heal and his sight would return.

It never did, but her Ryabets' decision never wavered.

"Nothing changed for me," she said.

In a corner of the garden away from the party, Soroko's father Oleksandr, 55, took a moment to smoke. A Red Army veteran, he could have enlisted, instead of his son, he said.

"I blame myself," he said, his voice shaking and thoughts scrambled.

As for Soroka, he is determined to move forward, he said. He hopes to find work, and most of all, he hopes for a first child.

He twirled his new wife in a park in Kyiv as the wedding photographer snapped photos, images he couldn't behold. Ryabets held his hand, guiding her new husband.

At the celebration, Soroka's and Ryabets' parents changed into traditional Ukrainian dress. In line with tradition, since the last child in both families was getting married, their parents were loaded into a wheelbarrow and dumped into a body of water to celebrate their empty nest.

The procession of party guests followed the wheelbarrow across the village, offering passersby a shot of vodka or a baked treat. The more bitter alcohol consumed, the less bitterness in the marriage, they said.

As his mother and father dip into the cool waters of Bortnychi's pond to mark this new chapter in their lives, Soroka and Ryabets shared a kiss.

The crowd cheered: "To the happy couple!"

About 13,000 workers go on strike seeking better wages and benefits from Detroit's three automakers

By TOM KRISHER, COREY WILLIAMS and MIKE HOUSEHOLDER Associated Press

DETROIT (AP) — About 13,000 U.S. auto workers stopped making vehicles and went on strike Friday after their leaders couldn't bridge a giant gap between union demands in contract talks and what Detroit's three automakers are willing to pay.

Members of the United Auto Workers union began picketing at a General Motors assembly plant in Wentzville, Missouri; a Ford factory in Wayne, Michigan, near Detroit; and a Stellantis Jeep plant in Toledo, Ohio.

It was the first time in the union's 88-year history that it walked out on all three companies simultaneously as four-year contracts expired at 11:59 p.m. Thursday.

The strikes will likely chart the future of the union and of America's homegrown auto industry at a time when U.S. labor is flexing its might and the companies face a historic transition from building internal combustion automobiles to making electric vehicles.

If they last a long time, dealers could run short of vehicles and prices could rise, impacting a U.S. economy already under strain from elevated inflation. The walkout could even be a factor in next year's presidential

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election by testing Joe Biden's proud claim to be the most union-friendly president in American history.

"Workers all over the world are watching this," said Liz Shuler, president of the AFL-CIO, a federation of 60 unions with 12.5 million members.

The strike is far different from those during previous UAW negotiations. Instead of going after one company, the union, led by its pugnacious new president, Shawn Fain, is striking at all three. But not all of the 146,000 UAW members at company plants are walking picket lines, at least not yet.

Instead, the UAW targeted a handful of factories to prod company negotiators to raise their offers, which were far lower than union demands of 36% wage increases over four years. GM and Ford offered 20% and Stellantis, formerly Fiat Chrysler, offered 17.5%.

Outside the Ford plant in suburban Detroit, Britney Johnson, 35, who has worked for the company about 3 1/2 years and has yet to reach top union wages, said she'd like higher pay, the return of pensions, and cost of living increases. "I like the job. It's just that we deserve more," she said.

She joined about 400 workers on the picket line outside the plant.

At the Toledo Jeep plant, assembly line worker Candace Bowles, 52, said it felt "strange" to walk off the job. "I didn't want to have to do it, but got to do it," said Bowles.

As the deadline approached, she cleaned up her workstation and walked out when the midnight bell rang. "I'm really happy that everyone stood together," she said.

The limited strikes will help to preserve the union's \$825 million strike fund, which would run dry in about 11 weeks if all workers walked out. But Fain said more plants could be added if the companies don't make better offers.

Even Fain has called the union's demands audacious, but he maintains the automakers are raking in billions and can afford them. He scoffed at company statements that costly settlements would force them to raise vehicle prices, saying labor accounts for only 4% to 5% of vehicle costs.

"They could double our raises and not raise car prices and still make millions of dollars in profits," Fain said. "We're not the problem. Corporate greed is the problem."

The strikes capped a day of both sides griping that the other had not budged enough from their initial positions.

In addition to general wage increases, the union is seeking restoration of cost-of-living pay raises, an end to varying tiers of wages for factory jobs, a 32-hour week with 40 hours of pay, the restoration of traditional defined-benefit pensions for new hires who now receive only 401(k)-style retirement plans, pension increases for retirees and other items.

Starting in 2007, workers gave up cost-of-living raises and defined benefit pensions for new hires. Wage tiers were created as the UAW tried to help the companies avoid financial trouble ahead of and during the Great Recession. Even so, only Ford avoided government-funded bankruptcy protection.

Many say it's time to get the concessions back because the companies are making huge profits and CEOs are raking in millions. They also want to make sure the union represents workers at joint-venture electric vehicle battery factories that the companies are building so workers have jobs making vehicles of the future.

Top-scale assembly plant workers make about \$32 per hour, plus large annual profit-sharing checks. Ford said average annual pay including overtime and bonuses was \$78,000 last year.

The Ford plant that's on strike employs about 3,300 workers, and it makes Bronco SUVs and Ranger mid-size pickup trucks. The Toledo Jeep complex has about 5,800 workers and manufactures the Jeep Wrangler SUV and Gladiator pickup. GM's Wentzville plant has about 3,600 workers and makes the GMC Canyon and Chevrolet Colorado midsize pickups, as well as the GMC Savana and Chevrolet Express full-size vans.

The union didn't go after the companies' big cash cows, which are full-size pickup trucks and big SUVs, and went more for plants that make vehicles with lower profit margins, said Marick Masters, a business professor at Wayne State University in Detroit.

"They want to give the companies some space without putting them up against the wall," Masters said. "They're not putting them right into the corner. You put an animal in the corner and it's dangerous."

Automakers say they're facing unprecedented demands as they develop and build new electric vehicles

while at the same time making gas-powered cars, SUVs and trucks to pay the bills. They're worried labor costs will rise so much that they'll have to price their cars above those sold by foreign automakers with U.S. factories.

GM CEO Mary Barra told workers in a letter Thursday that the company is offering historic wage increases and new vehicle commitments at U.S. factories. GM's offer, she wrote, "addresses what you've told us is most important to you, in spite of the heated rhetoric from UAW leadership."

On CNBC Thursday, Ford CEO Jim Farley said if Ford had agreed to the union's demands, it would have lost \$15 billion during the last decade and gone bankrupt.

Under the UAW strategy, workers who go on strike would live on \$500 per week in strike pay from the union, while others would stay on the job at full pay. It's unlikely the companies would lock the remaining workers out of their factories because they want to keep building vehicles.

It's tough to say just how long it will take for the strikes to cut inventories at dealers and start hurting the companies' bottom lines.

Jeff Schuster, head of automotive for the Global Data research firm, said Stellantis has the most inventory and could hold out longer. The company has enough vehicles at or en route to dealers to last for 75 days. Ford has a 62-day supply and GM has 51.

Still, Schuster predicted the strikes could last longer than previous work stoppages such as a 40-day strike against GM in 2019.

"This one feels like there's a lot more at risk here on both sides," he said.

Climate protesters around the world are calling for an end to fossil fuels as Earth heats up

By The Associated Press undefined

Tens of thousands of climate activists around the world are set to march, chant and protest Friday to call for an end to the burning of planet-warming fossil fuels as the globe suffers dramatic weather extremes and record-breaking heat.

The strike — driven by several mostly youth-led, local and global climate groups and organizations, including Greta Thunberg's Fridays for Future movement — will take place in dozens of countries and in hundreds of cities worldwide and continue through the weekend.

In one strike in Quezon City in the Philippines, activists lay in front of the Department of Environment and Natural Resources in protest, and held signs demanding fossil fuels — from coal to natural gas — be phased out.

A week before the planned protest, the United Nations warned that countries are way off track to curb warming to 1.5 degrees Celsius (2.7 degrees Fahrenheit) since pre-industrial times, as agreed in Paris in 2015. The world has warmed at least 1.1 degrees (2 degrees Fahrenheit) since then.

Over the past few months, Earth broke its daily average heat record several times according to one metric, July was the hottest month ever on record, and the Northern Hemisphere summer was declared the hottest on record.

Dozens of extreme weather events — from Hurricane Idalia in the southeastern United States to torrential flooding in Delhi in India — are believed to have been made worse by human-caused climate change.

Another major strike is planned to take place Sunday in New York, to coincide with the city's Climate Week and the U.N. climate summit.

Climate activists have organized similar worldwide strikes in recent years, where protesters from different nations join together on a single day.

Ukrainian forces reclaim a village in the east as part of counteroffensive

By SAMYA KULLAB Associated Press

KYIV, Ukraine (AP) — Ukraine's forces have recaptured a village in the country's east after intense battles with Russian troops, the military said Friday as the invaded nation pursues a multi-pronged counteroffensive.

The village of Andriivka is located about 10 kilometers (6 miles) south of the Russian-occupied city of Bakhmut, the scene of the longest battle of Russia's war on Ukraine. Its liberation would represent another gain for Kyiv in Ukraine's campaign to oust Moscow's troops from territory they captured.

The General Staff of Ukraine's armed forces announced the reclaiming of Andriivka early Friday. There was no confirmation or comment from Russia authorities.

Ukrainian forces launched their much-anticipated counteroffensive more than three months ago. The reported victory in the Donetsk province village illustrates progress and the challenges they face even with supplies of NATO-standard gear and Western weapons.

The approaching wet weather of winter will likely slow Ukrainian advances. President Volodymyr Zelenskyy is expected to visit Washington next week as Congress debates whether to approve more aid for Ukraine.

The 3rd Assault Brigade said it took Andriivka after surrounding the Russian garrison in the village during what it described as a "lightning operation" and destroying it over two days. It called the successful action a breakthrough on the southern flank of Bakhmut and "key to success in all further directions."

The brigade initially contested a statement by Ukrainian Deputy Defense Minister Hanna Maliar saying the village was reclaimed but confirmed early Friday that it had recaptured Andriivka.

"It was difficult and yesterday's situation changed very dynamically several times," Maliar said.

Maliar said Ukraine had regained 50 square kilometers (19 square miles) of land around Bakhmut since the start of the counteroffensive in June.

The eight months of fighting for control of Bakhmut, a city known for salt mining that is now in complete ruins, comprised the longest and likely bloodiest battle of the war in Ukraine. Russian forces led by mercenaries from the Wagner Group captured Bakhmut in May.

In late June, Wagner leader Yevgeny Prigozhin led his fighters from eastern Ukraine and into Russia as part of a short-lived mutiny. Prigozhin and several of his top lieutenants died in a plane crash while traveling between Moscow and St. Petersburg last month.

Ukrainian forces are trying to envelop Bakhmut from the south and the north and have gained ground meter by meter (yard by yard) in the past three months. Military analysts and U.S. officials have questioned the expenditure of forces around the city, but Ukrainian military leaders have said they were successfully exhausting Russian forces by keeping them fixed in position.

Andriivka is located between the settlements of Kurdiuvka and the heights of Klischiivka in the Donetsk region, where fighting has been especially intense. Ukraine's General Staff said Ukrainian forces also inflicted heavy losses on Russian troops in the nearby village of Klishchiivka as part of the counteroffensive.

The recapture of Andriivka comes weeks after an important tactical victory for Ukrainian forces in the southern Zaporizhzhia region, where they punctured through Russia's first line of defense and recaptured the village of Robotyne.

The gains in the south are considered more strategically significant since they bring Ukraine's troops closer to the shores of the Sea of Azov, where they could try to cut the land corridor to the Crimean Peninsula, which Russia seized from Ukraine in 2014. Isolating Crimea would divide the Russian-occupied territory in southern Ukraine and undermine Russian supply lines.

North Korea's Kim gets a close look at Russian fighter jets as his tour narrows its focus to weapons

By HYUNG-JIN KIM, KIM TONG-HYUNG and EMMA BURROWS Associated Press

SEOUL, South Korea (AP) — North Korean leader Kim Jong Un peered into the cockpit of Russia's most advanced fighter jet as he toured an aircraft factory Friday on an extended trip that has raised concerns about banned weapons transfer deals between the increasingly isolated countries.

Since entering Russia aboard his armored train on Tuesday, Kim has met President Vladimir Putin and visited weapons and technology sites, underscoring deepening ties between the two nations locked in separate confrontations with the West. Foreign governments and experts speculate Kim will likely supply ammunition to Russia for its war efforts in Ukraine in exchange for receiving advanced weapons or technology from Russia.

On Friday, Russia's state media published video showing Kim's train pulling into a station in the far eastern city of Komsomolsk-on-Amur and Kim's convoy sweeping out of the station on the way to the city's aircraft factory.

Russia's Cabinet later released video showing Kim, on an elevated platform, looking at the cockpit of the Su-57 — Russia's most sophisticated fighter jet — while listening to its pilot. Kim beamed and clapped his hands after a Su-35 fighter jet landed after a demonstration flight.

According to a Russian Cabinet statement, Kim visited a facility producing Sukhoi SJ-100 passenger planes as well. It said he was accompanied by Deputy Prime Minister Denis Manturov.

"We have shown one of our leading aircraft plants to the leader of (North Korea)," Manturov said in the statement. "We are seeing potential for cooperation in the aircraft-making and other industries, which is particularly acute for solving our countries' task of achieving technological sovereignty."

Kim is to travel next to Vladivostok to view Russia's Pacific fleet, a university and other facilities, Putin told Russian media after he met with Kim on Wednesday.

It was Kim's first foreign trip since April 2019, when he visited Vladivostok for his first meeting with Putin. The 2019 Russian visit came two months after Kim failed to win badly needed sanctions relief from the United States during a second summit with then U.S.-President Donald Trump in Vietnam.

Kim's earlier trip was likely primarily meant to seek Russian help to overcome the brunt of U.S.-led sanctions. But this time, Putin appears to be desperate to receive North Korean conventional arms to replenish his exhausted inventory in the second year of Russia's war in Ukraine. Experts say Kim, in return, would seek Russian assistance to modernize his air force and navy, which are inferior to those of rival South Korea while Kim has devoted much of his own resources to his nuclear weapons program.

The summit between Kim and Putin on Wednesday took place at the Vostochny Cosmodrome, Russia's most important domestic launch center. The venue is likely linked to North Korean struggles to put into space an operational spy satellite to monitor U.S. and South Korean military movements.

Asked if Russia and North Korea could cooperate in space research, Putin said: "That's why we have come here. (Kim) shows keen interest in rocket technology. They're trying to develop space, too."

Since last year, the U.S. accused North Korea of providing ammunition, artillery shells and rockets to Russia, likely much of them copies of Soviet-era munitions. South Korean officials said North Korean weapons provided to Russia have already been used in Ukraine.

On Thursday evening, the national security advisers of the U.S., South Korea and Japan talked by phone and expressed "serious concerns" about prospective weapons deals between Russia and North Korea. They warned Russia and North Korea would "pay a clear price" if they go ahead with such deals, according to South Korea's presidential office.

The White House said the three national security advisers noted that any arms export from North Korea to Russia would directly violate multiple U.N. Security Council resolutions, including resolutions that Russia, a permanent member of the U.N. council, itself voted to adopt. They reiterated their cooperation toward the complete denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula as well, according to a White House statement.

After a meeting in Seoul discussing the allies' nuclear deterrence strategies, U.S. and South Korean of-

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officials on Friday stepped up their condemnation of the recent moves by Russia and North Korea.

Sasha Baker, the U.S. acting undersecretary of defense for policy, said that Washington will continue to "try to identify and expose and counter Russian attempts to acquire military equipment, again, to prosecute their illegal war on Ukraine." South Korean Vice Foreign Minister Chang Ho-jin said Washington and Seoul, while tightening security cooperation, would ensure that Moscow faces consequences if it proceeds to help advance Pyongyang's weapons program.

A possibility that Russia may aid North Korea's nuclear weapons program stocked anger in South Korea, where some argued that Seoul could provide lethal arms to Ukraine in retaliation. But South Korea's Defense Ministry said Thursday that its policy of not supplying weapons to countries at war remains unchanged. Seoul has far limited its support of Ukraine to non-lethal military supplies and humanitarian items.

Some analysts question how much Russia would be willing to share its closely guarded high-tech weapons technologies with North Korea in return for its conventional arms. But others say Russia would do so because of its urgent need to refill its drained reserves.

Putin told reporters that Russia and North Korea have "lots of interesting projects" in spheres like transportation and agriculture and that Moscow is providing its neighbor with humanitarian aid. But he avoided talking about military cooperation, saying only that Russia is abiding by the sanctions prohibiting procuring weapons from North Korea.

Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov said Thursday that Putin had accepted Kim's invitation to visit Pyongyang and that Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov is expected to visit North Korea in October.

During Wednesday's summit, Kim vowed "full and unconditional support" for Putin in what he described as a "just fight against hegemonic forces to defend its sovereign rights, security and interests," in an apparent reference to the war in Ukraine.

Information on Kim's trip to Russia is largely from the two nations' official media outlets. North Korean media did not provide updates Friday on Kim's activities. They typically report on Kim's activities a day later, apparently to meet the need for North Korean propaganda to glorify Kim.

Libyan city closed off as searchers look for 10,100 missing after flood deaths rise to 11,300

By SAMY MAGDY Associated Press

CAIRO (AP) — Libyan authorities blocked civilians from entering the flood-stricken eastern city of Derna on Friday so search teams could look through the mud and wrecked buildings for 10,100 people still missing after the known toll rose to 11,300 dead.

The disaster after two dams collapsed in heavy rains and sent a massive flood gushing into the Mediterranean city early Monday underscored the storm's intensity but also Libya's vulnerability. The oil-rich state since 2014 has been split between rival governments in the east and west backed by various militia forces and international patrons.

Derna was being evacuated and only search and rescue teams would be allowed to enter, Salam al-Fergany, director general of the Ambulance and Emergency Service in eastern Libya, announced late Thursday.

The disaster has brought rare unity, as government agencies across Libya's divide rushed to help the affected areas, with the first aid convoys arriving in Derna on Tuesday evening. Relief efforts have been slowed by the destruction after several bridges that connect the city were destroyed.

The Libyan Red Crescent said as of Thursday that 11,300 people in Derna had died and another 10,100 were reported missing. Mediterranean storm Daniel also killed about 170 people elsewhere in the country.

Eastern Libya's health minister, Othman Abduljaleel, has said the burials so far were in mass graves outside Derna and nearby towns and cities.

Abduljaleel said rescue teams were searching wrecked buildings in the city center and divers were combing the sea off Derna.

Soon after the storm hit the city Sunday night, residents said they heard loud explosions when the dams outside the city collapsed. Floodwaters gushed down Wadi Derna, a valley that cuts through the city,

crashing through buildings and washing people out to sea.

Lori Hieber Girardet, the head of the risk knowledge branch the U.N. Office for Disaster Risk Reduction, told The Associated Press on Thursday that because of years of chaos and conflict Libyan "government institutions are not functioning as they should."

As a result, she said, "The amount of attention that should be paid to disaster management, to disaster risk management isn't adequate."

The city of Derna is governed by Libya's eastern administration, which is backed by the powerful military commander Khalifa Hiftar.

Citing sustainability, Starbucks wants to overhaul its iconic cup. Will customers go along?

By PETER PRENGAMAN Associated Press

TEMPE, Ariz. (AP) — Bethany Patton steps up to the counter and places her pink mug into a shoebox-sized dishwasher. It spins. It whirs. Water splashes inside. After 90 seconds, the door opens and steam emerges. A barista grabs the mug, dries it and prepares Patton's order — a 16-ounce Starbucks double espresso on ice.

For bringing her own cup, Patton gets \$1 off her drink.

"Saving the environment is important and all, but I probably come here more in knowing that I'm going to get a dollar off," says Patton, 27, a cancer researcher at Arizona State University. Two friends who came on the afternoon coffee run nod as they hold the cups that they, too, brought along.

Just as noteworthy as what they're carrying is what they are not: the disposable Starbucks cup, an icon in a world where the word is overused.

For a generation and more, it has been a cornerstone of consumer society, first in the United States and then globally — the throwaway cup with the emerald logo depicting a longhaired siren with locks like ocean waves. Ubiquitous to the point of being an accessory, it has carried a message: I am drinking the world's most recognizable coffee brand.

Now, in an era where concern for sustainability can be good business, the Starbucks disposable cup may be on its way to extinction thanks to an unlikely force: Starbucks itself.

CONVENIENCE COLLIDES WITH VIRTUE

By 2030, Starbucks wants to move away completely from disposable cups, which represent big portions of the company's overall waste and greenhouse gas emissions.

The stated reason is that it's the right thing to do for the environment, and Starbucks has a history of lofty sustainability goals around various aspects of their global operations. Some have been met, such as new stores being certified for energy efficiency; others have been revised or scrapped entirely. For example, in 2008 the company said that by 2015 it wanted 100% of its cups to be recyclable or reusable. Today, that's still a long way away.

Today's drive to overhaul the cup comes with an obvious business imperative. Producing disposable products like cups creates greenhouse gas emissions, which warm the planet and lead to extreme weather events and other manifestations of climate change. That goes against customers' increasing expectations for companies to be part of the solution to climate change.

Still, while customers want companies to be environmentally conscious, that doesn't mean they're willing to give up convenience. And there's this: Could eliminating the millions of paper and plastic cups used each year hurt Starbucks? After all, those cups, in the hands of customers, are advertising — a market penetration that makes Starbucks feel ubiquitous.

At the store where Patton gets her coffee, Starbucks already doesn't serve any in disposable paper or plastic cups. Customers who don't bring their own are given a reusable plastic one that can be dropped off in bins around campus. It's one of two dozen pilots over the last two years, aimed at changing how the world's largest coffee maker serves its java.

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The goal: to cut the company's waste, water use and carbon emissions in half by 2030. Pulling that off will be tricky and fraught with risks. It provides a window into how companies go from ambitious sustainability targets to actual results.

"Our vision for the cup of the future — and our Holy Grail, if you will — is that the cup still has the iconic symbol on it," says Michael Kobori, head of sustainability at Starbucks. "It's just as a reusable cup."

Starbucks sees the change as an opportunity to cast the siren, and the company, in a different light. It also wants to push more suppliers in its production chain to provide recycled material and partners, such as universities and other locales that house stores, to be able to handle all that comes with reusable cups.

Erin Simon, vice president for plastic waste and business at World Wildlife Fund, says commitment from major companies can help. But ultimately, she says, major change can happen only with corporate collaboration — and government regulation.

"Not one institution, not one organization, not even one sector can change it on its own," Simon says.

At Starbucks, the changes will create ripple effects. Jon Solorzano, a Los Angeles lawyer who advises companies on developing climate-friendly operations and disclosures, (an area referred to as "environmental, social and governance"), says the company likely has hundreds of suppliers that help manufacture cups.

"It's kind of like turning an aircraft carrier around," Solorzano says. "Little tiny tweaks, which seem insignificant, can actually have big operational challenges for an organization."

Starbucks is not the first company to push toward a reusable cup. From large companies in Europe, such as REcup in Germany, which uses reusable cups and other food packaging, to local coffee houses in cities like San Francisco, the goal for years has been to shed disposable paper and plastic.

But as the largest coffee company in the world, with more than 37,000 stores in 86 countries and revenues of \$32 billion last year, Starbucks could force change across the industry. At the same time, failure to adapt and lead could hurt the coffee giant in customers' eyes.

"I'll always choose the more sustainable company," says Irene Linayao-Putman, a public health worker from San Diego who recently bought Starbucks while visiting Seattle.

The road to overhauling the container transcends just making a different choice or spending money. Improving sustainability requires navigating a web of technological developments, seeking out like-minded suppliers and testing how far customers can be pushed to change.

For Starbucks, it means doing two major things in parallel that seemingly conflict: Move toward only reusable cups while developing disposable cups that use less material and are more recyclable. And managing the optics along the way.

"They are just trying to get more buyers," 10-year-old Aria June said with a laugh after buying Starbucks in Seattle. Then, prodded by her father, she added that sustainability and getting more business could co-exist.

THE MECHANICS OF REUSE

At the Arizona State store, if customers don't bring their own cup, they are given a reusable plastic one with a Starbucks logo. If they bring it back, they get \$1 off, just like customers who bring their own. And if they don't want to hold onto it? There are bins around campus, and the cups are washed by the university — part of a partnership with Starbucks — and returned to the store.

Cups too damaged to be reused, along with disposable Starbucks cold drink cups and other plastic found in the trash, are sent to the university's Circular Living Lab. They're shredded, melted and extruded into long, lumber-like pieces. Those pieces are cut, sanded and built into boxes, which become the return bins for the reusable cups.

"This obviously has some energy and production costs, but using recycled content is always going to be less energy intensive (and) emit less CO2 than using virgin plastics," says Tyler Eglen, the lab's project manager.

For several years, Starbucks has been increasing the amount of recycled material in disposable paper cups. In some markets last year, Starbucks began using single-use paper cups made with 30% recycled material, an increase from 10%. The plan is to have all cups at 30% recycled material in all U.S. stores starting in early 2025.

That pushes the limits of what can be done with recycled paper material that holds hot liquids. Paper pulp from recycled cups has shorter fibers than virgin pulp, which means less rigidity, important particularly with hot coffee. How much recycled material can be used in manufacturing new cups depends on how equipped any particular area is to gather material and recycle it. Big cities have major recycling infrastructure, but many communities around the world have little to no recycling capacity.

Another barrier: the lining inside the cup, crucial to keeping a hot liquid from quickly breaking down the paper. Made of polyethylene, a heat-resistant plastic, the liner is about 5% of the total cup but a significant piece of its overall carbon footprint. There is also the plastic lid.

"Today, the reality is that for protection, as we put a hot beverage inside, we need a good seal on those cups," says Jane Tsilas, Starbucks' senior manager for packaging.

A similar testing and refining process is happening with disposable cold-drink cups. At the Tryer Center innovation lab in Starbucks' Seattle headquarters, drinks with ice in plastic cups are placed in holders attached to a platform. It then shakes as technicians look for leaks and flaws.

For the last several years, Starbucks has been testing different kinds of plastics. In 2019, the company went to a strawless lid, eliminating a good amount of plastic. By the end of 2023, the goal is to reduce by 15% the amount of material in each cup.

To do that, technicians examine different parts of the cup to see where less material may be used without weakening it. For example, could reducing the thickness where many people hold the cup, about halfway between the middle and lid, mean the cup collapses and the drink spills on the customer?

"If it passes tests with baristas, then we would put it in the stores," says Kyle Walker, a packaging engineer on Starbucks' research and development team.

NOT AS EASY AS IT MIGHT SEEM

Eventually, the endpoint is this outcome, which is more sustainable and good PR, too: No more disposables at Starbucks.

That's because no matter the tests or technological innovations, there are limits to how much waste can be reduced with disposable paper and plastic cups. Long-term reductions in waste will come from reusable cups.

The company has a long way to go. Since the reintroduction of reusable cups in some stores in July 2021 — reusable cups were not used during much of the COVID-19 pandemic — only 1.2% of worldwide sales in fiscal year 2022 came from reusables. Starbucks refused to provide data on how many disposable cups it uses in any given year.

For all the talk of sustainability and increasing consciousness about climate change, it's fair to assume that a significant number of Starbucks' disposables end up in landfills. Even in Seattle, a progressive city with good recycling infrastructure, there are many cups in garbage cans outside Starbucks stores.

Valencia Villanueva, a barista at the Arizona State store, has noted a growing consciousness among customers about the cup-washing machine and the "borrowed" cup program. That gives her confidence that the future is reusable cups. After all, it's not as if anyone is clamoring to be wasteful — even if what they're giving up is an item that became something of a global status symbol.

"Nobody," she says, "has complained and said they wanted a single-use cup."

Psychedelic drug MDMA eases PTSD symptoms in a study that paves the way for possible US approval

By CARLA K. JOHNSON AP Medical Writer

The psychedelic drug MDMA can reduce symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder, researchers reported in a new study published Thursday.

The company sponsoring the research said it plans later this year to seek U.S. approval to market the drug, also known as ecstasy, as a PTSD treatment when combined with talk therapy.

"It's the first innovation in PTSD treatment in more than two decades. And it's significant because I

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think it will also open up other innovation," said Amy Emerson, CEO of MAPS Public Benefit Corporation, the research sponsor.

Earlier this year, Australia became the first country to allow psychiatrists to prescribe MDMA and psilocybin, the psychoactive ingredient in psychedelic mushrooms. The drugs are gaining wider cultural acceptance in the U.S. in part because of efforts by the nonprofit advocacy group Multidisciplinary Association for Psychedelic Studies.

For the new study, researchers measured symptoms in 104 people with PTSD who were randomly assigned to get either MDMA or a dummy pill during three sessions, one month apart. Both groups received talk therapy.

Common side effects in the MDMA group were muscle tightness, nausea, decreased appetite and sweating. But only one person in the MDMA group dropped out of the study.

After treatment, 86% of the MDMA group improved on a standard PTSD assessment compared to 69% of the placebo group. The assessment measures symptoms such as nightmares, flashbacks and insomnia.

By the study's end, 72% of people in the MDMA group no longer met the diagnostic criteria for PTSD, compared to about 48% of the placebo group.

"The results that they got are very exciting," said Barbara Rothbaum, who directs the Emory Healthcare Veterans Program in Atlanta. She was not involved in the research, which was published in the journal *Nature Medicine*.

PTSD also can be treated with other medications or talk therapy.

"They are very effective, but nothing is 100% effective," Rothbaum said. "So we absolutely need more options for treatment."

Before MDMA could be prescribed in the U.S., the Food and Drug Administration would need to approve it and the Drug Enforcement Administration would need to change its classification. MDMA is currently classified as Schedule 1, on par with heroin and deemed to have "no currently accepted medical use and a high potential for abuse."

The Republicans most at risk in next year's election are falling in line behind impeachment inquiry

By KEVIN FREKING Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — The Republicans whose elections in swing districts next year will determine which party gains control of the House are overwhelmingly voicing their support for House Speaker Kevin McCarthy's impeachment inquiry into President Joe Biden. It's a stance, Democrats say, that could come back to haunt them.

McCarthy spared the Republican lawmakers from having to take a vote to launch the impeachment investigation, a likely signal he didn't have the votes to succeed. Yet many of the 18 Republicans representing districts that Biden won in 2020 were quick to say they supported McCarthy's launch despite the potential political risk back home.

"I think the American people deserve to know the facts and I am looking forward to seeing what the outcome of the inquiry is," said Rep. Jen Kiggans, who represents a Virginia district she won in 2022, but Biden carried by nearly 2 percentage points in 2020.

If the inquiry does lead to an impeachment vote, history suggests it won't necessarily be helpful for the impeachers. House Republicans lost five seats in the 1998 election a few weeks before impeaching President Bill Clinton. Democrats made those surprising gains even though the party that controls the White House usually struggles in midterm elections.

Democrats need only a handful of seats to win back control of the House next year, as Republicans control the chamber by the narrowest of margins with a 222-212 majority. Rep. Suzan DelBene, the chair of the campaign arm for House Democrats, gave a preview of the political arguments to come, saying vulnerable House Republicans are not focusing on meeting the needs of voters while pursuing a "sham impeachment."

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"They are unfit to govern," she said. "House Democrats will make sure people know that as we continue to focus on growing the middle class, lowering costs and creating jobs."

Rep. Richard Hudson, the chair of the campaign arm for House Republicans, dismissed the threat the impeachment investigation may have for swing-district Republicans. He said voters want transparency and accountability in government.

"As long as we follow the facts, I don't think it hurts us," Hudson said.

An AP-NORC poll finds that two-thirds of Republicans but just 7% of Democrats are highly concerned about whether President Biden committed wrongdoing related to his son Hunter Biden's business dealings. About one-third of those identifying themselves as independent said they were extremely or very concerned.

The Congressional Integrity Project, a Democratic-aligned group, has already launched digital ads hammering the probe in the 18 Republican-led districts that Biden won. The ads frame the impeachment inquiry as hatched by McCarthy and conservative firebrand Marjorie Taylor Greene, R-Ga., in an effort to help former President Donald Trump, who is seeking a rematch with Biden in 2024. The ads call on the lawmakers to "focus on real priorities, not bogus impeachment stunts."

Many of the Republicans in Biden-won districts are from California and New York. They'll need to win over independents and moderates to win, and ads aligning them with Greene and Trump are designed to make that job harder for them.

Brad Woodhouse, a longtime Democratic strategist and senior adviser to the group, said Republicans have failed to get signature priorities over the finish line while fighting amongst themselves over lifting the debt ceiling and funding the government. That's a vulnerability that will be magnified during an impeachment fight, he said.

"Short of impeachment, it wouldn't be hard to go say that this Republican-led Congress has failed miserably to address the issues you care about," Woodhouse said of the message to voters. "But when you combine it with having wasted half a year or whatever it is on impeachment, it's going to be a really powerful message for the challengers to these Republican members."

Even as they say they support McCarthy's effort, some of the swing district Republicans emphasize that they'll be focused on other issues, clearly aware of the criticism coming their way.

Rep. Marc Molinaro, R-N.Y., told reporters the impeachment inquiry is "going to consume a lot of your attention. It's not going to consume a lot of my attention."

Rep. Nick LaLota, R-N.Y., said the decision to elevate investigations of Biden "was the speaker's call," and all they were embarking on was a fact-seeking mission. He said he wasn't worried about how the inquiry would play politically for him back home.

"This right now is not on my plate. But nevertheless, I think my constituents deserve some answers," LaLota said.

The freshmen lawmaker, along with other likely holdouts like Rep. Ken Buck, R-Colo., were offered private briefings from leadership this week in order to assuage any concerns they had about moving forward with an inquiry.

McCarthy was asked Wednesday how he won over the impeachment skeptics in his caucus.

"There's a lot of accusations out there you just want the answers to. Impeachment inquiry simply allows Congress — Republicans and Democrats — to be able to get the answers to the questions," McCarthy said.

Rep. James Comer, R-Ky., who will be leading the inquiry, said some lawmakers with concerns did reach out to him in the days before McCarthy's announcement.

"I tried to explain to them that my goal has always been just to get the facts," Comer said. "And, at the end of the day, if the facts lead to impeachment, then I'm sorry, we're going to have to vote on impeachment. But the facts clearly lead to an impeachment inquiry."

Just two weeks ago, McCarthy told Breitbart News that if House Republicans moved forward with the impeachment inquiry, it would come with a formal vote on the House floor. He said "the American people deserve to be heard on this matter through their elected representatives."

But he went a different route this week and launched the probe unilaterally, though it's possible he could

seek a vote later on. The maneuver shielded the Republicans in swing districts from having to cast that vote to start an impeachment investigation, though many said they would have voted yes.

Rep. Mike Garcia, R-Calif., was one of them. He won a district that Biden carried by a whopping 13 percentage points.

"There seems to be this national narrative that people in swing districts don't want accountability and the truth. Right? That's not the case," Garcia said. "There's smoke there, so we have a requirement to go investigate that and see if there's fire there."

Secret records: Government says Marine's adoption of Afghan orphan seen as abduction, must be undone

By MARTHA MENDOZA, CLAIRE GALOFARO and JULIET LINDERMAN Associated Press

The U.S. government has warned a Virginia judge that allowing an American Marine to keep an Afghan war orphan risks violating international law and could be viewed around the world as "endorsing an act of international child abduction," according to secret court records reviewed by The Associated Press.

It is rare for the federal government to step into a local custody case, but concern about the child's fate has stretched across the Trump and Biden administrations. The Justice Department argued in the court documents that the dispute has ramifications that extend far beyond the rural courthouse where the girl's future is being decided.

Failing to return the child, now 4, to Afghan relatives in the U.S. could jeopardize American efforts to resettle Afghan refugees, threaten international security pacts and might be used as propaganda by Islamic extremists — potentially endangering U.S. soldiers overseas, Justice Department attorneys and other U.S. officials warned in court filings seeking to intervene in the case.

The Justice Department was particularly scathing in its assessment of how Marine Maj. Joshua Mast and his wife convinced a Virginia judge to sign off on the adoption of the girl, who has been in their custody since 2021.

Citing a litany of "falsehoods," the Justice Department wrote that the court relied on "intentional misrepresentations" from the Marine and skipped critical safeguards to protect children being brought to the United States.

"The grave harm that the Masts have inflicted upon the Child, her family, and the United States is ongoing," Justice Department lawyers wrote in the court documents, which included signed declarations from State and Defense department officials. "Most troublingly, the child remains with the Masts to this day."

The documents were filed under seal this summer in the bitter custody battle over the child who was pulled by U.S. forces in 2019 from the rubble of a military raid.

Mast, who was on a short assignment as an attorney in Afghanistan, met the baby in a U.S. military hospital and became determined to bring her home.

The Masts and the girl's Afghan relatives, who are suing to get her back, have been ordered not to speak publicly about the case, and their lawyers did not respond to requests for comment.

But in earlier court filings, Mast's attorneys have written that the Marine and his wife acted in good faith and worked at "great personal expense and sacrifice" to protect the baby and "provide her a loving home."

Until now, the federal government's role in the case has remained mostly a mystery. The government filings reviewed by the AP represent just a fraction of the thousands of pages of documents, transcripts and exhibits that remain under seal, locked away with no word of when the public will be allowed to see them.

The AP in January took legal action to unseal the case and a Virginia judge agreed to do so. Yet nine months later, the documents remain secret. It is unclear how the Masts responded to the Justice Department's court filings.

In arguing that the girl should be returned to her Afghan relatives, the Justice Department wrote that the Masts, who were living in Fluvanna County at the time, convinced their local circuit court judge Richard E. Moore in 2019 that the child — 7,000 miles away — was the "stateless" daughter of foreign fighters from

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an unknown neighboring country, and that the Afghan government intended to waive jurisdiction over her. A year later, Moore, who has since retired, made the adoption permanent.

The child, however, was never "stateless," the Afghan government did not relinquish its claim over her, and the orders "were obtained fraudulently by the Masts, who knowingly made false representations before the Virginia courts," the Justice Department wrote.

Virginia law requires that whoever has physical custody of a child be given an opportunity to be heard in an adoption case. But the Virginia court failed to notify the U.S. government of Mast's custody petition, the Justice Department argued.

At the time, the baby was in the custody of the U.S. government, being treated at a military hospital in Kabul. The Afghan government was tracking down relatives, a State Department official wrote, and found an uncle who reported that the girl's father, a farmer, had been slain in the raid, along with his wife and five other children.

The documents reveal for the first time that concern about Mast's actions — and the court's decisions — reached the highest levels of the Trump administration. When the U.S. Embassy in February 2020 was working with the Afghan government to unite the child with her surviving relatives, Mast tried unsuccessfully to stop them, claiming the Afghan family was not biologically related.

Then-Secretary of State Mike Pompeo signed a cable to the embassy in Kabul that described Mast's custody order from Fluvanna County as "flawed in a number of respects," and questioned how any American court could have jurisdiction over an Afghan child.

Pompeo's cable said the State Department had "concerns about the perception of the U.S. government holding an Afghan child against the will of her extended family and the Afghan government."

The Red Cross took her to the Afghan family, who wept when they met her, according to a State Department declaration attached to the court filings. A young newlywed couple, the child's cousin and his wife, raised her for the next 18 months.

The Justice Department declined to comment. The State Department referred AP to a prior statement saying it has acted appropriately by supporting efforts to find the girl's surviving kin and reunify the family in Afghanistan.

As the family grew and bonded, Mast tracked them down and tried to convince them to send the child to the United States by promising medical care, the Afghan family told AP last year. They said they refused to go along with the plan; they didn't want to be separated from the girl, who appeared to have fully recovered from a fractured skull, broken leg and serious burns.

Later, in the summer of 2021, when U.S. troops withdrew from Afghanistan and the Taliban took over, Mast reiterated his offer of assistance, "misleading" the couple into believing the child would receive specialized medical treatment, the Justice Department wrote. Mast helped arrange a Defense Department evacuation of the Afghan family by "falsely telling other military personnel that he was clear to bring the Child," the Justice Department wrote.

When the Afghans arrived at a refugee resettlement camp in Virginia, the Justice Department wrote, Mast presented the adoption order to federal employees, who didn't know that the U.S. government had already deemed his claim to the girl to be flawed. Unwittingly, those employees helped Mast take custody of the child, and she's been with him ever since.

Fluvanna County Circuit Court Judge Claude Worrell, who took over the case, has said the government shoulders some blame for the girl ending up in the Masts' custody. He noted multiple federal employees and agencies helped Mast along the way.

"The left hand of the United States is doing one thing and the right hand of the United States is doing something else," Worrell said.

Mast is assigned to the Marine Corps Special Operations Command at Camp Lejeune in North Carolina, and the agency is fully cooperating with federal law enforcement investigations, according to a spokesperson. Earlier, a Marine official said at least one investigation focused on the alleged unauthorized removal and retention of classified documents or material. Records indicate that the Department of Homeland Security and the FBI have also been involved.

Worrell voided the adoption in March, but left the child with the Masts, citing a custody order. That decision has been appealed by the Masts.

In the meantime, the Biden administration argued in the filings that ongoing delays and “a narrative that a U.S. servicemember stole a Muslim child” are harming America’s standing on the world stage, particularly in Afghanistan, where the U.S.’s withdrawal left a fragile nation behind.

“The perception that the United States is a place where Afghan children can be taken from their families, over their families’ objection, without effective recourse, increases those perceived risks,” a State Department official wrote in a declaration, “to the detriment of U.S. foreign policy interests.”

Trial begins in Elijah McClain death, which sparked outrage over racial injustice in policing

By COLLEEN SLEVIN Associated Press

DENVER (AP) — Elijah McClain’s fatal encounter with police began on a summer night in 2019 when a 911 caller reported that the young Black man looked “sketchy” as he walked down the street wearing a ski mask and raising his hands in the air in the Denver suburb of Aurora.

In reality, McClain, who was often cold, was just walking home from a convenience store, listening to music.

But moments later, police stopped him and after struggling with him, put the 23-year-old in a neck hold. Then paramedics gave him a sedative that officials eventually determined played a key role in his death days later. McClain, a massage therapist known for his gentle nature, was unarmed and hadn’t committed any crime.

Four years after his death — which left a gaping hole in his mother’s heart and sparked outrage over racial injustice in American policing — a trial for two of the officers was set to begin Friday with jury selection. Trials for a third officer and two paramedics are scheduled to start later this year.

A jury will decide if officers Randy Roedema and Jason Rosenblatt are guilty of manslaughter, criminally negligent reckless homicide and assault charges in a trial expected to last about a month. They have pleaded not guilty but have never spoken publicly about the allegations against them.

Roedema, a former Marine who is currently suspended without pay, had been with the department for five years before McClain’s death. Rosenblatt had worked for the agency for two years and is the only officer who confronted McClain who was fired — not for the fatal encounter itself, but for making light of other officers’ reenactment of the neck hold.

Their attorneys — Donald Sisson for Roedema and Harvey Steinberg for Rosenblatt -- didn’t return requests for comment.

They were indicted in 2021 by a state grand jury after an outcry over McClain’s death following the police killing of George Floyd. McClain’s pleading words captured on body camera, including, “I’m an introvert and I’m different,” drew widespread attention after Floyd’s murder in Minneapolis.

The grand jury indictment came nearly two years after a local prosecutor decided against prosecuting the officers largely because the coroner’s office could not determine exactly how McClain died. He called McClain’s death “tragic,” but said that finding made it hard to prove that the officers’ actions caused his death.

A revised coroner’s report issued in 2021 said the cause of death was complications from the ketamine but also noted that that occurred after McClain was forcibly restrained. Pathologist Stephen Cina wrote he couldn’t rule out whether the stress of being held down by the officers may have contributed to McClain’s death.

McClain, who weighed 140 pounds (64 kilograms), was given a higher dose of ketamine than recommended for someone of his size and overdosed, Cina found. McClain was extremely sedated within minutes of being given the ketamine, wrote Cina, who said he believed McClain was gasping for air when he was put on a stretcher.

His death brought increased scrutiny to how police and paramedics use ketamine. It is often used at

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the behest of police who believe suspects are out of control.

Sheneen McClain, Elijah McClain's mother, declined an interview request ahead of the trial but has long called for the officers who stopped her son to be sent to prison. She and McClain's father, LaWayne Mosely, sued Aurora and reached a \$15 million settlement with the city.

Experts say the case against the officers is far from a slam dunk.

With ketamine blamed for causing McClain's death, it will be difficult for prosecutors to convince jurors that the police officers are responsible for his death, said Hermann Walz, a defense lawyer and former prosecutor and adjunct professor at John Jay College of Criminal Justice.

"They don't have a direct link for the police. They might have a better case against the EMTs," he said.

But Jonathan Smith, who helped conduct the Aurora investigation and is a senior special counsel for the Washington Lawyers' Committee for Civil Rights and Urban Affairs, said even if they can't prove that the officers' actions contributed to McClain's death, prosecutors could still try to win a conviction on the assault charges.

Except for when officers thought McClain had grabbed for one of their guns, Smith said there was no legal justification for using force against McClain.

Like so many police brutality cases today, body camera footage from the officers played a major role in bringing to light what happened. The officers' cameras eventually fell off but kept recording though sometimes only capturing audio.

The video shows it starting when one of the officers — Nathan Woodyard, on trial later this year — gets out of his car. He approaches McClain and says, "Stop right there. Stop. Stop. ... I have a right to stop you because you're being suspicious."

McClain, using earbuds, kept walking down the street, as he carried a plastic bag and his phone. Within ten seconds, Woodyard put his hands on McClain, turning him around. As McClain tried to escape his grip, Woodyard said, "Relax, or I'm going to have to change this situation."

Then Roedema took the bag McClain was holding, containing cans of iced tea, and threw it to the ground. McClain told them he would stop the music he had been listening to to hear them while demanding to be let go.

Then came a pivotal moment that escalated the situation.

As Rosenblatt and Woodyard held McClain's arms and pulled him toward a grassy area, Roedema said, "He grabbed your gun, dude." But that can't be seen on body camera footage and was never corroborated.

All three officers later told investigators that they helped bring McClain to the ground because of Roedema's statement.

As the officers restrained him, one of them put him in a neck hold that stops the flow of blood to the brain. Paramedics later arrived and gave him ketamine, which at the time was legal to give to people showing erratic behavior.

Pinned to the ground, McClain can be heard crying out in pain, apologizing, explaining himself and pleading with the officers. He vomited and tried to explain himself — but the officers didn't engage.

"I was just going home ... I'm an introvert and I'm different. Going home ... I'm just different. I'm just different. That's all," he said.

Later, as the officers talked to a supervisor about what happened, McClain said: "You all are phenomenal; you are beautiful. ... Forgive me."

Three days later, McClain was pronounced dead in a hospital.

Since 2020, neck holds have been banned for police in Colorado by the state's Democratic-led Legislature. The state health department has also told paramedics not to give ketamine to people suspected of having a condition involving erratic behavior known as excited delirium.

McClain's death became a rallying cry for police reform advocates. They hope his death can be a watershed moment that brings meaningful reform to police and serves as a warning that police brutality won't be tolerated.

"If we just continue to sit by and allow anyone to be murdered under the guise of 'protect and serve',

we have failed exponentially," said Candice Bailey, a police reform advocate in Aurora. "Elijah McClain was a wake-up call for the planet."

Donald Trump isn't backing a national abortion ban. That's not hurting him in the GOP primary

By WILL WEISSERT and THOMAS BEAUMONT Associated Press

DES MOINES, Iowa (AP) — Donald Trump is dominating the early stages of the Republican presidential primary even as he's refused to endorse a federal ban on abortion, allowing some top rivals to get to the right of him on an issue that animates many conservative activists.

Aiming to return to the White House, the former president often notes how his presidency advanced the cause of abortion opponents. He appointed three conservative Supreme Court justices who helped overturn *Roe v. Wade*, abolishing the federally guaranteed right to the procedure and fulfilling the decades-long aspirations of anti-abortion activists.

But Trump has so far declined to go along with some of his rivals, most notably his onetime vice president, Mike Pence, who is pushing for national bans that would take effect relatively early into a pregnancy. He's also warned Republicans against locking themselves into positions that are unpopular with a majority of the public, and has argued that the Supreme Court's decision gives abortion opponents the right to "negotiate" restrictions where they live rather than rely on federal curbs.

That tension underscores the new reality the GOP finds itself in more than a year into the post-*Roe* era. While top Republicans were long able to simply declare themselves opposed to abortion, they must now contend with more complicated questions — including when access should be banned and whether uniform standards might apply across the U.S., even in states where support for abortion rights runs deep.

"There's a wide variety of opinion. Should there be a national ban? At how many weeks? Should it be entirely left to the states?" said Steve Scheffler, president of the Iowa Faith and Freedom Coalition and a Republican National Committee member. "Some people get it wrong when they think this constituency is in lockstep."

The dynamic will be on fresh display in the coming days, at events dominated by social conservatives. Trump is joining a crowded slate of candidates speaking Friday in Washington at an event for the Family Research Council, and is headlining the Concerned Women for America's Leadership Summit dinner. But he's skipping Scheffler's Iowa Faith and Freedom Coalition banquet on Saturday in Des Moines, where five other candidates will address evangelical Christians, long an influential bloc in the first-in-the-nation caucus.

Polling suggests about two-thirds of Americans believe abortion should generally be legal, and Trump has said in recent years that he supports exceptions to abortion bans when a pregnancy was caused by rape or incest or threatens the life of the mother.

"It's probably cost us politically because the other side got energized," he told a rally in South Dakota last week of the Supreme Court ruling, while noting that it "moves the issue back to the states, where every legal scholar said it should be."

Indeed, in the aftermath of the high court's abortion decision, Democrats mounted a strong performance in last year's midterms, limiting their House losses and maintaining the Senate majority. Voters in Republican-leaning states from Kansas to Ohio have also rejected GOP-backed efforts to curb abortion.

Once a self-described "very pro-choice" New York businessman, Trump had to do more than most major GOP candidates to win over initially skeptical evangelical Christians during his 2016 presidential run. A political committee supporting one of his rivals ran an ad with footage from a 1999 interview in which he declared, "I am pro-choice in every respect."

Attempting to bolster his anti-abortion credentials, Trump released a list of potential nominees to the Supreme Court who could be counted on to overturn *Roe v. Wade* long before actually winning the White House.

Trump now calls himself the "most pro-life president" in U.S. history, pointing to his Supreme Court picks and other actions long sought by the anti-abortion movement.

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Ironically, Democrats are promoting the same branding. President Joe Biden is making abortion rights central to his reelection campaign and attacks on the former president's "Make America Great Again" movement.

"Led by Donald Trump, who's done more to pave the way for abortion bans than anyone in history, MAGA Republicans are poised to again be rejected by the American people who want women to have the freedom to make their own health care decisions," said Ammar Moussa, a spokesman for Biden's reelection campaign, in a statement.

Ahead of last year's midterm election, meanwhile, Trump warned candidates, including his endorsed choice for Michigan governor, Tudor Dixon, to "talk differently about abortion." He urged Dixon to explicitly allow for exceptions in cases of rape, incest and when the life of the mother is at risk, but she nonetheless lost handily to Michigan Democratic Gov. Gretchen Whitmer.

Mike DeMastus is an evangelical Christian in Des Moines who was part of a private meeting this summer between Trump and a group of pastors and asked Trump about abortion.

"His response to me was, 'I've given you leverage now to make a better deal,'" recalled DeMastus, who supports some form of a federal ban but isn't ruling out backing Trump even if he doesn't.

Many in the Republican primary field have taken a harder line.

Pence, whom Trump picked as his No. 2 in part because of his credibility with social conservatives, has declared that every Republican running for president should endorse, at a minimum, a federal abortion ban 15 weeks into pregnancy.

South Carolina Sen. Tim Scott, also making a push to appeal to Iowa evangelical voters, concurs with Pence. He recently criticized fellow South Carolinian Nikki Haley, who says Republicans should look for bipartisan consensus on abortion since stricter federal bans won't clear Congress.

But entrepreneur Vivek Ramaswamy opposes national bans in favor of state restrictions, and other major candidates have been noncommittal. That includes Florida Gov. Ron DeSantis, who often answers questions about a federal ban by saying his state recently passed a ban on abortion after six weeks of pregnancy.

Trump maintains that even some anti-abortion activists believe the six-week ban — before many women even know they're pregnant — is too harsh.

The country's leading anti-abortion group, Susan B. Anthony Pro-Life America, wants GOP presidential candidates to advocate for a 15-week federal ban. Its president, Marjorie Dannenfelser, said anything less is "unacceptable to the pro-life movement."

Trump campaign spokesman Steven Cheung noted that Dannenfelser's group has praised Trump's presidency as "the most consequential in American history for the pro-life cause." Other activists aren't as firm, however.

Kim Lehman, the former president of Iowa Right to Life and also an RNC member, says the issue should be left to the states.

"We need someone who is going to stand up for life and not just be a mouthpiece," said Lehman, who has not endorsed a GOP primary candidate. "But I believe our people are best served when this decision is made from the ground up."

Democrats have unified around calls to protect abortion rights, seeing it as an issue of strength in 2024. Mini Timmaraju, president of NARAL Pro-Choice America, said Republicans are trying to seem softer on abortion in an attempt to head off more losses.

"They know that, if they're clear about their motivations and their positions, they'll lose. And so they're trying to confuse the public," Timmaraju said. "The challenge is, they've run for so long as a party embedded and intertwined with the radical, extremist anti-abortion movement that it's almost impossible to disentangle themselves now."

Marlys Popma, a longtime GOP strategist for statewide and presidential candidates in Iowa, is among those suggesting her party embrace nuance. She described herself as "an incrementalist" but acknowledged, "Certain people in the movement don't like incrementalism" and think "we have to have it all."

"And if you want anything different than that," she added, "then you are wrong and a bad pro-lifer."

Hurricane Lee to strike weather-worn New England after heavy rain, flooding and tornadoes

By DAVID SHARP and PATRICK WHITTLE Associated Press

PORTLAND, Maine (AP) — After a deluge of rain, flooding, sinkholes and tornadoes this week, New England is about to face Hurricane Lee.

As the Category 1 system impacted Bermuda, Maine was under its first hurricane watch in 15 years and a state of emergency declared Thursday by Gov. Janet Mills. The water-logged region prepared for 20-foot (6-meter) waves offshore and wind gusts up to 80 mph (129 kph), along with more rain.

The hurricane watch applied to eastern Maine, while the rest of the state and an area extending south through Massachusetts was under a tropical storm warning. Powerful winds and coastal flooding were expected to arrive Friday afternoon in southern New England and spread north.

Although Lee did not contribute to the flooding that hit New England earlier in the week, it threatened to exacerbate conditions in a region that is already waterlogged.

The Coast Guard and emergency management agencies warned New England residents to be prepared, and utility companies brought in reinforcements to deal with any power outages. At Boothbay Harbor Marina in Maine, the community came together to remove boats from the water to keep them out of harm's way.

"It's a batten-down-the-hatches kind of day," owner Kim Gillies said Thursday.

Similar scenes played out elsewhere, including at Kennebunkport Marina, where crews planned to take 100 boats out of the water, said Cathy Norton, marina manager.

Commercial lobster fisherman Steve Train said fishermen have been sinking gear in deeper water to protect against storm damage. Fishing boats were also headed to the safety of harbors.

In Canada, residents of western Nova Scotia and southern New Brunswick were warned about the risk of power outages and flooding this weekend. A year ago, the remnants of Hurricane Fiona washed houses into the ocean, knocked out power to most of two provinces and swept a woman into the sea.

New Brunswick Minister of Public Safety Kris Austin urged residents to assemble a 72-hour safety kit that included batteries, water, food, medication and a radio.

In her emergency declaration, the Maine governor urged people to take the storm seriously and to make preparations. Mills, a Democrat, also asked President Joe Biden to issue a preemptive presidential disaster declaration to give the state access to federal resources.

Earlier in the week, the region saw 10 inches (25 centimeters) of rain over six hours. Tornado warnings were issued Wednesday in Massachusetts and Rhode Island, and more heavy rain created sinkholes and brought devastating flooding to several areas.

The National Weather Service in Boston confirmed Thursday that damage to trees and power lines in Massachusetts, Rhode Island and Connecticut the day before was caused by four tornadoes.

Dozens of trees snapped or were uprooted by a twister in the town of Glocester, Rhode Island, and a structure used as a bus shelter was blown away, the weather service said. The three tornadoes in Connecticut and Rhode Island were categorized as EF-1, while the one in North Attleboro, Massachusetts, was an EF-0.

Thursday night, Lee was spinning 185 miles (300 kilometers) west of Bermuda, with maximum sustained winds of 85 mph (140 kph), according to the National Hurricane Center. It was traveling north on a path that could lead to landfall in Nova Scotia, possibly as a tropical storm, forecasters said.

The system could bring a mix of threats. The storm surge and waves could lash the coast, damaging structures and causing erosion; powerful wind gusts could knock down trees weakened by a wet summer; and rain could cause flash flooding in a region where the soil is already saturated, said Louise Fode, a National Weather Service meteorologist in Maine.

The state's eastern coast — known as the Down East region — and the coast of Nova Scotia and New Brunswick were expected to bear the brunt of the storm, though the track could shift before the system arrives, Fode said.

One thing working in the region's favor: The storm surge will not be accompanied by an astronomical

high tide, helping to lower the risk, she said.

New England has experienced its share of flooding this summer, including a storm that dumped up to two months of rain in two days in Vermont in July, resulting in two deaths. Scientists are finding that storms around the world are forming in a warmer atmosphere, making extreme rainfall more frequent.

Massachusetts Gov. Maura Healey issued a state of emergency Tuesday following "catastrophic flash flooding and property damage" in two counties and other communities. The torrential downpour in a six-hour period was a "200-year event," said Matthew Belk, a meteorologist with the National Weather Service in Boston.

The rain created sinkholes in Leominster, Massachusetts, including one at a car dealership that swallowed several vehicles. In Providence, Rhode Island, firefighters used inflatable boats to rescue more than two dozen people stranded in cars in a flooded parking lot.

In Maine, the last time a hurricane watch was declared was in 2008, for Hurricane Kyle, but residents are accustomed to rough weather. Lee's projected wind, rain and surf are akin to a powerful Nor'easter, and Mainers are familiar with those.

Americans overwhelmingly support Medicare drug negotiations, but Biden sees little political boost

By SEUNG MIN KIM and LINLEY SANDERS Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Joe Biden is trumpeting Medicare's new powers to negotiate directly with drugmakers on the cost of prescription medications — but a new poll shows that any immediate political boost that Biden gets for enacting the overwhelmingly popular policy may be limited.

Three-quarters of Americans, or 76%, favor allowing the federal health care program for the elderly to negotiate prices for certain prescription drugs. That includes strong majorities of Democrats (86%) and Republicans (66%), according to a new poll from The Associated Press-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research. About one in five Americans are neutral on the issue, while 6% outright oppose it.

But the same poll shows Biden's approval rating, at 40%, is about where it's been for the last year. Americans are split on how Biden is handling the issue of prescription drug prices — 48% approve, making it a relative strong point for Biden, but 50% disapprove.

Seven in 10 Democrats approve of how Biden is handling the issue of prescription drug prices, compared to about a third of independents and about a quarter of Republicans. Even so, Republicans are still much more likely to approve of how Biden is handling prescription drug prices than they are to approve of his job efforts overall (8%).

Even among the Americans who support allowing Medicare to negotiate drug prices, approval of Biden's handling of the issue remains relatively tepid. A slim majority (55%) approve, but 43% disapprove.

Interviews with poll respondents also suggest that from conservative-leaning to liberal voters, Americans want the federal government to be more aggressive on negotiating drug prices with pharmaceutical companies in order to lower medication costs. The gap between those who support the new Medicare policy — a long-sought goal of various presidents and lawmakers — and those who approve of Biden's handling of the issue also suggests the administration continues to struggle to connect the White House's accomplishments to Biden's personal popularity as he readies a reelection bid.

That challenge is even more critical because the core of Biden's reelection pitch to voters is selling his legislative achievements and showing that he is a leader who has accomplished for Americans where other presidents had fallen short, such as giving Medicare negotiating powers and enacting a massive bipartisan infrastructure law.

Esperanza Baeza, a teacher's assistant in Chicago, said she was recently prescribed medication that was prohibitively expensive, and she had to comparison shop before she found drugs that were relatively affordable. She said while she understood that presidents can't fix all problems, she wondered whether Biden was doing enough on the issue of drug pricing.

Told about Medicare's new authority to negotiate with pharmaceutical companies, Baeza, a Democrat,

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responded, "That's awesome."

"I'm 55. I know pretty soon, I'm retiring," she said. "I would like to educate myself more on that and I'm hoping I don't have to struggle with that once I retire."

The new price negotiations come from a provision of the Inflation Reduction Act, a package of Democratic priorities signed into law last year that focuses largely on climate and health care policies. The White House last month formally rolled out the first 10 drugs that Medicare will negotiate on, which include the blood thinner Eliquis and Jardiance, a diabetes treatment.

"For years, Big Pharma blocked this," Biden said during an East Room event marking the announcement. "They kept prescription drug prices high to increase their profits. They extended patents on existing drugs to suppress fair competition instead of innovating, playing games with pricing so they could charge whatever they can."

"But this is — finally, finally, finally, we had enough votes, by a matter of one, to beat Big Pharma," he continued. "Well, we did it."

Ellen Daily, a 73-year-old retiree in Carrollton, Texas, said she strongly favors allowing Medicare to negotiate on drug prices. Both she and her husband are on the federal health program. But Daily, who said she disapproves of Biden's overall job performance, said the president's role in unlocking that authority for Medicare was not enough to change her outlook on him.

"They only negotiated on 10 drugs," said Daily, who said she is a political independent and holds fiscally conservative views. "It should've been across the board; every one of the drugs that Medicare pays for should be negotiated."

It will take three years for the lower prices for the 10 drugs to go into effect, and the industry's lobbying group, Pharmaceutical Research and Manufacturers of America, has already sued the administration to halt the plan. But Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services will add 15 more drugs to its negotiation list for 2027 and another 15 for 2028, while adding up to 20 more for each year after that.

Annie Lok, 45, who lives in Queens, New York, also said she does not approve of Biden's handling of prescription drugs because he needs to do more to lower costs for more medicines across the board.

"In my opinion, they should be setting prices or negotiating prices for pretty much all prescription drugs. And if that's not practical, then many more than 10," said Lok, who said she is a registered Democrat, although she doesn't consider herself to be part of the party because her views are to the left.

Lok, who works in the health care industry, added: "I believe there should be health care for all and so obviously prescription drugs is part of that. It's a basic need and for me to know that there are people who can't afford it in order to stay alive is not acceptable."

Biden himself has signaled some messaging challenges when it comes to his signature law. At the event, he said the Inflation Reduction Act, which passed Congress with no Republican support, "in a sense, is misnamed."

"We did lower inflation, but there are many other things in that legislation," he said. On health care, the law caps at \$20,000 how much Medicare beneficiaries have to pay every year out of pocket for drugs starting in 2025, while a provision that would limit out-of-pocket insulin costs for those on Medicare to \$35 per month has already gone into effect.

UAW poised for midnight strike at plants in Wayne, Michigan, Toledo, Ohio, and Wentzville, Missouri

By TOM KRISHER and DAVID KOENIG AP Auto Writers

DETROIT (AP) — The United Auto Workers union says it will go on strike at three vehicle assembly plants as it presses Detroit companies to come up with better wage and benefit offers.

The factories include a General Motors assembly plant in Wentzville, Missouri; a Ford factory in Wayne, Michigan, near Detroit; and a Stellantis Jeep plant in Toledo, Ohio. Only assembly and paint shop workers will walk out at the Ford plant.

Contracts between 146,000 auto workers and the companies are set to expire at 11:59 p.m. Thursday.

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Workers will stay on the job at all other plants.

"Time is of the essence," union President Shawn Fain told workers late Thursday in an online address less than two hours before the deadline.

Despite increased offers from Ford and GM, it appears that no deals will be reached before the contracts expire.

Fain said for the first time in the union's 88-year history, the UAW will strike at all three companies at the same time. He said union bargainers have been working hard but have been firm in trying to reach fair deals.

About 13,000 workers at the three plants are preparing to walk off the job after contracts with the Detroit Three expire at 11:59 p.m.

Fain has said more walkouts could be scheduled if companies don't move on bargaining. The companies, he said have made billions in profits during the past decade and can afford to pay workers more to make up for concessions made starting in 2007 to help the automakers in tough times. He says labor costs are only 4% to 5% of a vehicle's cost.

"They could double our raises and not raise car prices and still make millions of dollars in profits," Fain said. "We're not the problem. Corporate greed is the problem."

The union has a list of demands including 36% pay raises over four years, cost of living raises, and an end to different tiers of wages for workers. Ford and GM are offering 20% during the next contract while the last known offer from Stellantis, formerly Fiat Chrysler, was 17.5%.

The companies say the union hasn't responded to their latest offers and have called union demands unreasonable. They fear taking on increased costs at a time when they have to spend billions to develop and build new electric vehicles, while also making automobiles with internal combustion engines.

The Ford plant that's targeted employs about 3,300 workers who will strike, and it makes Bronco SUVs and Ranger midsize pickup trucks.

The Toledo Jeep complex has about 5,800 workers and manufactures the Jeep Wrangler SUV and Gladiator pickup.

GM's Wentzville plant has about 3,600 workers and makes the GMC Canyon and Chevrolet Colorado midsize pickups, as well as the GMC Savana and Chevrolet Express full-size vans.

The union didn't go after the companies' big cash cows, which are full-size pickup trucks and big SUVs, and went more for plants that make vehicles with lower profit margins, said Marick Masters, a business professor at Wayne State University in Detroit.

"They want to give the companies some space without putting them up against the wall," Masters said. "They're not putting them right into the corner. You put an animal in the corner and it's dangerous."

Masters said the companies are going to have to raise their wage offers in order to reach an agreement and address the issue of wage tiers and how to convert temporary workers to full-time jobs.

In a statement late Thursday, Ford said the union responded to the company's latest "historically generous" offer by showing little movement from its initial demands.

"If implemented, the proposal would more than double Ford's current UAW-related labor costs, which are already significantly higher than the labor costs of Tesla, Toyota and other foreign-owned automakers in the United States that utilize non-union-represented labor," the statement said.

On CNBC Thursday, Ford CEO Jim Farley said if Ford had agreed to the union's demands, it would have lost \$15 billion during the last decade and gone bankrupt.

The announcement and looming strikes capped a day of both sides griping that the other had not budged enough from their initial positions. But talks continued on Thursday with GM increasing its wage offer and Ford looking for a counteroffer from the union.

The chasm between the two sides could be a shock to a U.S. economy already under strain from elevated inflation. It's also a test of President Joe Biden's treasured assertion that he's the most pro-union president in U.S. history.

In a video released Thursday night, GM manufacturing chief Gerald Johnson said the union initially

presented over 1,000 demands that he said would cost more than \$100 billion. "That's unreasonable," Johnson said. "It's more than twice the value of all of General Motors and absolutely impossible to absorb and still compete in today's automotive market."

If there's no deal by the end of Thursday, Fain said union officials will not bargain on Friday and instead will join workers on picket lines.

The UAW started out demanding 40% raises over the life of a four-year contract, or 46% when compounded annually. Initial offers from the companies fell far short of those figures.

In addition to cost-of-living pay raises and an end to varying tiers of wages for factory jobs, it wants a 32-hour week with 40 hours of pay, the restoration of traditional defined-benefit pensions for new hires who now receive only 401(k)-style retirement plans, pension increases for retirees and other items.

The companies have upped their initial wage offers, with Ford and GM now at 20%, and GM offering 10% in the first year. Stellantis has made another offer following its last known offer of 17.5%.

"We know a strong GM is important to all of us," GM CEO Mary Barra wrote in a letter to workers Thursday. "We are working with urgency and have proposed yet another increasingly strong offer with the goal of reaching an agreement tonight."

Angry and frustrated, McCarthy challenges right-flank colleagues to try to oust him from his post

By LISA MASCARO and FARNOUSH AMIRI Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Angry, frustrated and unable to lead a fractured and unruly Republican majority, House Speaker Kevin McCarthy on Thursday told the colleagues threatening to oust him: Do it.

The embattled Republican leader essentially dared his hard-right flank to quit holding the risk of a vote to remove him from the job.

If you're going to do it, go ahead and try, McCarthy told the Republicans behind closed doors.

"File the f—— motion," McCarthy said, using a profanity for emphasis, according to those in the private meeting.

With a government shutdown looming, McCarthy is confronting the same stubborn problem that has driven Republicans before him from the speaker's job — trying to lead a ruptured GOP majority that's split between what's left of the traditional party and a harder-right element largely allied with former President Donald Trump.

Even his decision to launch an impeachment inquiry against President Joe Biden did little this week to appease the demands of the Freedom Caucus and others as they threaten to shut down the government in pursuit of deep spending cuts or move to a motion to oust him from office.

"I showed frustration in here because I am frustrated with some people in the conference," McCarthy said after the meeting in the Capitol basement as lawmakers were wrapping up for the week.

"But when we come back, we're going to get this done. Nobody wins in a government shutdown."

This may be the toughest moment yet for McCarthy who is trying to survive his first year as House speaker and live to fight another day.

But now, after promises made and possibly dashed, he has barely any days left.

At the moment McCarthy has just nine working days to pass the spending bills needed to fund the government or risk a politically devastating federal shutdown.

An interruption in government services would ripple across the country, almost certain to hurt his party politically as Republicans are blamed for the disruption and disarray.

Biden said in a speech Thursday that McCarthy and House Republicans seem unable to honor the commitments they made as part of a June debt-limit deal and are now seeking deeper cuts. In his remarks, the president did not address the impeachment inquiry nor the indictment Thursday of his son, Hunter, on gun-purchasing charges.

"They're back at it again, breaking their commitment," Biden said in Maryland. "Threatening to shut down the government again this month."

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Led by Republican Rep. Matt Gaetz of Florida, a core group of McCarthy critics is holding the threat of removal over him unless he meets conservative demands.

A top Trump ally, Gaetz reiterated the conservative flank's many demands after McCarthy's meeting — single-subject spending bills, a subpoena for Hunter Biden in the impeachment inquiry and other priorities.

"So instead of emotionally cursing, let's do this," Gaetz chided. "We must begin immediately. Pull yourself together, Kevin!"

None of the hard-right opponents of McCarthy rose to speak during the private morning meeting — in fact, few even showed up.

But McCarthy still addressed them directly — and profanely.

"Kevin doesn't live in fear about this," said Rep. Brian Mast, R-Fla.

McCarthy has prided himself being a survivor, who rose from the ranks over the past nearly 20 years to lead House Republicans.

At the start of the year, he suffered through 14 votes in his reach for the speaker's gavel before colleagues finally agreed to give it to him on the 15th vote.

Top McCarthy ally Rep. Marjorie Taylor Greene who is also close with Trump recaptured the speaker's message. "He said, 'If you want to throw in a motion to vacate, that's fine. I didn't survive 15 rounds for nothing and I'll survive another 15 rounds.'"

That said, there still is no viable plan or having the House pass the bills needed to run the government by Sept. 30, when current funding runs out, risking the shutdown.

Freedom Caucus conservatives are demanding cuts lower than what McCarthy agreed to in a budget deal with Biden earlier this year — and even lower than the speaker promised he would fight for when he agreed to their demands during his election to become speaker.

It's not just Trump influencing House Republicans from the campaign trail. Republican rival Ron DeSantis has also connected with conservatives "and is supportive of us trying to fight to get change up here," said Freedom Caucus member Rep. Chip Roy, R-Texas.

House Democratic Leader Hakeem Jeffries said, "House Republicans have made clear that they are determined to shut down the government and try to jam their extreme right-wing ideology down the throats of Americans."

Jeffries said he had not talked to McCarthy this week about a solution, but he has spoken with Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer and they have agreed "the only way forward is a bipartisan path that funds the government at the current fiscal year levels."

The Senate meanwhile, which is narrowly controlled by Democrats, pushed ahead with a rare and overwhelmingly bipartisan vote, 91-7, to advance a package of spending bills toward final passage — until it was stalled by Senate conservatives.

"And now all of a sudden, you have a group, a small group in the Senate, trying to mimic the Freedom Caucus in the House," Schumer said, calling on Republican leaders to intervene "for the good of the country."

McCarthy told the lawmakers to go home for the weekend — they are not in session Friday for the Jewish holiday — and be prepared to stay in session next week until they get the job done.

"I don't walk away from a battle," the speaker said, preparing to return to fight another day.

Asked if he had a plan for the week ahead, McCarthy said later: "I always have a plan. Doesn't mean it happens."

"I had a plan for this week, didn't turn out exactly as I had planned," he said.

Exasperated, McCarthy had already showed signs of strain the night before.

As he left the Capitol, his voice hoarse and his dry-cleaning bags of fresh shirts in hand, McCarthy scoffed when asked about the conservatives' latest demands for spending cuts.

"Welcome to my world," McCarthy said, as the grand Memorial Door slammed behind him.

As captured fugitive resumes sentence in the US, homicide in his native Brazil remains unsolved

By DIANE JEANTET Associated Press

RIO DE JANEIRO (AP) — When the Brazilian prosecutor in charge of a homicide case targeting Danelo Cavalcante saw footage of the 34 year-old crab-walk out of a U.S. prison last month, he thought the fugitive might try to head home, where he stood to receive a considerably lighter sentence.

Cavalcante fled Brazil in 2018, several months after allegedly shooting a man whose family members said owed him money. Today, Cavalcante faces life in a U.S. cell for the brutal killing of his girlfriend.

"I thought he wanted to escape to Brazil," Tocantins state prosecutor Rafael Pinto Alamy told The Associated Press on Thursday. "He would have to comply with the prison rules here, which are much more lenient."

A court hearing in Cavalcante's Brazilian homicide case has been set for Oct. 11. The case is expected to go to a jury, probably next year, Alamy and Cavalcante's lawyer told the AP.

Brazil does not deliver life sentences. Even had Cavalcante been sentenced to the maximum 30 years, Alamy said, he might have been able to walk free after some 12 years with reductions for good behavior.

Just after midnight on Nov. 5, 2017, Cavalcante allegedly killed a man outside a restaurant in Figueiropolis, a small rural town of about 5,200 inhabitants in Tocantins, a state in Brazil's hinterland.

The 20-year-old victim, Valter Júnior Moreira dos Reis, was shot five times, according to a police report seen by the AP. His sister later told officers she thought Cavalcante had attacked him because of a debt her brother owed him related to damage done to a car, the report read.

Cavalcante then ran to his car and fled the scene, a direct witness told officers.

Authorities in Brazil opened an investigation and, within a week, a judge had ordered his preventive arrest, documents show. Law enforcement was not able to find Cavalcante, who was not from the area.

According to the Brazilian investigative television show Fantastico, Cavalcante was able to travel to capital Brasilia in January 2018. It is unclear whether he used fake documents to travel, but he was only included in a national warrant information system in June of that year, the prosecutor working on the case told the AP.

Even if he had traveled with his own identification, he was only a fugitive in the state of Tocantins, Alamy said.

Cavalcante's arrest in the U.S. on Wednesday made the front page of many Brazilian newspapers. Coverage of the manhunt has likewise been splashed across papers and television programs throughout his 14 days on the run, despite the fact that the country is relatively more accustomed to jailbreaks and fugitives who, sometimes released from jail temporarily, decline to return.

Cavalcante's lawyer, Magnus Lourenço, said he was unsure his client would be notified of the October court hearing in time, and that it might be delayed.

Meantime, loved ones of the victim in Brazil have expressed relief that Cavalcante will resume paying for his crimes, even if in another country.

"We're pleased (with his capture), but there was no justice for my brother in Brazil. Justice is very slow," Dayane Moreira dos Reis, the victim's sister, told newspaper Folha de S. Paulo. "We spent seven years without any answers. We (now) hope he'll stay in prison for his whole sentence."

Captured Pennsylvania fugitive tells officials he planned to head to Canada or Puerto Rico

By MICHAEL RUBINKAM Associated Press

They caught him just in time.

After eluding a police dragnet in southeastern Pennsylvania for two weeks, escaped murderer Danelo Cavalcante could sense authorities were closing in. He knew he had to make a break for it or face capture. So he formulated a plan: The 34-year-old fugitive would carjack someone within 24 hours and try to flee to Canada or Puerto Rico.

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But there would be no car, no ride to the border, no way out.

Cavalcante — dirty and wet and hiding in thick underbrush — was captured by a U.S. Customs and Border Protection tactical team Wednesday morning. The team's search dog, a 4-year-old Belgian Malinois named Yoda, bit him on the scalp and then latched onto his leg as Cavalcante, still armed with a rifle he'd stolen a few days earlier, made one last futile effort to crawl away.

Hours later, inside a Pennsylvania State Police barracks, the Brazilian national, speaking in Portuguese through an interpreter, revealed to investigators his plan to forcibly take a car.

"He said the law enforcement presence in this perimeter was becoming too intense, and that he felt that he needed to get out of the area," Deputy U.S. Marshal Robert Clark, recounting Cavalcante's interview, told The Associated Press on Thursday.

Cavalcante provided other details about his life on the run since his brazen escape from the Chester County jail on Aug. 31, in which he crab-walked his 5-foot, 120-pound (152-centimeter, 54-kilogram) frame up two opposing prison walls topped with razor wire, then jumped from the roof.

He said he didn't eat for the first three days after busting out, surviving on creek water and then, finally, stealing watermelon from a farm and cracking it open with his head.

"I don't know that he was particularly skilled. He was desperate," state police Lt. Col. George Bivens, the leader and public face of the intensive search, said at a news conference Wednesday. "You have an individual whose choice is go back to prison and spend the rest of your life in a place you don't want to be, or continue to try and evade capture. He chose to evade capture."

Using the difficult terrain to his advantage, Cavalcante stayed put for days at a time and only moved at night, hiding in foliage so thick that search teams came within a few yards of him on three separate occasions. He said he covered his feces with leaves in an effort to hide his tracks from the hundreds of federal, state and local law enforcement agents who were out looking for him.

The sprawling search area consisted of miles of dense woods, residential neighborhoods and even Longwood Gardens, one of the nation's top botanical gardens, where a surveillance camera captured him walking through the area with a duffel bag, backpack and hooded sweatshirt.

As the days wore on — and police dogs, armored carriers, horses and helicopters became a familiar presence — residents grew increasingly uneasy.

"Many neighbors had a police officer on their deck with a machine gun while they slept," resident Jennie Brown, said over Labor Day weekend. "I've never felt more scared and more safe at the same time. It's a really strange feeling."

Cavalcante, meanwhile, seemed to have serendipity on his side.

He swiped a backpack that happened to have a razor in it, which he promptly used to shave off his beard in order to change his appearance. He pilfered a pair of boots to replace his worn-out prison shoes. He slipped out of an initial police perimeter and stole a dairy delivery van that had been left unlocked with the keys inside, ditching it miles away when he ran out of fuel.

At one point, Cavalcante told investigators, he heard a message broadcast from a police chopper in Portuguese, urging him to surrender.

He thought about it. He didn't want to be caught, but he also didn't want to die, Clark said.

"He said, 'I knew that I had to pay for what I had done. However, I wasn't willing to pay with my life,'" Clark said.

Late Monday, Cavalcante stole a .22-caliber rifle and ammunition from an open garage and fled when the homeowner, who was in the garage, drew a pistol and shot at him several times.

The homeowner missed, but Cavalcante's luck would run out soon enough.

Around 1 a.m. Wednesday, a Drug Enforcement Administration plane equipped with thermal imaging picked up the heat signature of a figure on the move. The figure didn't resemble a deer, a fox or some other animal. It looked like a person.

It looked like Cavalcante.

Stormy weather then moved in and grounded the plane, but tactical teams formed a tight perimeter

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to hem him in. The weather cleared hours later, and the officers advanced on him. He had no idea they were there until it was too late.

Cavalcante, who was sentenced to life in prison last month for killing his ex-girlfriend, and who is wanted for a 2017 killing in Brazil, was taken to a state prison in the Philadelphia suburbs after speaking with investigators from the U.S. Marshals Service and detectives with Pennsylvania State Police and Chester County.

"There are highs and lows in an investigation like this," State Police Commissioner Col. Christopher Paris said on NBC's "Today" show Thursday. "The resolve was constantly there ... And we knew that he was desperate. We knew that he was where we were looking."

Zelenskyy is expected to visit Washington as Congress is debating \$24 billion in aid for Ukraine

By STEPHEN GROVES, LISA MASCARO and MATTHEW LEE Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy is expected at the White House and on Capitol Hill next week as he visits the U.S. during the United Nations General Assembly.

Zelenskyy's trip comes as Congress is debating President Joe Biden's request to provide as much as \$24 billion in military and humanitarian aid for Ukraine as it fights the Russian invasion.

An administration official, speaking on condition of anonymity to discuss the sensitive visit, said Zelenskyy will meet with Biden at the White House next Thursday. The trip to the Capitol was confirmed by two congressional aides granted anonymity to discuss the plans.

The Ukrainian president made a wartime visit to Washington in December 2022 and delivered an impassioned address to a joint meeting of Congress. At the time it was his first known trip outside his country since Russia invaded in February of that year.

In his speech to cheering lawmakers, Zelenskyy thanked Americans for helping to fund the war effort and said that the money is "not charity," but an "investment" in global security and democracy.

Details of Zelenskyy's visit next week were not yet being made public. It was first reported by Punchbowl News.

The White House National Security Council declined to comment on Zelenskyy's plans, including whether he would meet with Biden at the White House.

Meanwhile, the Treasury and State departments announced they were imposing new sanctions on more than 150 individuals and entities connected with Russia's invasion of Ukraine.

Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen said the U.S. was "continuing our relentless work to target Russia's military supply chains and deprive (Russian President Vladimir) Putin of the equipment, technology, and services he needs to wage his barbaric war on Ukraine."

Congress is increasingly divided over providing additional funding for Ukraine as the war is well into its second year. Biden has sought a package of \$13.1 billion in additional military aid for Ukraine and \$8.5 billion for humanitarian support. It also includes \$2.3 billion for financing and to catalyze donors through the World Bank.

But conservative Republican lawmakers have been pushing for broad federal spending cuts and some of those allied with Donald Trump, the former president, are specifically looking to stop money to Ukraine.

Congress is working to pass its annual appropriations bills before a Sept. 30 deadline to keep the U.S. government running.

Kim Jong Un arrives in Russian city of Komsomolsk-on-Amur for expected visit to fighter jet plant

By KIM TONG-HYUNG and EMMA BURROWS Associated Press

SEOUL, South Korea (AP) — North Korean leader Kim Jong Un arrived Friday in Komsomolsk-on-Amur in far eastern Russia and is expected to visit a plant that builds fighter jets as South Korea has said it's concerned his visit is focused on expanding military cooperation in a possible arms-for-technology deal.

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The visit to Komsomolsk-on-Amur is one of several the North Korean leader is making on a days-long trip to Russia. Arriving on an armored train from North Korea, he rolled into Russia Tuesday and was met by officials at a station near the Russia-North Korea border.

After a long train trip north, on Wednesday Kim met President Putin at the Vostochny Cosmodrome and was greeted by Putin with a 40-second handshake. On Thursday, he largely disappeared from view, before reappearing local time Friday.

Russian state news agency RIA Novosti published a video which showed Kim's train pulling into the station as North Korean officials waited by a specially constructed ramp and red carpet. Shortly afterwards, his convoy swept out of Komsomolsk-on-Amur station.

Putin told Russian state TV after the summit that Kim would visit an aircraft plant in Komsomolsk-on-Amur, and then go to Vladivostok to view Russia's Pacific Fleet, a university and other facilities. The visit to the aircraft plant would possibly hint at what Kim seeks to gain from Russia in exchange for help fueling Putin's war on Ukraine.

Washington warned that Kim and Putin's summit could lead to a deal for North Korea to supply Moscow with ammunition and there is widespread concern in Seoul that North Korea would in return receive advanced weapons technologies from Russia, including those related to military spy satellites, which would increase the threat posed by Kim's military nuclear program.

"We express our deep concern and regret that despite repeated warnings from the international community, North Korea and Russia discussed military cooperation issues, including satellite development, during their summit," said Lim Soo-suk, South Korea's Foreign Ministry spokesperson Thursday.

"Any science and technology cooperation that contributes to nuclear weapons and missile development, including satellite systems that involve ballistic missile technologies, runs against U.N. Security Council resolutions," he said in a briefing.

Lim also pointed out that Kim's delegation in Russia includes several people sanctioned by the Security Council over involvement in illicit North Korean weapons development activities, including Korean People's Army Marshal Ri Pyong Chol and Jo Chun Yong, a ruling party official who handles munitions policies. Lim said Moscow should realize there will be "very negative impacts" on its relations with Seoul if it proceeds with military cooperation with North Korea.

Before Kim's arrival, traffic police in Komsomolsk-on-Amur blocked the entrance to the station with a police car and ticker tape — prompting passengers who were still arriving on scheduled trains to lift it up to move past. Some residents were pictured peering out from their balconies to watch as Kim's convoy swept past. Shortly after Kim's convoy left the station, a group of women in Russian national costumes and headdresses, presumably part of a welcoming party, were pictured leaving. Flowers were also planted near the station and residents were told roads would be closed from 6 a.m. to 1 p.m. on Friday so that the North Korean leader's car could travel through the city, according to local Telegram channels.

The map of road closures shared by one Telegram channel showed closures from the station, across town to an area where the Komsomolsk-on-Amur Aircraft Plant is based.

South Korean Unification Minister Kim Yung-ho, who handles affairs with North Korea, warned that potential arms transfers between the North and Russia would invite stronger responses from South Korea, the U.S. and Japan, which have been stepping up their trilateral security cooperation to cope with regional threats.

White House National Security Council spokesperson John Kirby said Wednesday that North Korea would face consequences if it supplies arms to Russia.

"No nation on the planet, nobody, should be helping Mr. Putin kill innocent Ukrainians," Kirby said. If the countries decide to move forward with an arms deal, the U.S. will take measure of the arrangement and "deal with it appropriately," he said.

The world has been largely relying on Russian and North Korean media for information about Kim's diplomacy in Russia, which underscores an aligning interest between the nuclear-armed countries locked in escalating tensions with the West.

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A day after giving intense coverage to the summit, Russian media outlets were largely silent about Kim's whereabouts Thursday. North Korean state media have been reporting on his activities in Russia a day late and crafting their reports to support the government's propaganda needs.

North Korea's official Korean Central News Agency said on Thursday that Kim had invited Putin to visit North Korea at a "convenient time" and that Putin accepted with "pleasure and reaffirmed his will to invariably carry forward" the history of friendship between the nations.

Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov confirmed that Putin had accepted the invitation and said Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov is expected to visit North Korea in October.

During their meeting on Wednesday at Russia's spaceport in the Far East, Kim vowed "full and unconditional support" for Putin in what he described as a "just fight against hegemonic forces to defend its sovereign rights, security and interests," in an apparent reference to the war in Ukraine.

The decision to meet at the Vostochny Cosmodrome suggested that Kim is seeking Russian help in developing military reconnaissance satellites. He has previously said they are crucial to enhancing the threat of his nuclear-capable missiles. North Korea has repeatedly failed to place spy satellites into orbit.

Some analysts question whether Russia, which has always closely guarded its sensitive weapons technologies, would be willing to share them with North Korea in exchange for what may end up being limited supplies of munitions moved slowly through their small land link.

They say military cooperation between the countries could be more about conventional capabilities, such as Russia possibly helping North Korea improve its badly aged air force that remains reliant on fighter jets sent by the Soviet Union in the 1980s.

Putin told reporters that Russia and North Korea have "lots of interesting projects" in spheres like transportation and agriculture and that Moscow is providing its neighbor with humanitarian aid. But he avoided talking about military cooperation, saying only that Russia is abiding by the sanctions prohibiting procuring weapons from North Korea.

Wednesday's meeting came hours after North Korea fired two ballistic missiles toward the sea, extending a highly provocative run in testing since 2022, as Kim used the distraction caused by war in Ukraine to accelerate his weapons development.

North Korea's Kim arrives in eastern Russian city for expected visit to fighter jet plant

By KIM TONG-HYUNG and DASHA LITVINOVA Associated Press

SEOUL, South Korea (AP) — North Korean leader Kim Jong Un arrived Friday in the far eastern Russian city of Komsomolsk-on-Amur where he was expected to visit a plant that builds fighter jets.

The visit is one of several the North Korean leader is making on a days-long trip to Russia and will be followed, Putin said, by a visit to Vladivostok where Kim will view Russia's Pacific Fleet.

On Wednesday Kim met Russian President Vladimir Putin at the Vostochny Cosmodrome, where he was greeted with a 40-second handshake by Putin.

Washington has warned that their summit could lead to a deal for North Korea to supply ammunition for Moscow's war in Ukraine, which U.S. officials say would violate sanctions.

There's widespread concern in Seoul that North Korea would in return receive advanced weapons technologies from Russia, including those related to military spy satellites, which would increase the threat posed by Kim's military nuclear program.

THIS IS BREAKING NEWS. Previous version of story below:

North Korea's Kim Jong Un vowed "full and unconditional support" for Russia's Vladimir Putin on Wednesday as the two leaders isolated by the West held a summit that the U.S. warned could lead to a deal to supply ammunition for Moscow's war in Ukraine.

The meeting, which lasted over four hours at Russia's spaceport in the Far East, underscores how the two countries' interests are aligning: Putin is believed to be seeking one of the few things impoverished North Korea has in abundance -- stockpiles of aging ammunition and rockets for Soviet-era weapons.

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Such a request would mark a role reversal from the 1950-53 Korean War, when Moscow gave weapons to support Pyongyang's invasion of South Korea — and in the decades that followed, when the Soviet Union sponsored North Korea.

Reporting on the meeting Thursday, North Korea's official Korean Central News Agency said Kim invited Putin to visit North Korea at a "convenient time" and that Putin accepted with "pleasure and reaffirmed his will to invariably carry forward" the history of friendship between the nations.

The decision to meet at the Vostochny Cosmodrome, Russia's most important launch center on its own soil, suggests Kim is seeking Russian help in developing military reconnaissance satellites. He has previously said that is crucial to enhancing the threat of his nuclear-capable missiles, and North Korea has repeatedly failed to put its first military spy satellite into orbit.

Putin met Kim's limousine, brought from Pyongyang in the North Korean leader's armored train, at the launch facility, greeting his guest with a handshake of about 40 seconds. Putin spoke of the Soviet Union's wartime support for North Korea and said the talks would cover economic cooperation, humanitarian issues and the "situation in the region."

Kim, in turn, pledged continued support for Moscow, making an apparent reference to the war in Ukraine. "Russia is currently engaged in a just fight against hegemonic forces to defend its sovereign rights, security and interests," he said.

North Korea may have tens of millions of aging artillery shells and rockets based on Soviet designs that could bolster Russian forces in Ukraine, analysts say.

Washington has accused North Korea of providing Russia with arms, including selling artillery shells to the Russian mercenary group Wagner. Russian and North Korean officials deny such claims.

But either buying arms from or providing rocket technology to North Korea would violate international sanctions that Russia has previously supported.

It would both underscore and deepen Russia's isolation in the 18 months after its invasion of Ukraine drew increasing sanctions that have cut off Moscow's economy from global markets and shrunk the circle of world leaders willing to meet with Putin. Tensions on the Korean Peninsula are also at their highest point in years as the pace of both Kim's weapons demonstrations and the United States' combined military exercises with South Korea have intensified. There are concerns the North would seek advanced weapons technologies from Russia that would increase the threat posed by Kim's military nuclear program in exchange for fueling Putin's war on Ukraine.

Jeon Ha Gyu, spokesperson of South Korea's Defense Ministry, said Seoul was closely monitoring the diplomacy between Moscow and Pyongyang and urged Russia to "properly follow" U.N. Security Council resolutions.

When asked whether North Korean arms shipments to Russia would inspire Seoul to change its policy of limiting its support of Ukraine to non-lethal supplies, Jeon said "there's no change in the government's stance of not providing lethal weapons" to Kyiv.

Moscow's priority is success in Ukraine, "and it would do pretty much anything in order to achieve that," said James Nixey, director of the Russia and Eurasia program at Chatham House, a London-based think-tank.

"Russia possibly wants to settle in for a longer war, but it can't meet the necessary industrial capacity," he said. In return, Pyongyang is likely to get food and missile technology from Moscow, "a relatively easy gift" for the Kremlin, Nixey said.

As the leaders toured a Soyuz-2 rocket launch facility on Wednesday, Kim peppered a Russian space official with questions.

Kim and Putin met together with their delegations and later one-on-one, said Kremlin spokesperson Dmitry Peskov. After the talks, there was an official lunch for Kim, Russian state media reported.

Kim has described space-based reconnaissance capabilities as crucial for enhancing the threat of nuclear-capable missiles designed to target the United States and its Asian allies, South Korea and Japan.

Following repeated failures, North Korea may want to launch a spy satellite on a Russian space launch vehicle, said Yang Uk, a military expert at South Korea's Asian Institute for Policy Studies. He said North Korea could also ask Russia to build a more powerful spy satellite than the one it has been trying to launch.

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"It's possible that North Korea pushes to participate in the production process of the satellite, rather than just acquiring a finished product, to set up a natural transfer of technologies," Yang said.

Putin told Russian state TV that Kim will visit two more cities in the Far East on his own after the summit, flying to Komsomolsk-on-Amur, where he will visit an aircraft plant, and then go to Vladivostok to view Russia's Pacific Fleet, a university and other facilities.

Russia and North Korea have "lots of interesting projects" in spheres like transportation and agriculture, Putin said. Moscow is providing its neighbor with humanitarian aid, but there also are opportunities for "working as equals," he added.

He dodged the issue, however, of military cooperation, saying only that Russia is abiding by the sanctions prohibiting procuring weapons from Pyongyang. "There are certain restrictions, Russia is following all of them. There are things we can talk about, we're discussing, thinking. Russia is a self-sufficient country, but there are things we can bring attention to, we're discussing them," he said.

James O'Brien, head of the Office of Sanctions Coordination at the U.S. State Department, said Russia was "scraping the bottom of the barrel looking for help because it's having trouble sustaining its military,"

A deal between the countries would violate existing sanctions, O'Brien said, and would trigger the U.S. to try to identify the individuals and the financial mechanisms used to "at least limit their ability to be effective."

U.N. Secretary-General Antonio Guterres said at a news conference that "any form of cooperation of any country with North Korea must respect the sanctions regime that was imposed by the Security Council."

Wednesday's meeting came hours after North Korea fired two ballistic missiles toward the sea, extending a highly provocative run in testing since 2022, as Kim used the distraction caused by war in Ukraine to accelerate his weapons development.

Japan's Chief Cabinet Secretary Hirokazu Matsuno said they landed in waters outside the country's exclusive economic zones and there were no reports of damage.

Official photos showed Kim was accompanied by Pak Thae Song, chairman of North Korea's space science and technology committee, and Adm. Kim Myong Sik, who are linked with efforts to acquire spy satellites and nuclear-capable ballistic missile submarines.

Kim also brought Jo Chun Ryong, who heads munitions policies and had joined him on tours of factories producing artillery shells and missiles.

South Korea's Unification Ministry, which handles inter-Korean affairs, said it was the first time the North launched a missile while Kim was abroad.

Kim could have ordered them to show he is in control of military activities even while outside the country, said Moon Seong Mook of the Seoul-based Korea Research Institute for National Strategy.

Asked whether Moscow will help North Korea build satellites, Putin was quoted by Russian media as saying "that's why we have come here. The DPRK leader shows keen interest in rocket technology. They're trying to develop space, too," using the acronym for North Korea's formal name. Asked about military cooperation, Putin said: "We will talk about all issues without a rush. There is time."

Noting what he called the "laconic" official presentation of the summit's outcome, Alexander Vorontsov of the Russian Academy of Science's Institute of Asian Studies was quoted as saying by the Tass news agency that "we can assume that ... most of the agreements reached ... will remain secret for the time being."

At their lunch, which reportedly featured regional delicacies such as Kamchatka crab dumplings and taiga lingonberries with pine nuts, Kim said he and Putin agreed to deepen their "strategic and tactical cooperation."

Alex Jones spent over \$93,000 in July. Sandy Hook families who sued him have yet to see a dime

By DAVE COLLINS Associated Press

HARTFORD, Conn. (AP) — As Alex Jones continues telling his Infowars audience about his money problems and pleads for them to buy his products, his own documents show life is not all that bad — his net worth is around \$14 million and his personal spending topped \$93,000 in July alone, including thousands of dollars on meals and entertainment.

The conspiracy theorist and his lawyers file monthly financial reports in his personal bankruptcy case, and the latest one has struck a nerve with the families of victims of Sandy Hook Elementary School shooting. They're still seeking the \$1.5 billion they won last year in lawsuits against Jones and his media company for repeatedly calling the 2012 massacre a hoax on his shows.

"It is disturbing that Alex Jones continues to spend money on excessive household expenditures and his extravagant lifestyle when that money rightfully belongs to the families he spent years tormenting," said Christopher Mattei, a Connecticut lawyer for the families. "The families are increasingly concerned and will continue to contest these matters in court."

In an Aug. 29 court filing, lawyers for the families said that if Jones doesn't reduce his personal expenses to a "reasonable" level, they will ask the bankruptcy judge to bar him from "further waste of estate assets," appoint a trustee to oversee his spending, or dismiss the bankruptcy case.

On his Infowars show Tuesday, Jones said he's not doing anything wrong.

"If anything, I like to go to nice restaurants. That is my deal. I like to go on a couple of nice vacations a year, but I think I pretty much have earned that in this fight," he said, urging his audience to donate money for his legal expenses.

Jones' spending in July, which was up from nearly \$75,000 in April, included his monthly \$15,000 payment to his wife, Erika Wulff Jones — payouts called "fraudulent transfers" by lawyers for the Sandy Hook families. Jones says they're required under a prenuptial agreement.

Also that month, Jones spent \$7,900 on housekeeping and dished out more than \$6,300 for meals and entertainment, not including groceries, which totaled nearly \$3,400 — or roughly \$850 per week.

A second home, his Texas lake house, cost him nearly \$6,700 that month, including maintenance and property taxes, while his vehicles and boats sapped another \$5,600, including insurance, maintenance and fuel.

Sandy Hook families won nearly the \$1.5 billion in judgments against Jones last year in lawsuits over repeated promotion of a false theory that the school shooting that killed 20 first graders and six educators in Newtown, Connecticut, never happened.

Relatives of the victims testified at the trials about being harassed and threatened by Jones' believers, who sent threats and even confronted the grieving families in person, accusing them of being "crisis actors" whose children never existed.

Collecting the astronomical sum, though, is proving to be a long battle.

When Jones filed for bankruptcy, it put a hold on the families' efforts to collect the lawsuit judgments in state courts as a federal bankruptcy court judge decides how much money Jones can actually pay his creditors.

Lawyers for the families have said in court that it has been difficult for them to track Jones' finances because of the numerous companies he owns and multiple deals among those corporate entities.

Meanwhile, Jones is still broadcasting. He and his media company, Free Speech Systems, are seeking court approval for a new contract that would pay him \$1.5 million a year plus incentive bonuses, up from his current \$520,000-a-year salary. The company also filed for bankruptcy protection last year.

On Infowars, Jones said Tuesday that he is more than \$1 million in debt. If he gets the salary increase, he said, he would be left with about \$300,000 a year after paying his legal bills.

"With all my expenses and things, that's nothing," he said. "And I don't care about that. I'm wearing a shirt I bought, like, eight years ago, and I love it to death."

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Financial documents filed by Jones and his bankruptcy lawyers say his personal net worth is around \$14 million. His assets include a home worth \$2.6 million, a \$2.2 million ranch, a \$1.8 million lake house, a \$500,000 rental property, and four vehicles and two boats worth more than \$330,000 in total. Jones had nearly \$800,000 in his bank accounts on July 31, court documents show.

Free Speech Systems, meanwhile, continues to rake in cash from the sale nutritional supplements, survival supplies and other merchandise that Jones hawks on Infowars, bringing in nearly \$2.5 million in revenue in July alone, according to Jones' financial reports, which he signed under penalty of perjury. The company's expenses totaled about \$2.4 million that month.

Meanwhile, some of the Sandy Hook families have another pending lawsuit claiming Jones hid millions of dollars in an attempt to protect his wealth. One of Jones' lawyers has called the allegations "ridiculous."

Jones, who is appealing the \$1.5 billion in lawsuit awards against him, sat for a deposition in his bankruptcy case Tuesday and Wednesday in his hometown of Austin, Texas, where Infowars is based.

On his show Tuesday, he denied financial wrongdoing.

"I'm not Lex Luthor ... when it comes to finances and life," he said. "I mean, I'm a straight-up guy. I'm a do-good in Mayberry RFD."

How hard will Hurricane Lee hit New England? The cold North Atlantic may decide that

By DAVID SHARP Associated Press

New England is known for its fickle weather, powerful nor'easters and blizzards. Destructive hurricanes, however, are relatively rare and typically don't pack the same punch as tropical cyclones that hit the Southeast.

Hurricanes usually lose some steam, becoming tropical storms, or extratropical storms, in northern waters.

GEOGRAPHY MATTERS

New England, awaiting the arrival of Hurricane Lee, is usually protected from the worst of a hurricane's wrath by the cold waters of the North Atlantic, and that's expected to help reduce Lee to a tropical storm by the time it arrives Saturday.

A number of factors determine the path and strength of a hurricane. But the warm waters that can strengthen a hurricane are typically south of Cape Cod. North of there, the Atlantic waters are much colder.

That doesn't mean storms aren't dangerous in New England.

The Great New England Hurricane of 1938 brought gusts as high as 186 mph (300 kph) and sustained winds of 121 mph (195 kph) at Massachusetts' Blue Hill Observatory. And the damage isn't always confined to the coast. In 2011, a weakening Hurricane Irene was downgraded to a tropical storm but produced historic flooding in Vermont, causing more than \$800 million in estimated damage.

DOWN EAST MAINE

While Lee will cause trouble across New England, it's tracking toward Down East Maine — as the state's easternmost regions are known — and Atlantic Canada.

The last time Maine was under a hurricane watch was in 2008 for Hurricane Kyle, a tropical storm when it skirted past the state.

The last hurricane to make landfall in Maine was Hurricane Gerda, which hit Eastport in 1969. Hurricane Bob also had a big impact in 1991, but it was downgraded to a tropical storm just as it arrived in Maine.

Again, those cold waters are expected to reduce Lee's potential for trouble. But the state is still expecting 20-foot (6-meter) waves and winds gusting to 70 mph (112 kph), along with more rain in a waterlogged region.

SOUTHERN STORMS

The most powerful hurricanes in history in the Atlantic have made landfall in the Caribbean, Mexico and Southern U.S. That's because the warm water tends to fuel the storms, giving them strength.

The Galveston Hurricane of August 1900 was the deadliest hurricane in U.S. history, claiming thousands of lives. Hurricane Katrina laid waste to much of southeast Louisiana and Mississippi's Gulf Coast in 2005.

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Superstorm Sandy in 2012 caused damage across more than a dozen states, and wreaked havoc in the Northeast when it made landfall near Atlantic City, New Jersey.

WARMING OCEANS

It's not clear what the future holds when it comes to cyclones in New England. But science suggests they could become more troublesome.

The Gulf of Maine is warming faster than the vast majority of the world's oceans. In 2022, the Gulf of Maine recorded the second-warmest year on record, beating the old record by less than half a degree Fahrenheit. The average sea surface temperature was 53.66 degrees (12 degrees Celsius), more than 3.7 degrees above the 40-year average, the scientists said.

That warming trend could allow hurricanes approaching New England to be slower to weaken at some point in the future. Warming waters could create even more powerful storms to the south, as well.

NASA says more science and less stigma are needed to understand UFOs

By MARCIA DUNN AP Aerospace Writer

CAPE CANAVERAL, Fla. (AP) — NASA said Thursday that the study of UFOs will require new scientific techniques, including advanced satellites as well as a shift in how unidentified flying objects are perceived.

The space agency released the findings after a yearlong study into UFOs.

In its 33-page report, an independent team commissioned by NASA cautioned that the negative perception surrounding UFOs poses an obstacle to collecting data. But officials said NASA's involvement should help reduce the stigma around what it calls UAPs, or unidentified anomalous phenomena.

"We want to shift the conversation about UAPs from sensationalism to science," NASA Administrator Bill Nelson said. He promised an open and transparent approach.

Officials stressed the panel found no evidence that UAPs had extraterrestrial origin. But Nelson acknowledged with billions of stars in billions of galaxies out there, another Earth could exist.

"If you ask me, do I believe there's life in a universe that is so vast that it's hard for me to comprehend how big it is, my personal answer is yes," Nelson said at a news conference. His own scientists put the likelihood of life on another Earth-like planet at "at least a trillion."

When pressed by reporters on whether the U.S. or other governments are hiding aliens or otherworldly spaceships, Nelson said: "Show me the evidence."

NASA has said it doesn't actively search for unexplained sightings. But it operates a fleet of Earth-circling spacecraft that can help determine, for example, whether weather is behind a strange event.

The 16-member panel noted that artificial intelligence and machine learning are essential for identifying rare occurrences, including UFOs.

NASA recently appointed a director of UAP research, but refused to divulge his identity at Thursday morning's news conference in hopes of avoiding the threats and harassment faced by panel members during the study.

Eight hours later, however, NASA said it's Mark McInerney, who previously served as a liaison on the subject of UAPs between the space agency and the Defense Department. He's also worked with the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration and the National Hurricane Center.

No top-secret files were accessed by the panel's scientists, aviation and artificial intelligence experts, and retired NASA astronaut Scott Kelly, the first American to spend nearly a year in space. Instead, the group relied on unclassified data in an attempt to better understand unexplained sightings in the sky.

Officials said there are so few high-quality observations that no scientific conclusions can be drawn. Most events can be attributed to planes, drones, balloons or weather conditions, said panel chairman David Spergel, president of the Simons Foundation, a scientific research group.

The government refers to unexplained sightings as UAPs versus UFOs. NASA defines them as observations in the sky or elsewhere that cannot be readily identified or scientifically explained.

The study was launched a year ago and cost under \$100,000.

Hunter Biden is indicted on federal firearm-purchasing charges after plea deal fails

By LINDSAY WHITEHURST Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Hunter Biden was indicted Thursday on federal firearms charges, the latest step in a long-running investigation into the president's son that puts the case on track toward a possible high-stakes trial as the 2024 election looms.

Biden is accused of lying about his drug use when he bought a firearm in October 2018, a period when he has acknowledged struggling with addiction to crack cocaine, according to the indictment filed in federal court in Delaware by a special counsel overseeing the case.

The indictment comes weeks after the collapse of a plea deal that would have averted a criminal trial and distracting headlines for President Joe Biden.

The court fight doesn't seem likely to end soon. Hunter Biden's defense attorney argues he didn't violate the law and remains protected by an immunity provision that was part of the plea deal. The charges, meanwhile, are rarely filed as stand-alone counts and a federal appeals court recently found the measure he was charged under unconstitutional.

He's also been under investigation for his business dealings, and the special counsel has indicated that tax charges could be filed at some point in Washington or in California, where he lives.

The legal arguing comes as a political fight also plays out. The House has formally opened an impeachment inquiry into the Democratic president, seeking to tie the elder Biden to his son's businesses and divert attention away from former President Donald Trump's own legal woes. Trump's include federal indictments over the handling of classified documents and efforts to overturn his 2020 election loss to Joe Biden.

Republicans have unearthed no significant evidence so far of wrongdoing by the elder Biden, who as vice president spoke often to his son and stopped by a business dinner with his son's associates. The White House maintains Joe Biden was not involved in his son's business affairs.

Republicans had slammed the plea agreement that spared Hunter Biden jail time as a "sweetheart deal." Rep. James Comer, the lead Republican pursuing the impeachment inquiry, called the gun charges "a very small start" and pushed for investigation of whether the president was involved in his son's business dealings. Trump also pointed to the lack of connection to Joe Biden in the gun charge plea agreement.

Federal prosecutors investigating Hunter Biden have not indicated Joe Biden is connected over the course of their yearslong probe. The lead prosecutor, Trump-appointed Delaware U.S. Attorney David Weiss, was elevated to special counsel last month, giving him broad authority to investigate and report out his findings.

The three-count indictment he filed Thursday alleges Hunter Biden lied on a form required for every gun purchase when he bought a .38-caliber Colt Cobra Special at a Wilmington, Delaware, gun shop.

He's charged with two counts of making false statements, first for checking a box falsely saying he was not addicted to drugs and second for giving it to the shop for their federally required records. A third count alleges he possessed the gun for about 11 days despite knowing he was a drug user.

The counts are punishable by up to 25 years in prison if convicted, though "actual sentences for federal crimes are typically less than the maximum sentence," a Justice Department statement from Weiss said.

A felony gun charge against Hunter Biden, 53, had previously been part of the plea deal that also included guilty pleas to misdemeanor charges of failing to pay taxes on about \$4 million of income in 2017 and 2018.

Under the terms, he would not have pleaded guilty to the gun charge, and prosecutors would have agreed to dismiss it if he stayed out of trouble for two years. But the agreement imploded during a court hearing in July when a judge raised questions about it.

Defense attorney Abbe Lowell argued that part of the deal, which includes immunity provisions against other potential charges, remains in place. He said in a statement that Hunter Biden "possessing an unloaded gun for 11 days" presented no threat to public safety and slammed "MAGA Republicans' improper and partisan interference in this process," a reference to Trump's "Make America Great Again" slogan.

Lowell took over after Hunter Biden's previous lawyer in the case, Christopher Clark, withdrew, saying he might be called to testify about the immunity provisions.

Prosecutors maintain the agreement never took effect and is now invalid.

Charges related to gun possession by drug users are rare, especially when not in connection with other crimes. Of all the people sentenced for illegal gun possession in 2021, about 5% were charged due to drug use, according to U.S. Sentencing Commission data.

Most such cases are brought against people accused of some other crime as well, said Adam Winkler, a constitutional law professor and expert in gun policy at the University of California, Los Angeles School of Law. "It's relatively rare to prosecute someone for being a substance abuser in possession of firearms, absent other criminal activity, or unusual circumstances," he said.

A federal appeals court recently found the longstanding purchase ban didn't stand up to new standards for gun laws set by the Supreme Court. The Fifth Circuit found the nation's "history and traditions" don't support "disarming a sober citizen based exclusively on his past drug use."

Congressional Republicans, meanwhile, have continued their own investigations into nearly every aspect of Hunter Biden's business dealings as well as the Justice Department's handling of the case.

Two FBI agents who worked on the Hunter Biden case testified separately behind closed doors this week to lawmakers about allegations of political interference in the case. Thomas Sobocinski, the special agent in charge of the Baltimore Field Office of the FBI and an unidentified agent who served as his No. 2, told Congress that Weiss had full authority of the yearslong investigation, rebutting IRS whistleblower testimony that the Justice Department slow-walked the probe.

GOP-led Wisconsin Senate votes to fire nonpartisan official targeted by 2020 election skeptics

By HARM VENHUIZEN Associated Press/Report for America

MADISON, Wis. (AP) — The Republican-controlled Wisconsin Senate voted Thursday to fire the battleground state's nonpartisan top elections official, prompting a legal challenge from Democrats who say the vote was illegitimate.

Democratic Attorney General Josh Kaul said in a lawsuit that Senate Republicans don't have the authority to oust Wisconsin Elections Commission Administrator Meagan Wolfe and accused them of attacking the state's elections.

It's the latest in a whirlwind of deep partisan divisions in Wisconsin, where Republicans who control the Legislature are threatening to impeach a newly elected Supreme Court justice before she's even heard a case. They're also floating plans to overhaul the state's electoral maps before the high court can toss out current boundaries that favor the GOP.

The fight over who will lead the elections agency stems from persistent lies about the 2020 election and creates instability ahead of the 2024 presidential race for the state's more than 1,800 local clerks who actually run elections.

Wolfe has been the subject of conspiracy theories and target for threats from election skeptics who falsely claim she was part of a plan to rig the 2020 vote in Wisconsin, and GOP leaders cited concerns from those skeptics in justifying Thursday's 22-11 vote along party lines.

She said Thursday she will not "bend to political pressure" and will continue to serve as administrator at least through the end of the 2024 election unless a court rules otherwise or the elections commission votes to remove her.

"The Senate's vote today to remove me is not a referendum on the job I do but rather a reaction to not achieving the political outcome they desire," Wolfe said. "The political outcome they desired is to have someone in this position of their own choosing that would bend to those political pressures."

"Wisconsinites have expressed concerns with the administration of elections both here in Wisconsin and nationally," said Majority Leader Devin LeMahieu. "We need to rebuild faith in Wisconsin's elections."

But numerous reviews have found that the 2020 election in Wisconsin was fair and the results were accurate. Biden defeated Trump in 2020 by nearly 21,000 votes in Wisconsin, an outcome that has withstood two partial recounts, a nonpartisan audit, a conservative law firm's review, and multiple state and

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federal lawsuits.

Election observers have voiced concerns that replacing Wolfe with a less experienced administrator or continuing to dispute her position ahead of the 2024 contest could create greater instability in a high-stakes presidential race where election workers expect to face unrelenting pressure, harassment and threats.

"Wisconsin Republicans' attempt to illegally fire Wisconsin's elections administrator without cause today shows they are continuing to escalate efforts to sow distrust and disinformation about our elections, denigrate our clerks, poll workers, and election administrators, and undermine basic tenets of our democracy, including the peaceful transfer of power," Democratic Gov. Tony Evers said in a statement.

At Evers' request, Kaul sued GOP legislative leaders and asked a judge to rule that the Senate's vote has no legal effect and that Wolfe will remain in charge of the elections commission. Meanwhile, Republicans introduced a resolution calling on the elections commission to appoint an interim administrator to replace her.

"The state Senate has blatantly ignored Wisconsin law in order to put its stamp of approval on baseless attacks against elections," Kaul said. "(Wolfe) remains the administrator. The court, I'm very confident, will confirm that."

The bipartisan elections commission deadlocked in June on a vote to nominate Wolfe for a second four-year term. Three Republicans voted to nominate her and three Democrats abstained in the hopes of preventing a nomination from proceeding to the Senate for confirmation.

Senate rejection would normally carry the effect of firing her, but without a four-vote majority nominating Wolfe, a recent state Supreme Court ruling appears to allow her to stay in office indefinitely as a holdover.

Senate Republicans in June pushed ahead with forcing a vote despite not receiving a nomination from the commission. LeMahieu said he interpreted the commission's 3-0 vote as a unanimous nomination. The Legislature's nonpartisan attorneys and Democratic Attorney General Josh Kaul have both contested that interpretation, saying the law is clear that an elections administrator must be nominated by at least four commissioners.

Wolfe did not attend a Senate committee hearing on her reappointment last month, citing a letter from Kaul saying "there is no question" that she remains head of the elections agency. That hearing instead became a platform for some of the most prominent members of Wisconsin's election denialism movement to repeat widely debunked claims about the 2020 election.

"It's hard to believe we're still at a place where those now very well analyzed and debunked claims about our system seem to still be driving decisions," Wolfe said Thursday.

Many of the same skeptics were present in the Senate gallery on Thursday, cheering when the vote passed.

Many Republican grievances against Wolfe are over decisions made by the elections commission and carried out by Wolfe, as she is bound by law to do. In addition to carrying out the decisions of the elections commission, Wolfe helps guide Wisconsin's more than 1,800 local clerks who actually run elections.

Wolfe became head of the elections commission in 2018, after Senate Republicans rejected her predecessor, Michael Haas, because he had worked for the Government Accountability Board. GOP lawmakers disbanded the agency, which was the elections commission's predecessor, in 2015 after it investigated whether former Republican Gov. Scott Walker's campaign illegally worked with outside groups.

Since the 2020 election, some Republicans have floated the idea of abolishing or overhauling the elections commission.

Wolfe has worked at the elections commission and the accountability board for more than 10 years. She has also served as president of the National Association of State Election Directors and chair of the bipartisan Electronic Registration Information Center, or ERIC, which helps states maintain accurate voter rolls.

Trump won't be tried with Powell and Chesebro next month in the Georgia election case, a judge rules

By KATE BRUMBACK Associated Press

ATLANTA (AP) — Donald Trump will not face trial next month in Georgia after a judge ruled Thursday that the former president and 16 others accused of illegally trying to overturn the results of the 2020 election will be tried separately from two other defendants in the case.

Lawyers Sidney Powell and Kenneth Chesebro had filed demands for a speedy trial, and Fulton County Superior Court Judge Scott McAfee set their trial to begin Oct. 23. Trump and other defendants had asked to be tried separately from Powell and Chesebro, with some saying they could not be ready by the late October trial date.

Fulton County District Attorney Fani Willis last month obtained an indictment against Trump and the others, charging them under the state's anti-racketeering law and accusing them of participating in an illegal scheme to deny Democrat Joe Biden's victory over the Republican incumbent. All of those charged have pleaded not guilty.

Willis had been pushing to try all 19 defendants together, arguing that it would be fairer and more efficient. McAfee cited the tight timetable, among other issues, as a factor in his decision to separate Trump and 16 others from Powell and Chesebro.

"The precarious ability of the Court to safeguard each defendant's due process rights and ensure adequate pretrial preparation on the current accelerated track weighs heavily, if not decisively, in favor of severance," McAfee wrote. He added that it may be necessary to further divide the remaining 17 defendants into smaller groups for trial.

The development is likely welcome news to other defendants looking to avoid being tied by prosecutors to Powell, who perhaps more than anyone else in the Trump camp was vocal about publicly pushing baseless conspiracy theories linking foreign governments to election interference.

Another defendant in the Atlanta case, former New York City Mayor Rudy Giuliani, has sought to distance himself from Powell and spoke at length about her in an interview with special counsel Jack Smith's team in Washington, according to a person familiar with his account who was not authorized to discuss the matter publicly and spoke on condition of anonymity.

Chesebro and Powell had sought to be tried separately from each other, but the judge also denied that request.

Chesebro is accused of working on the coordination and execution of a plan to have 16 Georgia Republicans sign a certificate declaring falsely that Trump won and declaring themselves the state's "duly elected and qualified" electors. Powell is accused of participating in a breach of election equipment in rural Coffee County.

The nearly 100-page indictment details dozens of alleged acts by Trump or his allies to undo his 2020 loss in Georgia, including suggesting the secretary of state, a Republican, could help find enough votes for Trump to win the battleground state; harassing an election worker who faced false claims of fraud; and attempting to persuade Georgia lawmakers to ignore the will of voters and appoint a new slate of electors favorable to Trump.

McAfee said he was skeptical of prosecutors' argument that trying all 19 defendants together would be more efficient. He noted that the Fulton County courthouse does not have a courtroom big enough to hold 19 defendants, their lawyers and others who would need to be present, and relocating to a bigger venue could raise security concerns.

Prosecutors also had said that because each defendant is charged under the state's Racketeer Influenced and Corrupt Organizations Act, or RICO Act, the state plans to call the same witnesses and present the same evidence for any trial in the case. They told the judge last week that they expect any trial would take four months, not including jury selection.

But McAfee pointed out that each additional defendant increases the time needed for opening statements and closing arguments, cross-examination and evidentiary objections. "Thus, even if the State's

case remains identical in length, and the aggregate time invested by the Court is increased, the burden on the jurors for each individual trial is lessened through shorter separate trials," he wrote.

The judge said that to satisfy the demands by Powell and Chesebro for a speedy trial, he will try to have a jury seated by Nov. 3. "With each additional defendant involved in the voir dire process, an already Herculean task becomes more unlikely," he wrote.

Asked about the judge's ruling at an unrelated news conference Thursday, Willis said her office is capable of trying big cases. "We're not scared of large RICO indictments and we're here for the task and ready to go," she said.

McAfee also noted that five defendants are currently seeking to move their cases to federal court and litigation on that issue continues. If they were to succeed midway through a trial in state court, it's not clear what the impact would be, McAfee wrote.

U.S. District Judge Steve Jones last week rejected a bid by Mark Meadows, Trump's last White House chief of staff, to move his case to federal court. Meadows is appealing that ruling. The other four have hearings before Jones scheduled next week.

Meadows and three of the others had asked McAfee to halt state court proceedings while their efforts to move to federal court are pending. The judge denied that request.

Meadows had also asked the 11th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals to stay the order sending his case back to state court while his appeal was pending. On Thursday, he withdrew that request, citing the appeals court's approval of an expedited review and the scheduling order that McAfee entered for the defendants who will not be tried next month.

Also Thursday, McAfee held a motions hearing for Chesebro and Powell, both of whom are seeking the names of unindicted co-conspirators mentioned in the indictment and are trying to speak with the grand jurors who returned the indictment. Chesebro wants transcripts, recordings and reports from a special grand jury that aided the investigation.

Prosecutors agreed to disclose the names of the unindicted co-conspirators but objected to the other two requests. McAfee said he would rule on those two matters later.

Pig kidney works a record 2 months in donated body, raising hope for animal-human transplants

By LAURAN NEERGAARD and SHELBY LUM Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — Dozens of doctors and nurses silently lined the hospital hallway in tribute: For a history-making two months, a pig's kidney worked normally inside the brain-dead man on the gurney rolling past them.

The dramatic experiment came to an end Wednesday as surgeons at NYU Langone Health removed the pig kidney and returned the donated body of Maurice "Mo" Miller to his family for cremation.

It marked the longest a genetically modified pig kidney has ever functioned inside a human, albeit a deceased one. And by pushing the boundaries of research with the dead, the scientists learned critical lessons they're preparing to share with the Food and Drug Administration — in hopes of eventually testing pig kidneys in the living.

"It's a combination of excitement and relief," Dr. Robert Montgomery, the transplant surgeon who led the experiment, told The Associated Press. "Two months is a lot to have a pig kidney in this good a condition. That gives you a lot of confidence" for next attempts.

Montgomery, himself a recipient of a heart transplant, sees animal-to-human transplants as crucial to ease the nation's organ shortage. More than 100,000 people are on the national waiting list, most who need a kidney, and thousands will die waiting.

So-called xenotransplantation attempts have failed for decades — the human immune system immediately destroyed foreign animal tissue. What's new: Trying pigs genetically modified so their organs are more humanlike.

Some short experiments in deceased bodies avoided an immediate immune attack but shed no light on

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a more common form of rejection that can take a month to form. Last year, University of Maryland surgeons tried to save a dying man with a pig heart — but he survived only two months as the organ failed for reasons that aren't completely clear. And the FDA gave Montgomery's team a list of questions about how pig organs really perform their jobs compared to human ones.

Montgomery gambled that maintaining Miller's body on a ventilator for two months to see how the pig kidney worked could answer some of those questions.

"I'm so proud of you," Miller's sister, Mary Miller-Duffy, said in a tearful farewell at her brother's bedside this week.

Miller had collapsed and was declared brain-dead, unable to donate his organs because of cancer. After wrestling with the choice, Miller-Duffy donated the Newburgh, New York, man's body for the pig experiment. She recently got a card from a stranger in California who's awaiting a kidney transplant, thanking her for helping to move forward desperately needed research.

"This has been quite the journey," Miller-Duffy said as she and her wife Sue Duffy hugged Montgomery's team.

On July 14, shortly before his 58th birthday, surgeons replaced Miller's own kidneys with one pig kidney plus the animal's thymus, a gland that trains immune cells. For the first month, the kidney worked with no signs of trouble.

But soon after, doctors measured a slight decrease in the amount of urine produced. A biopsy confirmed a subtle sign that rejection was beginning — giving doctors an opportunity to tell if it was treatable. Sure enough, the kidney's performance bounced back with a change in standard immune-suppressing medicines that patients use today.

"We are learning that this is actually doable," said NYU transplant immunologist Massimo Mangiola.

The researchers checked off other FDA questions, including seeing no differences in how the pig kidney reacted to human hormones, excreted antibiotics or experienced medicine-related side effects.

"It looks beautiful, it's exactly the way normal kidneys look," Dr. Jeffrey Stern said Wednesday after removing the pig kidney at the 61-day mark for closer examination.

The next steps: Researchers took about 180 different tissue samples — from every major organ, lymph nodes, the digestive tract — to scour for any hints of problems due to the xenotransplant.

Experiments in the deceased cannot predict that the organs will work the same in the living, cautioned Karen Maschke, a research scholar at the Hastings Center who is helping develop ethics and policy recommendations for xenotransplant clinical trials.

But they can provide other valuable information, she said. That includes helping to tease out differences between pigs with up to 10 genetics changes that some research teams prefer — and those like Montgomery uses that have just a single change, removal of a gene that triggers an immediate immune attack.

"Why we're doing this is because there are a lot of people that unfortunately die before having the opportunity of a second chance at life," said Mangiola, the immunologist. "And we need to do something about it."

Americans sharply divided over whether Biden acted wrongly in son's businesses, AP-NORC poll shows

By COLLEEN LONG and EMILY SWANSON Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — About half of Americans say they have little or no confidence that the Justice Department is handling its investigation into Hunter Biden in a fair and nonpartisan way, and 1 in 3 are highly concerned about whether President Joe Biden may have committed wrongdoing related to his son's business dealings, according to a new poll. But the political divide is stark.

Sixty-six percent of Republicans -- and just 7% of Democrats — are very or extremely concerned about whether Joe Biden committed wrongdoing when it comes to his son's business dealings, according to the poll from The Associated Press-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research.

Overall, Democrats are far more wary of faulting the president at all with regard to his son's business

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dealings.

"The way I look at it, if Biden did something wrong, then he should be held accountable," said Pilar DeAvila-Pinsley 60, a New York Democrat. "But there is no proof of this."

The poll was conducted just before House Speaker Kevin McCarthy launched an impeachment inquiry aiming to link the president to the business dealings of his son and deflect attention from Donald Trump's legal peril as the two men battle anew for the White House. The special counsel appointed by Attorney General Merrick Garland indicted Hunter Biden on gun purchase charges Thursday, an issue unearthed during the probe into his tax dealings. The investigation has continued after a plea deal fell apart this summer.

Over the yearslong probe, federal prosecutors have not indicated Joe Biden is connected. And so far, Republicans have unearthed no significant evidence of wrongdoing by the elder Biden, who spoke often to his son as vice president and did stop by a business dinner with his son's associates. The White House, for its part, maintains Joe Biden was not involved in his son's business affairs.

Those assurances haven't stopped Americans from worrying, and shifts in White House explanations — from earlier insisting Biden had never spoken to his son about his overseas business dealings to now saying Biden was not in business with his son — have caused concern.

Derik Wieland, 47, a Republican who lives outside Raleigh, North Carolina, said Biden has already admitted to some of the issues. "I don't know any dad who doesn't know what his son is doing. I would be concerned about a dad who didn't know what his son was doing."

For Wieland, the allegations laid out by House Republicans are a sign of a larger problem in Washington, one he believes ensnares Biden, too.

"A guy who has been in higher levels of power for ages, and kind of plays fast and loose with what he does," he said. "He's been there too long. Too many of them have."

The White House messaging shift was also concerning to 40-year-old Nicholas Zumbusch, an independent who lives in a Minneapolis suburb. He isn't fully convinced that Biden profited off his son's business dealings but thinks "it's very clear that Joe Biden lied about knowing about his son's business."

"The narrative changed, and then that narrative changed again," Zumbusch said.

The poll also found that just 19% of Americans are very or extremely confident that the Justice Department is handling its investigation in a fair and nonpartisan way. An additional 30% are somewhat confident, and 50% say they are not too confident or not at all confident.

That view is especially common among Republicans: 79% say they have little to no confidence in the fairness of the investigation. Even Democrats express mediocre levels of confidence: 33% are highly confident, 36% are somewhat confident and 29% have little confidence.

The political polarization is reflective of the larger divide in the U.S., and bright political lines have also been drawn around the validity of the 2024 election, and Trump's first impeachment.

An August AP-NORC poll, for example, found that 85% of Democrats but just 16% of Republicans approved of the Justice Department's indictment of Trump in the federal case involving allegations that he worked illegally to overturn results of the 2020 presidential election. There was a similar partisan divide in beliefs that Trump did something illegal in the Florida classified documents case, his role in what happened at the Capitol on Jan. 6, 2021, and his alleged attempt to interfere in Georgia's 2020 presidential vote count.

Zumbusch said he has confidence in the rank-and-file Justice Department; it's the agency's leadership that troubles him.

"My big concern is the people who have connections with any administration that's in power," he said. "I feel like they tend to be influenced, whether it's Republicans in power, or Democrats in power. I think they feel their boss is the administration."

The poll shows a majority of Americans, 56%, say they've heard at least some about the investigations into Hunter Biden, although only 18% say they've heard a lot. Republicans are more likely than Democrats to say they've heard at least some about the investigations (68% to 51%) and that they've heard a lot (27% to 13%).

Among Republicans, those who say they've heard at least some about the investigations are more likely

than those who have heard less to say they are highly concerned about whether Joe Biden committed wrongdoing (76% to 45%) and that they have little to no confidence that the Justice Department's investigation is fair (88% to 60%).

Among Democrats, those who are paying at least some attention to the investigations are no more or less likely than others to be concerned about Joe Biden's role, and are actually somewhat more likely than those paying less attention to say they're highly confident in the Justice Department's investigation being fair, 42% to 24%.

Ryan Laiche, 44, a Democrat from Wheaton, Illinois, said if you are paying attention to the news, it's obvious Garland is working independently and fairly. House Republicans, he says, are hellbent on making Biden look bad to distract from Trump's crimes.

"It's an investigation looking for a crime," he said. "We knew this was going to happen when Republicans took over the House. They're so predictable. But they can't answer any of the questions ... was Biden involved? If he was, prosecute him, impeach him. If there's legitimate evidence. But therein lies the rub - there's no evidence."

Firefighters fear the toxic chemicals in their gear could be contributing to cancer cases

By MICHAEL CASEY Associated Press

BOSTON (AP) — Boston firefighter Daniel Ranahan had heard about colleagues getting cancer but he was stunned when doctors discovered a tumor in his chest.

He was only 30 and had been in the Boston Fire Department less than a decade. But as he investigated his diagnosis of Hodgkin's lymphoma in October 2020 and sought successful treatment, he learned he and others wore gear that contained the toxic industrial compound PFAS.

"You always hear about the dangers. You just never think it's going be you," said Ranahan, who stopped working due to the cancer and is among thousands of firefighters nationwide who sued PFAS manufacturers and companies that make firefighting gear and foam, seeking damages for their exposure.

"These guys put this on day in and day out to protect neighborhoods and wherever they are working," he said. The Associated Press was not given access to his doctors due to the ongoing litigation, making it difficult to independently verify his claims.

The multi-layered coats and pants worn by firefighters have become the latest battleground over PFAS, or per-and polyfluoroalkyl substances. It's found in everything from food packaging to clothing and is associated with health problems including several types of cancer. In March, the Environmental Protection Agency for the first time proposed limits on the chemicals in drinking water.

The news that PFAS compounds are in their gear — primarily meant to repel water and contaminants like oil and prevent moisture-related burns — is worrisome to firefighters.

The International Association of Fire Fighters or IAFF says that cancer has replaced heart disease as the biggest cause of line-of duty deaths. Firefighters have been shown to be at higher risk than the general population of getting several types of cancer.

Firefighters are exposed to a laundry list of carcinogens coming from fires burning hotter and faster than ever before — often due to increased petroleum products in homes. But as they learn more about PFAS, firefighters have grown suspicious that their personal protective equipment or PPE is sickening them.

"We had no idea that the gear that we were putting on every day was essentially loaded with PFAS," said IAFF General President Edward Kelly, who was elected in 2021 on a campaign in part to address dangers of PFAS in gear.

Sam Dillon, president of Boston Firefighters, Local 718, said the union had to act.

"When we break it down, the problem to us becomes very simple," he said. "There is proven science that PFAS is a known carcinogen. There is also proven science that PFAS is in protective gear that firefighters wear. So when its brought to our attention that there is a known carcinogen in the protective ensemble that our members wear, it is grave concern to the union and it's our job to address that issue."

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One defendant in the lawsuits, 3M Co., said in a statement that it “manufactures a variety of personal protective equipment products that meet nationally recognized standards to help protect first responders facing high-hazard environments.” Last year, the company announced it would stop manufacturing PFAS by the end of 2025 and would work to discontinue using the chemicals in its products.

Another defendant, W. L. Gore & Associates, says the PFAS compound PTFE used in its clothing is non-toxic and safe.

“Based on the body of available and reliable science, Gore concludes its firefighting products are not the cause of cancers impacting firefighters, who by the nature of their important work are sometimes exposed to cancer-causing chemicals from fires,” said company spokesperson Amy Calhoun.

The American Chemistry Council said in a statement that “PFAS-based materials are the only viable options for some key equipment that meet the vital performance properties required for firefighting gear.”

HEIGHTENED CONCERNS ABOUT GEAR

The PFAS has been in the gear for decades. But the wife of retired Worcester, Massachusetts fire lieutenant Paul Cotter who had cancer raised concerns about PFAS in gear in 2016. Until then, many firefighters had not heard of PFAS or did not know it was in their gear.

Gear makers told Diane Cotter there were only trace amounts of PFAS and it was safe. “I was attacked by firefighters when discussing the idea that chemicals in the gear could be causing cancer,” she said.

Cotter sent patches of gear to Graham Peaslee, a University of Notre Dame professor who studies PFAS, for testing.

“It was loaded with PFAS. That was the first eye opening moment that there may be more than just trace amounts,” said Peaslee, who also found the chemicals on gloves and in firehouse dust.

“They come off and they pose risks,” he said.

Courtney Carignan, an exposure scientist and epidemiologist at Michigan State University, said she found PFAS at twice the levels of the general population in the blood of more than half of the 18 firefighters she tested in Nantucket and Fall River, Massachusetts. She also found PFAS in gear was transferred to the skin of firefighters.

But Carignan is still investigating how much the gear contributed to increased levels of PFAS in the blood and whether PFAS exposure may be causing or contributing to cancer.

“Even though we know PFAS is in the gear, we still don’t know how much exposure that is,” she said.

FIREFIGHTERS TAKE ACTION

The revelation of PFAS in the gear sparked a campaign by firefighters to find safer alternatives and to hold companies responsible.

Lawsuits on behalf of firefighters argue they were exposed to significant PFAS levels and companies knew the gear contained PFAS and that it can cause serious health problems. The suits also allege companies misrepresented their products as safe.

The IAFF, which represents more than 340,000 U.S. and Canadian firefighters, decided in 2021 to no longer accept sponsorships or advertising from the chemical industry and to oppose PFAS in turnout gear. A Congressional bill introduced in July would accelerate the search for safer alternatives and support firefighter training to reduce exposure from existing gear.

Seven states including Washington, New Hampshire and New York passed bills requiring companies to disclose PFAS in their gear, according to Safer States, a coalition of environmental health groups. Several more states introduced or enacted bills this year that provide funds to purchase PFAS-free gear or prohibit manufacture or sale of gear containing the chemicals, according to Emily Sampson, an environment policy analyst at the National Conference of State Legislatures.

NO EASY FIX

For most fire departments, there is no easy fix. Replacing gear is expensive — one set can cost upwards of \$4,000 — and finding alternatives has proven challenging. Some companies are promoting a PFAS-free outer layer but that doesn’t solve the problem because the other two layers still contain PFAS, the IAFF said.

Among the hurdles, according to a IAFF lawsuit filed in March, is that the National Fire Protection Association or NFPA standard for gear can only be met with PFAS-infused material. The suit accuses the

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NFPA of working with several gear makers to maintain that requirement. It seeks damages and an end to the standard.

Chris Dubay, NFPA vice president and chief engineer, said in a statement that the standard "does not specify or require the use of any particular materials, chemicals or treatments for that gear." He said the group has no "special agreements or relationships with any company or organization" in development of standards.

"The manufacturers who are producing this gear owe it to the fire service to come up with an alternative," Brockton Fire Chief Brian Nardelli, who has heard of companies promoting gear with less PFAS but is reluctant to buy it for his 231-member department without more proof.

Instead, his department tries to limit firefighter exposure to gear that's been integral to firefighter identity. They would take it everywhere, including charity events. Now, Brockton discourages firefighters from wearing turnout gear in living quarters and encourages them to wash it after fires. It's stored on trucks and is only to be worn for serious calls like fires and car accidents.

"Guys have seen everyone who has gotten cancer, guys dying from cancer," said William Hill, the president of the Brockton Fire Fighters Local 144 who was successfully treated for testicular cancer. "Being told that PFAS is in the gear, guys don't want to take the chance of being overexposed."

This fall TV season, there's no new 'Grey's Anatomy' or 'Law & Order.' Here's what's coming instead

By ALICIA RANCILIO Associated Press

Sorry "Abbott Elementary" and "Grey's Anatomy" fans — there won't be new episodes airing anytime soon.

Some viewers may be unaware, but striking screenwriters and actors have brought production to a screeching halt, including on many popular shows like "Law & Order" and "1923." So fans will have to wait to find out if Janine and Gregory can really be just friends on "Abbott" or if Kim Raver's Dr. Teddy Altman survives after collapsing on "Grey's." But there's plenty of new characters and familiar faces heading to screens via already-completed shows that are ready to air.

Some creative programming — including shows imported from other countries, competition series and the broadcast arrival of the Paramount Network hit "Yellowstone" — will round-out gaps in the TV schedule.

Here's a sampling of notable shows debuting in the strike-challenged season ahead:

NEW SHOWS ADAPTED FROM BOOKS

Books remain popular inspiration for Hollywood. "The Other Black Girl," based on the novel by Zakiya Dalila Harris, follows Nella, (Sinclair Daniel), a Black editorial assistant in publishing who is thrilled by her company's new hire of another Black woman, Hazel (played by Ashleigh Murray). Nella's hope for an ally and confidante is repeatedly squashed, leaving her to wonder if the two are in competition. "The Other Black Girl" is a genre-blending mix of social satire, commentary and creepiness streaming now on Hulu.

Jesse L. Martin returns to NBC in "The Irrational," playing a behavioral science expert with a keen understanding of what makes people tick. This skill makes him an in-demand problem solver and translator-of-sorts for government agencies and big corporations. The show is based on Dan Ariely's book, "Predictably Irrational" and premieres Sept. 25. Episodes will also stream on Peacock.

In "Wilderness," Jenna Coleman ("Doctor Who" and "Victoria") and Oliver Jackson-Cohen ("Mr. Malcolm's List," "Surface") are Liv and Will, a young couple whose marriage is on the rocks. They plan a vacation to set things right but what Will doesn't know is that Liv has cooked up an itinerary he wasn't prepared for. The thriller is adapted from a book of the same name by B.E. Jones, with Ashley Benson and Eric Balfour also starring. "Wilderness" debuts Friday on Prime Video.

Brie Larson brings the Bonnie Garmus novel "Lessons in Chemistry" to life for Apple TV+. It's about Elizabeth, a female scientist in the 1960s who works in a chemical lab, is smarter than most but is only permitted to do menial work by sexist colleagues. A romance with a fellow chemist named Calvin (Lewis Pullman), who sees Elizabeth as an equal, sets in motion her winding, fascinating and empowering road

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to a fulfilling life and career. The show debuts Oct. 13.

The heartbreaking-yet-hopeful WWII novel "All the Light We Cannot See" by Anthony Doerr has been turned into a four-episode series directed by Shawn Levy for Netflix. It follows the story of Marie (played by newcomer Aria Mia Loberti) as a blind, young woman in hiding in German-occupied France and a Nazi soldier named Werner (Louis Hoffman). He's an orphan who was drafted against his will and the show explores how their lives intersect. The limited series also stars Mark Ruffalo and Hugh Laurie and debuts Nov. 2.

SPIN-OFFS, PREQUELS AND SEQUELS

Hollywood loves a safe bet and a number of new shows debuting this fall feature some not-so-new characters or tie-ins to films and other series that have proved popular.

"The Walking Dead" served as a mainstream introduction to several talented actors: Danai Gurira, Steven Yeun, Lauren Cohan, Jon Bernthal and yes, Norman Reedus. Reedus' character Daryl Dixon also emerged as a heartthrob. He now fronts his own spinoff called "The Walking Dead: Daryl Dixon," taking place in France after the events of the original show. Daryl may be in a new country but walkers are still out there, and they've evolved. The show airs Sundays on AMC and streams on AMC+.

The massively popular "John Wick" movie franchise starring Keanu Reeves is getting a three-night prequel event series called "The Continental: From the World of John Wick" on Peacock. It stars Mel Gibson and Colin Woodell as a younger version of Ian McShane's character from the movies. "The Continental" debuts Sept. 22.

Young adult superheroes need education too, and that's the backdrop of the new Prime Video series "Gen V," a spin-off of "The Boys." Superheroes-in-training are enrolled at Godolkin University School of Crimefighting, where they fraternize in between high-stakes competitions of strength and ability. Like "The Boys," the show takes an irreverent approach to its supes. The first three episodes drop Sept. 29.

Kelsey Grammer is back as his most well-known character, Dr. Frasier Crane, in a sequel for Paramount+. In this "Frasier," the character returns to Boston to embark on a new phase of his life. The 10-episode comedy debuts Oct. 12 and the first two episodes will air later that month on CBS.

An eight-episode anime series inspired by the 2010 movie "Scott Pilgrim vs. the World" is coming to Netflix on Nov. 17. "Scott Pilgrim Takes Off" will feature the voices of the film cast including Michael Cera, Mary Elizabeth Winstead, Kieran Culkin, Brie Larson and Anna Kendrick.

SIGNS OF STRIKES

There are also programs coming to TV this fall that are obvious time-fillers to help round out primetime schedules. CBS made some interesting decisions to complete their puzzle.

Kevin Costner's "Yellowstone," which airs on Paramount Network, is now getting a broadcast run on CBS beginning Sunday.

Longtime reality competition staples "Survivor" and "The Amazing Race" return to CBS on Sept. 27 but with longer, 90-minute episodes, filling up a night's three-hour prime-time block.

"NCIS: Sydney" will begin airing on CBS Nov. 13. It's the first international edition of the franchise that originated in the United States.

They've also imported international shows to air in the States. "Ghosts UK," the original version of "Ghosts" that inspired the Rose McIver-led U.S. remake, will debut Nov. 16.

Fox has leaned in heavily to competition shows. "The Masked Singer" is back for season 10, and they've tapped David Spade to host a new game show called "Snake Oil." It will join other game shows including "Celebrity Name That Tune," "I Can See Your Voice" and "Special Forces: World's Toughest Test."

The CW — once known for superheroes, sci-fi and beautiful people coming-of-age — is also now tapping into international options. Examples include Lea Thompson's "Spencer Sisters" and "Sullivan's Crossing" starring Chad Michael Murray and Scott Patterson — both Canadian-made shows — debuting Oct. 4. The network has also scheduled three Canadian comedies for Monday nights. The German eco-thriller "The Swarm," about a predatory life force in our oceans, is now airing.

Since ABC doesn't have the aforementioned favorites "Abbott Elementary" or "Grey's Anatomy" on its

lineup, it's touting non-scripted options like "Dancing with the Stars" (returning to broadcast after a run on Disney+), "The Golden Bachelor" and "Bachelor in Paradise."

Moroccans whose homes were destroyed by last week's earthquake face daunting rebuilding decisions

By SAM METZ and MOHAMED BOUKDIRE Associated Press

AMIZMIZ, Morocco (AP) — The building where Naima Ait Brahim Ouali lived in a third-story apartment with her five children was one of many that were destroyed by the earthquake that killed nearly 3,000 people in Morocco last week.

A house cleaner, she and her daughter fell down the stairs as the quake tore off the building's top floor and laid waste to much of the rest of their neighborhood in the town of Amizmiz, near the epicenter.

Like children in many parts of the world, Ait Brahim Ouali's youngest had just started their school year. Now, relocated with the rest of the Sourejdid neighborhood to a tent city in the town center, fear sets in at around 11 p.m. each night — the time the earthquake happened last Friday.

"They saw death," she said of her children, who range in age from 10 to 25. One of her daughters now has nightmares.

The displaced family is one of many in Morocco wondering what their future holds, particularly as autumn approaches and the nights get colder. Though many villagers are being provided with food and water, officials said it could take five or six years to rebuild Atlas Mountain communities like Amizmiz, which is more than an hour's drive from the closest big city, Marrakech.

The death toll from the 6.8 magnitude quake stood at 2,946 on Wednesday, with several thousand injuries. The government doesn't release the number of deaths by community, but in Amizmiz, everyone seems to know at least someone who was killed.

Rebuilding has already begun in Marrakech's old Jewish Quarter and other damaged parts of the city frequented by tourists. In Al Haouz — the province that includes Amizmiz and was the hardest hit by the earthquake and its aftershocks — efforts are still focused on immediate humanitarian needs.

After King Mohammed VI presided over an emergency response meeting on Thursday, Moroccan officials said the government would fund both emergency relief and future rebuilding for residents of roughly 50,000 homes that were damaged or destroyed by allocating cash depending on the level of destruction.

Some in the Al Haouz region's mountain towns and villages might move away, but Ait Brahim Ouali said she's committed to staying — just not in the same type of multistory brick apartment building. Like most in this part of Morocco, her family is Amazigh, the country's largest indigenous group, and she doubts that they would get enough government assistance to be able to afford a home in Marrakech big enough for the whole family.

"We are afraid for the future. We just started the new school year but the earthquake came and ruined everything," she said, standing under an umbrella outside of a yellow tent as children played inside. "We just want somewhere to hide from the rain."

UNICEF, the United Nations agency that provides aid for children, estimated this week that roughly 100,000 children have been "impacted" by the quake. That's in line with the 300,000 people of all ages who the U.N. estimates were affected, as roughly a third of Morocco's population are kids.

Ricardo Pires, a spokesperson for UNICEF, said that during humanitarian disasters, the organization worries about the trauma of displacement as well as basic needs for children such as access to clean water and medical supplies.

"Children get separated from their families. They might be displaced, on the move, and not knowing where to go to stay safe," Pires said. "This is always a major risk in humanitarian disasters or when earthquakes like this break and it's very hard to reach certain areas."

Like many in Amizmiz, 40-year-old plumber Rachid Alachoun said his family plans to stay and rebuild. Half of their home near the town's old Jewish quarter, the Mellah, collapsed during the quake. The yellow

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tent in the town center that his family was given isn't big enough for everyone, so Alachoun stayed behind, navigating between rubble and exposed wires to get to his kitchen and bathroom.

On Wednesday, he cooked chicken, carrots and olives in a clay pot on the gas stove in an area of the home he's kept tidy. Cooking with gas beneath a cinderblock ceiling is especially precarious when after-shocks strike, such as a 4.6-magnitude tremor on Thursday morning.

The Alachouns were told Saturday that assistance was on the way. Food and water soon arrived, but they lacked shelter until they were given the tent Tuesday.

"They told us not to come to get supplies and that supplies would come. So we waited," Alachoun's sister, Loubna, said from the coated polyester tent she is sharing with another brother, father, mother and a close family friend.

With Russia isolated on the world stage, Putin turns to old friend North Korea for help

By The Associated Press undefined

After the handshakes, the platitudes and the lunch of Kamchatka crab dumplings, the outcome of the talks between Russian President Vladimir Putin and North Korean leader Kim Jong Un stayed hidden.

But the summit's location — Russia's Far East spaceport — offered a big clue.

By choosing the Vostochny Cosmodrome, Putin has signaled his readiness to share Russian rocket and space technology with Pyongyang in exchange for access to North Korea's mammoth arms stockpiles for the war in Ukraine.

The move underscored Russia's estrangement on the world stage and the shrinking circle of friends that Moscow can rely on, thanks to the 18-month-old invasion. At the same time, it heralds new threats for stability in northeast Asia and beyond.

The nearly five hours of talks Wednesday between Putin and Kim marked a new high point in the ties between the old allies — a relationship that dates back nearly eight decades to Soviet leader Josef Stalin and Kim's grandfather, North Korean founder Kim Il Sung.

North Korea has relied on Soviet-designed weapons since the 1950-53 Korean War and has some of the world's largest ammunition stockpiles, estimated at tens of millions of artillery shells and rockets.

Russia is eager to tap that trove after having spent a significant share of its arsenal in fighting Europe's largest ground conflict since World War II, with thousands of shells fired daily by each side.

Western officials saw the summit with North Korea as an effort by Putin to secure a potential arms bonanza for his military.

"It looks like they're very focused on the artillery shells (and) the multiple-rocket launchers for battlefield use," said John Park, director of the Korea Project at the Harvard Kennedy School's Belfer Center. "These are things that can be immediately applied in terms of this war of attrition that is playing out in Ukraine."

U.S. officials have cast it as a sign of desperation by Putin. Russia was "scraping the bottom of the barrel looking for help because it's having trouble sustaining its military," said James O'Brien, head of the Office of Sanctions Coordination at the U.S. State Department.

Putin, however, didn't seem to care about the optics of meeting with Kim, with the West now considering both leaders to be pariahs.

"For Russia, it's simply that the ends justify the means," said James Nixey, director of the Russia and Eurasia program at Chatham House, a London-based think-tank. "It's perfectly comfortable with alliances of any shape form on nature as long as they serve perceived Russian national interests."

The need for munitions in the Ukraine war is hardly one-sided. In addition to Western supplies of new tanks, missiles and other weapons systems, the U.S. and its allies have drained the stockpiles of Soviet-era arms and munitions in Central and Eastern Europe and beyond to help President Volodymyr Zelenskyy.

With both Russia and Ukraine digging in for what could be a long war, the North Korean munitions could offer Moscow a critical lifeline as it tries to boost its domestic arms output. North Korea also could increase

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its ammunition production at Russia's behest.

"It's the immediate benefit of existing stockpiles and also the potential to crank up on the production side if they want to go that direction as well," Park said.

Yang Uk, a security expert at South Korea's Asan Institute for Policy Studies, noted that in addition to Soviet-designed armaments, North Korea also could share some of its latest military equipment.

Amid tensions with the South, Pyongyang has heavily relied on artillery and developed long-range systems that could add capabilities that Moscow lacks.

"Beyond merely transferring ammunition, there is also a strong possibility that North Korea would be willing to provide Russia with some of the advanced weapons systems it developed and publicly boasted about to be used for the war in Ukraine," Yang said.

At Vostochny, Putin and Kim traded mutual praise and assurances of friendship, alluding their historic alliance.

Putin mentioned the Soviet support for Pyongyang in the Korean War, while Kim referred to Russia's campaign in Ukraine as a "just fight against hegemonic forces to defend its sovereign rights, security and interests."

Leif-Eric Easley, a professor at Ewha University in Seoul, noted the summit also served both leaders' domestic and foreign policy agendas.

"Putin and Kim's diplomatic display is meant to claim success in challenging the U.S.-led international order, avoiding over-reliance on China, and increasing pressure on rivals in Ukraine and South Korea," he said. "The summit defiantly linked pariah state behavior in Europe and Asia."

Asked by reporters at the spaceport whether Russia and North Korea could cooperate in space, Putin responded: "That's why we came here." He added that Kim showed a "big interest in rocket technologies."

While Russia has previously avoided sharing sensitive know-how with Pyongyang, analysts point out that Moscow could now facilitate such transfers as a way of hurting the U.S. and its allies.

"Russia profits from the destabilization of the international system," Nixey said. "If Russia is giving the Western powers one more problem to worry about other than itself, then it actually aids the overall Russian cause."

He said the Kremlin's "principal priority" is success in Ukraine, adding that "it would do pretty much anything in order to achieve that."

Of course, any arms deal between Moscow and Pyongyang would violate U.N. sanctions against North Korea over its nuclear and missile programs that Russia voted to enact.

U.N. Secretary-General Antonio Guterres emphasized the need to respect those sanctions, and Washington warned it is ready to impose new restrictions on Russia and North Korea if they violate the Security Council's resolutions.

Observers warned, however, that the West has limited options in addressing a rapprochement between Moscow and Pyongyang.

"There isn't really much left in the policy toolbox in terms of addressing the challenges specifically from Russia and North Korea," Park observed.

Post-summit comments by Putin and his officials indicated that Moscow wasn't going to openly trample on the sanctions and instead could try to keep an arms deal with Pyongyang secret.

Asked about potential military cooperation with Pyongyang, Putin responded that "there are certain restrictions, and Russia is following all of them." But he added that "there are things we can talk about, we're discussing and thinking about them."

Park noted that the shared border between Russia and North Korea could facilitate any exchanges between the countries.

"When you look at the type of cooperation that they have, this is a large landmass and it's directly connected," he said. "It's not necessarily Russia lifting sanctions. It's just basically not implementing sanctions."

A major factor Russia needs to consider while it seeks to expand ties with North Korea is China, Pyongyang's No. 1 ally that has jealously watched the rapprochement. Beijing's support is also crucial for Putin,

and the Kremlin can be expected to tread carefully to assuage any Chinese concerns.

"Having Putin and Kim meet directly is something that would be at the expense of Chinese interests," Park said. "So from that calculus, one country that is watching this very, very closely is China."

Stranded luxury cruise ship MV Ocean Explorer is pulled free at high tide in Greenland

By JAN M. OLSEN Associated Press

COPENHAGEN, Denmark (AP) — The luxury cruise ship MV Ocean Explorer was successfully pulled free on Thursday, three days after running aground in Greenland with 206 people on board, authorities and the ship's owner said.

The ship was freed by a fisheries research vessel at high tide, said the cruise ship's owner, Copenhagen-based SunStone Ships, and the Joint Arctic Command, which coordinated the operation.

"There have not been any injuries to anybody onboard, no pollution of the environment and no breach of the hull," SunStone Ships said in a statement. The research vessel which pulled the cruise ship belongs to the Greenland Institute of Natural Resources, a government agency, it said.

It said the cruise ship and its passengers will now travel to a port where the damage to the vessel's bottom can be assessed, and the passengers will be taken to a location from where they can be flown home. There was no immediate comment from the tour company that organized the trip, Australia-based Aurora Expeditions.

The cruise ship ran aground Monday above the Arctic Circle in Alpefjord in Northeast Greenland National Park, the world's northernmost national park. The park is nearly the size of France and Spain combined, and approximately 80% is covered by an ice sheet. Alpefjord is about 240 kilometers (150 miles) from the closest settlement, Ittoqqortoormiit, which is nearly 1,400 kilometers (870 miles) from the country's capital, Nuuk.

The Bahamas-flagged cruise ship has passengers from Australia, New Zealand, South Korea, the United Kingdom and the United States. It has an inverted bow, shaped like the one on a submarine, 77 cabins, 151 passenger beds and 99 beds for crew, and several restaurants.

Earlier Thursday, Aurora Expeditions said three passengers had COVID-19.

"These passengers are currently in isolation. They are looked after by our onboard doctor, medical team and crew, and they are doing well," it said in a statement. Others on the MV Ocean Explorer are "safe and healthy," it said.

Australian newspaper The Sydney Morning Herald quoted a retiree from Australia who is on the ship, Steven Fraser, as saying: "Everyone's in good spirits. It's a little bit frustrating, but we are in a beautiful part of the world."

Fraser told the newspaper that he had come down with COVID-19 on the ship.

Cmdr. Brian Jensen of the Joint Arctic Command told Greenland broadcaster KNR that the ship is likely to go to Iceland, the closest place with large ports.

"Now it is exciting to find out what the condition of the ship is," Jensen was quoted as saying by KNR. "They are in the process of investigating whether the ship is intact and seaworthy and ready to sail on."

The ship's owner said several other vessels had rushed to the scene "and offered their assistance, which however, was not needed." It said it had also "arranged additional tug assistance in case it was needed, however, this has now been canceled."

Dozens of cruise ships sail along Greenland's coast every year so passengers can admire the picturesque mountainous landscape, waterways packed with icebergs of different sizes and glaciers jutting out into the sea.

Danish broadcaster DR said there were 400 cruises in Greenland in 2022 and 600 cruises in 2023.

The Danish Maritime Authority asked police in Greenland to investigate why the ship ran aground and whether any laws had been violated, a police statement said, adding that no one has been charged or ar-

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rested. An officer has been on board the ship to carry out "initial investigative steps, which, among other things, involve questioning the crew and other relevant persons on board," it said.

The cruise liner began its current trip on Sept. 2 in Kirkenes in Arctic Norway and was due to return to Bergen, Norway, on Sept. 22, according to SunStone Ships.

The primary mission of the Joint Arctic Command is to ensure Danish sovereignty by monitoring the area around the Faeroe Islands and Greenland, including the Arctic Ocean in the north. Greenland is a semi-independent territory that is part of the Danish realm, as are the Faeroe Islands.

At the University of North Carolina, two shootings 30 years apart show how much has changed

By HOLLY RAMER Associated Press

Three decades ago, as a University of North Carolina student, he covered a deadly shooting for the school newspaper. Last month, as a journalism professor at the same school, Ryan Thornburg kept his students safe during a lockdown — after another shooting.

In some ways, the era of campus shootings has come full circle. Other UNC-Chapel Hill alumni who remember the 1995 tragedy now have children enrolled at their alma mater, where an associate professor was shot to death Aug. 28 (and where a second brief lockdown was imposed Wednesday). But vast changes in the way information spreads make their recent experiences less like replays and more like double exposures: new technology, new emotions superimposed upon the same setting.

Twenty-eight years ago, there was no way for university officials to alert the entire community that a gunman had opened fire on the edge of campus, killing two people and wounding two others. E-mail existed but wasn't widespread. Calling home meant long-distance surcharges and leaving messages on answering-machine tapes when no one picked up.

Thornburg, the former student journalist, didn't even think to call his parents in California about the 1995 shooting until he saw a television news van near the scene. As he said in an interview last week: "That made me go, 'Oh, my parents might know about this sooner rather than later, I better give them a call.'"

EXPERIENCES RELIVED, DIFFERENTLY

Thornburg was a sophomore when law student Wendell Williamson walked down the street firing a semiautomatic rifle on Jan. 26, 1995. Continuing to shoot even after he was wounded by police, Williamson eventually was tackled by two bystanders and later committed to a psychiatric hospital after being found not guilty by reason of insanity.

Thornburg, then the city editor at The Daily Tar Heel, was headed to the police station to get information for an unrelated story when the shooting began. He used a pay phone in the lobby to relay updates to the newsroom, then spent a long night working on the next day's edition.

"It's kind of embarrassing, but the exhilaration I felt at the end of that — I didn't feel like I wanted to go away from it or look away. I wanted to really engage and do more," he told his students at the start of this semester when one asked what sparked his passion for journalism.

A few days later, it was their turn to experience a campus shooting.

Thornburg was teaching "Introduction to Newswriting" when a campus-wide alert about an active shooter popped up on his computer and was projected on a screen behind him. The response began: As sirens blared with instructions to take cover, text messages went out to students, faculty and staff.

Thornburg hustled some students in from the hallway and locked the doors. At one point, he told them to hide under their desks. Together, they listened to a broadcast of police scanner traffic and watched a local news livestream. Rumors were flying.

"I said, 'I know you're all on social. What are you hearing? Let's talk about it, and let's talk about what's reliable and what's not,'" Thornburg said. "It was a little bit of a teachable moment."

EVERYTHING IS FAST NOW — THE BAD AND THE GOOD

While campus alert systems have become much more robust, so too has the spread of misinformation,

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said Paul Dean, president of the International Association of Campus Law Enforcement Administrators. Cutting through the clutter can be a challenge, as is finding the balance between security and anxiety. Students who grew up in the age of school shootings are arriving on campus extra jumpy, he said.

"These kinds of alerts trigger people, and I'm cognizant of that," said Dean, chief of police at the University of New Hampshire. "It's a difficult balance."

On one hand, there were no warnings in 1995 to prevent students from stumbling into the line of fire. On the other hand, many knew nothing of the shooting until hours later and thus were spared the fear and panic of lockdown.

Zoe Bright, a current UNC sophomore, was on the phone with her father when she received the first alert last month. After reassuring him she was safe in her dorm, she started checking on her friends. They were all doing the same. One friend sought shelter in the bathroom of a downtown bar after her building was evacuated before sprinting to Bright's dorm room.

"Basically everyone I've ever met in my entire life was texting me," Bright said. Everybody at the school, every group chat on every platform that I have, was blowing up for the whole three hours."

She told her father, Mark, about hearing helicopters outside, something he had reported to his own parents when he was a senior at UNC in 1995. But beyond that, their experiences were vastly different.

Mark Bright remembers hearing shots and seeing the commotion downtown as he left class that day. He clustered with classmates in the doorway of a nearby building for a while, then went back to his dorm thinking maybe a beer truck had gotten robbed. His wife, fellow 1995 graduate Presley Bright, can't recall how she found about the shooting. But they both remember learning the details from the student newspaper the next day.

That front page featured Thornburg's lead story and four others about the shooting, a map of the crime scene and a photo of a victim's body covered by a sheet. In contrast, the current Daily Tar Heel staff filled the front page with oral history as it unfolded — emotional texts that students received during the lockdown. In Thornburg's view, this year's newspaper staff captured the moment far better.

"When I saw it, I viscerally knew that it captured the experience of being in our unique situation, but that it also transcended so many other lockdowns," said the professor, who was teaching the same class during the second lockdown on Wednesday.

'JUST THE WAY WE ARE RIGHT NOW'

This year alone, there have been at least 86 incidents of gunfire on K-12 schools and college campuses, resulting in 27 deaths and 57 injuries, according to Everytown for Gun Safety, a gun-control research and advocacy group. Over the last decade, such incidents have increased in frequency, says Dan Flannery, director of the Begun Center for Violence Prevention and Research at Case Western Reserve University.

"It's horrible to even think that that's just the way we are right now. People have accepted that this is a thing that's going to keep occurring and we're all kind of getting more desensitized to it as a more normal part of our culture," Flannery said.

Indeed, some UNC alumni were not particularly surprised by the recent shooting — not because they had been through it before but because of what they know about American society.

"Once I got over the initial shock of what was happening and making sure that we were doing the right thing, it was sort of like, 'Okay, today's the day. This happens,'" said Thornburg, who called the lockdown "simultaneously surreal and the least surprising thing ever."

Likewise, Mark Bright said because his daughter had a lot of angst about where to go to college, he briefly thought: "If she had been at a different college, this wouldn't be happening."

Then the reality of the United States in 2023 quickly set in.

"Then my second thought after that was, 'It doesn't matter what college you go to,'" he said. "It doesn't really matter at all nowadays. It could be anywhere."

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Today in History: September 15

4 Black girls killed in bombing of Birmingham church

By The Associated Press undefined

Today in History

Today is Friday, Sept. 15, the 258th day of 2023. There are 107 days left in the year.

Today's Highlight in History:

On Sept. 15, 1963, four Black girls were killed when a bomb went off during Sunday services at the 16th Street Baptist Church in Birmingham, Alabama. (Three Ku Klux Klansmen were eventually convicted for their roles in the blast.)

On this date:

In 1776, British forces occupied New York City during the American Revolution.

In 1789, the U.S. Department of Foreign Affairs was renamed the Department of State.

In 1857, William Howard Taft — who served as President of the United States and as U.S. chief justice — was born in Cincinnati, Ohio.

In 1935, the Nuremberg Laws deprived German Jews of their citizenship.

In 1940, during the World War II Battle of Britain, the tide turned as the Royal Air Force inflicted heavy losses upon the Luftwaffe.

In 1955, the novel "Lolita," by Vladimir Nabokov, was first published in Paris.

In 1959, Nikita Khrushchev became the first Soviet head of state to visit the United States as he arrived at Andrews Air Force Base outside Washington.

In 1972, a federal grand jury in Washington indicted seven men in connection with the Watergate break-in.

In 1981, the Senate Judiciary Committee voted unanimously to approve the Supreme Court nomination of Sandra Day O'Connor.

In 1985, Nike began selling its "Air Jordan 1" sneaker.

In 2001, President George W. Bush ordered U.S. troops to get ready for war and braced Americans for a long, difficult assault against terrorists to avenge the Sept. 11 attack. Beleaguered Afghans streamed out of Kabul, fearing a U.S. military strike against Taliban rulers harboring Osama bin Laden.

In 2006, Ford Motor Co. took drastic steps to remold itself into a smaller, more competitive company, slashing thousands of jobs and shuttering two additional plants.

In 2021, California Democratic Gov. Gavin Newsom soundly defeated a recall aimed at kicking him out of office.

In 2022, President Joe Biden said federal mediators had helped foster an agreement that averted a rail strike that would have been devastating to the U.S. economy.

Today's Birthdays: Actor Carmen Maura is 78. Writer-director Ron Shelton is 78. Actor Tommy Lee Jones is 77. Movie director Oliver Stone is 77. Rock musician Kelly Keagy (KAY'-gee) (Night Ranger) is 71. Actor Barry Shabaka Henley is 69. Director Pawel Pawlikowski is 66. Rock musician Mitch Dorge (Crash Test Dummies) is 63. Football Hall of Famer Dan Marino is 62. Actor Danny Nucci is 55. Rap DJ KayGee is 54. Actor Josh Charles is 52. Actor Tom Hardy is 46. Actor Marisa Ramirez is 46. Pop-rock musician Zach Filkins (OneRepublic) is 45. Actor Dave Annable is 44. Actor Amy Davidson is 44. Britain's Prince Harry is 39. TV personality Heidi Montag is 37. Actor Kate Mansi is 36.