

# Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, Sept. 21, 2023 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 089 ~ 1 of 82

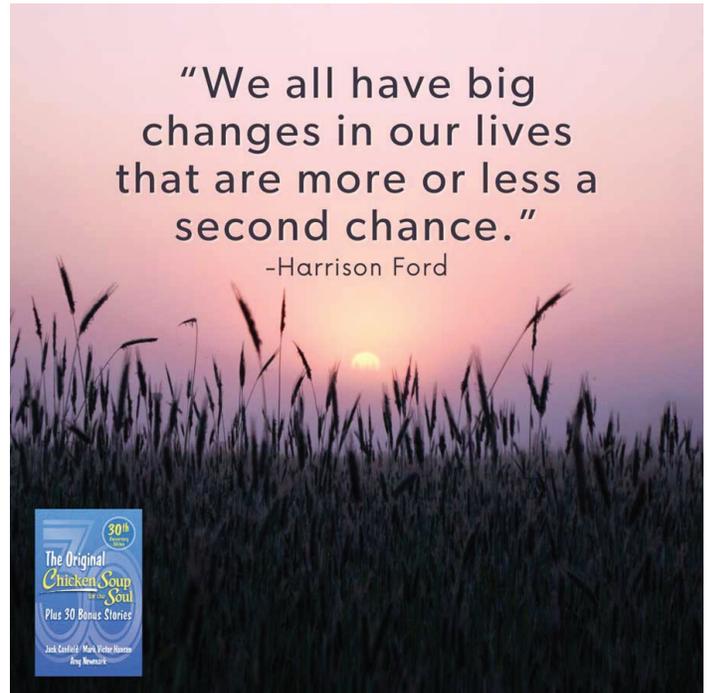
- [1- Upcoming Events](#)
- [2- Newsweek Bulletin](#)
- [3- Youth Football Jamboree held Saturday in Groton](#)
- [4- Roncalli Marching Festival next Wednesday](#)
- [6- Todd County Fatal Crash](#)
- [6- Names Released in Jackson County Fatal Crash](#)
- [7- Robin Bitz is MS/SH Paraprofessional](#)
- [8- Community Transit Letter](#)
- [9- SD SearchLight: U.S. House passes Johnson's bill to protect Wounded Knee land](#)
- [9- SD SearchLight: Wounded Knee Massacre monument vandalized, damaged](#)
- [10- SD SearchLight: 'Just a knee bone': Reinterment brings pain and healing to Sisseton Wahpeton Oyate](#)
- [12- SD SearchLight: U.S. Senate panel grapples with how to ensure access to water amid Western drought](#)
- [13- SD SearchLight: South Dakota-based health system chooses new leader](#)
- [13- SD SearchLight: A 'disaster' nears: Millions of federal workers' paychecks would be on hold in a shutdown](#)
- [17- Weather Pages](#)
- [21- Daily Devotional](#)
- [22- 2023 Community Events](#)
- [23- Subscription Form](#)
- [24- Lottery Numbers](#)
- [25- News from the Associated Press](#)

**The Boys Soccer Game with Dakota Valley scheduled on Saturday, September 30th has been rescheduled to Monday, September 25th at 4pm.**

## Thursday, Sept. 21

Senior Menu: Chicken Alfredo, California blend, peaches, whole wheat bread.  
Boys Golf at Sisseton, 10 a.m.  
Boys Soccer hosts James Valley Christian, 4 p.m.  
Volleyball at Tiospa Zina with C match at 5 p.m. followed by JV and Varsity.

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



## Friday, Sept. 22

Senior Menu: Taco salad with chips, Mexican rice and black beans, Mandarin oranges, pineapple, breadstick.  
Football at Sisseton, 7 p.m.

## Saturday, Sept. 23

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 Hamlin, 9 a.m.  
Girls Soccer at Tea Area, 11 a.m. (No JV)  
Youth Football at Clark Jamboree

## **CLOSED:** Recycling Trailer in Groton

The recycling trailer is located west of the city shop. It takes cardboard, papers and aluminum cans.  
© 2023 Groton Daily Independent

# Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, Sept. 21, 2023 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 089 ~ 2 of 82

## The Bulletin by Newsweek

### World in Brief

making them eligible to obtain work permits, as state leaders struggle to house an influx of migrants arriving at the U.S. borders.

An Indonesian TikTok influencer has been sentenced to two years in prison under the country's strict blasphemy laws after she posted a video of herself reciting an Islamic prayer before eating pork.

Polish Prime Minister Mateusz Morawiecki said the country, one of Ukraine's staunchest supporters, will not send weapons to Kyiv and focus on "arming" itself. It comes as tensions between Warsaw and Kyiv escalated over grain exports.

Thousands of protesters gathered in the Armenian capital, with many demanding Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan step down over the perceived failure to support separatists in Karabakh after Armenia and Azerbaijan agreed to a ceasefire.

The Senate has confirmed Air Force General Charles Q. Brown Jr. as Joint Chiefs chairman with a vote of 83 yeas to 11 nays, bypassing Senator Tommy Tuberville's months-long blockade on military promotions and confirmations.

In the ongoing war in Ukraine, two planes and a helicopter have been blown up by "unknown saboteurs" on Russian soil, Ukraine's Main Directorate of Intelligence agency (GUR) said on Wednesday.

.

### TALKING POINTS

"Because even where we have some differences, my commitment to Israel, you know, is ironclad. I think without Israel, there's not a Jew in the world that's secure. I think Israel is essential." President Joe Biden to Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu during a long-anticipated meeting in New York.

"I have no reason not to trust them. To the extent the West is reliable, Russia is equally reliable. For the last 50 years, we have been waiting at the doorstep of the E.U., and, at this moment in time, I trust Russia just as much as I trust the West." Turkey's leader Recep Tayyip Erdoğan during a PBS interview.

### What to Watch in the Day Ahead

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky will conclude his U.S. trip with a visit to Washington, D.C., where he will meet with congressional leaders. He is scheduled to deliver a speech to the Senate leadership and court for a military package for Kyiv.

Market participants will watch for the weekly initial jobless claims report and other economic data, including current account deficit and existing home sales, from 8:30 a.m. ET.

Darden Restaurants is expected to report a rise in revenue as it releases its first-quarter earnings report. Investors will watch for comments on the company's future expectations amid rising costs.

Anthony Sanchez, 51, is scheduled to be executed for the 1996 rape and murder of a 21-year-old University of Oklahoma dance student, Juli Busken. Sanchez will receive a lethal injection at the Oklahoma State Penitentiary in McAlester at 10 a.m. ET.

# Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, Sept. 21, 2023 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 089 ~ 3 of 82

## Youth Football Jamboree held Saturday in Groton



**5th and 6th grade warming up for their game**

We had 14 teams, 24 games, over 60 volunteers, over 200 players, and over 800 spectators for the Youth Football Jamboree held Saturday in Groton. We were very blessed to have great weather for the day and so lucky to have the support from all the community members that helped volunteer for the day to make the jamboree very successful. It took weeks of planning and preparation to make it run as smooth as it did. Special thanks to Dion and Sam Bahr of the Jungle for making all the delicious pizza and Matt Johnson from Kens Super Fair Foods for delivering doughnuts and freezies to the concession stand.

Big thank you to the Groton Firemen and Kens Super Fair Foods for their monetary donations.



**3rd and 4th Grade ready to go for their first game of the day**



**Dion Bahr delivering pizza with a smile! Over 500 slices of pizza sold for the day!**

(Courtesy Photo from Tigh Fleihs)



**Aerial photo of the successful day**

(Courtesy Photo from Tigh Fleihs)

# Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, Sept. 21, 2023 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 089 ~ 4 of 82

## Roncalli Marching Festival next Wednesday

Next Wednesday, September 27th, is the Roncalli Marching Festival in Aberdeen. A map is available on the next page. All are welcome to come and support us in the festival. If you can't attend then you can catch the Livestream link at <https://portal.stretchinternet.com/hubcityroncalli/>

The 2023 Parade Order and approximate step-off times are:

1. 9:30 – Warner Middle School Band
2. 9:37 – Holgate/Simmons Combined Middle School Band
3. 9:44 – Edmunds Central Marching Band
4. 9:51 – Redfield High School Marching Band
5. 9:58 – Langford Area Marching Lions
6. 10:05 – Webster Area High School
7. 10:12 – Groton Area High School
8. 10:19 – Emerald Regiment, Pierre
9. 10:26 – Hoven Marching Greyhounds
10. 10:33 – Castlewood High School Warrior Marching Band
11. 10:40 – Ipswich High School Marching Band
12. 10:47 – Aberdeen Christian Marching Knights
13. 10:54 – Aberdeen Roncalli Marching Cavaliers
14. 11:01 – Warner High School Band
15. 11:08 – Gregory High School Gorillas Marching Band
16. 11:15 – Feature Band: Aberdeen Central High School Golden Eagles Marching Band
17. 11:22 – Northern State University Marching Wolves

### Details for Wednesday:

-Load time will be 8:00 am and a 8:15-8:30 am leave time. I would like everyone to be almost fully dressed in uniform before we leave. I will do my best to be at the school around 7:30 am if anyone wants to come early.

-After awards are presented at the festival, we will be eating lunch in Aberdeen before heading back to Groton. Please send money with your son/daughter.

-I am estimating us to be back in Groton by 6th period so the students will not be gone for an entire school day.

### Upcoming Practices Until Festival:

Friday September 22nd- 7:50 am

Sunday September 24th- 5:00-6:00 pm (This is an added practice to get more time with our MS Students)

Monday September 25th- 7:50 am

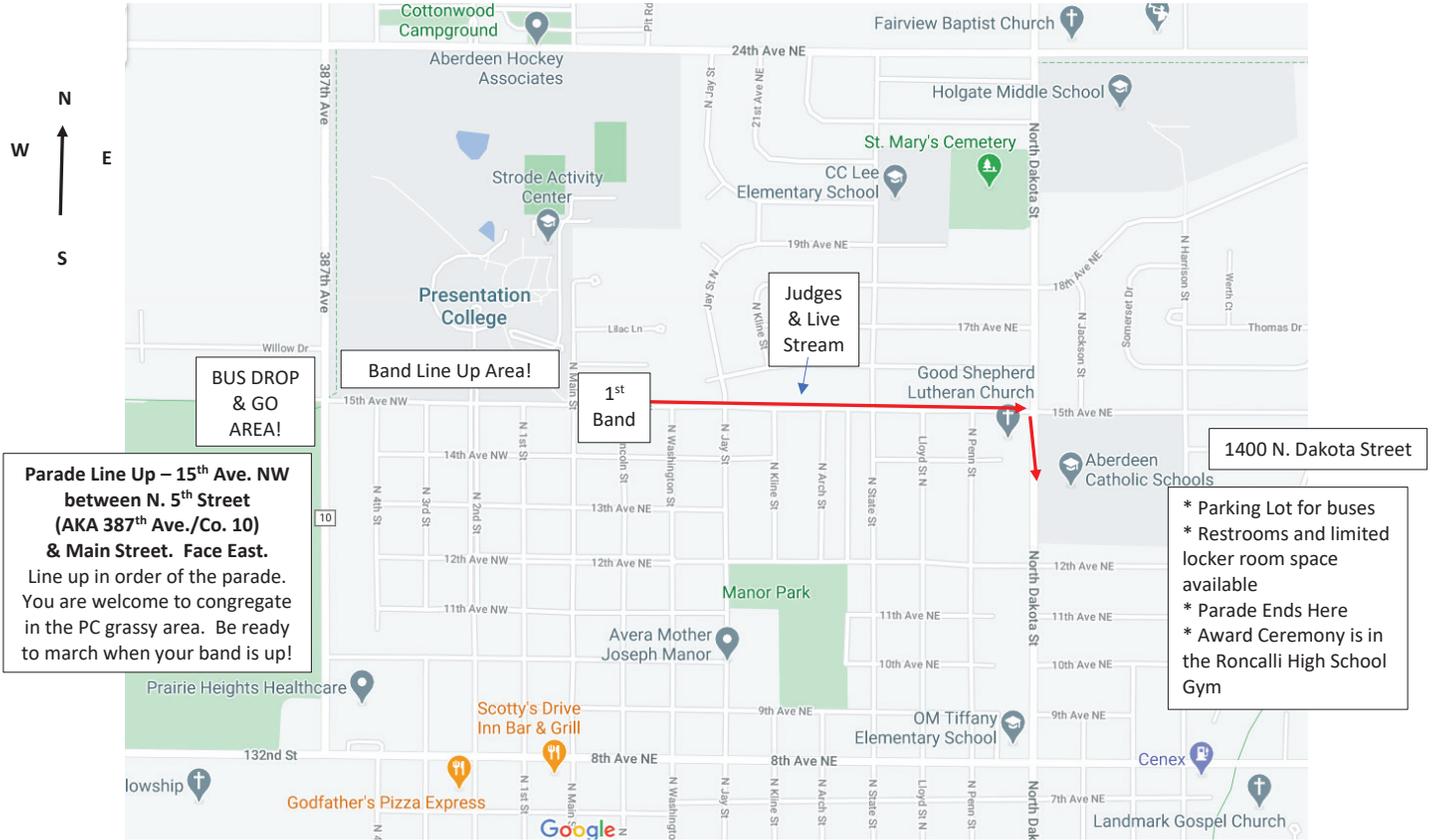
# Broton Daily Independent

Thursday, Sept. 21, 2023 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 089 ~ 5 of 82

## 2023 RONCALLI MARCHING BAND FESTIVAL

WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 27, 2023 – 9:30AM EVENT

**\*\* PARADE ROUTE (in red) \*\* BAND LINE UP INFO IN THE BOX!!**



## Todd County Fatal Crash

What: Two semi fatal crash

Where: S.D. Highway 63, mile marker 36, 5 miles north of Parmelee, S.D.

When: 3:53 p.m., Tuesday, September 19, 2023

Driver 1: Male, 82, Not injured

Vehicle 1: 1999 Freightliner FLD120 semi with trailer

Driver 2: Male, 51, Fatal injuries

Vehicle 2: 1993 Peterbilt Conventional semi with trailer

Todd County, S.D.- One person died Tuesday afternoon in a two vehicle crash 5 miles north of Parmelee, S.D.

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

Preliminary crash information indicates a 1999 Freightliner FLD120 semi with trailer was traveling west on 277th Street near its intersection with S.D. Highway 63. The driver stopped at the intersection and then turned south on S.D. 63. A 1993 Peterbilt Conventional semi with trailer was traveling north on S.D. 63 and struck the Freightliner's trailer which caused the Freightliner and trailer to rollover.

The 82-year-old male driver of the Freightliner was not injured.

He was wearing a seatbelt.

The 51-year-old male driver of the Peterbilt sustained fatal injuries and was pronounced deceased at the scene.

He was not wearing a seatbelt.

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

## Names Released in Jackson County Fatal Crash

What: Vehicle-pedestrian crash

Where: Interstate 90 mile marker 164, one mile east of Belvidere

When: 2:07 a.m., Sat., Sept. 16, 2023

Driver No. 1: Robert Volpe, 55, Fort Madison, Iowa, No injuries

Vehicle No. 1: 2018 Chevrolet Silverado pickup

Pedestrian: Shane Ghost, 55, Belvidere, S.D., Fatal injuries

Belvidere, S.D.: A Belvidere, S.D., man has been identified as the person who died early Saturday morning in a vehicle-pedestrian crash east of Belvidere.

Preliminary crash information indicates that a 2018 Chevrolet Silverado pickup was traveling east on Interstate 90 near mile marker 164. A male pedestrian identified as Shane Ghost, 55, of Belvidere, S.D., entered the roadway from the median. The driver of the Silverado applied his brakes but was unable to avoid a collision with Mr. Ghost, who received fatal injuries.

The 55-year-old male driver of the Silverado, Robert Volpe of Fort Madison, Iowa, was not injured. He was wearing a seat belt.

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

## Robin Bitz is MS/SH Paraprofessional

Robin Bitz, the most recent employee for the Groton Area School System, has been hired as a junior high/senior high special needs paraprofessional. "I'm originally from Ipswich," she said. "After graduating from high school, I attended Lake Area Technical College in Watertown where I enrolled in cosmetology."

"I worked as a hair stylist for about twenty years," Bitz explained, "before switching to Aspire in Aberdeen. This job gave me the opportunity to help those who needed it the most. It also provided me with the experience and learning that I needed to switch to the special education area in a school system."

"I enjoyed working at Aspire but really wanted to get into a school system and was excited to see this position was open," she smiled. "I work with all of the special education teachers in the middle school/high school."

"My job as a para is quite varied," Bitz stated. "I work with the twenty or so students in the special education classrooms, and I also attend classes with some of them. After the class is over, I work with the students individually to make sure that they understand the assignment and to help them with their work."

"My husband and I live in Bath so I have a short, trip on a nice four-lane highway to get the school every day," she said. "I love working here and find the other staff members to be friendly and easy to work with."



# Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, Sept. 21, 2023 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 089 ~ 8 of 82



## 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



## SOUTH DAKOTA SEARCHLIGHT

<https://southdakotasearchlight.com>

### **U.S. House passes Johnson's bill to protect Wounded Knee land**

**BY: JACOB FISCHLER - SEPTEMBER 20, 2023 8:30 PM**

The U.S. House approved by voice vote Wednesday a bill that would help protect land at the site of the 1890 Wounded Knee Massacre in South Dakota, where an estimated 350 Lakota were killed by U.S. soldiers.

The site is within the Pine Ridge Indian Reservation. The Oglala Sioux Tribe and the Cheyenne River Sioux Tribe purchased 40 acres around the site last year and would retain possession of the land under the bill, lead sponsor Dusty Johnson, a South Dakota Republican, said.

The wounds from the massacre, which included the killing of noncombatant women and children, remain fresh for the state's Lakota residents, Johnson said on the House floor earlier this week.

Johnson visited the site in June, he said. At nearby St. John's Church, the floorboards are still stained with the blood of the wounded and dying who retreated there.

Johnson said he heard on his June visit from the grandson of a survivor of the attack, who grew up hearing of the fear and terror the day evinced.

"These are real people, these are real places," he said. "These are not ancient tales of a distant land."

The bill would place 40 acres into protected status for the tribes, Johnson said, providing tribes tools to protect the land.

Oglala Sioux Tribe President Frank Star Comes Out commented on the bill in a news release from Johnson.

"We are pleased the House of Representatives acted quickly to pass this important legislation," Star Comes Out said. "This bill will protect our sacred land at Wounded Knee. It also continues the healing process for the descendants of victims and survivors of the 1890 Wounded Knee Massacre."

South Dakota's U.S. Sens. John Thune and Mike Rounds, both Republicans, introduced an identical bill in the Senate.

Democrats have introduced bills in several sessions of Congress to rescind the 20 Medals of Honor awarded to U.S. service members at Wounded Knee, but that measure has not passed either chamber.

*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.*

### **Wounded Knee Massacre monument vandalized, damaged**

**Rep. Johnson's bill to protect land passes House**

**BY: MAKENZIE HUBER - SEPTEMBER 20, 2023 6:06 PM**

A monument erected over a century ago to honor tribal leaders killed in the Wounded Knee Massacre was broken and vandalized earlier this month on the Pine Ridge Reservation.

A decorative element resembling an urn was pulled off the top of the monument, despite being held in place by a pin or rod. The element was damaged and left busted near the monument. Vandals also defaced the south side of the monument with graffiti.

"I'm really angered and frustrated because people in the area should respect this a little more," said Wendell Yellow Bull, an Oglala Lakota County commissioner.

After weeks of work to clean and repair the monument, Yellow Bull plans to hold a ceremony when the broken pieces are placed back atop the monument on Monday.

Yellow Bull's great-grandfather, Joseph Horn Cloud — who was a teenager at the massacre and whose parents, two brothers and a niece died in the onslaught — commissioned the monument in the early 1900s

# Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, Sept. 21, 2023 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 089 ~ 10 of 82

to honor the 22 headmen or "Itancan" who were killed in the massacre.

A total of about 350 Miniconjou Lakota people — many of them women and children — were killed by nearly 500 U.S. soldiers at the site on Dec. 29, 1890. After some of the Native American bodies froze on the ground for several days, a military-led burial party dumped them into a mass grave.

The 870-acre area surrounding the site is designated as a U.S. National Historic Landmark and is listed in the U.S. National Register of Historic Places.

South Dakota Congressman Dusty Johnson introduced a bill to protect 40 acres of the land, prevent commercial development and provide greater control of the site to the Oglala Lakota and Cheyenne River Sioux tribes, which recently acquired the land covered by the bill. The bill unanimously passed the U.S. House of Representatives on Wednesday and now goes to the Senate.

"What happened at Wounded Knee is a stain on our nation's past that cannot be washed away," Johnson said Wednesday.

In a 1990 Associated Press article, Yellow Bull's grandfather, William Horn Cloud, recalled visiting the mass gravesite with Joseph Horn Cloud.

"He would walk over and lay down on the long, trench grave," William recalled. "I asked him later why he did that. And he'd say, 'My mother and father are there, so I am laying with them.'"

Yellow Bull worked with Sioux Monument in Martin to piece the monument back together. Owner Rick May, who is Oglala Lakota, estimated it cost about \$500 to repair the monument, which he covered.

May hopes the damage will bring attention to Wounded Knee and the needed repairs or updates that could improve the site.

"It's just a sad event," May said.

Yellow Bull filed a police report on the incident.

*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.*

## 'Just a knee bone': Reinterment brings pain and healing to Sisseton Wahpeton Oyate

**Grave at former boarding school yields incomplete remains**

**BY: MAKENZIE HUBER - SEPTEMBER 20, 2023 4:49 PM**

They only found a knee bone.

That was all that was left of Amos La Framboise in his grave at the Carlisle Indian Industrial School in Pennsylvania, where the 13-year-old Sisseton Wahpeton boy was sent to assimilate to white culture in 1879. He died just three weeks after arriving at the school.

La Framboise and Edward Upright, also of the Sisseton Wahpeton Oyate, were disinterred by tribal representatives and the U.S. Army this week to be reburied on tribal land, rather than remaining over 1,000 miles away from their homeland. Upright's grave contained teeth, his skull and other large bones.

The boys' remains returned to the Lake Traverse Reservation in northeastern South Dakota on Wednesday, to be placed on scaffolds at sunrise and then placed in a tipi each sundown Thursday and Friday before being reburied at noon on Saturday.

The state of La Framboise's remains infuriates Tamara St. John, Sisseton Wahpeton tribal historian and a member of the South Dakota House of Representatives.

This was the third time La Framboise's remains have been disinterred. La Framboise's grave was moved a month after his initial burial from the town's "White persons' cemetery" to the school's newly established private cemetery. Both of the boys' bodies were disinterred in 1927 after the Army took over the property. The more than 180 children buried at the school were moved to clear space for a new building on the property.

"How careful and loving were you with our child when you dug him up from the Ashland Cemetery and then dug him up again from another?" St. John said.

# Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, Sept. 21, 2023 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 089 ~ 11 of 82

The singular bone, which matched La Framboise's gender and age upon death, is a reflection of how poorly Native American children and people were treated and viewed by the United States, she added.

The day before the reinterment process began for La Framboise and Upright, the Puyallup Nation from Washington exhumed what were thought to be the remains of Edward Spott, a 16-year-old boy who died at the school in 1894. Instead, the remains found in the grave belonged to what archeologists estimated were a female between 16 and 22 years old, according to Tiauna Augkhopinee, one of Spott's relatives who traveled to Pennsylvania to bring his remains home.

"We took care of her as we would take care of our own children and sent her back into her current resting place with love and dignity," Augkhopinee posted on social media. "Please continue to pray not only for Eddie but for that young lady who is still trying to find her way back to her family. We'll continue to do this work selflessly, with care and humility."

Spott is now considered missing, and the remains of the girl will join the more than a dozen other "unknown" graves in the cemetery.

While St. John said she loves the United States, she isn't surprised that there was "just a knee bone" in La Framboise's grave.

"I cannot tell you how many times I've cried, even though I know I should be happy. People are messaging me that I did it — because I'm the loudest and have been the pushiest," St. John said, who's been actively working on bringing the boys home for the past six years.

The Sisseton Wahpeton Oyate struggled with the U.S. Army for years to follow what St. John referred to as a "rigid" reinterment process, having to find next of kin to the boys (who did not have direct descendants) and endure other struggles. The Army took over the property in 1927 after the school closed in 1918, so while the Army was not involved with running the school, the grounds are under the Army's oversight now.

"At the moment it's not possible to look at that knee bone and feel much happiness," she said.

Nevertheless, the process has been a step toward healing. Tribal representatives embraced Army officials they'd fought with for years, and allowed them to observe traditionally private ceremonies.

The Army officials in Pennsylvania helped set up a sweat lodge, sat through prayers, accepted gifts, and took part in pipe smoking and smudging, which is the ceremonial burning of sacred herbs, such as sage, to purify a space or person.

"In the end, I'd like to believe that maybe, just maybe, they have all learned something that might effect change," St. John said.

She hopes Sisseton Wahpeton's experience will help other tribes who attempt repatriation. And she was happy that tribal representatives were able to lead ceremonies and prayers and wear traditional regalia while on the school grounds.

"All of those things were intended to be erased at this very place," St. John said. "But not only are we still here, we're here with songs and praise."

St. John said her work has just begun. She is thinking about lobbying for federal legislation to make repatriation efforts easier, or to increase resources for tribal repatriation efforts.

Thousands of Native American children died at the more than 500 boarding schools across the United States and Canada, according to the Federal Indian Boarding School Initiative. Sisseton Wahpeton children went to multiple schools, including the Genoa Indian School in Nebraska where one boy from the tribe, Alfred Brandt, died.

Nebraska officials are trying to find the burial site of the children who died at Genoa. The school operated from 1884 through 1934 with children attending from more than 40 tribal nations.

"This is not something I ever wanted to be an expert in, but that's what's happening," St. John said. "I hope that we don't become so callous to this that these children's stories don't matter. We're bringing home Amos and Edward, and next it's going to be Alfred Brandt."

*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 panel grapples with how to ensure access to water amid Western drought

BY: JACOB FISCHLER - SEPTEMBER 20, 2023 6:24 PM

Decades of drought in the West has made water quality and quantity a major issue requiring government funding and innovation to fix, members of a U.S. Senate panel said Wednesday.

Demand for water in growing municipalities is stretching agricultural and tribal communities, while shrinking availability is leading to higher water prices, witnesses told the Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee's Water and Power Subcommittee.

More than 2 million Americans lack access to safe and reliable drinking water, subcommittee Chair Ron Wyden, an Oregon Democrat, said.

"America can do better and America must do better," he said. "The problem is worsened by the devastating drought that has hit so much of our country."

Kyle Jones, the policy and legal director at the advocacy group Community Water Center, told the panel about a woman whose California well ran dry as her husband recovered from open-heart surgery. A new well would have required a \$30,000 loan, he said.

"We need more resources to make drought resiliency a reality," Jones said. "Aridification is happening and we need support to prepare communities so they do not lose access to their human right to water."

Members at Wednesday's hearing seemed to go out of their way to avoid polarizing topics. Wyden said he believed climate change was a factor in extreme drought conditions, but said that others may "debate it." But the drought, he said, was undeniable, and he called on Congress to act.

Federal and state officials have been working to improve the situation, members noted.

Democrats' climate, taxes and social policy law enacted last year and the 2021 bipartisan infrastructure law provided \$13 billion to address Western water infrastructure, Michael Brain, a water and science official at the Interior Department, said.

### Aquifer recharge

In Idaho, the state has spent \$500 million on a program to "recharge" the Eastern Snake Plain Aquifer to recycle floodwaters back into the aquifer, Idaho Water Resource Board member Albert Barker told the panel.

"When you have that water in the aquifer, it's available for all these other resources including agriculture, including 18 municipalities, and ... over 300,000 people who obtain their drinking water from this source," he said. "It also provides water for hydropower and recreation and environmental purposes."

But the program requires assistance from other water users in the area, including the Interior Department's Bureau of Land Management, which has interpreted federal law to say that the bureau cannot share water with the state, Barker and the panel's ranking Republican, Jim Risch of Idaho, said.

Risch asked Brain to have the Interior Department change its policy, saying it would be more efficient than having Congress "pass another statute to say we really really mean it."

### Tribal access

Tribes have also had trouble accessing federal funds meant to help deal with drought, Chairman Jonathan Smith of the Confederated Tribes of Warm Springs in Oregon confirmed after being asked by Nevada Democrat Catherine Cortez Masto.

"One of the things that I hear from my tribal communities is that one, the federal dollars are there, but you don't have necessarily the cost-share amount that you need to go after some of these funds at a federal level," Cortez Masto said.

She asked if eliminating the cost-share requirement would be helpful.

"Most definitely," Smith answered. "Yes, it would."

Eliminating a 50% cost-share that requires tribes to contribute half of the money for a water project to access federal money would be helpful, he said.

The next round of WaterSMART grants from the Interior Department's Bureau of Reclamation would be

allowed to reduce or eliminate the cost-share for tribes, Brain said.

At the close of the hearing, Wyden called for bipartisanship to address a major issue.

"The stakes are obviously as high as you can get," Wyden said. "Without water, you don't have life."

Because of those stakes, he said, Congress should avoid its typical partisan or jurisdictional fights to work toward addressing the problem.

Other Senate panels, the Environment and Public Works Committee and Indian Affairs Committee, would hold other hearings on water availability, he said.

Neither party was to blame, he said, but both could be part of a solution.

"Nobody's going to sit around on my watch and say, 'The Republicans are at fault,' 'Oh, the Democrats are at fault' and everybody sit around, throw rotten fruit at each other," he said. "We got big, big, important work to do."

*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.*

## South Dakota-based health system chooses new leader

**BY: SEARCHLIGHT STAFF - SEPTEMBER 20, 2023 4:08 PM**

One of the state's major health systems has a new leader.

James "Jim" Dover has been named the next president and CEO of Sioux Falls-based Avera Health, one of the largest not-for-profit rural health care systems in the Midwest. His first day with Avera will be Oct. 23.

Dover joins Avera following Bob Sutton's resignation early this summer due to a health problem. Dover will be Avera's third president and CEO.

"I am humbled and honored to lead such a remarkable organization," Dover said in a news release.

He will oversee a health system with \$3 billion in annual revenue, more than 20,000 employees, a 1,200-member medical group, 37 hospitals, 200 clinics, and 40 long-term care facilities. Avera's footprint includes locations in South Dakota, North Dakota, Minnesota, Iowa and Nebraska.

Avera is also the region's largest provider of behavioral health services and operates Avera Health Plans.

Dover comes to Avera from Lansing, Michigan-based Sparrow Health, where he had served as president and CEO since 2019. Dover received his bachelor's degree in bacteriology from the University of Idaho and his master's degree in hospital administration from the University of Minnesota. He is a fellow of the American College of Healthcare Executives.

## A 'disaster' nears: Millions of federal workers' paychecks would be on hold in a shutdown

**BY: JENNIFER SHUTT - SEPTEMBER 20, 2023 3:18 PM**

WASHINGTON — More than 3.5 million federal employees and military personnel — many in the Washington, D.C., area but also scattered across the states and around the globe — are bracing for another partial government shutdown, as U.S. House Republicans struggle to produce a short-term plan to fund the government past the end of the month.

Most of the workers will be furloughed and go without paychecks in a shutdown. Some will have to work without pay because of the nature of their jobs, like members of the military, law enforcement officers, air traffic controllers and TSA officers. Those federal employees would get back pay once the shutdown ends under a law enacted in January 2019.

Lawmakers would not be personally affected — members of Congress would continue to get paid, as well as President Joe Biden and federal judges, though the judicial branch could see its funding run low.

In the D.C. area, Virginia is home to an estimated 140,000 civilian federal workers, who for some unknown period would go without pay and would be forced to draw on savings or other assistance, according to a federal employee database. Maryland has an estimated 139,000 civilian employees.

# Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, Sept. 21, 2023 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 089 ~ 14 of 82

The economic impact could be broad, because the funding lapse this year would hit much harder than the 35-day partial government shutdown that took place during the Trump administration and reduced GDP by billions of dollars. This time, a partial shutdown would affect more than 1.4 million uniformed members of the military and 1 million additional civilian federal employees at the Pentagon, Department of Health and Human Services and several other agencies, as well as congressional staff.

Speaker Kevin McCarthy, a California Republican, has repeatedly warned his own members against forcing a funding lapse, saying it won't help the party to achieve its goals.

But that hasn't stopped especially conservative Republicans from halting work on full-year spending measures and opposing the short-term stopgap bill that's needed to give lawmakers more time to work out a deal.

American Federation of Government Employees National President Everett Kelley said in a written statement that a "government shutdown would be a disaster for the American people and the federal employees who keep our government running."

"Shutdowns hurt local communities across the country, deny Americans access to government services, and do significant damage to the overall economy," Kelley said.

Congress, Kelley said, "needs to do its job and pass a continuing resolution to keep the government funded at current levels while continuing to negotiate a final budget. Nothing less is acceptable."

AFGE represents more than 750,000 federal and D.C. government employees.

Here's a look at why the federal government might shut down by Oct. 1, what agencies are impacted and what isn't affected.

## **Why would the government have to shut down?**

Congress is supposed to pass 12 government funding bills each year before the start of the new fiscal year on Oct. 1, but lawmakers haven't completed all of their bills on time since 1996.

Instead, every year the House and Senate pass at least one stopgap spending bill, or continuing resolution. This keeps funding levels and policy mostly flat for a few weeks or a couple of months, giving the Appropriations committees more time to work out bipartisan bills and for leaders to hold floor votes.

Congress sometimes has to pass several short-term funding bills lasting for months, or even the entire fiscal year, if agreements on new, full-year spending bills can't be negotiated.

If Congress doesn't approve all dozen full-year government funding bills, or pass a short-term stopgap bill, by midnight on Sept. 30, then a funding lapse begins and government departments begin implementing a partial shutdown.

## **What happens during a shutdown?**

Federal civilian employees are broadly categorized as either "excepted" or "non-excepted." During a partial government shutdown, excepted federal workers continue to work without pay while everyone else is furloughed — which means they are on an enforced vacation and their pay is on hold until the government resumes operations.

Employees that deal with "the safety of human life or the protection of property" often work without pay until Congress approves some sort of spending measure.

## **What federal departments and agencies are involved?**

Any federal department or agency without a full-year appropriations bill would need to implement its shutdown plans if Congress doesn't approve a spending bill before Oct. 1.

Congress has yet to pass any of its dozen annual funding bills for fiscal 2024, so all of the departments and agencies funded through the annual appropriations process would be impacted.

That includes the departments of Agriculture, Commerce, Defense, Education, Energy, Health and Human Services, Homeland Security, Housing and Urban Development, Interior, Justice, Labor, State, Transportation, Treasury and Veterans Affairs.

Smaller federal agencies would also be affected, including the Environmental Protection Agency, Food and Drug Administration, NASA and the Smithsonian Institution, among dozens of others.

The entire legislative branch, including the U.S. House, U.S. Senate, the Capitol Police, the Congressional

# Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, Sept. 21, 2023 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 089 ~ 15 of 82

Budget Office, Government Accountability Office and the Library of Congress, among others, would be partially shut down.

Each department and agency has its own guidance for implementing a partial government shutdown, which is posted on the Office of Management and Budget's website.

## **What federal operations escape?**

Spending on mandatory programs like Medicare, Medicaid and Social Security does not go through the annual appropriations process, so those three programs are mostly exempt from the impact.

How many federal employees would be furloughed?

The federal government employed just under 2.2 million civilian employees earlier this year, according to its database. There are another 1.4 million members of the U.S. military, according to numbers from the Office of Management and Budget. The Legislative Branch employs more than 31,000 employees and the judicial branch has about 33,000 employees.

About 745,000 of the civilian employees work for the Department of Defense, with another 449,000 at the Veterans Affairs Department. The Department of Homeland Security — which houses Customs and Border Protection, Immigration and Customs Enforcement, and the Federal Emergency Management Agency — employs more than 216,000 federal employees.

A state-by-state breakdown of where civilian federal employees work shows that the nation's capital has the most federal employees, with 161,000 working in the District of Columbia.

California has the second-highest population of civilian federal employees with 142,000. Texas holds nearly 123,000.

More than 636,000 federal employees are veterans.

Federal employees will get back pay after the shutdown ends, though that hasn't extended to federal contractors.

## **Does anyone get paid during a partial government shutdown?**

Yes. The president, members of Congress and judges.

Article II, Section 1 of the Constitution "forbids the salary of the President to be reduced while he or she is in office, thus effectively guaranteeing the President of compensation regardless of any shutdown action," according to the Congressional Research Service.

Members of Congress would receive pay for several reasons, including that they have a permanent appropriation for their salaries, a section of the Constitution addressing lawmakers' pay and the 27th Amendment, according to the Congressional Research Service.

Article I, Section 6 of the Constitution says that U.S. lawmakers "shall receive a Compensation for their Services, to be ascertained by Law, and paid out of the Treasury of the United States."

And the 27th Amendment notes that "No law, varying the compensation for the services of the Senators and Representatives, shall take effect, until an election of Representatives shall have intervened."

Judges and the judiciary would "likely be able to continue to operate for a limited time using funds derived from court filings and other fees and from no-year appropriations," according to a report from CRS.

## **How many funding lapses have there been?**

Congress has failed to fund the government three times since 2000.

In 2013, there was a 16-day shutdown amid calls from several hardline Republicans, including Texas Sen. Ted Cruz, to defund the Affordable Care Act, or Obamacare.

While none of the 12 full-year government funding bills were law when that shutdown began, it didn't fully impact the Pentagon.

Just before the funding lapse began, Congress passed a bill to provide pay for troops, Defense Department civilian employees and certain contractors working for either the Defense Department or the Homeland Security Department, according to the Congressional Research Service.

There were two funding lapses during the Trump administration, one of which was relatively short and one that lasted for 35 days.

The 35-day partial government shutdown began after five of the dozen annual spending bills became

# Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, Sept. 21, 2023 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 089 ~ 16 of 82

law, reducing the number of federal employees and operations impacted.

The Departments of Defense, Education, Energy, Health and Human Services, Labor and Veterans Affairs weren't affected. Congress also wasn't impacted, having passed its own funding bill.

## **What is the economic impact of a partial government shutdown?**

Federal employees were furloughed for a total of 6.6 million days during the 2013 partial government shutdown, bringing the total "lost productivity" to about \$2 billion, according to an analysis from the White House budget office.

The 2019 partial government shutdown reduced real gross domestic product by \$3 billion during the fourth quarter of 2018 and by \$8 billion during the first quarter of 2019, according to analysis from the nonpartisan Congressional Budget Office.

That shutdown, CBO said in its report, "dampened economic activity mainly because of the loss of furloughed federal workers' contribution to GDP, the delay in federal spending on goods and services, and the reduction in aggregate demand (which thereby dampened private-sector activity)."

## **What's the Biden administration saying?**

The White House released a memo Wednesday rebuking House Republicans for approaching the end of the fiscal year without a bipartisan plan to fund the government.

The administration said it's clear that "if extreme House Republicans fail to ram through their radical agenda, they plan to take their frustration out on the American people by forcing a government shutdown that would undermine our economy and national security, create needless uncertainty for families and businesses, and have damaging consequences across the country."

The memo says a funding lapse could affect dozens of federal programs, including eliminating some spaces in Head Start, slowing down new loans at the Small Business Administration and forcing the FDA to "delay food safety inspections for a wide variety of products all across the country."

The Occupational Safety and Health Administration, or OSHA, could have to reduce the number of inspections, "denying workers a key protection against safety risk, and Americans who are owed back pay for their hard work would face delays due to the majority of Department of Labor investigations being suspended."

Air travel could also be impacted since TSA employees and air traffic controllers would be working without pay, the White House memo says.

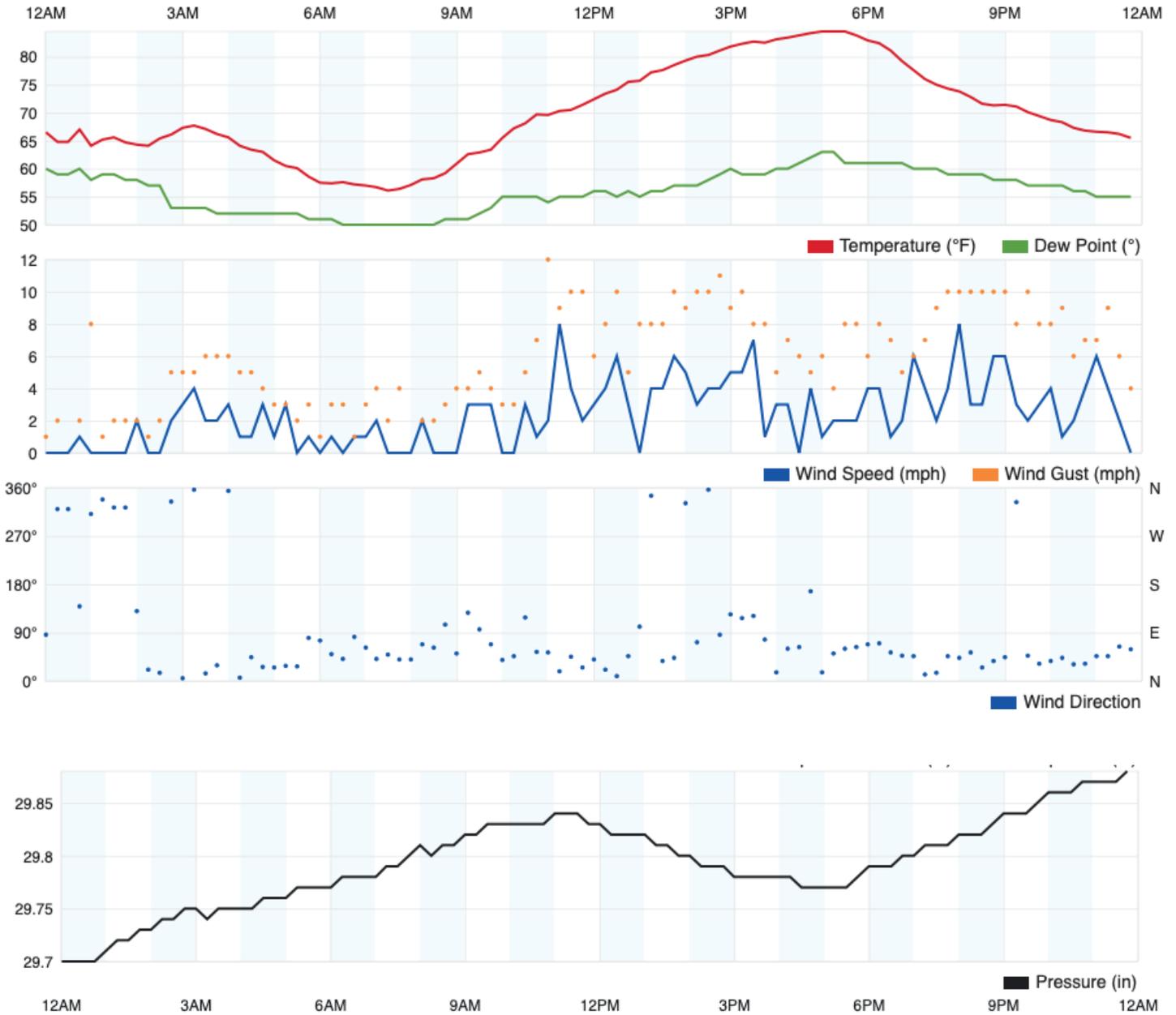
"These consequences are real and avoidable — but only if House Republicans stop playing political games with peoples' lives and catering to the ideological demands of their most extreme, far-right members," the White House memo says. "It's time for House Republicans to abide by the bipartisan budget agreement that a majority of them voted for, keep the government open, and address other urgent needs for the American people."

*Jennifer covers the nation's capital as a senior reporter for States Newsroom. Her coverage areas include congressional policy, politics and legal challenges with a focus on health care, unemployment, housing and aid to families.*

# Groton Daily Independent

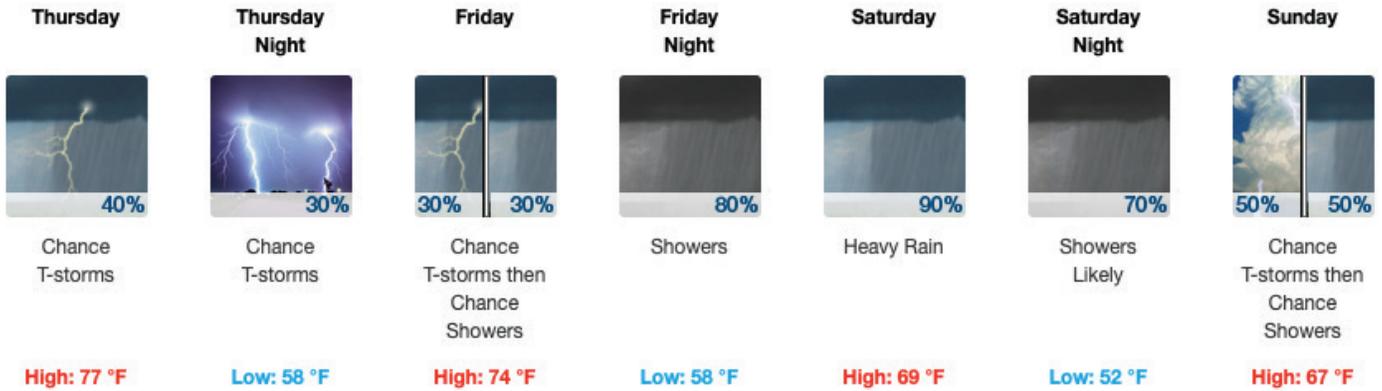
Thursday, Sept. 21, 2023 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 089 ~ 17 of 82

## Yesterday's Groton Weather Graphs



# Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, Sept. 21, 2023 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 089 ~ 18 of 82



## Active Pattern Continues!

September 21, 2023  
4:47 AM

### Probability of Precipitation

**Main Takeaways:**

- Multiple Rounds of Showers & Thunderstorms Over Next Few Days
- Severe Weather Potential Today, Friday & Saturday
- Rainfall Amounts Will Vary Widely Because of Convection

	9/21 Thu												9/22 Fri			9/23 Sat			9/24 Sun						
	6am	7am	8am	9am	10am	11am	12pm	1pm	2pm	3pm	4pm	5pm	6pm	12am	6am	12pm	6pm	12am	6am	12pm	6pm	12am	6am	12pm	6pm
Aberdeen	35	30	30	30	30	30	35	35	40	40	45	40	35	20	30	35	35	70	85	85	90	65	50	45	50
Britton	15	15	15	15	15	20	20	25	25	30	30	30	30	25	20	25	30	50	75	75	90	75	55	50	50
Brookings	15	15	10	10	10	10	15	15	15	10	10	5	5	5	10	20	40	60	80	65	85	70	50	40	45
Chamberlain	50	50	40	30	35	45	45	50	45	40	35	30	35	50	60	35	60	85	65	60	50	35	35	30	25
Clark	15	15	20	20	20	20	20	25	30	30	30	25	20	15	20	20	40	75	85	75	90	70	45	45	50
Eagle Butte	25	15	20	20	20	20	20	25	30	35	35	35	40	70	80	70	90	90	70	75	65	45	40	45	40
Ellendale	40	40	40	40	35	30	30	35	35	35	35	35	35	35	30	35	45	55	80	85	85	70	55	50	50
Eureka	50	45	40	40	35	35	35	40	40	45	45	40	40	35	60	50	65	85	90	85	85	60	50	45	50
Gettysburg	25	25	25	25	30	40	45	55	50	50	45	40	55	85	45	85	90	75	80	70	50	40	45	45	
Huron	50	45	35	30	25	20	25	25	30	30	25	20	15	20	30	60	85	85	80	85	50	40	40	40	
Kennebec	35	30	30	35	40	45	50	50	50	50	55	55	65	70	50	80	85	60	60	45	35	30	30	30	
McIntosh	30	30	25	25	25	25	25	25	30	30	35	35	40	65	85	60	85	95	85	80	80	60	55	40	45
Milbank	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	15	20	20	20	15	10	10	15	30	40	70	65	85	80	60	50	55	
Miller	35	35	35	35	35	35	40	45	45	50	45	40	30	60	40	65	90	75	80	75	50	35	40	40	
Mobridge	25	25	25	25	25	25	25	35	45	45	45	40	55	80	55	90	90	80	80	70	50	45	40	45	
Murdo	20	20	25	25	25	30	35	40	45	50	55	60	65	80	65	50	85	80	55	55	40	35	30	30	30
Pierre	25	20	25	25	25	35	45	50	55	55	50	50	65	75	55	85	85	55	65	55	40	25	35	40	
Redfield	30	30	30	30	30	30	30	35	35	40	40	35	35	20	35	35	50	85	90	85	85	55	45	45	45
Sisseton	10	10	10	10	15	15	15	20	20	25	25	25	25	15	10	20	30	40	70	70	85	80	60	55	55
Watertown	5	10	10	10	15	15	20	25	25	30	30	25	15	10	10	20	35	60	80	75	90	75	50	50	50
Webster	10	10	15	15	15	15	20	25	35	35	35	25	15	15	20	30	55	80	75	90	75	55	50	50	
Wheaton	10	5	5	5	5	5	5	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	15	20	35	60	65	80	80	60	55	55	



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

National Weather Service  
Aberdeen, SD

We continue to monitor a broad weather system that will help generate multiple period of precipitation over the course of the next few days. This comes with the potential for severe weather as well.

# Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, Sept. 21, 2023 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 089 ~ 19 of 82

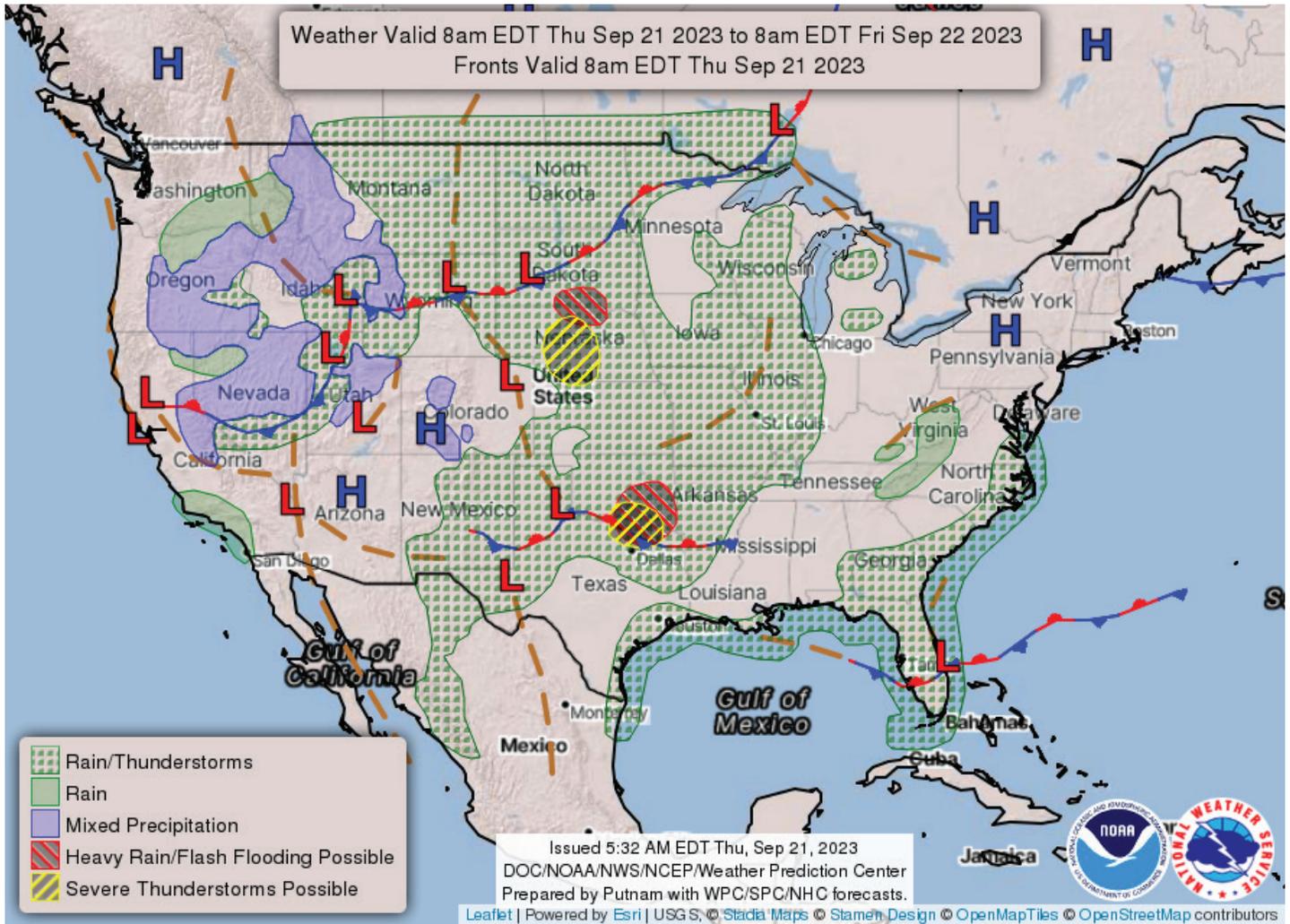
## Yesterday's Groton Weather

**High Temp: 85 °F at 5:01 PM**  
**Low Temp: 56 °F at 7:34 AM**  
**Wind: 12 mph at 10:56 AM**  
**Precip: : 0.00**

Day length: 21 hours, 17 minutes

## Today's Info

Record High: 99 in 1937  
Record Low: 22 in 1893  
Average High: 73  
Average Low: 45  
Average Precip in Sept.: 1.40  
Precip to date in Sept.: 0.57  
Average Precip to date: 17.74  
Precip Year to Date: 19.16  
Sunset Tonight: 7:34:06 PM  
Sunrise Tomorrow: 7:18:02 AM



# Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, Sept. 21, 2023 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 089 ~ 20 of 82

## Today in Weather History

September 21, 1960: In the morning hours of September 21st, lightning struck and caused structural damage to a home in Clear Lake, Deuel County. Lightning also hit a home in Clark in Clark County, and two telephone poles near Milbank in Grant County. Power was also interrupted for a short time by lightning near Britton.

1894: A late season severe weather outbreak occurred across northwest Iowa, south central Minnesota and southwestern Wisconsin during the late evening hours. Several communities were impacted by this outbreak with an estimated 55 to 65 deaths, and in additional 300 injuries. The strongest tornado was an estimated F5, which tore through the counties of Kossuth, Hancock, Winnebago in Iowa, and Faribault in Minnesota.

1894 - A heavy chicken house, sixteen by sixteen feet in area, was picked up by a tornado and wedged between two trees. The hens were found the next day sitting on their eggs in the chicken house, with no windows broken, as though nothing had happened. (The Weather Channel)

1924: A couple of tornadoes, one rated F4 and the other F5, tore paths of devastation through Eau Claire, Clark, and Taylor Counties in Wisconsin. The death toll was 18 and 50 people were injured.

1938 - A great hurricane smashed into Long Island and bisected New England causing a massive forest blowdown and widespread flooding. Winds gusted to 186 mph at Blue Hill MA, and a storm surge of nearly thirty feet caused extensive flooding along the coast of Rhode Island. The hurricane killed 600 persons and caused 500 million dollars damage. The hurricane, which lasted twelve days, destroyed 275 million trees. Hardest hit were Massachusetts, Connecticut, Rhode Island and Long Island NY. The "Long Island Express" produced gargantuan waves with its 150 mph winds, waves which smashed against the New England shore with such force that earthquake-recording machines on the Pacific coast clearly showed the shock of each wave. (David Ludlum) (The Weather Channel)

1954 - The temperature at Deeth, NV, soared from a morning low of 12 degrees to a high of 87 degrees, a record daily warm-up for the state. (The Weather Channel)

1987 - Tropical Storm Emily, which formed in the Caribbean the previous afternoon, caused considerable damage to the banana industry of Saint Vincent in the Windward Islands. Unseasonably hot weather continued in Florida and the western U.S. Redding CA and Red Bluff CA, with record highs of 108 degrees, tied for honors as the hot spot in the nation. (The National Weather Summary)

1988 - Thunderstorms produced high winds and locally heavy rain in the southwestern U.S. One thunderstorm in west Texas produced wind gusts to 86 mph at Dell City completely destroying an airport hangar. A Cessna 150 aircraft housed within the hangar was flipped over and snapped in two. Thunderstorms produced large hail in east central Utah, while snow blanketed some of the higher elevations of the state. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1989 - Hurricane Hugo slammed into the South Carolina coast about 11 PM, making landfall near Sullivan's Island. Hurricane Hugo was directly responsible for thirteen deaths, and indirectly responsible for twenty-two others. A total of 420 persons were injured in the hurricane, and damage was estimated at eight billion dollars, including two billion dollars damage to crops. Sustained winds reached 85 mph at Folly Beach SC, with wind gusts as high as 138 mph. Wind gusts reached 98 mph at Charleston, and 109 mph at Shaw AFB. The biggest storm surge occurred in the McClellanville and Bulls Bay area of Charleston County, with a storm surge of 20.2 feet reported at Seewee Bay. Shrimp boats were found one half mile inland at McClellanville. (National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

Daily Devotionals

## Seeds of Hope

### THE VALUE OF HARD TIMES

My mother was a most wonderful Christian, always teaching her children by example. She taught Sunday school, child evangelism classes, ladies Bible study groups, and weekly prayer services for missionaries. Each Thursday was set aside as a day of fasting and prayer.

I remember overhearing her prayer on one occasion. She was praying for her children: "Oh God," she cried, "don't ever let my children have an easy life. Let them experience sorrow and suffering, pain and problems, otherwise, they will not need to depend on you."

That prayer shaped all of us children. It has given us a heart for the broken-in-heart. As a result of her prayers, when we see the tears of others we want to dry their eyes because we can understand their pain. When others go through a time of grief, we can identify with them because we've been there. When others are in need, it motivates us to help them because we have been without. When we see the unsaved, we are encouraged to pray: Lord what can I do to win them to Christ.

We must also remember that Jesus went through these very same experiences. He was beaten and spit upon, abandoned and betrayed, went through hours of excruciating pain - even death itself. Now, in heaven, He remembers these feelings and through His ever sufficient grace will give us hope, help, and healing. He's been where we are and therefore understands our needs.

Prayer: We are grateful, Father, that You know, through experience, what we go through in our hours of pain and suffering. Thank You for knowing and understanding us. In Jesus' Name, Amen.

Scripture For Today: He said to his disciples, "The harvest is great, but the workers are few. So pray to the Lord who is in charge of the harvest; ask him to send more workers into his fields." Matthew 9:36-38



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

# Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, Sept. 21, 2023 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 089 ~ 22 of 82

## 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

# Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, Sept. 21, 2023 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 089 ~ 23 of 82

## The Groton Independent Printed & Mailed Weekly Edition

### Subscription Form

All prices listed include 6.5% Sales Tax

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

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

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Mailing Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_

State, Zip Code \_\_\_\_\_

E-mail \_\_\_\_\_

Phone Number \_\_\_\_\_

Mail Completed Form to:

Groton Independent

P.O. Box 34

Groton, SD 57445-0034

or scan and email to [paperpaul@grotonsd.net](mailto:paperpaul@grotonsd.net)

## Groton Daily Independent

[www.397news.com](http://www.397news.com)

### Subscription Form

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

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

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Mailing Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_

State, Zip Code \_\_\_\_\_

Phone Number \_\_\_\_\_

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

E-mail \_\_\_\_\_

Password \_\_\_\_\_

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

[paypal.me/paperpaul](https://paypal.me/paperpaul)



# Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, Sept. 21, 2023 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 089 ~ 24 of 82



## WINNING NUMBERS

### MEGA MILLIONS

WINNING NUMBERS:  
09.19.23

6 9 13 29 66 24

MegaPlier: 2x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:  
**\$205,000,000**

NEXT 1 Days 16 Hrs 59  
DRAW: Mins 18 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

### LOTTO AMERICA

WINNING NUMBERS:  
09.20.23

2 16 27 32 46 3

All Star Bonus: 3x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:  
**\$2,250,000**

NEXT 2 Days 16 Hrs 14  
DRAW: Mins 18 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

### LUCKY FOR LIFE

WINNING NUMBERS:  
09.20.23

8 9 20 31 47 11

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

NEXT 16 Hrs 29 Mins 19  
DRAW: Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

### DAKOTA CASH

WINNING NUMBERS:  
09.20.23

6 12 22 29 30

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:  
**\$50,000**

NEXT 2 Days 16 Hrs 29  
DRAW: Mins 19 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

### POWERBALL

DOUBLE PLAY

WINNING NUMBERS:  
09.20.23

6 20 29 46 68 8

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

NEXT 2 Days 16 Hrs 58  
DRAW: Mins 19 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

### POWERBALL

WINNING NUMBERS:  
09.20.23

16 27 59 62 63 23

Power Play: 3x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:  
**\$725,000,000**

NEXT 2 Days 16 Hrs 58  
DRAW: Mins 19 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

## News from the Associated Press

### **A grandmother seeks justice for Native Americans after thousands of unsolved deaths, disappearances**

By MATTHEW BROWN Associated Press

HARDIN, Mont. (AP) — Yolanda Fraser is back near a ragged chain-link fence, blinking through tears as she tidies up flowers and ribbons and a pinwheel twirls in the breeze at a makeshift roadside memorial in a small Montana town.

This is where the badly decomposed body of her granddaughter Kaysera Stops Pretty Places was found a few days after the 18-year-old went missing from a Native American reservation border town.

Four years later, there are still no answers about how the Native American teenager was killed. No named suspects. No arrests.

Fraser's grief is a common tale among Native Americans whose loved ones went missing, and she's turned her fight for justice into a leading role with other families working to highlight missing and slain Indigenous peoples' cases across the U.S. Despite some early success from a new U.S. government program aimed at the problem, most cases remain unsolved and federal officials have closed more than 300 potential cases due to jurisdictional conflicts and other issues.

As she told her granddaughter's story, Fraser pushed past tears and began listing other names among the thousands of disappearances and violent deaths of Native Americans and Alaska Natives.

"My nephew Victor, my nephew Dane Fisher, my close relative Christy Rose Woodenthigh — and it just goes on and on," Fraser said. "It just became obvious that there's a pattern to all of it. There's a line between these Native lives and other lives. ... But our voice is getting louder. People are listening."

U.S. officials share frustration over the unsolved cases, which critics say reflects racial injustice, particularly when compared to the media frenzy that erupts when a white woman goes missing.

"The patchwork of jurisdictions makes it so hard to get started on these investigations. And when you lose time, your chances of solving these cases goes down," said Assistant Secretary of Interior Bryan Newland. "It's frustrating for everybody."

Federal law enforcement has jurisdiction over most Native American reservations, which often don't have their own police force yet experience people going missing at several times the rate of the rest of the nation. That's set against a backdrop of historical injustices that include massacres of Native Americans by U.S. troops, forced assimilation of Native children in abusive boarding schools and the removal of many tribes from their traditional lands.

Members of several victims' families joined Fraser recently to dedicate a billboard honoring victims along Interstate 90 just outside the town of Hardin where Stops Pretty Places died. The billboard lists four dozen missing and slain people and other victims on the Northern Cheyenne and Crow reservations in southeastern Montana.

As the names were recited over a loudspeaker some relatives of victims cried as they leaned into one another.

"When we're divided we're not strong at all, but when we're together we're powerful," said Blossom Old Bull, whose son was killed in a car crash at 17 while being pursued by police who the family blames for his death.

With backing from nonprofit groups and her family, Fraser hopes to erect similar billboards near reservations across the U.S. She wants to highlight the names behind crime statistics and for local officials to be confronted with the victims within their community.

Stops Pretty Places died in Big Horn County, just outside the Crow Indian Reservation and about 55 miles (89 kilometers) from Muddy Creek, the Northern Cheyenne Reservation community where Fraser largely raised her. She'd been missing for several days when her body was found at the edge of a fenced-in yard next to a busy road, one door down from where she'd last been seen with some friends.

# Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, Sept. 21, 2023 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 089 ~ 26 of 82

For years, the family's pleas for an outside investigation went unanswered. This spring they learned county authorities had finally agreed to federal assistance. Agents from the Bureau of Indian Affairs' Missing and Murdered Unit are now reexamining the case.

The unit was formed in 2021 by U.S. Interior Secretary Deb Haaland amid rising criticism over the mis-handling of crimes involving Native Americans. Its agents have received 845 case referrals, primarily from victims' families, including 117 that were solved and 372 still under review or being investigated.

More than 350 were closed with no resolution, often because of jurisdictional issues that prevent federal agents from working off-reservation without an invitation from local authorities.

The Missing and Murdered Unit has only 15 agents, with plans to more than double that figure, officials said. Its caseload covers a small fraction of an estimated 4,200 unsolved cases nationwide among American Indians and Alaska Natives, with the victims ranging in age from toddlers to the elderly. Indigenous people account for 3.5% of missing persons in the U.S. — more than three times the percentage in the overall population, according to federal data.

Violent crimes reported against Native Americans more than tripled between 2010 and 2020, the Congressional Research Service reported in July, adding that improved reporting could have contributed to the increase.

"All these cases, they're really different but it all has to do with the same thing — the lack of law enforcement on reservations. the jurisdictional problems," said Melissa Lonebear, a member of the Northern Cheyenne Tribal Council.

Adding to the challenges is the lack of reliable data on crime in Native communities. That's beginning to change. In New Mexico, the FBI has compiled a database of about 200 missing Native Americans. And a first-of-its-kind report released in Alaska last month listed 280 missing Alaska Natives and American Indians.

Requests for federal intervention have poured into the Missing and Murdered Unit in recent months as President Joe Biden's administration held a series of field hearings to solicit testimony about the crisis from tribal members, families of victims and survivors.

People travelled hundreds of miles including from Washington state and South Dakota to attend the hearing in Billings, Montana, where they erected oversized photos of victims at the back of a convention center ballroom. They told the commission of loved ones who had been shot in the back, killed in their own home or gone missing and never seen again.

Grace Bulltail, a member of the commission and one of Stops Pretty Places' aunts, said it's hard for many native families to step forward.

"When we're speaking, we know that they don't care. We know they're just waiting for us to stop talking. They've heard it before," Bulltail said, adding this is why some families remain silent. "But when there is such an injustice and disregard for our lives, we have to speak out."

The hearing also acted as a networking event, providing families the opportunity to trade tips on pushing investigations forward and bringing more attention to this crisis. Fraser traces the rise of her own advocacy to the brutal 2015 killing of Hannah Harris, whose partially clothed body was found on the Northern Cheyenne Reservation rodeo grounds near the town of Lame Deer days after she disappeared.

Tribal members said the search for Harris was botched by authorities, allowing her body to become so badly decomposed it prevented prosecutors from pursuing murder charges against one of the suspects in the case. Harris' birthday, May 5, was later designated by Congress as the National Day of Awareness for Missing and Murdered Native Women and Girls, which has since been expanded to include all missing and murdered Indigenous peoples.

When Stops Pretty Places died, Fraser reached out to Harris' mother — Fraser's cousin -- for guidance. As the case dragged on their extended family began organizing rallies, letter-writing campaigns and other actions to spur further investigations.

"We're not going to stop. They get tired of us sometimes, but that's OK," Fraser said. "We want to make noise."

## Bill for preserving site of Wounded Knee massacre in South Dakota passes U.S. House

WASHINGTON (AP) — A bill to preserve the site of the Wounded Knee massacre — one of the deadliest massacres in U.S. history — cleared the U.S. House of Representatives on Wednesday.

The Wounded Knee Massacre Memorial and Sacred Site Act, introduced by Republican U.S. Rep. Dusty Johnson of South Dakota in May, passed the House by voice vote. The Senate is considering companion legislation.

More than 200 Native Americans — including children and elderly people — were killed at Wounded Knee in 1890. The bloodshed marked a seminal moment in the frontier battles the U.S. Army waged against tribes.

The Oglala Sioux and Cheyenne River Sioux Tribes joined together last year to purchase about 40 acres around the Wounded Knee National Historic Landmark in South Dakota to ensure the area was preserved as a sacred site. Leaders of both tribes testified in support of the House bill, which would put federal protections on the land on the Pine Ridge Indian Reservation.

Oglala Sioux Tribe President Frank Star Comes Out did not immediately return a phone message seeking comment on the bill's passage. In a previous statement, he said: "We must remember the sacrifices our ancestors have suffered for us. What happened at Wounded Knee is a reminder that we as a Oyate (people) have succumbed incredible odds to survive, so we must honor our ancestors by preserving the land for future generations to come."

A phone call to the Cheyenne River Sioux Tribe rang unanswered Wednesday. In a previous statement, Cheyenne River Sioux Chairman Ryman LeBeau and Wounded Knee survivor descendants Manny and Renee Iron Hawk said, "We stand in strong solidarity in memorializing this sacred site, that will be honored as such forever more."

In a speech on Monday on the House floor, Johnson described his trip to the Wounded Knee site in June, when he visited with descendants, including an elder whose grandmother survived the massacre.

"These are real people. These are real places. These are not ancient tales of a distant land," Johnson said.

The site has figured prominently in Indigenous people's struggles with the U.S. government. A private citizen, James Czywczynski, purchased the property in 1968. His family operated a trading post and museum there until 1973, when American Indian Movement protesters occupied the site, destroying both the post and Czywczynski's home.

The 71-day standoff that left two tribal members dead and a federal agent seriously wounded led to heightened awareness about Native American struggles and propelled a wider protest movement.

## This is what it's like to maintain the US nuclear arsenal

By TARA COPP Associated Press

KANSAS CITY NATIONAL SECURITY CAMPUS, Mo. (AP) — The U.S. will spend more than \$750 billion over the next decade to revamp nearly every part of its aging nuclear defenses. Officials say they simply can't wait any longer — some systems and parts are more than 50 years old.

For now, it's up to young military troops and government technicians across the U.S. to maintain the existing bombs and related components. The jobs are exacting and often require a deft touch. That's because many of the maintenance tasks must be performed by hand.

The Associated Press was granted rare access to nuclear missile bases and weapons production facilities to see how technicians keep the arsenal working while starting the government's biggest nuclear overhaul since the Cold War.

This is how they do it and who they are:

SHAKE, RATTLE AND ROLL

Because the U.S. no longer conducts explosive nuclear tests, scientists are not exactly sure how aging warhead plutonium cores affect detonation. For more common parts, like the plastics and metals and wiring inside each detonator, there are also questions about how the years spent in warheads might affect

# Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, Sept. 21, 2023 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 089 ~ 28 of 82

their integrity.

So workers at the nation's nuclear labs and production sites spend a lot of time stressing and testing parts to make sure they're safe. At the Energy Department's Kansas City National Security Campus, where warheads are maintained and made, technicians put components through endless tests. They heat weapons parts to extreme temperatures, drop them at speeds simulating a plane crash, shoot them at high velocity out of testing guns and rattle and shake them for hours on end. The tests are meant to simulate real world scenarios — from hurtling toward a target to being carted in an Air Force truck over a long, rutty road.

Technicians at the Los Alamos National Lab conduct similar evaluations, putting plutonium under extreme stress, heat and pressure to ensure it is stable enough to blow up as intended. Just like the technicians in Kansas City, the ones in Los Alamos closely examine the tested parts and radioactive material to see if they caused any damage.

## RELYING ON OLD BLUEPRINTS

The lack of explosive tests — banned since the George H.W. Bush administration by an international treaty — has also meant that the scientists have been forced to rely on warhead designs that were created many decades ago.

That's because each of those original designs had been certified, and the best way to certify a weapon works as designed is to blow it up. Changing even one component introduces uncertainty.

Further complicating matters — because the weapons are so old — many of those original manufacturers and contractors have gone out of business. That has forced the nation's nuclear labs to reverse engineer old parts, such as a peroxide that was used to treat warhead parts, but is no longer in production. So lab technicians are working to reinvent it.

Re-engineering parts is getting easier with advances in computer-aided design and 3D printing. Kansas City technicians are experimenting with 3D printers to create some warhead parts, such as a micro-honeycombed, rubbery layer that will serve as a cushion for a warhead radar systems.

## THE WORKERS ARE YOUNGER THAN THE WARHEADS

It's not unusual to see a 50-year-old warhead guarded or maintained by someone just out of high school, and ultimate custody of a nuclear weapon can fall on the shoulders of a service member who's just 23.

That is what happened on a recent afternoon in Montana at Malmstrom Air Force Base, where Senior Airman Jacob Deas signed a paper assuming responsibility for an almost 3,000-pound Minuteman III intercontinental ballistic missile warhead, as it was lifted out of the Bravo-9 silo and escorted back to base for work.

A sea swell of government retirements has meant that experience level in the civilian nuclear workforce has shifted dramatically. At the Kansas City campus, for example, just about 6% of the workforce has been there 30 years or more — and over 60% has been at the facility for five years or less.

That change has meant more women have joined the workforce, too. In the cavernous hallways between Kansas City's secured warhead workrooms are green and white nursing pods with a greeting: "Welcome mothers."

At Los Alamos, workers' uniform allowance now covers sports bras. Why? Because underwire bras were not compatible with the secured facilities' many layers of metal detection and radiation monitoring.

---

The Associated Press receives support for nuclear security coverage from the Carnegie Corporation of New York and Outrider Foundation. The AP is solely responsible for all content. Del Wilber is the Washington investigations editor for the AP.

## Inside the delicate art of maintaining America's aging nuclear weapons

By TARA COPP Associated Press

KANSAS CITY NATIONAL SECURITY CAMPUS, Mo. (AP) — In an ultra-sterile room at a secure factory in Kansas City, U.S. government technicians refurbish the nation's nuclear warheads. The job is exacting: Each warhead has thousands of springs, gears and copper contacts that must work in conjunction to set off a nuclear explosion.

Eight hundred miles (about 1,300 kilometers) away in New Mexico, workers in a steel-walled vault have an equally delicate task. Wearing radiation monitors, safety goggles and seven layers of gloves, they practice shaping new warhead plutonium cores — by hand.

And at nuclear weapons bases across the country, troops as young as 17 keep 50-year-old warheads working until replacements are ready. A hairline scratch on a warhead's polished black cone could send the bomb off course.

The Associated Press was granted rare access to key parts of the highly classified nuclear supply chain and got to watch technicians and engineers tackle the difficult job of maintaining an aging nuclear arsenal. Those workers are about to get a lot busier. The U.S. will spend more than \$750 billion over the next 10 years replacing almost every component of its nuclear defenses, including new stealth bombers, submarines and ground-based intercontinental ballistic missiles in the country's most ambitious nuclear weapons effort since the Manhattan Project.

It's been almost eight decades since a nuclear weapon has been fired in war. But military leaders warn that such peace may not last. They say the U.S. has entered an uneasy era of global threats that includes a nuclear weapons buildup by China and Russia's repeat threats to use a nuclear bomb in Ukraine. They say that America's aged weapons need to be replaced to ensure they work.

"What we want to do is preserve our way of life without fighting major wars," said Marvin Adams, director of weapons programs for the Department of Energy. "Nothing in our toolbox really works to deter aggressors unless we have that foundation of the nuclear deterrent."

By treaty the U.S. maintains 1,550 active nuclear warheads, and the government plans to modernize them all. At the same time, technicians, scientists and military missile crews must ensure the older weapons keep running until the new ones are installed.

The project is so ambitious that watchdogs warn that the government may not meet its goals. The program has also drawn criticism from non-proliferation advocates and experts who say the current arsenal, though timeworn, is sufficient to meet U.S. needs. Upgrading it will also be expensive, they say.

"They are going to have extreme difficulty meeting these deadlines," said Daryl Kimball, executive director of the Arms Control Association, a non-partisan group focused on nuclear and conventional weapons control. "And the costs are going to go up."

He cautioned that the sweeping upgrades could also have the undesired effect of pushing Russia and China to improve and expand their arsenals.

### WHERE IT BEGINS

The core of every nuclear warhead is a hollow, globe-shaped plutonium pit made by engineers at the Energy Department's lab in Los Alamos, New Mexico, birthplace of the atom bomb. Many of the current pits in use come from the 1970s and 80s. That can be problematic, because there's a lot about plutonium's aging process that scientists still don't understand.

The key radioactive atom in the plutonium pit has a half life of 24,000 years, which is the amount of time it would take roughly half of the radioactive atoms present to decay. That would suggest the weapons should be viable for years to come. But the plutonium decay is still enough to cause concern that it could affect how a pit explodes.

President George H.W. Bush signed an order in the 1990s banning underground nuclear tests, and the U.S. has not detonated pits to update data on their degradation since. When the last tests were performed, they provided data on pits that were at most about two decades old. That generation of pits is

# Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, Sept. 21, 2023 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 089 ~ 30 of 82

now pushing past 50.

Bob Webster, deputy director of weapons at Los Alamos, said scientists have relied on computer models to determine how well such old pits might work, but "everything we're doing is extrapolating," he said.

That uncertainty has pushed the department to restart pit production. The U.S. no longer produces man-made plutonium. Instead, old plutonium is essentially refurbished into new pits.

This task takes place inside PF-4, a highly classified building at Los Alamos that's surrounded by layers of armed guards, heavy steel doors and radiation monitors. Inside, workers handle the plutonium inside steel glove boxes, which allow them to clean and process the plutonium without being exposed to deadly radiation.

In the final production steps, a lone employee in the vault takes the almost-completed pit into both of her gloved hands and shapes it into its final form.

"Things have to fit a certain way, and everything is by touch, by feel," said the Los Alamos employee, who the AP has agreed not to name because she is one of only a handful of people in the U.S., and the only female, who performs this sensitive task.

For about the last 10 years technicians have been practicing on "test" pits that aren't ready for the stockpile. The U.S. is planning to fully recycle its first weapon-ready pit next year — and quickly increase annual production to as many as 80 new pits.

The painstaking and hazardous work has led a government watchdog to express doubts about whether the U.S. government can meet that goal.

"The United States has not regularly manufactured plutonium pits since 1989," the Government Accountability Office noted in a January 2023 report, adding that the Energy Department's National Nuclear Security Administration has provided "limited assurance that it would be able to produce sufficient numbers of pits."

Webster has been at Los Alamos since Ronald Reagan was president. He could have retired years ago, but has remained to shepherd the first new plutonium pits through to production. The lab is starting to feel a bit like it did in the 1980s, during the Cold War, he said. Los Alamos scientists are having intense discussions about weapon design — how much each can weigh, its explosive punch, how far it must travel.

"We need our nation to be back making pits," Webster said. "We just have to be able to do that."

## THE WARHEAD AND THE WRISTWATCH

Completed pits are protected and detonated by an outer warhead layer that is built at the Energy Department's Kansas City National Security Campus. Inside that three-story windowless factory, workers restore and test those warhead parts, work that a government watchdog said required "a great deal of precision manufacturing to exacting specifications."

There are thousands of tiny parts inside each warhead, so steady hands are key. That's why technicians go through a skills assessment that includes disassembling and assembling a mechanical wristwatch.

"Everything is done under a microscope with tweezers," said Molly Hadfield, a spokeswoman for the Kansas City plant. "And it's pass (or) fail. Either the watch works or it doesn't work."

This factory would be busy even if an overhaul wasn't underway. All warheads have regular maintenance requirements. Their plastics age, and metal gears and wiring are weakened by the years and by exposure to radiation.

The factory is also working on warheads for the B-21 Raider, a futuristic stealth bomber, while also supporting the Sentinel, a new intercontinental ballistic missile and on warheads for a new class of submarines.

"There's a huge modernization effort going on," said Eric Wollerman, who manages the Kansas City complex for the Department of Energy through its federal contract with Honeywell. "If you're going to update the delivery systems, you would also then update the warheads in the missiles and the bombs that are with them."

To meet the demand for both maintenance and modernization, the facilities have gone on a hiring spree. The Kansas City plant has 6,700 employees, a 40% jump since 2018, with plans to add several hundred more. The Los Alamos lab has added more than 4,000 employees in that same time frame.

## OLD MISSILES, YOUNG TROOPS

The U.S. nuclear arsenal reveals its age each time troops fix a missile. That can occur as often as twice

# Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, Sept. 21, 2023 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 089 ~ 31 of 82

a week, but only if the equally old tools, or the truck carrying the tools, or the truck needed to transport the missile itself isn't also broken down, which is often.

That is why Airman 1st Class Jonathan Marrs was dragging a second 225-pound (102-kilogram) aluminum tow behind him toward a concrete silo in the midst of vast Montana farmland on a recent hot afternoon.

Marrs, 21, and other airmen used a tow and wrenches the size of human femurs to dislodge silo Bravo-9's 110-ton blast door. Underneath its cement and steel cover was a 70,000-pound (31,750-kilogram) nuclear missile; the missile's warhead tip needed to be lifted out and trucked to base for work.

Except the blast door wouldn't budge. The first 225-pound (102-kilogram) tow, or mule, as the troops call it, couldn't generate the power needed to pull back the door.

After attaching a second mule, Marrs and the other airman succeeded in pulling the door free, releasing scores of mice.

The maintainers next unfastened the warhead from the missile and placed it in a specialized truck. It's then escorted by Air Force security forces back to a heavily guarded hangar at Montana's Malmstrom Air Force Base.

Marrs and the other young airmen — known as maintainers — are closely monitored as they handle nuclear weapons, U.S. Air Force officials said.

"If I under-inflate a basketball at the gym, no one will care," said Chief Master Sgt. Andrew Zahm, the maintenance group senior enlisted leader at F.E. Warren Air Force Base. "If I did something with one of these weapons, the president would know about it in 45 minutes."

The workload is already a challenge for these troops, and there aren't many easy ways to relieve it.

While the private-sector managed Los Alamos and Kansas City plants have hired personnel to meet the rising workload, the military has struggled to fill jobs and retain experienced technicians. Instead, the military must do more with fewer maintainers, and for much less money than those troops could make as government contractors.

"Once you start showing a staff sergeant the \$80,000" they could make in the private sector, they are going to take it, Zahm said.

Zahm is a rarity. While many have retired or left for private industry, he's remained to keep serving the military's nuclear mission. With the U.S. so close to its first new weapon, he's driven by a desire to see it through. "In 21 years I've never seen a new thing," Zahm said. "I want to see the new stuff."

Copp reported from Los Alamos National Laboratory, New Mexico; the Kansas City National Security Campus, Missouri; Malmstrom Air Force Base, Montana and F.E. Warren Air Force Base, Wyoming.

The Associated Press receives support for nuclear security coverage from the Carnegie Corporation of New York and Outrider Foundation. The AP is solely responsible for all content. Del Wilber is the Washington investigations editor for the AP.

## Editorial Roundup: South Dakota

By The Associated Press undefined

Yankton Press & Dakotan. September 18, 2023.

Editorial: South Dakota University System On The Rebound

South Dakota's public university system seems to be on the rebound.

That could be one takeaway after the Board of Regents released its system-wide fall 2023 numbers last week. Overall, the system saw its second straight year of growth, this time with total enrollment rising 2% from a year ago with 34,370 students.

It's a cautiously encouraging trajectory for the state system, which struggled to move the enrollment needle much for a few years and also had to deal with issues related to the COVID-19 pandemic.

A crucial statistic in the regents' report included the number of first-time freshmen in the state, which rose 2.6% from a year ago and was up more than 6% from 2021. That might suggest that the issues

# Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, Sept. 21, 2023 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 089 ~ 32 of 82

created in the early years of the pandemic might be fading.

Locally, the University of South Dakota reported 9,868 students, which was up a modest .1% from a year ago but nevertheless marked the third straight year of rising enrollment. The school also welcomed 1,367 first-time freshmen, up 2.6% from last year and its largest freshman class since 2018.

USD's story behind the numbers reflects what is going on at other schools. They are reaching out to more in-state students while also increasing the number of students both from out of state and internationally.

The latter is particularly important to USD officials. The school enrolled 606 international students, an increase for the third straight year.

"I'm incredibly proud of the vibrant global community we have cultivated at USD, and we are glad to provide a welcoming home to so many students from across the world," USD President Sheila Gestring said. "Adding global perspectives to our campus not only benefits our students, but it is also an asset to our state's businesses, international trade and enhancing innovation and competitiveness when these students graduate."

Also, USD saw its largest incoming law school class in more than a decade, which is an important boost to that program.

"We increased class size while also increasing entering credentials, proving that we can get better and bigger at the same time," Dean Neil Fulton said.

Another solid sign for the system is the number of students returning. For example, South Dakota State University, the state's largest university, reported an 83% retention rate, which topped the record of 81% set in 2020. Again, this may be an indication that schools are moving past pandemic issues.

The system is also demonstrating the importance of innovation, and there is no better example than Dakota State University. With its expanding cybersecurity program, DSU saw a solid 8.3% hike in enrollment. Also, USD saw a 20% increase in its new graduate computer science program and an 18% rise in the artificial intelligence (AI) program.

Overall, the snapshot of the report seems to indicate the state system is finding its bearings not only post-pandemic but also in light of the changing dynamics of students in the 2020s. Broadening the system's reach while diversifying its offerings is producing promising returns. It's a vital trend that needs to continue.

END

## Russia strikes cities from east to west Ukraine, starting fires and killing at least 2

By ILLIA NOVIKOV Associated Press

KYIV, Ukraine (AP) — Russian missiles pounded cities across Ukraine early Thursday morning, according to authorities, sparking fires, killing at least two people and trapping others under rubble, and Ukrainian ally Poland said it would stop providing weapons amid a trade dispute.

The early morning missile attack on what's known as the International Day of Peace was Russia's largest in over a month, and came amid the United Nations General Assembly summit in New York, where Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy had denounced Russia as "a terrorist state."

Zelenskyy, who delivered a speech presenting a Ukrainian "peace formula," was to meet Thursday with President Joe Biden and congressional leaders in Washington with an additional \$24 billion aid package hanging in the balance.

Poland, which has been a major supporter of Ukraine, said it would stop transferring its own weapons to its neighbor as it works to modernize its own military, but denied the decision was linked to a simmering dispute over a temporary ban on Ukrainian grain imports.

Polish Prime Minister Mateusz Morawiecki said the decision would not affect NATO and U.S. weapons transfers through Poland.

"We are no longer transferring any weapons to Ukraine because now we will arm ourselves with the most modern weapons," he said in an interview on the private TV broadcaster Polsat News late Wednesday.

A dispute about whether Ukrainian grain should be allowed to enter the domestic markets of Poland and

other European Union countries has pushed the tight relationship between Kyiv and Warsaw to its lowest point since Russia invaded Ukraine last year.

Morawiecki stressed that Poland would defend its economic interests, but added that the dispute over grain imports would not hurt Ukraine's security.

"We are not going to risk the security of Ukraine," he said. Poland has transferred large amounts of its older weapons to Ukraine and has been upgrading its own inventory with new equipment purchased from South Korea and other countries.

In the southern Ukrainian city of Kherson, near the front lines, two people were killed Thursday and at least five injured after a strike hit a residential building, said regional Governor Oleksand Prokudin.

Seven people were injured in Kyiv, including a 9-year-old girl, reported Mayor Vitalii Klitschko, and some residential and commercial buildings were damaged.

Marharyta Moldokova, 76, who had taken shelter on the floor of her Kyiv home just before hearing the explosion and sound of her window shattering, denounced Russian President Vladimir Putin.

"God, we can't wait for someone to shoot him," she said. "Everything is not enough for him ... What does he need?"

The Ukrainian Air Force said it had intercepted 36 of 43 cruise missiles launched deep into Ukraine. Closer to the the front lines, Kherson was struck with S-300 missiles and Kharkiv was likely targeted with shorter-range weapons.

At least six strikes damaged civilian infrastructure in the Slobidskyi district of Kharkiv, said regional Governor Oleh Syniehubov. The city's mayor added that two people had been hospitalized.

At least 10 people were injured and at least one person was rescued from under rubble in Cherkasy, in central Ukraine, according to Ihor Klymenko, minister of internal affairs of Ukraine. Up to 23 people may still be buried under rubble after the morning strike, said Cherkasy regional Governor Ihor Taburets. Rescue services were working to clear the debris.

An industrial zone was hit in the western region of Lviv, damaging buildings and starting a fire, but no information on casualties was immediately available, Klymenko added.

Regional Governor Vitalii Koval reported strikes in the city of Rivne in the northwest region of the same name, without immediately providing details.

Russia's Ministry of Defense said 22 drones were taken down overnight by air defense systems, 19 above Russian-annexed Crimea and three others in the Kursk, Belgorod and Oryol regions near Ukraine. The defense ministry did not say whether there were any casualties.

---

Associated Press journalist Vanessa Gera in Warsaw, Poland contributed to this report.

---

For more coverage of the war in Ukraine, visit: <https://apnews.com/hub/russia-ukraine>

## **Talks have opened on the future of Nagorno-Karabakh as Azerbaijan claims full control of the region**

Representatives from Nagorno-Karabakh and the Azerbaijan government are meeting for talks Thursday to discuss the future of the breakaway region Azerbaijan claims to fully control following a military offensive this week.

Nagorno-Karabakh authorities and the Azerbaijan State News Agency say the talks Thursday between regional leaders and the Baku government will focus on Nagorno-Karabakh's "reintegration" into Azerbaijan.

The talks come after local Armenian forces in Nagorno-Karabakh agreed to lay down their weapons following the latest outbreak of fighting in the decades-long separatist conflict.

According to the Azerbaijan State News Agency, a delegation from Nagorno-Karabakh, accompanied by Russian peacekeepers, arrived for talks in the Azerbaijani city of Yevlakh which is about 100 km (62 miles) north of Stepanakert, Nagorno-Karabakh's regional capital.

# Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, Sept. 21, 2023 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 089 ~ 34 of 82

Authorities in the ethnic Armenian region that has run its affairs without international recognition since fighting broke out in the early 1990s declared around midday Wednesday that local self-defense forces will disarm and disband under a Russia-mediated cease-fire.

Azerbaijan President Ilham Aliyev trumpeted victory in a televised address to the nation, saying that his country's military had restored the region's sovereignty.

On Thursday, Russia's Ministry of Defense reported that about 5,000 civilians from the region had been evacuated to a camp operated by Russian peacekeepers to avoid the fighting. Many others gathered Wednesday at the airport in Stepanakert, hoping to flee the region.

The U.N. Security Council scheduled an urgent meeting Thursday on the Azerbaijani offensive, at the request of France.

On Tuesday, the Azerbaijan army unleashed an artillery barrage and drone attacks against outnumbered and undersupplied pro-Armenian forces, which have been weakened by a blockade of the region in the southern Caucasus Mountains that is recognized internationally as being part of Azerbaijan.

Nagorno-Karabakh human rights ombudsman Gegham Stepanyan said at least 200 people, including 10 civilians, were killed and more than 400 others were wounded in the fighting. He said earlier that children were among the dead and wounded. The figures could not immediately be independently verified.

The hostilities worsened an already grim humanitarian situation for residents who have endured food and medicine shortages for months as Azerbaijan enforced a blockade of the road connecting Nagorno-Karabakh to Armenia.

Armenian Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan said in a speech to the nation that fighting decreased following the truce, emphasizing that Russian peacekeepers in Nagorno-Karabakh are fully responsible for residents' security.

Pashinyan, who has previously recognized Azerbaijan's sovereignty over Nagorno-Karabakh, said Armenia wouldn't be drawn into the fighting. He said his government didn't take part in negotiating the deal, but "has taken note" of the decision made by the region's separatist authorities.

He again denied any Armenian troops were in the region, even though separatist authorities said they were in Nagorno-Karabakh and would pull out as part of the truce.

Protesters rallied in the Armenian capital of Yerevan for a second straight day Wednesday, blocking streets and demanding that authorities defend Armenians in Nagorno-Karabakh.

White House national security spokesman John Kirby said the U.S. was "deeply concerned" about Azerbaijan's military actions. "We have repeatedly emphasized the use of force is absolutely unacceptable," he said, adding that the U.S. was closely watching the worsening humanitarian situation in Nagorno-Karabakh.

Azerbaijan's move to reclaim control over Nagorno-Karabakh raised concerns that a full-scale war in the region could resume between the two neighbors, which have been locked in a struggle over Nagorno-Karabakh since a separatist war there ended in 1994.

During another war that lasted for six weeks in 2020, Azerbaijan reclaimed broad swaths of Nagorno-Karabakh and adjacent territories that were held for decades by Armenian forces. More than 6,700 people died in the fighting, which ended with a Russian-brokered peace agreement. Moscow deployed about 2,000 peacekeeping troops to the region.

The conflict has long drawn in powerful regional players, including Russia and Turkey. While Russia took on a mediating role, Turkey threw its weight behind longtime ally Azerbaijan.

Russia has been Armenia's main economic partner and ally since the 1991 collapse of the Soviet Union and has a military base in the country.

Pashinyan, however, has been increasingly critical of Moscow's role, emphasizing its failure to protect Nagorno-Karabakh and arguing that Armenia needs to turn to the West to ensure its security. Moscow, in turn, has expressed dismay about Pashinyan's pro-Western tilt.

The Kremlin said Russian President Vladimir Putin spoke by phone with Pashinyan on Wednesday, welcoming the deal to end the hostilities and start talks.

Russia's Defense Ministry said some of its peacekeepers were killed Wednesday, although it didn't say how many and whether it happened before or after the start of the cease-fire. The ministry said the

peacekeeping contingent had evacuated more than 3,100 civilians.

The separatists' quick capitulation reflected their weakness following the Armenian forces' defeat in the 2020 war and the loss of the only road linking the region to Armenia.

While many in Armenia blamed Russia for the defeat of the separatists, Moscow pointed to Pashinyan's own recognition of Nagorno-Karabakh as part of Azerbaijan.

"Undoubtedly, Karabakh is Azerbaijan's internal business," said Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov. "Azerbaijan is acting on its own territory, which was recognized by the leadership of Armenia."

French President Emmanuel Macron spoke with Aliyev and "condemned Azerbaijan's decision to use force ... at the risk of worsening the humanitarian crisis in Nagorno-Karabakh and compromising ongoing efforts to achieve a fair and lasting peace," the French presidential office said.

Macron "stressed the need to respect" the cease-fire and "to provide guarantees on the rights and security of the people of Karabakh, in line with international law."

Azerbaijan's presidential aide Hikmet Hajiyev said Baku was "ready to listen to the Armenian population of Karabakh regarding their humanitarian needs."

In announcing its military operation Tuesday, Azerbaijan aired a long list of grievances, accusing pro-Armenian forces of attacking its positions, planting land mines and engaging in sabotage.

Even though Aliyev insisted the Azerbaijani army struck only military facilities during the fighting, separatist officials in Nagorno-Karabakh said Stepanakert and other areas came under "intense shelling."

Significant damage was visible in the city, with shop windows blown out and vehicles apparently hit by shrapnel.

The Azerbaijani Prosecutor General's Office said Armenian forces fired at Shusha, a city in Nagorno-Karabakh under Azerbaijan's control, killing one civilian.

## Man set to be executed for 1996 slaying of University of Oklahoma dance student

By SEAN MURPHY Associated Press

McALESTER, Okla. (AP) — Oklahoma is set to execute an inmate Thursday morning for the 1996 slaying of a University of Oklahoma dance student, a case that went unsolved for years until DNA from the crime scene matched a man serving time for burglary.

Anthony Sanchez, 44, is scheduled to receive a three-drug injection at 10 a.m. CDT at the Oklahoma State Penitentiary in McAlester. He took the unusual step earlier this year of opting not to present a clemency application to the state's Pardon and Parole Board, which many viewed as his last chance to have his life spared. His former attorneys blamed Sanchez's decision on his spiritual adviser, the Rev. Jeff Hood, an anti-death penalty advocate who has befriended death row inmates across the country.

Sanchez's new attorney, Eric Allen of Columbus, Ohio, has requested a stay of execution in federal court, claiming he needs more time to go through boxes of evidence in the case. So far, that request has been rejected by a federal judge and is pending before the U.S. Supreme Court.

Sanchez was convicted of raping and murdering 21-year-old Juli Busken, an Arkansas native who had just completed her last semester when she was abducted on Dec. 20, 1996, from the parking lot of her Norman apartment complex. Her body was found that evening near a lake in far southeast Oklahoma City. She had been bound, raped and shot in the head.

Busken had performed as a ballerina in several dance performances during her tenure at OU and was memorialized at the campus with a dance scholarship in her name at the College of Fine Arts.

Years later, Sanchez was serving time for a burglary conviction when DNA from sperm on Busken's clothing at the crime scene was matched to him. He was convicted and sentenced to die in 2006.

Sanchez has long maintained his innocence and did so again in a phone call to The Associated Press earlier this year from death row. "That is fabricated DNA," Sanchez said. "That is false DNA. That is not my DNA. I've been saying that since day one."

He told AP he declined to ask for clemency because even when the five-member Pardon and Parole Board takes the rare step of recommending it, Gov. Kevin Stitt has been unlikely to grant it. "I've sat in my cell and I've watched inmate after inmate after inmate get clemency and get denied clemency," Sanchez said. "Either way, it doesn't go well for the inmates."

Oklahoma Attorney General Gentner Drummond maintained the DNA evidence unequivocally links Sanchez to Busken's killing.

A sample of Anthony Sanchez's DNA "was identical to the profiles developed from sperm on Ms. Busken's panties and leotard," Drummond wrote last month in a letter to a state representative who had inquired about Sanchez's conviction. Drummond added there was no indication either profile was mixed with DNA from any other individual and that the odds of randomly selecting an individual with the same genetic profile were 1 in 94 trillion among Southwest Hispanics.

"There is no conceivable doubt that Anthony Sanchez is a brutal rapist and murderer who is deserving of the state's harshest punishment," Drummond said in a recent statement.

A private investigator hired by an anti-death penalty group contends the DNA evidence may have been contaminated and that an inexperienced lab technician miscommunicated the strength of the evidence to a jury.

Former Cleveland County District Attorney Tim Kuykendall, who was the county's top prosecutor when Sanchez was tried, has said that while the DNA evidence was the most compelling at trial, there was other evidence linking Sanchez to the killing, including ballistic evidence and a shoe print found at the crime scene.

"I know from spending a lot of time on that case, there is not one piece of evidence that pointed to anyone other than Anthony Sanchez," Kuykendall said recently. "I don't care if a hundred people or a thousand people confess to killing Juli Busken."

Oklahoma resumed carrying out the death penalty in 2021, ending a six-year moratorium brought on by concerns about its execution methods. The state had one of the nation's busiest death chambers until problems arose in 2014 and 2015. Richard Glossip was hours away from being executed in September 2015 when prison officials realized they received the wrong lethal drug. It was later learned the same wrong drug had been used to execute an inmate in January 2015.

## **Inside a Ukrainian brigade's battle 'through hell' to reclaim a village on the way to Bakhmut**

By MSTYSLAV CHERNOV and LORI HINNANT Associated Press

ANDRIIVKA, Ukraine (AP) — The Russian bullet struck the sergeant just above the left ear. The leader of the Ukrainian platoon was down. Headquarters radioed a battlefield promotion to the private who had called him "brother" — a man known as Courier.

Courier knew the platoon's orders were to move forward through the forest, on the road to Bakhmut. He hesitated for 30 seconds near his mortally wounded commander. Maybe a minute. Then he decided: There would be no turning back. "Forward!" he howled.

He fired toward a trench just ahead until he was sure the Russians inside would never shoot again. Then the men stumbled through the charred spindles of trees toward the village of Andriivka — the objective of the 3rd Assault Brigade since the start of Ukraine's counteroffensive this summer, about 6 miles (10 kilometers) south of the city of Bakhmut.

The sergeant, Gagarin, and other injured soldiers could only be evacuated after dark, because the Russians were also hunting downed Ukrainians. Days later, as he prepared for Gagarin's funeral, Courier predicted his own future, his pale eyes unfocused.

"This forest is taking our friends away, and this is the worst," he said. "And when I think about how far we still need to move forward ... most likely someday I will be the one to remain lying in the forest, and my friends will just go forward."

This stretch of dead forest — a couple dozen trees wide and a mile (2 kilometers) long — toward the equally dead village of Andriivka is one of countless like it on the road to Russian-controlled Bakhmut, which

# Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, Sept. 21, 2023 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 089 ~ 37 of 82

has now taken on huge symbolic significance in the Ukrainian counteroffensive. The Associated Press spent two weeks with the brigade for an intimate glimpse into the speed, direction and cost of the counteroffensive, through scenes witnessed in the forest and at rest, in helmet camera footage and drone video.

A lot rides on their progress. Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy is making his country's case to Washington and to the world this week for more money and more weapons, and must persuade his audience that the counteroffensive is working. The U.S. Congress is currently weighing President Joe Biden's request to provide as much as \$24 billion more in military and humanitarian aid.

In an interview with "60 Minutes," Zelenskyy acknowledged the counteroffensive was slow, but added, "It is important that we are moving forward every day and liberating territory." A study earlier this month by the Royal United Service Institute, a London-based think-tank, found that Ukrainian forces are averaging 700-1,200 meters of progress every five days. That gives Russian forces time to dig in and especially to mine territory as they pull back.

The 3rd Assault Brigade, composed entirely of volunteers and considered one of Ukraine's best and most experienced corps, has been fighting almost nonstop in the east since January, while less-experienced units received new training and modern weapons to fight in the south. The AP is identifying the men by their call-signs, which is both how they identify each other and a military requirement to report in-depth on the unit.

Bakhmut fell to Russia in May, largely due to waves of attacks from mercenary Wagner fighters, including prison conscripts thought to have died by the hundreds. Ukraine has been trying to reclaim it ever since, hoping to deal a major psychological blow to Russia.

But the soldiers sent to carry out the task are relying on largely Soviet-era armored vehicles and older weapons. In the past month, the 3rd Assault Brigade had only been able to move a mile (2 kilometers), crossing mines and booby-trapped trenches and dodging artillery, drone-launched grenades and Russian forces within shouting distance.

The questions now facing them were the same ones facing their country: Would they succeed, and at what cost?

Andriivka was their goal, as important as any strip of land in Ukraine. And on Sept. 6, the day Courier left his commander's body behind, he and his men took over a trash-strewn trench in the middle of the forest and held it for four full days. On either side of them were mined fields that once grew wheat and now sprout only craters.

During moments of rest, he leafed through a diary, written longhand by a Russian soldier: "I've been at war for four weeks already and I miss my mom," Courier read.

Courier asked one of the Russian prisoners who surrendered what he knew about the diary. The Russian replied, "I don't know. I just got here today."

Maybe the author was the Russian whose body Courier propped up to protect himself from incoming fire. Or maybe he was one of the Russians who had shot Gagarin and been killed in turn a few minutes later. Courier didn't know.

But by then, Gagarin was dead. And the forest kept claiming others.

Shepherd, who was wounded in the leg in the morning and had to wait hours for evacuation from the battlefield, was a mask of pain. Chapa too. A grenade struck Spaniard's helmet, and the resulting head injury would leave him helpless. Gary had no obvious injuries but was so shell-shocked he could barely make it through a conversation.

Courier would go to western Ukraine and represent the platoon at Gagarin's funeral. Gagarin, ironically named for the Russian cosmonaut who was the first human in space, was buried in his hometown of Polonne, a 550-mile (900-kilometer) drive from the battlefield.

As military pallbearers walked uphill toward the churchyard, residents along the way stopped and knelt to honor the dead along flower-lined roads. One of the men carrying the casket remarked on the view from the village cemetery.

"I've done this 56 times," he said grimly. Social media feeds from the brigade show dozens of funeral

# Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, Sept. 21, 2023 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 089 ~ 38 of 82

announcements since the counteroffensive began.

Gagarin's mother sought out Courier, who was among the last to see her son alive. But he finds it hard to talk to civilians these days.

"I feel like there is a gap between civilians and us now," he said. "When the war is over, I will probably just leave to fight elsewhere."

For Courier, war is complicated. He says he enjoys the dopamine rush, when he leaves the "horrible grinder," comes back to headquarters and jumps down from the armored vehicle.

"You look at the sky and you look around, and you understand that you're alive and nothing can kill you," he said. "This is the moment. This is a feeling you cannot get anywhere else in life."

And yet he did not want to return to the strip of forest leading to Andriivka. His commanders ordered him to take 10 days' leave, a break for a fighter whose anguish they sensed despite his outward calm. He would take the time to go fishing and clear his head.

"Unfortunately, I'm only able to leave after going through hell," he said bitterly.

On the day of the funeral, Sept. 13, any man whole enough to fight was in the forest, including another sergeant in the platoon, Fedya. On Sept. 5, Fedya had been lightly wounded by a cluster munition, and the injury may have saved his life. Gagarin took his place in the assault, and that was the day he died.

The last push started on Sept. 14. Men from other depleted units from the 3rd Assault Brigade joined in for the usual three- to four-day stint on the battlefield. After two months of inching their way forward through the stand of ash trees, maybe they would finally break through the woods to Andriivka.

"How many more lives do we need to give?" Fedya asked. "How many more forests are there?"

Fedya sees war as something to be perfected through a combination of study and experience. A 24-year-old with a smooth and unlined face, he wears his authority lightly, introspective but with little time or energy to spare on self-doubt or guilt. He dreams of war, and when he wakes, it is there waiting for him to move forward.

"War is a science, and you have to get better at it and study. If you don't, you have no chance of survival," said Fedya. "The smarter you are, the more qualified you are, the better your chances of coming back alive."

On Sept. 14, they finally did it — more than three months after receiving the order to reclaim Andriivka. They broke through the shelling and the drone-launched grenades, firing at Russian forces who fled in front of them.

The day was a blur. The Ukrainians pummeled the tiny village with artillery and then threw a smoke-screen into its main street. Russian artillery hit retreating and surrendering Russian soldiers, whose bodies lay face down or curled on their sides. The last hundred meters was a mix of blood, metal, trash, spent cartridges and shredded armor.

The Ukrainians went house to house, taking Russian prisoners and killing those who fought back. Even after the last of the Russian forces were expelled, Andriivka came under constant shelling, with buzzing drones on both sides.

Fedya warned his men to shoot down the ones that hovered: They were the ones that dropped grenades. That night, Fedya dreamed he was cowering behind a shrapnel-pierced truck on the battlefield and was hit by artillery fire.

The next morning, Sept. 16, Fedya carried a Ukrainian flag to hoist in the reclaimed village of Andriivka.

It was time to retrieve the bodies. There was the body of 19-year-old Riley, killed on the first day he ever fought. There was Zima. There were others, placed carefully into bags and carried back through the forest. The men left dozens of Russian bodies for later.

Andriivka was now nothing but a pile of bricks and scorched trees with the smell of death. But it was in Ukrainian hands, and Fedya was ready to hand control to the next brigade to reclaim the next forest. He huddled in one of the few basements left and tried to explain to the incoming commander why the fight for this broken town was worth it.

"Look at these fields, this forest. Everything grows again," he said. "The cities that we reclaim, they will

# Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, Sept. 21, 2023 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 089 ~ 39 of 82

be rebuilt. ... We will clear out all that's left of the Soviet Union. ... The war could be the best thing to happen, in the sense that everything can start fresh."

Ukrainian officials said this month's battle's for the road to Bakhmut may have taken as many as three Russian brigades out of combat, as cited in an assessment Tuesday by the Institute for the Study of War. But Fedya was ready to leave.

"I'm tired of this forest. I want to go home. I want to wash and sleep," he said with a curse. "Until morning. And in the morning, I'll come back."

Hinnant reported from Paris. Alex Babenko contributed to this story.

Follow AP's coverage at <https://apnews.com/hub/russia-ukraine>

## Zelenskyy returns to Washington to face growing dissent among Republicans to US spending for Ukraine

By ELLEN KNICKMEYER, LISA MASCARO and MARY CLARE JALONICK Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy returns to Washington on Thursday for a whirlwind one-day visit, this time to face the Republicans now questioning the flow of American dollars that for 19 months has kept his troops in the fight against Russian forces.

Zelenskyy will meet with President Joe Biden at the White House, speak with U.S. military leaders at the Pentagon and stop at Capitol Hill to talk privately with Republican and Democratic leaders of the House and Senate as the world is watching Western support for Kyiv.

It is Zelenskyy's second visit to Washington since Russia invaded Ukraine in February 2022 and comes as Biden's request to Congress for an additional \$24 billion for Ukraine's military and humanitarian needs is hanging in the balance.

National Security Council spokesman John Kirby called the Ukrainian president "our best messenger" in persuading U.S. lawmakers to keep vital U.S. money and weapons coming.

"It's really important for members of Congress to be able to hear directly from the president about what he's facing in this counteroffensive," Kirby told reporters Wednesday, "and how he's achieving his goals, and what he needs to continue to achieve those goals."

Biden has called on world leaders to stand strong with Ukraine, even as he faces domestic political divisions at home. A hard-right flank of Republicans, led by former President Donald Trump, Biden's chief rival in the 2024 race for the White House, is increasingly opposed to sending more money overseas.

As the White House worked to shore up support for Ukraine before Zelenskyy's visit, Secretary of State Antony Blinken and top intelligence officials briefed senior lawmakers behind closed doors Wednesday to argue the case.

But some Senate Republicans walked out of the briefing no more convinced than before about the necessity of spending more on Ukraine. "It's not close to the end," Sen. Josh Hawley, a Missouri Republican, said. "What we're basically told is, 'Buckle up and get out your checkbook.'"

Since the start of the war, most members of Congress supported approving four rounds of aid to Ukraine, totaling about \$113 billion, viewing defense of the country and its democracy as an imperative, especially when it comes to containing Russian President Vladimir Putin. Some of that money went toward replenishing U.S. military equipment sent to the frontlines.

Democratic Sen. Mark Kelly of Arizona, who traveled to Kyiv this week, said cutting off U.S. aid during the Ukrainians' counteroffensive would be "catastrophic" to their efforts.

"That would clearly be the opening that Putin is looking for," Kelly said Wednesday. "They cannot be successful without our support."

The political environment has shifted markedly since Zelenskyy addressed Congress last December on his first trip out of Ukraine since the war began. He was met with rapturous applause for his country's bravery and surprisingly strong showing in the war.

# Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, Sept. 21, 2023 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 089 ~ 40 of 82

His meeting with senators on Thursday will take place behind closed doors in the Old Senate Chamber, a historical and intimate place of importance at the U.S. Capitol, signifying the respect the Senate is showing the foreign leader.

But on the other side of the Capitol, Republican House Speaker Kevin McCarthy, who faces more opposition within his Trump-aligned ranks to supporting Ukraine, is planning a separate meeting with Zelenskyy, with a smaller bipartisan group of lawmakers and committee chairmen.

"I will have questions for President Zelenskyy," McCarthy told reporters before the visit.

The House speaker said he wanted more accountability for the money the U.S. has already approved for Ukraine before moving ahead with more.

And, McCarthy said, he wants to know, "What is the plan for victory?"

In the Senate, however, Ukraine has a strong ally in Republican leader Mitch McConnell, who is out front in pushing his party, and the president, to continue robust support for Kyiv.

McConnell urged Biden before Wednesday's closed-door briefing to senators to make sure the administration's top brass puts forward a more forceful case in support of Ukraine so Congress can send Zelenskyy what's needed to win the war.

"I sometimes get the sense that I speak more about Ukraine matters than the president does," McConnell said in a speech Wednesday.

---

Associated Press writers Seung Min Kim and Farnoush Amiri contributed to this report.

## Wave of migrants that halted trains in Mexico started with migrant smuggling industry in Darien Gap

By MARK STEVENSON Associated Press

HUEHUETOCA, Mexico (AP) — Thousands of migrants riding atop railway cars in Mexico this week or waiting in mile-long lines by the tracks to hitch a ride to the U.S. have triggered the closure of one U.S. border crossing and forced Mexico's largest railroad to suspend dozens of freight trains.

But the upsurge has also revealed a much larger phenomenon — an almost unbroken chain of migrants being shuffled from Colombia through the Darien Gap jungle into Panama on an industrial scale that could approach 500,000 this year.

Those migrants are then moving steadily without interruption up through Central America into Mexico and on to the U.S. border.

"Behind us, there are thousands more. It's continuous," Juan Carlos Leal, a Venezuelan migrant who was waiting Wednesday with his 5-year-old son beside railroad tracks about 35 miles north of Mexico City.

He and other migrants waiting to hop passing trains — some while still running — in the Mexican town of Huehuetoca said 3,500 migrants are being moved every day through jungle camps organized by smugglers on the Colombian side of the Darien Gap, because that is the number of people that can fit in each camp.

The dangerous jungle crossing has been reduced from over a week to as little as two days for the strongest walkers, by a network of guides, established camps and rudimentary trail markers that start in the Necocli, on Colombia's side of the gap.

Venezuelan migrants in Huehuetoca said the Darien operation appears to be dominated by Colombian paramilitary groups, which funnel part of their proceeds to Panama's autonomous Indigenous groups.

Panama's government said last week that it would increase deportations to confront the record-breaking flow of migrants through Darien.

The smuggling network can now get migrants from Venezuela to central Mexico in as little as just over two weeks, an odyssey that once could take months. Detentions along the U.S.-Mexico border soared 33% from June to July, according to U.S. government figures, reversing a plunge after new asylum restrictions were introduced in May.

"It's in their interest to move people through as quickly as possible," Venezuelan migrant Jose Javier Ferreira said of the gangs running the smuggling. "This is not going to stop until they put a stop to the

# Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, Sept. 21, 2023 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 089 ~ 41 of 82

mafia in Necocli.”

A former taxi driver, Ferreira said he simply could not earn a living in Venezuela because gasoline is too expensive for those who are not politically connected. At the same time, he decided to leave his family at home because the journey was just too dangerous.

That was not the case for everyone. Entire families waited to hop freight cars Huehuetoca.

Mayerlin Bracamontes cuddled and played with her 5-month-old daughter as she waited for a train. “It is dangerous,” she acknowledged, but said she was accompanied by fellow Venezuelans who would help her pass the baby to waiting hands of those already aboard a train.

The migrants are still preyed upon by corrupt officials, gangs, thieves and sexual abusers almost every step of the way. At least a half dozen of the migrants in Huehuetoca described seeing the same dead bodies — a woman and her newborn baby, a young couple, an older, heavy-set man — decomposing along the jungle trail in Darien.

Migrants also agreed in describing details of the smuggling industry in Colombia: Smugglers attach two concert-style bracelets to the wrists of migrants who have paid the minimum \$350 smuggling fee. One bracelet signifies the migrant has paid the gang tax, the other signifies a cut has been given to Panamanian Indigenous groups through whose territory the migrants pass.

Beyond the jungle, migrants have fewer complaints about Panama, Costa Rica and Nicaragua, saying officials there mostly seemed to want to move the migrants quickly along to get them out of their countries fast.

For Guatemala, however, almost all the migrants reported repeated sexual abuse and extortion by Guatemalan police.

But it is in Mexico where they face perhaps the deadliest part of their journey, apart from the jungle: hopping aboard freight trains. Migrants have long crossed Mexico aboard the trains, collectively known as “The Beast,” at levels that fluctuated with efforts to keep them off.

Usually they board when a train stops to switch tracks. They prefer climbing onto freight cars, which have flat tops with ladders and railings that offer handholds. But in their desperation, some migrants also crowd onto the narrow, un-railed tops of tank cars, where falling asleep or being jostled can lead to a fatal fall.

Mexico’s largest railroad, Ferromex, said Tuesday it had temporarily halted 60 freight trains because so many migrants had climbed aboard that it was unsafe to move the cars. In recent days, there have been about a “half-dozen regrettable cases of injuries or deaths” among migrants, it said in a statement.

The company, owned by conglomerate Grupo Mexico, said some migrants even were jumping on moving freight cars “despite the grave danger that represents.”

The flood of migrants into Eagle Pass, Texas, led U.S. Customs and Border Protection to close one of two bridges leading into the city from the Mexican town of Piedras Negras. The agency said the bridge was temporarily closed “in order to redirect personnel to assist the U.S. Border Patrol with taking migrants into custody.”

For migrants who had already traveled thousands of miles, the idea of hitching a train ride was daunting.

“If I had known how dangerous it was going to be, I would have stayed to die in Venezuela with my family,” said Félix Rodríguez, a migrant from Barquisimeto, Venezuela, who was traveling with his wife and two sons, aged 13 and 14.

Rodríguez refused to take the risk of boarding a train that passed by Huehuetoca on Tuesday night, judging it too risky.

Instead, he walked away from the tracks, saying he and his family would sell snacks in the streets or wash car windows to raise enough money for bus tickets to the border.

“It’s dangerous to get on board with children, but a lot of people die to reach their dream,” Rodríguez said.

That approach carries its own risk. Migrants prefer the train not just because it costs nothing to ride, but because Mexican police and immigration agents frequently pull migrants off buses, saying the humanitarian visa or asylum application papers they carry don’t allow them to travel into Mexico’s north.

One thing the surge is not, is a caravan of the kind that saw 10,000 to 15,000 migrants — mainly from

Central America — walk and hitchhike across Mexico in disciplined groups in 2018 and 2019.

The migrants crossing Mexico on trains this week often did not know which border town they would head to, and they traveled in the company only of relatives or a small group of friends.

"We Venezuelans take care of each other, that is something we have," one migrant said as he offered to help boost Bracamontes' 5-month-old baby aboard a train.

## **No Labels push in closely divided Arizona fuels Democratic anxiety about a Biden spoiler**

By JONATHAN J. COOPER Associated Press

PHOENIX (AP) — More than 15,000 people in Arizona have registered to join a new political party floating a possible bipartisan "unity ticket" against Joe Biden and Donald Trump.

While that's less than the population of each of the state's 40 largest cities, it's still a number big enough to tip the presidential election in a critical swing state. And that is alarming people trying to stop Trump from winning the White House again.

The very existence of the No Labels group is fanning Democratic anxiety about Trump's chances against an incumbent president facing questions about his age and record. While it hasn't committed to running candidates for president and vice president, No Labels has already secured ballot access in Arizona and 10 other states. Its organizers say they are on track to reach 20 states by the end of this year and all 50 states by Election Day.

"If they have someone on the ballot who is designed to bring the country together, that clearly draws votes away from Joe Biden and does not draw votes away from Donald Trump," said Rodd McLeod, a Democratic strategist in Arizona.

That's raising the stakes for Biden allies who are mounting a furious pressure campaign against No Labels and politicians taking meetings with the group.

In Arizona, which Biden won by about 10,000 votes, the state Democratic Party sued Secretary of State Adrian Fontes, also a Democrat, to try to prevent No Labels from being on the ballot. The party lost in court and then dropped its lawsuit. Now Democrats are pushing Fontes to force No Labels to disclose its donors, having insinuated that the group is being supported by conservatives attempting to thwart Biden. No Labels has so far refused to name how it is funding its work, saying it follows federal law and wants to protect the privacy of its donors.

Fontes has not commented publicly but is expected to announce a decision in the coming weeks after telling No Labels he may take action against the group for failing to register under the state's campaign finance law. His decision is likely to be challenged in court.

Some of the anti-No Labels efforts here are quixotic. A perennial candidate from outside Phoenix signed up as a No Labels candidate and declared himself chairman of No Labels' Pinal County chapter, in part so he could run for state office and try to force the party to follow the state's campaign finance reporting laws.

"It's kind of like a performance art piece," said Richard Grayson, who promptly after switching to No Labels endorsed Biden and Vice President Kamala Harris.

Biden's narrow 2020 victory came with the help of anti-Trump Republicans, right-leaning independents and voters who disliked both candidates but saw Biden as a better option than Trump. He'll need their support to win a rematch.

In Arizona, Biden was endorsed by former Republican Sen. Jeff Flake and Cindy McCain, the widow of Sen. John McCain — a lifelong Republican who publicly clashed with Trump.

If even a small number of those voters were to back a No Labels candidate next year, Biden could fall short.

No third-party candidate has ever won the presidency or even come close. In the modern era, the strongest performer was Ross Perot in 1992, but he didn't earn a single electoral vote. He did, however, earn a reputation as a spoiler to then-President George H.W. Bush.

Democrats blame Green Party nominee Jill Stein for spoiling Hillary Clinton's would-be victory in 2016,

# Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, Sept. 21, 2023 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 089 ~ 43 of 82

when Stein got more votes in Michigan, Pennsylvania and Wisconsin than Trump's margin of victory. In 2020, a shift of just 45,000 votes in Arizona, Georgia and Wisconsin would have been enough to tilt the election from Biden to Trump.

"We need to convince the political world that being involved with this is a bad idea," said Matt Bennett, executive vice president of the center-left group Third Way. "If you're a potential candidate of theirs, you're going to be Jill Stein 2.0."

But supporters of No Labels insist that the political climate is far different heading into 2024, with wide swaths of voters in both parties exhausted by years of turmoil and chaos in Washington.

"These are unprecedented times," said Benjamin Chavis, a former head of the NAACP who is now working with No Labels. "Never before has such a large number of Americans expressed their concerns and expressed their views and their aspirations for more choices."

At least 13,500 people have registered with No Labels in Arizona's two largest counties, which include Phoenix and Tucson, with roughly 1,900 registered in the state's other counties, according to the most recent figures available.

About half of registrants in August were formerly independent and another quarter were newly registered, according to Sam Almy, a Democratic data analyst based in Phoenix. The rest came mostly from the two major parties: 14% were previously Democrats and 11% had been Republicans.

While only about a quarter of the newly registered No Labels members came from the major parties, they're much likelier to vote. About 63% of the former Democrats and 65% of the former Republicans voted in 2020, while only 45% of the former independents cast a ballot.

No Labels party members skew younger. More than half are younger than 35, according to Almy, and just 5% are older than 65. Twelve percent of them live in the 4th Congressional District, which includes Arizona State University.

If No Labels runs candidates, anybody can vote for them whether they've joined the party or not.

No Labels leaders say they'll decide after the Super Tuesday primaries in March whether to run a candidate, who would be nominated at a convention in Dallas in April.

The group has not said how the candidate would be chosen but hopes to publish a plan next month. No Labels has ties to moderates from both parties. Among them: Democratic Sen. Joe Manchin of West Virginia, former independent Sen. Joe Lieberman of Connecticut, former Republican Gov. Jon Huntsman of Utah and Republican Gov. Larry Hogan of Maryland. The group also could pick a business leader or retired military officer.

Ryan Clancy, chief strategist for No Labels, said their decision will not be influenced by head-to-head polling of the chosen candidate against Trump and Biden. Such a poll would be meaningless because a large swath of voters won't know anything about the No Labels candidate before a campaign is run, he said.

No Labels leaders vehemently deny that they'll be a spoiler for Trump and say they'll only proceed if their candidate has a path to victory. But it's unclear how certain that path will have to be.

"This is something we're still working through," Clancy said.

## Canada gets muted allied support after alleging India may have been involved in killing of Canadian

By ROB GILLIES Associated Press

TORONTO (AP) — When Prime Minister Justin Trudeau stood up in Parliament and said India may have been involved in the killing of a Canadian citizen, the muted international response offered a lesson in modern geopolitics.

India, it seems, may be too powerful to alienate.

None of Canada's most important allies — not the U.S., Britain, Australia or New Zealand, all knitted tightly together in the "Five Eyes" intelligence-sharing alliance — echoed Trudeau's allegations.

They've declared their concern. They've urged full investigations. But none have stepped up to condemn India for its alleged involvement in the June slaying on Canadian soil of a Sikh separatist, Hardeep Singh

# Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, Sept. 21, 2023 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 089 ~ 44 of 82

Nijjar.

Why?

Mainly there's China, and the priority among the allies to bolster ties with India as a counterweight to Beijing's rising power and assertiveness.

But it's more than that. Modern India has a fast-growing economy that many analysts believe will overtake Japan and Germany to become the world's third-largest by 2030. It has become a major power in world affairs, with more than 1.4 billion people and one of the world's largest militaries.

All that makes it hard for Canada's main allies — which are also some of India's main partners — to loudly speak out.

"I think Australia, U.S. and U.K. did about what was expected," said Janice Stein, a political scientist at the Munk School of Global Affairs in Toronto.

Sushant Singh, a senior fellow at the New Delhi-based Centre for Policy Research, agreed: "As long as the West needs India to counter China, it is likely to look away."

On Monday, Trudeau said there were "credible allegations" of Indian involvement in the killing outside Vancouver by masked gunmen of 45-year-old Nijjar, who had been wanted by India for years. Canada also expelled an Indian diplomat.

A day later — and after India ramped up the confrontation by itself expelling a top Canadian diplomat — Trudeau toned down the rhetoric, telling reporters that Canada was "not looking to provoke or escalate."

"PM tempers criticism as allies decline to condemn India over slain Sikh leader," read the front-page headline Wednesday in Canada's The Globe and Mail newspaper.

The government's allegations are particularly awkward now for the U.K., which is seeking a free trade deal with India.

"These are serious allegations. It is right that the Canadian authorities should be looking into them," said British Prime Minister Rishi Sunak's spokesman, Max Blain.

But he made clear that the killing would not come up in the trade talks, saying "these are negotiations about a trade deal and we are not looking to conflate with other issues."

Trudeau discussed the slaying with Sunak and U.S. President Joe Biden in recent weeks, according to Canadian Foreign Minister Mélanie Joly.

If the allies' responses were muted, Joly's office and the White House denied news reports that Canada, in the days before Trudeau made his allegations, had lobbied the U.S. and other major allies to condemn the killing.

White House national security spokesman John Kirby said any reports that the U.S. had rebuffed Canada were "just flatly false."

"We were deeply concerned by these allegations Prime Minister Trudeau laid forward and remain in regular contact with our Canadian partners," Kirby said. "They're investigating and that should proceed unimpeded."

He added, however, that the U.S. relationship with India "remains vitally important, not only for the South Asia region but of course for the Indo Pacific."

Still, the Biden administration seems to be offering more moral support than anything substantive. It might want to let things play out as a bilateral issue between Ottawa and New Delhi.

"It's embarrassing" to Washington, said Robert Bothwell, a historian and professor at the University of Toronto. But "the U.S. has larger interests."

If Trudeau's accusations are correct, he said, it also shows that Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi's government is not "restrained by an innate sense of rule of law or a commitment to democracy."

"This is the same kind of thing that Putin does," he said, referring to enemies of Russian President Vladimir Putin who have been killed in Russia and abroad, including in the U.K.

Nijjar, who was born in India and had worked for years as a plumber in Canada, was killed in the parking lot of a Sikh temple in Surrey, a suburb of Vancouver. He was wanted by Indian authorities, who had long said he had links to separatist terrorists seeking the creation of an independent Sikh nation in-

# Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, Sept. 21, 2023 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 089 ~ 45 of 82

side India. While Nijjar advocated for a Sikh homeland, he repeatedly denied allegations he had any ties to terrorism.

Canada has yet to provide any evidence of India's involvement in the killing. But a U.S. official said Tuesday that Trudeau's willingness to speak out was taken by the White House as an indication of the Canadian leader's certainty about what had been found. The official, who was not authorized to comment publicly, spoke on condition of anonymity.

Canada is one of the few countries in the world that unabashedly speaks out in defense of human rights and the international rule of law. It also has few qualms about taking on major powers.

In 2018, for example, China-Canada relations nosedived after China detained former Canadian diplomat Michael Kovrig and Canadian entrepreneur Michael Spavor. Those arrests came shortly after Canada arrested Meng Wanzhou, chief financial officer of Chinese telecoms giant Huawei and the daughter of the company's founder. Canada made the arrest at the behest of U.S. authorities who accused Meng of fraud.

Relations have not rebounded even after a prisoner swap that saw China release the Canadians in exchange for Meng in 2021.

Also in 2018, the Saudi government expelled Canada's ambassador to the kingdom and withdrew its own ambassador after Canada's foreign ministry tweeted support for an arrested Saudi activist. It took five years for Canada and Saudi Arabia to finally restore full diplomatic relations in May.

Trudeau also clashed with former U.S. President Donald Trump, who vowed to make Canada pay after Trudeau said he wouldn't be pushed around in trade talks with the U.S. Trump responded by insulting Trudeau, saying he was "meek and mild," words that shocked Canadians.

Now the stakes are higher, and it's unclear — at least publicly — who Canada can count on for full-throated support.

"Is Canada alone?" asked Bothwell. "That is obviously a worry because throughout Canada's existence it has relied on the protection of first the British and then the Americans."

## **Texas AG Ken Paxton attacks rivals, doesn't rule out US Senate run in first remarks since acquittal**

By PAUL J. WEBER Associated Press

AUSTIN, Texas (AP) — Texas Attorney General Ken Paxton attacked his Republican rivals and displayed an openness to challenging U.S. Sen. John Cornyn in 2026 while speaking out Wednesday for the first time since his acquittal on corruption charges at his impeachment trial.

He did not discuss accusations that he misused his office to protect a political donor, which were the backbone of Paxton becoming just the third sitting official in Texas' nearly 200-year history to be impeached. Paxton did not testify during the two-week impeachment trial and is still under FBI investigation.

Instead, Paxton used pre-recorded interviews with former Fox News host Tucker Carlson and a Texas conservative activist to lay into Republicans who drove his impeachment and to assert that his career is far from over.

"It became political completely and I didn't know how it was going to turn out on the political side," Paxton told Carlson.

Paxton was acquitted by the Texas Senate on Saturday on 16 articles of impeachment. Most of the charges surrounded his relationship with an Austin real estate developer named Nate Paul, who was indicted in June on charges of making false statements to banks in order to secure more than \$170 million in loans. Paul has pleaded not guilty and did not appear at the impeachment trial.

Only two Republicans voted to convict Paxton on any of the impeachment articles, well short of the nine that would have needed to join Senate Democrats in order to remove Paxton from office. The 31 members of the Texas Senate include Paxton's wife, state Sen. Angela Paxton, who was required to attend the trial but was barred from voting.

Paxton, who was scheduled Thursday to continue a media blitz with conservative hosts, picked up where his defense team left off in the trial and called his impeachment a political plot orchestrated by Republican

rivals.

He also criticized Cornyn, who in recent years has been one of Texas' few top Republicans to publicly express concerns with Paxton's legal troubles.

Asked by Carlson why he doesn't challenge Cornyn, who is up for reelection in 2026, Paxton said, "Hey look, everything is on the table for me."

Spokespersons for Cornyn did not immediately return an email seeking comment late Wednesday.

The outcome of the trial far from ended Paxton's troubles. He still faces trial on felony securities fraud charges, remains under a separate FBI investigation and is in jeopardy of losing his ability to practice law in Texas because of his baseless attempts to overturn the 2020 election.

Find AP's full coverage of the impeachment of Texas Attorney General Ken Paxton at: <https://apnews.com/hub/ken-paxton>

## **Saudi crown prince says in rare interview 'every day we get closer' to normalization with Israel**

By WILL WEISSERT Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman said in a rare interview with Fox News on Wednesday that negotiations over Israel means the prospects of normalized relations between both countries "get closer" every day, but that treatment of Palestinians remains a "very important" issue to be resolved.

Saudi Arabia is discussing a major agreement with the United States to normalize relations with Israel in exchange for a U.S. defense pact and aid in developing its own civilian nuclear program. The Saudis have said any deal would require major progress toward the creation of a Palestinian state, which is a hard sell for the most religious and nationalist government in Israel's history.

"For us, the Palestinian issue is very important. We need to solve that part," Saudi Arabi's de facto leader, widely known as MbS, said on "Special Report with Bret Baier" in an interview conducted in English, adding that there had been "good negotiations" so far.

"We got to see where we go," the prince said. "We hope that will reach a place, that it will ease the life of the Palestinians, get Israel as a player in the Middle East."

He also denied reports that the talks had been suspended, saying "every day, we get closer."

The interview aired shortly after President Joe Biden met with Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu while both were in New York for the meeting of the U.N. General Assembly. Biden raised concerns about the far-right Israeli government's treatment of the Palestinians and urged Netanyahu to take steps to improve conditions in the West Bank at a time of heightened violence in the occupied territory.

Netanyahu's office said the meeting "mostly dealt with ways to establish an historic peace agreement between Israel and Saudi Arabia, which could greatly advance an end to the Arab-Israeli conflict and facilitate the establishment of an economic corridor to link Asia, the Middle East and Europe."

Asked during the interview about working with someone as conservative as Netanyahu, Prince Mohammed said: "If we have a breakthrough, reaching a deal that gives the Palestinians their needs and (making) the region calm, we've got to work with whoever's there."

National Security Council spokesman John Kirby told reporters before the interview was shown that it was best for the leaders of Israel and Saudi Arabia "to speak to how close they think they are, and where they think they are" in the process.

"Obviously, we encourage normalization. We think it's good not just for Israel and Saudi Arabia, we think it's good for the whole region," Kirby said.

Prince Mohammed was also questioned about the possibility of Iran eventually building a nuclear weapon and said "we are concerned of any country getting a nuclear weapon" and that that if Iran were to get one, Saudi Arabi will seek to do the same: "We will have to get one." That has worried nuclear non-proliferation experts, who say the U.S. granting the kingdom the ability to enrich uranium itself could fuel a

# Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, Sept. 21, 2023 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 089 ~ 47 of 82

regional arms race.

Prince Mohammed has given very few interviews to Western media outlets, particularly since the 2018 killing of Jamal Khashoggi, a Saudi dissident and Washington Post columnist, in an operation by Saudi agents that U.S. intelligence says was likely approved by the prince. The prince has denied any involvement.

He said on Fox News Channel of Khashoggi's killing that "we tried to reform the security system to be sure that these kinds of mistakes doesn't happen again."

"It was a mistake. It was painful," the crown prince said, while insisting that "everyone involved" served jail time.

In the five years since, the kingdom has shed whatever pariah status it had as focus has shifted to major diplomatic initiatives and progress on Vision 2030, the prince's wide-ranging plan for overhauling the economy, providing jobs for young people and weaning the kingdom off oil revenues.

Prince Mohammed was also asked about Jared Kushner, an ex-White House adviser and former President Donald Trump's son-in-law who secured a \$2 billion investment from Saudi Arabia's Public Investment Fund to jump start his new private equity firm. The prince said "we look" for global investment opportunities and that PIF keeps its commitments to investors — planning to do so even if Trump wins another term as president next year.

Saudi Arabia has made major progress in winding down its devastating war with Iranian-backed Houthi rebels in Yemen, this week hosting a rebel delegation in the capital, Riyadh. It spearheaded the return of Syria to the Arab League, and in March agreed to a Chinese-brokered deal to restore diplomatic relations with Iran, its main regional rival.

The prince's far-reaching social reforms have transformed the kingdom from an ultraconservative state governed by a strict form of Islamic law to an aspiring entertainment powerhouse, investing billions of dollars in everything from top soccer stars and golf tournaments to video games.

But the prince has proven to be even less tolerant of dissent than his predecessors. Saudis who speak out against his policies can face long prison sentences or even the death penalty, and that has even extended to Saudis living on U.S. soil.

The 38-year-old prince assumed day-to-day rule after his aging father King Salman named him next in line to the throne in 2017.

Biden, who had vowed to make Saudi Arabia a "pariah" over the Khashoggi killing while campaigning for president in 2020, has since bowed to that reality, patching up relations with the crown prince while seeking his help in controlling oil prices and managing other regional issues.

Prince Mohammed said during the interview that "the agenda between Saudi Arabia and America today is really interesting" and characterized his country's relationship with Biden as "really amazing."

He was also asked about critics who have accused Saudi Arabia of investing heavily in golf and other sports in attempted "sportswashing," or spending to improve the kingdom's political image abroad. The prince said he wasn't bothered by such charges and if sports investments continue to grow Saudi Arabia's gross domestic product significantly, then his country would "continue to do sportswashing."

## **Under pressure over border, Biden administration to protect hundreds of thousands of Venezuelans**

By REBECCA SANTANA and ELLIOT SPAGAT Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — The Biden administration said Wednesday that it was granting temporary legal status to hundreds of thousands of Venezuelans who are already in the country — quickly making them eligible to work — as it grapples with growing numbers of people fleeing the South American country and elsewhere to arrive at the U.S. border with Mexico.

The move — along with promises to accelerate work permits for many migrants — may appease Democratic leaders who have pressured the White House to do more to aid asylum seekers, while also providing grist for Republicans who say the president has been too lax on immigration.

The Homeland Security Department plans to grant Temporary Protected Status to an estimated 472,000

# Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, Sept. 21, 2023 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 089 ~ 48 of 82

Venezuelans who arrived in the country as of July 31, 2023, making it easier for them to get authorization to work in the U.S. That's been a key demand of Democratic mayors and governors who are struggling to care for an increased number of migrants in their care.

That's in addition to about 242,700 Venezuelans who already qualified for temporary status before Wednesday's announcement.

The protections for Venezuelans are significant because they account for such a large number of the migrants who have been arriving in the country in recent years.

Venezuela plunged into a political, economic and humanitarian crisis over the last decade, pushing at least 7.3 million people to migrate and making food and other necessities unaffordable for those who remain. The vast majority who fled settled in neighboring countries in Latin America, but many began coming to the United States in the last three years through the notoriously dangerous Darien Gap, a stretch of jungle in Panama.

Venezuelans who arrive in the U.S. after July 31 of this year will not be eligible for the protection. Those who are now eligible have to apply to get it.

Homeland Security Secretary Alejandro Mayorkas granted the expansion and an 18-month extension for those who already have temporary status due to "Venezuela's increased instability and lack of safety due to the enduring humanitarian, security, political, and environmental conditions," the department said in a statement.

The administration said it would accelerate work authorizations for people who have arrived in the country since January through a mobile app for appointments at land crossings with Mexico, called CBP One, or through parole granted to Cubans, Haitians, Nicaraguans and Venezuelans who have financial sponsors and arrive at an airport. It will aim to give them work permits within 30 days, compared with about 90 days currently.

The promise of accelerated work permits does not apply to people who cross the border illegally and seek asylum, who, by law, must wait for six months to receive work permits.

Mayors and governors have been clamoring for President Joe Biden to figure out a way to get newly arrived migrants to be able to work legally, so they can support themselves.

Democratic officials in New York, Massachusetts, Chicago and elsewhere have complained about the strain that newly arrived migrants are putting on their resources, especially in New York, where the government is required to provide housing for anyone who needs it. The city is currently paying to house about 60,000 newly arrived migrants.

New York Gov. Kathy Hochul said in a statement late Wednesday that she was "grateful the federal government has acted so speedily to grant one of our top priorities: Temporary Protected Status to Venezuelan asylum seekers and migrants who have already arrived in this country."

The city's mayor, Eric Adams, has been especially critical of the Biden administration. But Adams on Wednesday praised the decision to grant protections to Venezuelans and thanked the administration for listening to the city's concerns.

The number of migrants trying to cross the southern border is rising. That poses a severe challenge for the administration, which has struggled to show it is in control of the border in the face of Republican criticism. The city of Eagle Pass, which borders Mexico along the Rio Grande in southern Texas, announced a state of emergency Wednesday due to a "severe undocumented immigrant surge."

According to Maverick County Sheriff Tom Schmerber, about 2,700 migrants crossed into Eagle Pass on Tuesday and about 3,000 Wednesday.

The administration also said Wednesday it was also using Defense Department forces to support Homeland Security staff on the border. Homeland Security already uses about 2,500 National Guard troops to help Customs and Border Protection. In the news release, Homeland Security said up to 800 new active-duty troops would also be detailed to the border; they would be used for things like logistics to free up Customs officials for more front-line responsibilities.

Homeland Security said it was also taking other steps to deal with immigration, such as scaling up a

process started in May to quickly remove families who are found to have no basis to stay in the country. The agency said it has also beefed up holding capacity along the southern border.

And it said it has increased the number of people expelled from the country. Since May 12, the agency said it has removed 253,000 people to a little over 150 countries around the world. That compares with 180,000 removed during the same period in 2019 — before the pandemic drastically alerted the government's ability to expel migrants.

Spagat reported from San Diego. Valerie Gonzalez in McAllen, Texas contributed to this report.

## **Senate confirms chairman of joint chiefs as GOP senator still blocking hundreds of military nominees**

By MARY CLARE JALONICK and TARA COPP Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — The Senate on Wednesday confirmed Gen. CQ Brown as the next chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, putting him in place to succeed Gen. Mark Milley when he retires at the end of the month.

Brown's confirmation on a 83-11 vote, months after President Joe Biden nominated him for the post, comes as Democrats try to maneuver around holds placed on hundreds of nominations by Alabama Sen. Tommy Tuberville over the Pentagon's abortion policy. The Senate is also expected to confirm Gen. Randy George to be Army Chief of Staff and Gen. Eric Smith as commandant of the U.S. Marine Corps this week.

Tuberville has been blocking the Senate from the routine process of approving military nominations in groups, frustrating Democrats who had said they would not go through the time-consuming process of bringing up individual nominations for a vote. More than 300 nominees are still stalled amid Tuberville's blockade, and confirming them one-by-one would take months.

But Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer, D-N.Y., reversed course on Wednesday and moved to force votes on Brown, George and Smith.

"Senator Tuberville is forcing us to face his obstruction head on," Schumer said. "I want to make clear to my Republican colleagues — this cannot continue."

Tuberville did not object to the confirmation votes, saying he will maintain his holds but is fine with bringing up nominations individually for roll call votes.

White House national security spokesman John Kirby said that Brown's confirmation, along with expected votes on Smith and George, is positive news. But "we should have never been in this position," he said.

"While good for these three officers, it doesn't fix the problem or provide a path forward for the 316 other general and flag officers that are held up by this ridiculous hold," Kirby told reporters.

Brown, a career fighter pilot, was the Air Force's first Black commander of the Pacific Air Forces and most recently its first Black chief of staff, making him the first African American to lead any of the military branches. His confirmation will also mark the first time the Pentagon's top two posts were held by African Americans, with Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin as the top civilian leader.

In a statement late Wednesday, Austin said Brown would be a "tremendous leader" as the new chairman.

Brown, 60, replaces Joint Chiefs Chairman Army Gen. Mark Milley, who is retiring after four decades in military service. Milley's four-year term as chairman ends on Sept. 30.

Tuberville said on Wednesday that he will continue to hold up the other nominations unless the Pentagon ends its policy of paying for travel when a service member has to go out of state to get an abortion or other reproductive care. The Biden administration instituted the policy after the Supreme Court overturned the nationwide right to an abortion and some states have limited or banned the procedure.

"Let's do one at a time or change the policy back," Tuberville said after Schumer put the three nominations up for a vote. "Let's vote on it."

In an effort to force Tuberville's hand, Democrats had said they would not bring up the most senior nominees while the others were still stalled. "There's an old saying in the military, leave no one behind," Senate Armed Services Chairman Jack Reed said in July.

But in a frustrated speech on the Senate floor, Schumer said Wednesday he was left with no other choice. "Senator Tuberville is using them as pawns," Schumer said of the nominees.

The votes come as a host of military officers have spoken out about the damage of the delays for service members. While Tuberville's holds are focused on all general and flag officers, they carry career impacts on the military's younger rising officers. Until each general or admiral is confirmed, it blocks an opportunity for a more junior officer to rise.

That affects pay, retirement, lifestyle and future assignments — and in some fields where the private sector will pay more, it becomes harder to convince those highly trained young leaders to stay.

"Senator Tuberville's continued hold on hundreds of our nation's military leaders endangers our national security and military readiness. It is well past time to confirm the over 300 other military nominees," Austin said, noting he would "continue to personally engage with members of Congress in both parties until all of these well-qualified, apolitical officers are confirmed."

Tuberville said he has not talked to Austin since July about the holds.

The blockade has frustrated members on both sides of the aisle, and it is still unclear how the larger standoff will be resolved. Schumer did not say if he will put additional nominations on the floor.

The monthslong holds have devolved into a convoluted procedural back and forth in recent days.

Tuberville claimed victory after Schumer's move, even though the Pentagon policy remains unchanged. "We called them out, and they blinked," he told reporters of Schumer.

---

Associated Press writer Colleen Long contributed to this report.

## **Trump launches his fall push in Iowa to lock in his lead before the first Republican caucuses**

By THOMAS BEAUMONT Associated Press

MAQUOKETA, Iowa (AP) — Donald Trump began a fall press Wednesday to lock in thousands of Republican caucusgoers in early-voting Iowa, where the former president faces sky-high expectations in his campaign for a White House comeback.

Having campaigned far less often in Iowa than many of his 2024 rivals, Trump was making his first of five Iowa visits planned through the end of October. The visits are aimed at converting what polls in Iowa show as a commanding lead into committed supporters and volunteers as Trump's campaign tries to secure a massive victory that would deny his rivals momentum and effectively end the primary on caucus day.

"In less than four months from now, we're going to win the Iowa caucuses in a historic landslide," Trump predicted as he addressed a crowd of more than 1,000 people in small-town Maquoketa. He urged those in attendance to support him in the Jan. 15 caucuses and asked them to bring friends along.

On display was his team's promised commitment to better organize in Iowa than it did in 2016, when Trump finished a close second to Texas Sen. Ted Cruz.

Supporters from across northeast Iowa had lined up outside the expo building at the Jackson County fairgrounds hours before Trump's arrival. His campaign aimed to collect signed cards from the crowd pledging to back him in the Jan. 15 caucuses. While the cards do not bind voters to a candidate, they give campaigns valuable contact information to get out the vote and recruit volunteers and precinct leaders.

Tables inside the hall promoted the number to sign up for campaign text messages and screens displayed the caucus schedule and how to participate.

Trump addressed his 2016 loss at the start of his speech, blaming his previous campaign team.

"They didn't do the caucus thing too well and I learned a lot," Trump acknowledged, adding: "I don't like second, though."

Maquoketa is a small town of about 6,000 in the middle of several rural counties in the heart of the swath of eastern Iowa. In 2016, the region flipped from Democratic President Barack Obama to Trump.

At a second event in Dubuque, Trump laced into Florida Gov. Ron DeSantis, whom he has long treated as his chief target, as he touted the efforts of his administration to help Iowa farmers and crack down on

# Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, Sept. 21, 2023 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 089 ~ 51 of 82

illegal immigration. At one point, Trump recited a poem he sometimes reads about a woman who invites a sick, frozen snake into her home, only to be bitten.

"That's what's happening in our country," he said.

Before leaving town, Trump stopped by Kathy's Treehouse Pub and Eatery. More than a hundred people packed into the bar of the Bettendorf restaurant, where Trump signed dollar bills, caps and the tank top — and later, arm — of a woman who bartends at the popular watering hole. Trump handed out boxed pizzas to the crowd of cheering supporters, who screamed his name and sang along to Lee Greenwood's "God Bless the U.S.A."

Trump has visited Iowa seven times this year, headlining policy and political events, and he stopped by his campaign office in July. Trump has opted not to attend key multicandidate events in Iowa hosted by influential social conservative groups, an important bloc in the caucuses.

More recently, his events have been more akin to photo ops, including stopping by an Iowa State fraternity house to toss footballs and shake hands before attending the university's football game in Ames against rival Iowa this month.

Before that, Trump drew throngs to the Iowa State Fair in August. He brought U.S. House members from Florida as a poke at DeSantis, who was visiting the fair the same day.

While Trump is ramping up his campaign, he is still doing far fewer events in the state than several rivals.

DeSantis has pledged to visit all of the state's 99 counties. Former U.N. Ambassador Nikki Haley, South Carolina Sen. Tim Scott, businessman Vivek Ramaswamy, former Vice President Mike Pence and others have also campaigned aggressively in the state.

During a recent visit to Red Oak in western Iowa, DeSantis emphasized the disparity between Trump's visits and his own dozens of events in the state, saying "that just gives off a sense of entitlement."

Still, Trump's team has been busy in his absence. Aides report having collected more than 27,500 pledge cards, including more than 10,000 at the state fair. In addition to 1,500 volunteers, they say they have amassed more than 200,000 voter contacts, including calls.

Never Back Down, the super PAC supporting DeSantis, which is handling most of his organizing, says it has collected more than 13,000 signed cards from Iowa residents pledging to caucus for DeSantis. The group also reports having knocked on more than 390,000 doors, though many of those are repeats.

But no one has been able to surpass Trump, who remains the early front-runner for the Republican nomination, even as he faces four separate indictments that have resulted in dozens of criminal charges.

"The truth is Trump has an enduring lead in Iowa," said Republican strategist David Kochel, a veteran Iowa and national Republican strategist who has advised several presidential campaigns.

Trump has maintained a far less rigorous early-state schedule than he did in previous contests, but has campaigned in Iowa more often than he has in other early nominating states.

"We're not taking anything for granted. We're going to fight for every vote. You're going to see that in every event," said Trump spokesman Steven Cheung.

Tracie Kelly, a 48-year-old mother who home-schools her children, attended the event with her husband and family. After filling out her pledge card committing to caucus for Trump, Kelly called him "the right guy to do the right thing."

In particular, she noted his appointment of the three U.S. Supreme Court justices who helped overturn Roe v. Wade, allowing states to pass strict abortion restrictions. Trump has refused to commit to pursuing a national abortion ban, drawing the ire of some social conservatives. But Kelly said that didn't bother her.

"He might not say the right things all the time, but he speaks for our beliefs," she said.

---

Associated Press writer Jill Colvin in New York contributed to this report.

## Officers who put Elijah McClain in neck hold ignored pleas of 'I can't breathe,' prosecutors say

By COLLEEN SLEVIN Associated Press

BRIGHTON, Colo. (AP) — Two Denver-area police officers who put Elijah McClain in a neck hold ignored his pleas of "I can't breathe" before the Black man was injected by paramedics with a powerful sedative and died, prosecutors said Wednesday, as a trial began over the 2019 confrontation that became a rallying cry for protests and spurred police reform.

In opening arguments for the first of several trials stemming from McClain's death, lawyers for the two sides painted contrasting pictures of the fatal struggle after he was stopped by police in Aurora.

Officers Randy Roedema and Jason Rosenblatt approached McClain, a 23-year-old massage therapist, as he walked home from a convenience store carrying only a plastic bag with three cans of iced tea and his phone. A 911 caller had reported him as "sketchy."

If prosecutors can convince jurors the Aug. 24, 2019 stop was unjustified, that would undermine any argument that McClain's injuries were a result of the officers just doing their jobs.

Roedema and Rosenblatt are both charged with criminally negligent homicide, manslaughter and assault. They have pleaded not guilty but have never spoken publicly about the allegations against them. The trial is expected to last about a month.

A third officer and two paramedics are also charged in McClain's death and are scheduled for trial later this year.

Officials have determined the sedative ketamine played a key role in McClain's death, which fueled renewed scrutiny about the use of the drug for people considered to be acting erratically and led Colorado's health department to limit when emergency workers can administer it. In 2020, neck holds by police were banned by the state's Democratic-led Legislature.

Prosecutor Jonathan Bunge said the officers violated department policies by using excessive force against McClain, who was unarmed, and failing to deescalate the situation.

"Listen to Elijah's words," Bunge said as he replayed police body camera video of the episode. "When Elijah is on the ground handcuffed, he's saying over and over and over again, 'I can't breathe. Please help me.'"

McClain threw up repeatedly after the neck hold and was drowning in his own vomit, according to Bunge. "He is drifting further and further toward death. The sedative is the last thing he needs," the prosecutor said.

But Roedema's attorney, Reid Elkus, said the officers' actions were in line with department policies and their own training. McClain was stopped in a "high-crime area," and officers repeatedly told him to halt before he complied, Elkus said, adding that they didn't want to hurt him.

"Just because a tragedy occurred doesn't mean criminality occurred," Elkus said. He blamed McClain's death on paramedics who later arrived on the scene and took control over his care.

"After being injected with ketamine, that's when Mr. McClain's pulse stopped," Elkus said. "Mr. McClain died because paramedic (Jeremy) Cooper injected him with 1.7, 1.8 times the ketamine for someone his weight and size."

Rosenblatt's attorney, Harvey Steinberg, argued that the officers had no choice but to stop McClain after the 911 call. He added that McClain showed "continued resistance" after he was stopped and the officers were forced to respond accordingly.

"Please be fair and don't allow emotion or sympathy come into it," Steinberg told jurors. "And don't let politics enter into this at all."

McClain's mother sat in the front of the courtroom for the opening statements. Sheneen McClain dabbed tears from her eyes when Bunge described how her son, who was often cold, was wearing a runner's mask when he went to a convenience store near his house before police stopped him.

Family members of the two officers also were present, as were other Aurora police.

Before jury selection could be finalized, Judge Mark Warner talked behind closed doors with attorneys for both sides as well as a man whom the defense struck from the jury pool after he said he'd been racially

profiled about a half-dozen times by police, including in Aurora. The man remained off the jury, but what happened in the closed discussions was not revealed in open court.

The 12 jurors and 2 alternates appeared to be mostly white.

Other potential jurors who were removed included a woman who identified herself as Hispanic and said her husband was singled out for arrest in a conflict with white people. Removals by prosecutors included the daughter of a police officer who said officers weren't being supported by society and a former EMT who witnessed people being given ketamine.

In response to a defense objection, the judge found that the prosecution did not remove potential white jurors because of their race.

Charges were not brought for two years after McClain died, by which time a national reckoning had begun over racial injustice in American policing following the murder of George Floyd by officers in Minneapolis.

In 2019, a local district attorney, Dave Young, called McClain's death "tragic" but decided against prosecuting the officers largely because the coroner's office could not determine exactly how McClain died.

A revised coroner's report was issued in 2021, relying in part on information from a grand jury investigation. It found the cause of death was complications from ketamine after McClain, who weighed 140 pounds (64 kilograms), overdosed because he received a higher dose than recommended for someone of his size, pathologist Stephen Cina found.

"I believe that Mr. McClain would most likely be alive but for the administration of ketamine," Cina said.

Cina said he couldn't rule out whether the stress of being held down by the officers may have contributed to McClain's death.

Officer Nathan Woodyard, who is set to go on trial later this year, was the first to approach McClain and was soon joined by Roedema and Rosenblatt.

McClain, using earbuds, initially kept walking. Within 10 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."

The encounter quickly escalated, with officers taking him to the ground and putting him in a neck hold.

McClain suffered cardiac arrest on the way to the hospital and was pronounced dead three days later.

Prosecutors played numerous body camera clips including one in which they said McClain spoke his last words as Roedema jerked up on one of his arms, popping a joint.

"Please help me," McClain was heard saying. "Please help me."

## Jeep maker Stellantis makes a new contract offer as auto workers prepare to expand their strike

By DAVID KOENIG AP Business Writer

General Motors and Stellantis announced fresh layoffs Wednesday that they blamed on damage from the United Auto Workers strike, and the labor standoff grew more tense just two days before the union was expected to call for new walkouts.

Stellantis provided a glimmer of hope for a breakthrough by giving the union a new contract proposal. However, a company spokeswoman said the offer primarily covered non-economic issues.

It was not clear whether the Stellantis offer would satisfy union President Shawn Fain, who vows to announce new strike targets on Friday unless there is "serious progress" toward agreements with GM, Stellantis and Ford.

So far UAW workers are striking at just three factories, one for each company. It's a novel approach for the union, which in the past has focused negotiations on one company and limited a 2019 strike to GM. Fain says his approach will keep the companies guessing about UAW's next move.

"He is trying to distinguish himself from the old leadership of the UAW," said Harry Katz, a professor of collective bargaining at Cornell University. "He's different, he's tough, and he's trying to put pressure on the companies."

The three-plant strike has so far had limited impact on the automakers — probably by design, longtime

# Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, Sept. 21, 2023 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 089 ~ 54 of 82

industry observers say.

"The strategy is to incrementally apply pressure on the companies to encourage them to come to the table," said Marick Masters, a management professor at Wayne State University in Detroit. "He is negotiating with the three companies simultaneously with the expectation that the one that is most vulnerable and will give them the best deal will surface from that strategy."

However, if there is little sign of progress in the talks by Friday, Fain could take a more aggressive tack, "and they are going to strike where it hurts," said Daniel Ives, an analyst at Wedbush Securities. "For Ford, on the pickups — disrupting (production of) F-150s, and strategically striking GM and Stellantis in a way that could substantially impair 30% to 40% of the industry's production."

Strikes that target production of popular models like the F-150 or the Dodge Ram would inflict a lot of pain on the carmakers, but the UAW could pack the same punch if it walks out of key engine and transmission plants.

Another clue of possible strike targets might be found in locations where UAW locals have announced they will hold rallies and practice picketing in the coming days. Those include a Ford plant in Louisville, Kentucky, a GM plant in Bedford, Indiana, and a GM truck plant in Arlington, Texas.

"If Friday comes and there is no major progress" at the bargaining table, "this will get a lot nastier," Ives said.

The layoffs that GM and Stellantis announced Wednesday will be in Kansas, Ohio and Indiana.

GM said that the UAW strike at its assembly plant near St. Louis caused it to idle a plant in Kansas with about 2,000 workers because "there is no work available" — the plant depends on parts stamped in the St. Louis-area facility.

GM said it does not expect to restart the Kansas plant until the strike ends, and it won't provide supplemental pay to the workers. The company said the layoffs demonstrated "that nobody wins in a strike."

Stellantis, which makes Jeep, Chrysler and Dodge vehicles, said it expects to lay off more than 300 workers in Ohio and Indiana because "storage constraints" caused by the UAW strike at its assembly plant in Toledo, Ohio.

Asked for comment, a UAW spokesman referred to a statement last weekend in which UAW President Shawn Fain said layoffs were unnecessary and an effort to pressure workers to settle for less in contract negotiations.

Also Wednesday, about 190 UAW members walked off the job at ZF, a Mercedes supplier in Alabama, over wages, a lower scale for new workers, and health care benefits. The workers are covered under a different contract than those that UAW is negotiating with the three big automakers. A ZF spokesman said the plant was continuing to run, and the company hopes to reach an agreement with the workers soon.

The layoffs and the Alabama walkout ratcheted up tension two days before Friday's UAW deadline for the carmakers to show progress in meeting the UAW's demands. The union and the car makers continue to talk, but an industry official said Wednesday that the two sides remain far apart.

The UAW is seeking pay raises of more than 30% over four years, a restoration of defined-benefit pensions for all workers, and a 32-hour work week for 40 hours of pay. The companies are offering around 20% on pay and are staunchly resisting some of the union's other demands.

Yolanda Downs, who works at a Stellantis assembly plant, wants an end to lower wage scales for new workers, another UAW priority.

"I want everyone to make a good living and a fair living," said Downs, who wore a red union shirt as she marched with about 200 other UAW members in front of Stellantis' U.S. headquarters outside Detroit. "If I'm working on one side of the line and I'm making \$30, and the person across from me is making \$15 an hour, how is that fair?"

There has been recent progress between one automaker and a labor union, but it happened in Canada.

Ford and Unifor, which represents Canadian auto workers, announced late Tuesday that they reached a tentative agreement on a new three-year contract just hours before a strike deadline. Terms of the deal were not disclosed. If ratified, it would cover more than 5,000 workers and provide a model for similar deals at GM and Stellantis operations in Canada.

Associated Press writer Mike Householder contributed from Auburn Hills, Michigan.

This story has been corrected to show that the GM plant is in Bedford, Indiana, not Illinois.

## McCarthy struggles to pass a temporary spending bill to avoid a shutdown as others look at options

By STEPHEN GROVES and LISA MASCARO Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — With no clear strategy, no sure support and not much time left, House Speaker Kevin McCarthy nevertheless vowed Wednesday he would not give up trying to persuade his colleagues to pass a temporary funding bill to prevent a federal government shutdown.

But lawmakers watching and waiting for the beleaguered leader to deliver are looking at other options.

The Republican speaker met behind closed doors with his GOP colleagues for another day of grueling negotiations — arguing publicly that he still had time to win over hard-line conservatives but privately running out of options to keep the government funded before money runs out before the end of the month.

“It’s not September 30 — the game is not over,” McCarthy told reporters as he arrived at the Capitol.

But after a more than two hour evening meeting he had only inched closer to a resolution.

“We’re very close there,” McCarthy said. “I feel like I just got a little more movement to go there.”

Even if McCarthy is able to accomplish the seemingly impossible and unite his all-but-ungovernable House Republican majority around a conservative spending plan, the victory would be short-lived. The hard-right bill, with steep 8% cuts to many services, would be rejected by the Senate, where Democrats are in control but even Republicans reject the House GOP’s severe reductions.

Across the Capitol, Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer, D-N.Y., opened the chamber trying to push ahead with its own bipartisan spending bills to kickstart the process, but even that ran into trouble from Republicans.

A Senate test vote on a popular bipartisan package of defense and military appropriations bills was turned back after opposition from GOP senators, as some are joining House Republicans in fighting for steeper reductions.

“It’s yet another reminder that in both houses, a small group of hard-right Republicans are dead set to grind the gears of government to a halt,” Schumer said.

McCarthy has suffered a series of setbacks this week to his plan to advance Republicans’ spending plans, testing his grip on power amid calls for his ouster.

In defiance of the speaker, a group of five GOP lawmakers from the right-wing House Freedom Caucus joined with Democrats to prevent consideration Tuesday of a usually popular defense bill. The bill would provide pay raises for the troops and other measures, but Republicans want a broader discussion on spending cuts in non-defense-related budgets.

McCarthy set up a do-over vote for Thursday as he tries for a third time to advance the defense bill after winning over two of the hard-right Republicans who were holding out for a commitment from the speaker on spending cuts elsewhere.

The House floor is essentially at a standstill, with no business related to the looming government shutdown being conducted, as McCarthy tries to regroup. He has warned lawmakers that they will stay in session this weekend to finish the job.

The speaker had hoped to rally Republicans around a stopgap bill, called a continuing resolution, or CR, that would fund the government for the next month as talks continue. The temporary bill would accomplish some of the conservatives’ goals — by slashing many government services 8%, while sparing defense and veterans accounts.

The package McCarthy is trying to push through the House also proposes a long list of conservative policies for immigration and border security that are widely embraced by Republicans.

But the conservative holdouts also want McCarthy to commit to keeping the funding cuts in place longer, for the full year, as budget talks continue with the Senate.

# Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, Sept. 21, 2023 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 089 ~ 56 of 82

During the lengthy dinnertime meeting in the Capitol basement, McCarthy offered to meet the conservative holdouts partway, vowing he would fight for a lower overall spending level in the subsequent bills.

But that still wasn't enough for some. One key conservative, Rep. Matt Gaetz of Florida, stood up and warned the room that at least seven Republicans would oppose the continuing resolution, according to those familiar with the private meeting. That's enough to deny passage.

Among others still opposed to the stopgap measure, Rep. Marjorie Taylor Greene of Georgia said afterward she too would vote against it.

Commanding only a slim House majority, McCarthy needs almost every Republican on board to pass any conservative bills over the objections of Democrats.

"It's a tough job and keeping all of these members appeased is next to impossible," said Rep. Steve Womack, R-Ark.

About McCarthy, he said, "He's doing the best he can, but we have to give him a hand to play."

As the Republican lawmakers were fighting among themselves for another day in the Capitol, others reached across the aisle to Democrats to try come up with a bipartisan solution.

Two centrist groups, the New Democratic Coalition and the Republican Governance Group, are having their own conversations on how to solve this impasse, according to a person familiar with the talks who insisted on anonymity to discuss them. Their groups together make up 145 members.

Rep. Annie Kuster, D-N.H., who chairs the New Democratic Coalition, said on Tuesday she was hoping that a coalition of "roughly an equal number" of Republicans and Democrats would emerge to support a continuing resolution.

"These are the people that are making public statements that a shutdown is not good for the country," she said.

And members of the bipartisan Problem Solvers Caucus of Republicans and Democrats are also in talks to develop a framework that would fund the government for several months, into 2024, while budget talks continue, according to a person familiar with the private negotiations and granted anonymity to discuss them.

Also at stake is President Joe Biden's request to provide an additional \$24 billion in military and humanitarian aid for Ukraine in its war with Russia that some lawmakers want to add to the must-pass bills needed to fund the U.S. government.

Meanwhile in the Senate, a robust bipartisan group of senators was had been trying to show strength as they prepare to negotiate with the House on government funding. But the Senate's effort to advance the bill fell short again Wednesday as Republicans dug in for a fight.

It's not the only Senate fight as senators are reeling from Schumer's decision to do away with the chamber's stuffy dress code, in a nod to Democratic Sen. John Fetterman of Pennsylvania, who has preferred wearing casual clothes while working to recover from a stroke and depression.

Fetterman on Wednesday upped the ante: "If those jagoffs in the House stop trying to shut our government down, and fully support Ukraine, then I will save democracy by wearing a suit on the Senate floor next week," he said in a statement.

---

Associated Press writers Kevin Freking, Mary Clare Jalonick and Farnoush Amiri contributed reporting.

## Debate over a Black student's suspension over his hairstyle in Texas ramps up with probe and lawsuit

By JUAN A. LOZANO Associated Press

HOUSTON (AP) — The debate over whether a Black high school student in Texas should be serving in-school suspension for wearing twisted dreadlocks to class intensified this week as the student's family and his school district both took legal action.

Darryl George, 17, a junior at Barbers Hill High School in Mont Belvieu, has been serving an in-school

# Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, Sept. 21, 2023 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 089 ~ 57 of 82

suspension since Aug. 31 at the Houston-area school. School officials say his dreadlocks fall below his eyebrows and ear lobes and violate the district's dress code.

George's mother, Darresha George, and the family's attorney deny the teenager's hairstyle violates the Barbers Hill Independent School District dress code and have accused the district of violating a new state law that outlaws racial discrimination based on hairstyles. The new law, the CROWN Act, took effect Sept. 1.

On Tuesday, Darresha George and her attorney filed a formal complaint with the Texas Education Agency, alleging that Darryl George was being harassed and mistreated by school district officials over his hair and that his in-school suspension was in violation of the CROWN Act.

On Wednesday, the agency notified Darresha George and her attorney that it will investigate the complaint.

Later Wednesday, the Barbers Hill school district announced it had filed a lawsuit in state district court asking a judge to clarify whether its dress code restrictions limiting student hair length for boys violates the CROWN Act. The lawsuit was filed in Chambers County, located east of Houston.

"Although we believe the new law does not govern hair length, we are asking the judicial system of Texas to interpret," Barbers Hill Superintendent Greg Poole said in a statement.

The superintendent had previously said the dress code is legal and teaches students to conform as a sacrifice benefiting everyone.

Darresha George said the fight to have her son return to class has taken a toll on her mentally and physically. She said she was recently hospitalized after a series of panic and anxiety attacks brought on from stress.

"I try not to show everything because I have to stay strong for my son. I have to stay strong and stay in the fight," Darresha George said. "But it is draining."

Darryl George did return to his regular first-period class on Wednesday morning, was welcomed by his teacher and classmates, and for a moment he "felt free for a little bit," his mother said.

But soon after his return, the school principal pulled him out of class and returned him to in-school suspension over his hair and for allegedly wearing an earring, which his mother said he does not wear to school.

"So (the principal) snatched his freedom right back away," Darresha George said.

In a statement, the school district said it would not enhance the current punishment against Darryl George while it waits for a ruling on its lawsuit.

The CROWN Act, an acronym for "Create a Respectful and Open World for Natural Hair," is intended to prohibit race-based hair discrimination and bars employers and schools from penalizing people because of hair texture or protective hairstyles including Afros, braids, dreadlocks, twists or Bantu knots. Texas is one of 24 states that have enacted a version of the CROWN Act.

A federal version of the CROWN Act passed in the House of Representatives last year, but was not successful in the Senate.

Darryl George's school previously clashed with another Black male student over the dress code. Barbers Hill officials told a student he had to cut his dreadlocks to return to school or participate in graduation in 2020, which garnered national attention. The student's mother withdrew him from the school and a federal judge later ruled the school district's hair policy was discriminatory.

Darryl George's family has said it plans to file a federal lawsuit against the school district.

"Barbers Hill, the hammer of accountability is coming. You will no longer discriminate or be racist or ignorant to no child on our watch," said Candice Matthews, national minister of politics for the New Black Panther Nation, who is a family spokesperson.

---

Follow Juan A. Lozano on X, the platform formerly known as Twitter: <https://twitter.com/juanlozano70>

## Behind all the speechmaking at the UN lies a basic, unspoken question: Is the world governable?

By TED ANTHONY AP National Writer

UNITED NATIONS (AP) — Work together. Go it alone. The apocalypse is at hand. But the future can be bright. The squabbles never cease, yet here are human beings from all across the world — hashing out conflicts with words and processes, convening under one roof, trying to write the next chapter of a common dream.

At the United Nations, “multilateralism” is always the goal. Yet so is the quest for a coherent storyline that unites all 193 member states and their ideas. Those two holy grails often find themselves at odds when leaders gather each September at the United Nations — a construct whose very name can be a two-word contradiction.

You hear a lot about “the narrative” these days in politics (and everywhere else). It’s a way to punch through the static and make sure people are absorbing your message — and, ultimately, doing what you want them to do. But how to establish a coherent storyline when the very notion of many nations with many voices is baked into the pie to begin with?

Which raises the bigger question, the one that sits beneath it all at this assembling of people trying to figure out how to run their patches of the planet and be part of an increasingly interconnected civilization: With the 21st century unfolding in all of its unimaginable complexities and conundrums, with fracture and fragmentation everywhere, can the world even be governed?

“Yes, it can, but only in the sense that the world has ever been governed, including in this highly institutionalized and regulated world — that is, minimally,” Jeffrey Martinson, an associate professor of political science at Meredith College in North Carolina, said in an email.

That truth becomes evident listening to the first two days of leaders’ speeches at the U.N. General Assembly this week. They are, to put it mildly, a global festival of competing wants and needs and complaints and demands — with climate and war and public health and inequality at the center of it all, but fragmentation and chaos ever-present.

“The world,” said Wavel Ramkalawan, president of the island nation of Seychelles, “stands at the brink.”

His sentiment embodies the main challenge that surfaces each year since shortly after World War II when leaders have gathered at the United Nations: how exactly to balance hope and cold reality.

For the past several years, U.N. Secretary-General António Guterres has set the tone with warnings of darkening skies. His imagery gets more dire each year, and this year he topped himself. First, in his opening speech Tuesday, he said that “our world is becoming unhinged.” Then, at a U.N. climate conference on Wednesday, he upped the ante even more — if that was possible — with the statement that humanity has “opened the gates to hell.”

Here’s a sampling of what followed:

— “We are going through a crisis — possibly the most significant one since the end of the Second World War,” said Alain Berset, the president of Switzerland.

— “We no longer trust any narratives,” said Nataša Pirc Musar, the president of Slovenia.

— “We believe that the world ... needs to be reborn,” said El Salvador President Nayib Bukele.

— “Time is running out for all of us,” said Panamanian President Laurentino Cortizo.

Not exactly excerpts from “The Power of Positive Thinking.” Yet in listening to the speeches, it became clear that some of this was merely an attention-getting device. Even Guterres, with his apocalyptic language, offered ways forward. His answer — unsurprising, since he hammers it home every year — is a world that is “multipolar” and multilateral, the collaborative foundations upon which the United Nations was founded.

“We are rapidly moving towards a multipolar world,” he said. “This is, in many ways, positive. It brings new opportunities for justice and balance in international relations. But multipolarity alone cannot guarantee peace.”

Or even coherence. Being multilateral means shared responsibility, shared ideas, shared paths forward. And nations have internal constituencies that often prevent that kind of cooperation (Exhibit A: Some

# Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, Sept. 21, 2023 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 089 ~ 59 of 82

Americans' suspicion of the United Nations, a mostly advisory organization, as the path to a "one-world government").

"The idea of a single governing body able to understand and address each country's needs and aspirations has proved to be an illusion," Andrea Molle, a scholar in sociology and political science at Chapman University in California, said in an email. "One of the axioms of the system of international relations is that such a system is intrinsically anarchic."

Anarchic is right. That's going to happen when those 193 members try to form a family and get along under one roof. But the goal — a shared vision, but multilateral — is always the United Nations' most elusive quarry.

"We seem incapable of coming together to respond," Guterres said in his opening speech Tuesday. Here's the thing, though: He may have been right, but he was also wrong.

Because before him sat scores of leaders and deputy leaders and ministers and diplomats, who traveled a total of more than a million miles to be on one patch of land in New York City to talk, to hear others talk and to try to work it out. It's chaos, but it's chaos sublimated.

"One can argue this question of governance has always plagued the United Nations," Katie Laatikainen, a professor of political science and international relations at Adelphi University in New York, said in an email. "Perhaps governing and a unified narrative are too ambitious for an organization like the U.N. Creative problem-solving and inclusion are worthy goals of multilateralism, and the U.N. has a respectable record in that regard."

Maybe that's enough. Maybe that's also what makes the most intricate era in human history governable: Sometimes we don't just kill each other. Sometimes, like this week, we draw together with all our contentiousness and all our ego, and we sit down and try to work it out. Maybe that act of trying is the entire point.

---

Ted Anthony, the director of new storytelling and newsroom innovation at The Associated Press, has been writing about international affairs since 1995 and covering the U.N. General Assembly since 2018. Find him at <http://twitter.com/anthonyted>

## **Ukraine's president, at Security Council, lashes out at Russia but avoids face-to-face encounter**

By EDITH M. LEDERER and JENNIFER PELTZ Associated Press

UNITED NATIONS (AP) — Ukraine's president accused Russia of waging "a criminal and unprovoked aggression" that undermines all norms of war and the U.N. charter Wednesday at a meeting of the U.N. Security Council. Volodymyr Zelenskyy also urged world leaders to strip Russia of its veto power.

The Ukrainian leader told the council that his proposal to end the 19-month war starts with adherence to the charter that ensures the sovereignty and territorial integrity of all 193 U.N. member nations. He stressed that restoration of all Ukrainian territory is the key to peace.

Before the meeting started, there was intense speculation about whether Zelenskyy and Russia's top diplomat, Sergey Lavrov, would clash, speak or totally avoid each other. But no confrontation happened because Zelenskyy left the council soon after his address.

The meeting started with a clash over his speech. Before Lavrov arrived, Russian U.N. Ambassador Vassily Nebenzia protested the council president's decision to allow Zelenskyy to speak ahead of the 15 council members.

He said Albanian Prime Minister Edi Rama, this month's council president, was trying to turn the meeting into "a one-man stand-up show," adding that it would be "nothing more than a spectacle" — a dig at Zelenskyy's past as a comedian.

Rama cited the council rule allowing a nonmember to speak first. He added that "this is not a special operation by the Albanian presidency," eliciting laughter with a quip about Russia's insistence on referring

# Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, Sept. 21, 2023 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 089 ~ 60 of 82

to its offensive against Ukraine as a "special military operation."

After another heated exchange over whether Nebenzia had referred to Rama as Albania's prime minister and a NATO member instead of as the council president, Rama declared: "I take note, and we'll continue with our session."

U.N. Secretary-General Antonio Guterres then briefed the council, reiterating that Russia's invasion of Ukraine in February 2022 was "in clear violation of the United Nations charter and international law."

The war "is aggravating geopolitical tensions and divisions, threatening regional stability, increasing the nuclear threat and creating deep fissures in our increasingly multipolar world," the U.N. chief warned.

Guterres again condemned the war and repeated his call for "a just and sustainable peace in Ukraine in line with the U.N. charter and international law — for Ukraine, for Russia and for the world."

Zelenskyy was the next speaker, sitting behind the Ukraine plaque at the Security Council's horseshoe-shaped table and wearing his traditional fatigues.

He called the invasion "a criminal and unprovoked aggression by Russia" that was "aimed at Ukraine's territory and resources."

"But it's not just that," he said. "The terrorist state is willing, through its aggression, to undermine all the grounds of international norms meant to protect the world from the wars."

Ukraine has long accused Russia of being an illegal successor to the former Soviet Union, which collapsed in the early 1990s, and Zelenskyy went after Russia again for claiming the Soviet Union's Security Council seat "through backstage manipulations."

The Ukrainian leader accused Russia of "mass atrocities" of human rights and said action should be taken to prevent Moscow from using its veto at the Security Council. The U.N.'s most powerful body is charged with ensuring international peace and security, but it has been blocked from taking any action on Ukraine because of Russia's virtually certain veto.

Zelenskyy called for reforms to allow the 193 members of the U.N. General Assembly, where there are no vetoes, to suspend or strip the veto power of one of the five permanent members of the Security Council for egregious violations of the U.N. charter.

The assembly has condemned Russia's invasion and demanded the withdrawal of its forces and a reversal of its annexation of Ukrainian territory, but its resolutions are not legally binding.

Ukraine has come under pressure from some council members, including China, to engage in talks to end the war, which has claimed tens of thousands of lives on both sides.

Zelenskyy laid out two key concrete steps to ensure Ukraine's future security: a complete withdrawal of all Russian troops, mercenaries and military and paramilitary "formations," and ships, from Ukraine's internationally recognized territory and its Black Sea waters. That step would be followed by "full restoration" of Ukrainian control "over the entire state border and exclusive economic zone."

"Only the implementation of these two points will result in an honest, reliable and complete cessation of hostilities," he said.

In a high-profile speech Tuesday to the General Assembly during its annual meeting of world leaders, the Ukrainian president accused Russia of using food, energy and even children as weapons in the war — and he warned other leaders that "when hatred is weaponized against one nation, it never stops there."

U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken told the council that Russia "has shredded the major tenets of the U.N. charter, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and international humanitarian law — and flouted one Security Council resolution after another."

The invasion violates the charter's "central pillar" of respecting every country's sovereignty and territorial integrity, he said.

"Russia is committing war crimes and crimes against humanity on a daily basis," he said.

Blinken said Russian President Vladimir Putin declared from the outset that the Kremlin's aim is to erase Ukraine from the map and restore Russia's lost empire.

Lavrov blamed the West for "a shaking of global stability as well as the exacerbation and the fomenting of new hotbeds of tension." He said "the U.S. and its satellites have egregiously and openly interfered in the domestic affairs of Ukraine," heightening the risks of global conflict.

He insisted that Russia has “fully” respected the provisions of the U.N. charter “in an interconnected way.”

This story has been corrected to indicate that Edi Rama is Albania’s prime minister, not president.

## **A panel finds torture made a 9/11 defendant psychotic. A judge will rule whether he can stand trial**

By ELLEN KNICKMEYER Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — A military medical panel has concluded that one of the five 9/11 defendants held at the Guantanamo Bay naval base has been rendered delusional and psychotic by the torture he underwent years ago while in CIA custody.

The findings heighten uncertainty over whether Ramzi bin al-Shibh, who has long complained he was under attack by invisible rays at Guantanamo, will stand trial. A military judge, Col. Matthew McCall, is expected to rule as soon as Thursday whether al-Shibh’s mental issues render him incompetent to take part in the proceedings against him.

Defense lawyers argue that the best hope of al-Shibh, a Yemeni accused of organizing one cell of the Sept. 11, 2001, hijackers, regaining competency to stand trial is a step that some Americans are likely to find distasteful: for him to be provided with post-torture trauma care and no longer subject to solitary confinement.

Al-Shibh’s newly disclosed diagnosis — post-traumatic stress disorder with secondary psychotic features — is the latest development to show how the George W. Bush administration’s approval of abusive interrogation of alleged al-Qaida attackers is complicating U.S. efforts to try the men more than two decades later.

On Wednesday, al-Shibh’s lead attorney, David Bruck, told the courtroom that the diagnosis is creating “a moment of truth” and an opportunity for the country to take into account the harm that was done by allowing torture.

On Sept. 6, the White House said President Joe Biden had declined to approve or deny demands presented by defense lawyers in plea negotiations to settle the case. They were seeking guarantees that all five men would get care for the physical and mental damage of their torture, and would be spared solitary confinement going forward.

Biden was unsettled about accepting terms for the plea from those responsible for the deadliest assault on the United States since Pearl Harbor, a White House National Security Council official said. The official spoke on condition of anonymity because he was not authorized to speak publicly.

Defense and prosecution attorneys had been negotiating a possible deal that would have the defendants plead guilty in exchange for being spared the death penalty. Some family members of 9/11 victims objected to the plea negotiations. Conservatives faulted the Biden administration for allowing the negotiations.

Al-Shibh’s mental issues meant he was not included in the plea negotiations. Any future plea negotiations are on hold at least until the military commission gets a new presiding military official next month, lawyers said.

No trial date has been set for the five defendants after more than a decade of proceedings. Logistical challenges and legal questions have slowed the commission at Guantanamo. That includes the question of how much evidence has been rendered inadmissible by torture while they were in CIA custody. The case has had a succession of military judges, with the fourth announcing Wednesday that he will retire in April.

The charges accuse alleged lead conspirator Khalid Sheikh Mohammed and the other four of helping orchestrate the killings of 2,976 people on Sept. 11, 2001. Al-Qaida attackers commandeered commercial aircraft and flew them into the World Trade Center, the Pentagon and, when passengers thwarted one attack, a field in Pennsylvania

The Associated Press monitored the military commission’s hearings in Cuba on Wednesday via a relay provided by the Pentagon.

The five defendants are being prosecuted jointly. Wednesday was the first time in more than a year the

men were in the Guantanamo commission room together.

Bruck pointed to what he said was al-Shibh's solitary confinement over four years in detention at CIA black sites, and torture that included his being forced to stand sleepless for as long as three days at a time, naked except for a diaper and doused with cold water in air-conditioned rooms, for the man's lasting belief that guards at Guantanamo were subjecting him to unseen attacks to deprive him of sleep.

Prosecutor Clayton Trivett and the judge acknowledged what they said were the man's persistent demands for an end to the invisible attacks over the years. Bruck estimated that al-Shibh's defense team spent as much as 90% of its time dealing with al-Shibh's mental challenges and trying to show him it was taking his complaints of invisible attacks seriously.

Al-Shibh is currently being held in disciplinary solitary confinement at Guantanamo, after staging a protest in his cell about the invisible attacks, Bruck said. The defense lawyer said the event did not injure others but gave no details.

Prosecutors are fighting a designation of incompetency for the defendant.

While al-Shibh is delusional, "he has the capacity to participate" with his lawyers "and it's really just a choice," Trivett argued.

Trivett said prosecutors would seek to separate him from the case against his four co-defendants if the judge does deem him incompetent.

For al-Shibh ever to improve, defense lawyer Bruck told the court, "his PTSD has to be treated. It's not going to get any better until it is."

The Bush administration after 9/11 cited the threat of future attacks in authorizing abusive interrogation by the CIA and military. It instituted a secret CIA detention program for hundreds of suspects, many of whom were later cleared.

The five 9/11 defendants were variously subjected to repeated waterboarding, beatings, violent repeated searches of their rectal cavities, sleep deprivation and other abuse.

A Senate investigation concluded what the administration called "enhanced interrogation" was ineffective at obtaining information.

The CIA's detention and interrogation program ended in 2009. The agency declined comment Wednesday.

This June, the first U.N. independent investigator allowed to meet with detainees at Guantanamo said even though the 2001 attacks were "crimes against humanity," the treatment of the detainees was unjustified. She noted that most of the more than 700 men brought to Guantanamo over the years were detained without cause and had no role in terror attacks. She said all still suffered from physical and psychological trauma and urged torture rehabilitation.

The Biden administration, which has said it wants to close the Guantanamo facility, said in a statement attached to the report that "the United States disagrees in significant respects with many factual and legal assertions" but it will carefully review her recommendations.

## **House Republicans clash with Attorney General Garland, accusing him of favoring Hunter Biden**

By FARNOUSH AMIRI and LINDSAY WHITEHURST Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — House Republicans clashed with Attorney General Merrick Garland on Wednesday, accusing him and the Justice Department of the "weaponization" of the department's work in favor of President Joe Biden's son Hunter.

Garland's appearance before the House Judiciary Committee was his first in two years and came at an unprecedented moment in the department's history: He's overseeing two cases against Donald Trump, the first former president to face criminal charges, and another against the sitting president's son.

Republicans on the committee — led by chairman Jim Jordan of Ohio — set the tone with accusations that the Justice Department is favoring the Biden family while targeting his likely 2024 opponent, Trump.

"There's one investigation protecting President Biden. There's another one attacking President Trump," Jordan declared. "The Justice Department's got both sides of the equation covered."

# Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, Sept. 21, 2023 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 089 ~ 63 of 82

Garland — carefully and deliberately — defended the country's largest law enforcement agency of more than 115,000 employees at a time when political and physical threats against agents and their families are on the rise.

"Our job is not to take orders from the president, from Congress, or from anyone else, about who or what to criminally investigate," the attorney general said. "I am not the president's lawyer. I will also add that I am not Congress' prosecutor. The Justice Department works for the American people."

Questioning in the Republicans' arsenal focused on allegations that the Justice Department interfered in the yearslong case into Hunter Biden and that the prosecutor in charge of that case did not have the full authority he needed to bring necessary charges.

Republican Mike Johnson of Louisiana asked Garland whether he had talked with anyone at FBI headquarters about the Hunter Biden investigation. The attorney general's response began with a long pause before he said: "I don't recollect the answer to that question," later adding "I don't believe that I did."

Garland then said repeatedly that he purposely kept the details of the investigation at arms length, to keep his promise not to interfere.

His testimony came just over a week after House Speaker Kevin McCarthy, R-Calif., launched an impeachment inquiry into Garland's boss, President Biden, with a special focus on the Justice Department's handling of Hunter Biden's case.

The White House has dismissed the impeachment inquiry as baseless and has worked to focus the conversation on policy instead.

"These sideshows won't spare House Republicans from bearing responsibility for inflicting serious damage on the country," Ian Sams, a White House spokesperson, said in a statement Wednesday.

Hunter Biden's legal team, on the other hand, has gone on the offensive against GOP critics, most recently filing suit against the Internal Revenue Service after two of its agents raised whistleblower claims to Congress about the handling of the investigation.

Republicans contend that the Justice Department — both under Trump and now Biden — has failed to fully probe the allegations against the younger Biden, ranging from his work on the board of Ukrainian energy company Burisma to his tax filings in California and Washington D.C.

An investigation into Hunter Biden had been run by the U.S. Attorney for Delaware, Trump appointee David Weiss, who Garland kept on to finish the probe and insulate it from claims of political interference. Garland granted Weiss special counsel status last month, giving him broad authority to investigate and report his findings.

Last week, Weiss used that new authority to indict Hunter Biden on federal firearms charges, putting the case on track toward a possible trial as the 2024 election looms.

When asked by Rep. Dan Bishop, R-N.C., whether he had tried to figure out if Weiss was facing any hurdles in bringing charges against the president's son, Garland said he had purposely kept his distance to keep a promise not to interfere.

"The way to not interfere was to not investigate an investigation," Garland said.

One Republican during the more than five-hour hearing came to Garland's defense

Rep. Ken Buck of Colorado, a former Justice Department prosecutor, told Garland that he was in an impossible situation after inheriting an investigation into the president's son and would have been criticized no matter what.

"Do you know what people would have said if you had asked for U.S. Attorney Weiss' resignation when you became attorney general?" Buck asked Garland. "They would have said that you were obstructing the Hunter Biden investigation and you were firing a Republican appointee so that you could appoint a Democrat to slow walk this investigation."

He added, "You would have been criticized either way, whether you acted or did not act in that situation."

Weiss, since 2018, has overseen the day-to-day running of the probe, while another special counsel, Jack Smith, is in charge of the Trump investigation, though Garland retains final say on both as attorney general.

Garland said no one at the White House had given him or other senior officials at the Justice Department direction about the handling of the Hunter Biden investigation. Asked whether he had spoken with Weiss,

Garland said he had followed his pledge not to interfere in the investigation but declined to say whether or how often he had spoken with the newly named special counsel, citing the ongoing investigation.

Democrats, for their part, sought to focus on other criminal-justice issues, including domestic terrorism, hate crimes and gun violence. Rep. Jerry Nadler, the top Democrat on the committee, decried what he called Republicans' focus on "long discredited conspiracy theories" about Hunter Biden and a laptop said to have belonged to him.

"That is their goal. They want to divide this country and make our government appear like it's broken," Nadler said.

Jordan, along with the Republican chairmen of the Oversight and Ways and Means committees, launched an investigation into Weiss' handling of the case, which was first opened in 2018, after two IRS agents claimed in congressional testimony in May that the Justice Department improperly interfered with their work.

Gary Shapley, a veteran IRS agent assigned to the case, testified to Congress that Weiss said in October 2022 that he was not the "deciding person whether charges are filed" against Hunter Biden. That testimony has been disputed by two FBI agents also in that meeting who told lawmakers that they have no recollection of Weiss saying that.

## **Biden warns Netanyahu about the health of Israel's democracy and urges compromise on court overhaul**

By JOSEF FEDERMAN and AAMER MADHANI Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — President Joe Biden raised "hard issues," including protecting the "checks and balances" in a democracy, in a Wednesday meeting with Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, pushing the Israeli leader to find a compromise on a judicial overhaul that has set off months of mass protests in Israel and concerns in Washington.

Biden also raised concerns about the far-right Israeli government's treatment of the Palestinians, urging Netanyahu to take steps to improve conditions in the West Bank at a time of heightened violence in the occupied territory.

The two leaders sat down and took time to chat one-on-one on the sidelines of the U.N. General Assembly. It was their first meeting since Netanyahu took office at the helm of his country's far-right government late last year.

Relations have cooled since Netanyahu returned to office with a coalition of ultra-Orthodox and ultranationalist partners. His new government has stepped up construction in West Bank settlements, angering the U.S., and pressed ahead with its contentious judicial overhaul plan despite deep divisions at home and criticism from the U.S. and other allies.

Netanyahu tried to play down concerns about the plan, saying there is "one thing that will never change and that is Israel's commitment to democracy."

Biden opened the meeting by stressing the U.S. friendship with Israel as being "ironclad" and saying that "without Israel, there's not a Jew in the world who is secure. Israel is essential." But Biden also acknowledged the tensions with Netanyahu's government and its policies.

"We're going to discuss some of the hard issues, that is upholding democratic values that lie at the heart of our partnership, including the checks and balances in our systems," Biden said. He said they would also talk about a path to a negotiated two-state solution with Palestinians and "ensuring that Iran never, never acquires a nuclear weapon."

A senior Biden administration official said Biden pushed Netanyahu to find a compromise on his planned changes to the Israeli court system. The official, who spoke on condition of anonymity to discuss the private meeting, did not want to characterize Netanyahu's reaction to what Biden said, only that the Israeli leader understood the need for a compromise.

Israeli media, citing a senior official, said Netanyahu assured Biden he was seeking a compromise. However, Netanyahu has made similar pledges in recent months while pushing ahead with the plan, drawing accusations from his opponents that he is not negotiating in good faith. His coalition pushed the first major

# Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, Sept. 21, 2023 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 089 ~ 65 of 82

piece of the legislation through parliament in July.

A statement by Netanyahu's office said the meeting with Biden was primarily about brokering a peace agreement between Israel and Saudi Arabia.

The prospect of an agreement was also raised by Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman, who said in an interview with Fox News being aired Wednesday that the two countries are getting closer to normalizing relations. But Saudi Arabia's de facto leader also said it was "very important" to reach a pact on the treatment of Palestinians as part of any agreement.

"We got to see where we go," he said. "We hope that will reach a place, that it will ease the life of the Palestinians, get Israel as a player in the Middle East."

The location of Biden and Netanyahu's long-anticipated meeting — a New York hotel room on the sidelines of the U.N. General Assembly meetings rather than the grandeur of the Oval Office — has been widely interpreted in Israel as a sign of U.S. displeasure with Netanyahu's new government.

Netanyahu has been a frequent White House visitor over the years, and Israeli leaders are typically invited within weeks of starting their tenure to the Oval Office. But his judicial proposals have raised concerns within Israel as well as the U.S. about his commitment to a democratic system.

Biden held out the possibility of the coveted Oval Office meeting, saying, "I hope we'll see each other in Washington by the end of the year." The U.S. later formally invited Netanyahu to the White House, eyeing a meeting in November or December.

Biden himself has repeatedly raised concerns about Netanyahu's plan to overhaul Israel's judicial system.

Netanyahu says the country's unelected judges wield too much power over government decision-making. His plan seeks to give more authority to the ruling coalition in parliament, which he heads. Critics say that by weakening the independent judiciary, Netanyahu is pushing Israel toward authoritarian rule.

The plan has divided the nation and led to months of mass protests against his government. Those demonstrations followed him to the United States, with large numbers of Israeli expatriates waving the country's flag in protest Wednesday in New York. Hundreds of Israelis also protested outside the U.S. Embassy in Tel Aviv on Wednesday.

Early this year, Biden voiced his unhappiness over the judicial overhaul, saying Netanyahu "cannot continue down this road" and urging the Israeli leader to find a compromise.

The Israeli government's treatment of the Palestinians has also drawn American ire. Netanyahu's coalition is dominated by far-right ultranationalists who have greatly expanded Israeli settlement construction on occupied lands claimed by the Palestinians for a future state. Israel's government also opposes a two-state solution between Israel and the Palestinians — a cornerstone of White House policy in the region. The deadlock has coincided with a spike in fighting in the West Bank.

According to a White House summary of the talks, Biden stressed the "need to take immediate measures to improve the security and economic situation" in the West Bank, where violence between Israelis and Palestinians over the past 18 months has intensified to its worst levels in roughly two decades. The two leaders also reaffirmed their intention to stop Iran from acquiring nuclear weapons.

The Biden-Netanyahu meeting came at a time of cooling ties between Israel and the Democratic Party. A poll by The Associated Press-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research found that while Americans generally view Israel as a partner or ally, many are questioning whether Netanyahu's government shares American values. Republicans were significantly more likely than Democrats to call Israel an ally with shared values.

Topping Netanyahu's wish list were discussions on U.S. efforts to broker a deal establishing full diplomatic relations between Israel and Saudi Arabia. The White House statement said Biden and Netanyahu discussed the shipping and rail corridor announced at the Group of 20 summit that would connect Israel with Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates and Jordan.

Netanyahu, who also led Israel when President Donald Trump brokered the "Abraham Accords" between Israel and four Arab countries, said a similar deal with Saudi Arabia would "go a long way" to promoting Israel's relations with the broader Arab and Muslim world and help advance "a genuine peace" with the Palestinians.

The White House has acknowledged that it is seeking such a deal, but obstacles lie in the way. Saudi

Arabia is pushing for a nuclear cooperation deal and defense guarantees from the U.S.

The Saudis have also said they expect Israel to make significant concessions to the Palestinians.

The Saudi foreign minister, Prince Faisal bin Farhan, told reporters "there is no other way" to solve the conflict than by establishing a Palestinian state. But senior ministers in Netanyahu's government have already ruled out any concessions to the Palestinians.

Federman reported from Jerusalem. Associated Press writer Isabel Debre in Jerusalem and AP Diplomatic Writer Matthew Lee in Washington contributed to this report.

## **Biden administration announces \$600M to produce COVID tests and will reopen website to order them**

By WILL WEISSERT Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — The Biden administration announced Wednesday that it is providing \$600 million in funding to produce new at-home COVID-19 tests and is restarting a website allowing Americans to again order up to four free tests per household — aiming to prevent possible shortages during a rise in coronavirus cases that has typically come during colder months.

The Department of Health and Human Services says orders can be placed at COVIDTests.gov starting Sept. 25, and that no-cost tests will be delivered for free by the United States Postal Service.

Twelve manufacturers that employ hundreds of people in seven states from California to Maryland have been awarded funding and will produce 200 million over-the-counter tests to replenish federal stockpiles for government use, in addition to producing enough tests to meet demand for tests ordered online, the department said.

The new effort is meant to guard against supply chain issues that sparked some shortages of at-home COVID tests made overseas during past surges in coronavirus cases. But it also illustrates the political balance President Joe Biden is trying to strike as he seeks reelection next year between trumpeting his administration having led the country through the worst of the pandemic while also trying to try to better prepare for the continued effects of a virus that persists.

Dawn O'Connell, assistant secretary for preparedness and response at HHS, said that though some portions of the public may be tired of the pandemic and its implications, at home-testing remains a key way to slow the spread of new cases.

"Whether or not people are done with it, we know the virus is there, we know that it's circulating. We know, if past is prologue, it'll circulate to a higher degree and spread, and cases will go up in the fall and winter seasons," O'Connell said. "Anticipating that that would be true again, or something similar, we want to make sure the American people have these tools."

O'Connell said the website will remain functional to receive orders through the holidays and "we reserve the right to keep it open even longer if we're starting to see an increase in cases."

"If there is a demand for these tests, we want to make sure that they're made available to the American people for free in this way," O'Connell said. "But, at this point, our focus is getting through the holidays and making sure folks can take a test if they're going to see Grandma for Thanksgiving."

The tests are designed to detect COVID variants currently circulating, and are intended for use by the end of the year. But they will include instructions on how to verify extended expiration dates, the department said.

The initiative follows four previous rounds where federal officials and the U.S. Postal Service provided more than 755 million tests for free to homes nationwide.

It is also meant to complement ongoing federal efforts to provide free COVID tests to long-term care facilities, schools, low-income senior housing, uninsured individuals and underserved communities which are already distributing 4 million per week and have distributed 500 million tests to date, the department said.

O'Connell said manufacturers would be able to spread out the 200 million tests they will produce for federal use over 18 months. That means that, as demand for home tests rises via the website or at U.S.

retailers when COVID cases increase around the country, producers can focus on meeting those orders — but that they will then have an additional outlet for the tests they produce during period when demand declines.

She also said that each winter since the pandemic began “as people move indoors into heated spaces” cases rise and added that also “there’s always an opportunity or chance for another variant to come” but “we’re not anticipating that.”

“That’s not why we’re doing this,” O’Connell said. “We’re doing this for the fall and winter season ahead and the potential for an increase in cases as a result.”

HHS Secretary Xavier Becerra said that the “Biden-Harris Administration, in partnership with domestic manufacturers, has made great strides in addressing vulnerabilities in the U.S. supply chain by reducing our reliance on overseas manufacturing.”

“These critical investments will strengthen our nation’s production levels of domestic at-home COVID-19 rapid tests and help mitigate the spread of the virus,” Becerra said in a statement.

## **Revolving door redux: The DEA’s recently departed No. 2 returns to a Big Pharma consulting firm**

By JOSHUA GOODMAN and JIM MUSTIAN Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Washington’s revolving door kept spinning this week as the Drug Enforcement Administration’s recently departed second-in-command returned for a new stint with the high-powered consulting firm where he previously advised Purdue Pharma and a drug distributor fighting sanctions over a deluge of suspicious painkiller shipments.

Louis Milione retired from the DEA a second time this summer amid reporting by The Associated Press on potential conflicts caused by his prior consulting for the pharmaceutical industry. Less than three months later, Milione again landed a plum job at Guidepost Solutions, a New York-based firm hired by some of the same companies he had been tasked with regulating when he returned to the DEA in 2021 as Administrator Anne Milgram’s top deputy.

Milione had spent four years at Guidepost prior to his return, leveraging his extensive experience and contacts from a 21-year DEA career.

“Should we say Welcome Back?” Guidepost quipped in a social media post this week announcing Milione’s rehire as president of global investigations and regulatory compliance.

Milione is the most senior of a slew of DEA officials to have traded their badge and gun for a globe-trotting consulting job; that includes a dozen at Guidepost alone. His career stands out for two cycles through the revolving door between government and industry, raising questions about the potential impact on the DEA’s mission to police drug companies blamed for tens of thousands of American overdose deaths.

“Once someone reveals that they are willing to trade their public service expertise on the private market, they’re probably going to do it again,” said Jeff Hauser, the executive director of the Revolving Door Project, a watchdog for corporate influence in the federal government. “Knowing how lucrative that industry work can be, it’s hard to imagine he was ever truly firewalled in his emotions or self-interest from Guidepost while at the DEA.”

It’s unclear when Milione began preparing his return to Guidepost, but any employment negotiation with an entity with dealings before the DEA would have required him to file an ethics disclosure with the agency. Milione and Guidepost declined to comment about the new role. The DEA and Justice Department did not respond to questions.

Milione, 60, is perhaps best known at the DEA for leading the 2008 sting that nabbed Russia’s notorious arms trafficker Viktor Bout and, more recently, a two-year stint heading the division that controls the sale of highly addictive narcotics.

Like dozens of colleagues in the DEA’s Office of Diversion Control, he went to work as a consultant for some of the same companies he had been tasked with regulating. That included serving as a \$600-per-hour expert for Purdue Pharma as it fought legal challenges over its aggressive marketing of Oxycontin

other highly addictive painkillers, becoming the face of the opioid epidemic.

Pressed by members of Congress recently about her decision to rehire Milione, Milgram acknowledged she had been aware of his previous work for the drug industry but was more impressed by his legacy at the DEA.

"I asked the question of many former agents, current agents and prosecutors, who the best agent in America was," she said during House oversight hearing in July. "The answer I got repeatedly was Lou Milione."

But when he served as the DEA's No. 2, Milione never faced scrutiny from lawmakers over his consulting because the DEA for more than a decade has not filled the job of deputy administrator, which requires a presidential appointment and Senate confirmation. Instead, the DEA directly hired Milione to fill a career position with essentially the same duties but a slightly different title — "principal deputy administrator" — requiring no such oversight.

Milione's private-sector clientele also included Morris & Dickson Co., the nation's fourth-largest wholesale drug distributor, as it tried to stave off DEA sanctions for disregarding thousands of suspicious, high-volume orders.

The DEA allowed the company to continue shipping drugs for nearly four years after a judge recommended its license be revoked for "cavalier disregard" of rules aimed at preventing opioid abuse. It was not until AP began asking questions this spring that the DEA moved to finally strip the Shreveport, Louisiana-based company of its license to distribute highly addictive painkillers.

Morris & Dickson is still challenging the ruling, which threatens to put the \$4 billion a year company out of business. Its attorneys filed court papers this month reiterating Milione's testimony in 2019 that the company "spared no expense" to overhaul its anti-diversion efforts.

The DEA has not explained the unusual delays in the administrative case but said Milione, after returning to the DEA, recused himself from agency business related to Morris & Dickson and other companies he advised.

"I believe in the recusal and ethics process at the Department of Justice," Milgram told Congress. "I relied on that."

---

Contact AP's global investigative team at [Investigative@ap.org](mailto:Investigative@ap.org).

## **White House to announce first-ever federal office of gun violence prevention, AP sources say**

By COLLEEN LONG and SEUNG MIN KIM Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Joe Biden is creating the first-ever federal office of gun violence prevention, according to two people familiar with the plans.

The office will coordinate efforts across the federal government and will offer help and guidance to states struggling with increasing gun violence, while taking the lead on implementation of the bipartisan gun legislation signed into law last year. Biden tentatively plans to announce the new effort with an event Friday at the White House, said the people, who had direct knowledge of the plans and who spoke to The Associated Press on condition of anonymity because they were not authorized to speak publicly.

The office fulfills a key demand of gun safety activists who banded together as a coalition to endorse Biden for president in 2024, and is an effort by the White House to keep the issue front-and-center as the president pushes for a ban on so-called "assault weapons" and urges Congress to act.

"The creation of an Office of Gun Violence Prevention in the White House will mark a turning point in how our federal government responds to an epidemic that plagues every state and every community in America," said Kris Brown, president of the gun safety group Brady, which has advocated for the office since 2020.

"Tackling this epidemic will take a whole-of-government approach, and this new office would ensure the executive branch is focused and coordinated on proven solutions that will save lives."

# Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, Sept. 21, 2023 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 089 ~ 69 of 82

Greg Jackson, the executive director of the Community Justice Action Fund, and Everytown for Gun Safety's Rob Wilcox are expected to hold roles in the newly created office, which White House staff secretary Stef Feldman will oversee, the people said. The White House's plans were first reported by The Washington Post.

"There are few people who care more about the work of gun violence prevention than President Biden," said Sen. Chris Murphy, D-Conn., who has drafted legislation with Rep. Maxwell Frost, D-Fla., that would create such an office. "Establishing a White House office dedicated to this fight will save thousands of lives and strengthen the federal government's implementation of the Bipartisan Safer Communities Act."

Firearms are the No. 1 killer of children in the U.S., and so far this year 220 children younger than 11 have died by guns and 1,049 between the ages of 12 and 17 have died. As of 2020, the firearm mortality rate in the U.S. for those under age 19 is 5.6 per 100,000. The next comparable is Canada, with 0.08 deaths per 100,000.

But Republican support for gun restrictions is slipping a year after Congress passed the most comprehensive firearms control legislation in decades with bipartisan support, according to a recent poll from The Associated Press-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research.

Most Democrats, 92%, want gun laws made stronger, in line with their views in a UChicago Harris/AP-NORC poll conducted in July 2022. But Republican desire for more expansive legislation has dropped to 32% from 49% last summer and independents' support has also declined slightly to 61% from 72%.

Yet despite the political divide, both sides believe it's important to reduce mass shootings that plague the nation, the poll found. As of Monday, there have been at least 35 mass killings in the U.S. so far in 2023, leaving at least 171 people dead, not including shooters who died, according to a database maintained by the AP and USA Today in partnership with Northeastern University.

That puts the country on a faster pace for mass killings than in any other year since 2006, according to the database, which defines a mass killing as one in which four or more people are killed, not including the perpetrator, within a 24-hour period.

## NASA spacecraft delivering biggest sample yet from an asteroid

By MARCIA DUNN AP Aerospace Writer

Planet Earth is about to receive a special delivery — the biggest sample yet from an asteroid.

A NASA spacecraft will fly by Earth on Sunday and drop off what is expected to be at least a cupful of rubble it grabbed from the asteroid Bennu, closing out a seven-year quest.

The sample capsule will parachute into the Utah desert as its mothership, the Osiris-Rex spacecraft, zooms off for an encounter with another asteroid.

Scientists anticipate getting about a half pound (250 grams) of pebbles and dust, much more than the teaspoon or so brought back by Japan from two other asteroids. No other country has fetched pieces of asteroids, preserved time capsules from the dawn of our solar system that can help explain how Earth — and life — came to be.

Sunday's landing concludes a 4 billion-mile (6.2-billion-kilometer) journey highlighted by the rendezvous with the carbon-rich Bennu, a unique pogo stick-style touchdown and sample grab, a jammed lid that sent some of the stash spilling into space, and now the return of NASA's first asteroid samples.

"I ask myself how many heart-pounding moments can you have in one lifetime because I feel like I might be hitting my limit," said the University of Arizona's Dante Lauretta, the mission's lead scientist.

A brief look at the spacecraft and its cargo:

### THE LONG JOURNEY

Asteroid chaser Osiris-Rex blasted off on the \$1 billion mission in 2016. It arrived at Bennu in 2018 and spent the next two years flying around the small spinning space rock and scouting out the best place to grab samples. Three years ago, the spacecraft swooped in and reached out with its 11-foot (3-meter) stick vacuum, momentarily touching the asteroid's surface and sucking up dust and pebbles. The device pressed down with such force and grabbed so much that rocks became wedged around the rim of the lid.

# Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, Sept. 21, 2023 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 089 ~ 70 of 82

As samples drifted off into space, Lauretta and his team scrambled to get the remaining material into the capsule. The exact amount inside won't be known until the container is opened.

## ASTEROID BENNU

Discovered in 1999, Bennu is believed to be a remnant of a much larger asteroid that collided with another space rock. It's barely one-third of a mile (half a kilometer) wide, roughly the height of the Empire State Building, and its black rugged surface is packed with boulders. Roundish in shape like a spinning top, Bennu orbits the sun every 14 months, while rotating every four hours. Scientists believe Bennu holds leftovers from the solar system's formation 4.5 billion years ago. It may come dangerously close and strike Earth on Sept. 24, 2182 — exactly 159 years after the asteroid's first pieces arrive. Osiris-Rex's up-close study can help humanity figure out how to deflect Bennu if needed, Lauretta said.

## GAME DAY

Osiris-Rex will release the sample capsule from 63,000 miles (100,000 kilometers) out, four hours before it's due to touch down at the Defense Department's Utah Test and Training Range on Sunday morning. The release command will come from spacecraft builder Lockheed Martin's control center in Colorado. Soon afterward, the mothership will steer away and take off to explore another asteroid. The capsule — nearly 3 feet wide (81 centimeters) and 1.6 feet tall (50 centimeters) — will hit the atmosphere at 27,650 mph (44,500 kph) for the final 13 minutes of descent remaining. The main parachute will slow the last mile (1.6 kilometers), allowing for a mild 11 mph (18 kph) touchdown. Once everything is deemed safe, the capsule will be hustled by helicopter to a makeshift clean lab at the range. The next morning, a plane will carry the sealed container full of rubble to Houston, home to NASA's Johnson Space Center. NASA is livestreaming the touchdown, set for around 10:55 a.m. EDT.

## CLEANER THAN CLEAN

A new lab at Johnson will be limited to the Bennu rubble to avoid cross-contamination with other collections, said NASA curator Kevin Righter. Building 31 already holds the moon rocks brought back by the Apollo astronauts from 1969 through 1972, as well as comet dust and specks of solar wind collected during two previous missions and Mars meteorites found in Antarctica. The asteroid samples will be handled inside nitrogen-purging gloveboxes by staff in head-to-toe clean room suits. NASA plans a splashy public reveal of Bennu's riches on Oct. 11.

## ASTEROID AUTUMN

This fall is what NASA is calling Asteroid Autumn, with three asteroid missions marking major milestones. The Osiris-Rex touchdown will be followed by the launch of another asteroid hunter on Oct. 5. Both the NASA spacecraft and its target — a metal asteroid — are named Psyche. Then a month later, NASA's Lucy spacecraft will encounter its first asteroid since soaring from Cape Canaveral, Florida, in 2021. Lucy will swoop past Dinkinesh in the main asteroid belt between Mars and Jupiter on Nov. 1. It's a warmup for Lucy's unprecedented tour of the so-called Trojans, swarms of asteroids that shadow Jupiter around the sun. Neither Psyche nor Lucy will collect souvenirs, nor will Osiris-Rex on its next assignment, to explore the asteroid Apophis in 2029.

## OTHER SAMPLE RETURNS

This is NASA's third sample return from deep space, not counting the hundreds of pounds (kilograms) of moon rocks gathered by the Apollo astronauts. The agency's first robotic sample grab ended with a bang in 2004. The capsule bearing solar wind particles slammed into the Utah desert and shattered, compromising the samples. Two years later, a U.S. capsule with comet dust landed intact. Japan's first asteroid sample mission returned microscopic grains from asteroid Itokawa in 2010. Its second trip yielded about 5 grams — a teaspoon or so — from the asteroid Ryugu in 2020. The Soviet Union transported moon samples to Earth during the 1970s, and China returned lunar material in 2020.

---

The Associated Press Health and Science Department receives support from the Howard Hughes Medical Institute's Science and Educational Media Group. The AP is solely responsible for all content.

## Homeowners face rising insurance rates as climate change makes wildfires, storms more common

By KEN SWEET AP Business Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — A growing number of Americans are finding it difficult to afford insurance on their homes, a problem only expected to worsen because insurers and lawmakers have underestimated the impact of climate change, a new report says.

A report from First Street Foundation released Wednesday says states such as California, Florida and Louisiana, which are prone to wildfires and damaging storms and flooding, are likely to see the most dramatic increases in premiums. But the fire that destroyed the Hawaiian community of Lahaina on Aug. 8, as well as the historic flooding that happened in Vermont and Maine in July, are examples of events that could drive up insurance costs for homeowners in other states.

"If you're not worried, you're not paying attention," said California Sen. Bill Dodd, whose district includes the wine-country counties devastated by the LNU Complex fires in 2020.

First Street estimates, factoring climate models into the financial risk of properties in its report, that roughly 39 million properties — roughly a quarter of all homes in the country — are being underpriced for the climate risk to insure those properties.

"Some places may be impacted very minimally, but other places could see massive increases in insurance premiums in the coming years," said Jeremy Porter, head of climate implications at First Street and a co-author of the report.

First Street, a New York-based non-profit, has been a to-go researcher on the financial implications of climate change for years. Their research is used by Fannie Mae, Bank of America, the Treasury Department and others for understanding the potential risks to properties.

There are several signs that climate change is taking its toll on the insurance industry. The U.S. homeowner's insurance industry has had three straight years of underwriting losses, according to credit rating agency AM Best. Losses for the first half of 2023 totaled \$24.5 billion, which is roughly what was lost in all of 2022.

"(Climate change) is a problem that is already here," said Todd Bevington, a managing director at the insurance broker VIU by HUB. In his 30 years of doing insurance, he said "I've never seen the market turn this quickly or significantly."

Skyrocketing insurance costs are a serious concern for the small town of Paradise in Northern California, which was nearly wiped out by a deadly 2018 wildfire that killed 85 people.

Jen Goodlin moved back to her hometown from Colorado with her family in 2020, determined to help in the town's recovery. They began building on a lot they had purchased, and moved into their new house in October 2022.

In July, she was shocked to receive notice that the family's homeowner insurance premium would be \$11,245 -- up from \$2,500.

"Our insurance agent said, 'Just be thankful we didn't drop you,' and I said, 'You did, you just dropped me,'" she said.

Goodlin, a former dental hygienist who is now executive director of the nonprofit Rebuild Paradise Foundation, said hundreds, if not thousands, of people are being hit by these rate hikes in a town being built with updated fire-safe building codes and little if any fuel to burn. She knows a homeowner whose premium is now \$21,000 for a newly constructed home.

Record numbers of Americans are now insured through state-affiliated "insurers of last resort" like California's FAIR Plan, or Louisiana or Florida's Citizens property insurance companies. These programs were designed to insure properties where private insurance companies have refused to insure or the price for private insurance is too expensive.

Goodlin will soon be one of those homeowners. She said she's in the process of transitioning to the FAIR Plan.

The number of homeowners covered by California's FAIR Plan was 268,321 in 2021, almost double what

# Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, Sept. 21, 2023 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 089 ~ 72 of 82

it was five years before. That figure has almost certainly increased in the last two years, experts say. In Florida, Citizens Property Insurance Corp. now has 1.4 million homeowners' policies in effect, nearly triple in five years.

In some cases, policymakers have bound the hands of insurance companies, leading to an underpricing of risk. For example, the most a California insurance company can raise a homeowner's premium by law each year is 7% without involving a public hearing, a process that most insurers want to avoid. Those policies, along with the increased chance of catastrophic events, have led insurers like State Farm and Allstate to either pull out of the California market or pause underwriting new policies.

As a result, California's FAIR plan, which was created 50 years ago as a temporary stopgap measure for those impacted by riots and brush fires in the 1960s, is now the only option available to homeowners in some ZIP codes.

"We've got to find a way to get insurers to get back into the market, to take people out of the FAIR Plan so that we can reduce the risk there," Dodd said.

Dodd was one of the key lawmakers trying to negotiate a bill in the final weeks of the state's legislative session to address the issue. But all sides failed to reach an agreement.

There are likely to be more insurance market failures in the future, Porter said, as more insurers simply refuse to underwrite policies in certain communities or go property by property. Comparisons to the National Flood Insurance Program, which is now \$22.5 billion in debt, have become common.

Even the backstop programs are buckling under tremendous losses. Louisiana's insurer of last resort, Citizens, raised its rates for 2023 by 63.1% statewide to cover higher costs.

This summer, reinsurance companies such as Swiss Re and Munich Re raised their property catastrophe reinsurance premiums in the U.S. by an average of 20% to 50%. Reinsurance brokerage firm Guy Carpenter & Co. said it was the highest increase for reinsurance rates since the year after Hurricane Katrina devastated New Orleans and the Gulf Coast.

"It's a global problem. Virtually every geography is seeing a repricing of risk," said Lara Mowery, global head of distribution at Guy Carpenter, in an interview.

Reinsurers step in to help cover losses resulting from a catastrophe, so regular insurance companies do not take on all of the risk. In one example of a typical reinsurance contract, a \$20 million contract could require the insurance company to cover the first \$10 million in claims and the reinsurer to pick up the other \$10 million.

Mowery added that many reinsurance firms now have resources dedicated to studying the impact of climate change on how to price catastrophes.

There have been other factors impacting the insurance industry as well. Inflation has made the cost of repairing homes pricier and home prices remain near record levels. A labor shortage means getting damaged homes repaired may take longer, requiring insurers to pay for temporary housing for policyholders longer.

In short, an industry whose business model is calculating risk based on what happened in the past is increasingly unable to do so.

"You can no longer rely on 100 years of wildfire data to price risk when the unprecedented has happened," Mowery said.

While the intensity of wildfires, floods and storms can vary from year to year, the trend lines in these models point to more wildfire activity as well as more intense storms, all likely to result in more catastrophic amounts of damage that insurance companies will have to cover.

Factoring in climate models and acres estimated to be burned, First Street estimates that by 2050, roughly 34,000 homes will burn down because of wildfires every year. That's roughly the equivalent of losing the city of Asheville, N.C., every year.

Going forward, it may become more necessary for potential homebuyers to look at the cost of insuring the property they are looking at before locking in a mortgage rate, due to the potential for significant rate hikes in the future.

"It used to be homeowner's insurance was an afterthought when you are looking at buying a property. Now you'll really need to do your research into what risks there may be in that property in the coming years," Bevington said.

Reporter Adam Beam contributed to this report from Sacramento, Calif., and reporter Janie Har contributed from San Francisco.

This story has been corrected to say that by 2050 the number of homes that could burn down because of wildfires would be the equivalent of losing the city of Asheville, N.C., not Asheland.

## **This simple log structure may be the oldest example of early humans building with wood**

By MADDIE BURAKOFF AP Science Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — Researchers have uncovered a simple structure from the Stone Age that may be the oldest evidence yet of early humans building with wood.

The construction is basic: a pair of overlapping logs, fitted together with a notch. It's nearly half a million years old and provides a rare look at how ancient human relatives were working with wood and changing their environments, authors wrote in a study published Wednesday in *Nature*.

"It took me a while before I appreciated what we were looking at," said study author Larry Barham, an archaeologist at the University of Liverpool. "It didn't look very nice, to be honest. But it is much more complex than I thought."

Barham and his team dug up the log structure — plus a handful of wooden tools — from a riverbed site that sits above a waterfall in Zambia. They think the crossed logs could have been the base for a bigger structure like a walkway or a platform.

Usually, wood rots quickly when it's exposed to the elements, which has left us with little evidence of how our ancient relatives used the material, Barham explained. But these materials were submerged in the river, which helped preserve them.

So when his team uncovered the logs in 2019, they were still able to see telltale signs that early humans had shaped them — carving out a notch in the upper log, tapering off the ends and leaving tool marks across the surface.

"Everything just looks so fresh, you think, 'It cannot be this old,'" Barham said.

Figuring out just how old posed its own challenge, since traditional dating techniques couldn't get deep enough into the past. In this study, researchers used a new method called luminescence dating, which uses tiny minerals in the sand to estimate how long materials have been buried, explained study author Geoff Duller, an expert in dating methods at Aberystwyth University in Wales.

The log structure was made at least 476,000 years ago, while the wood tools are slightly younger, under 400,000 years old. That places the materials in a time before our species, *Homo sapiens*, evolved.

They would have been made by another kind of early human cousin — possibly *Homo heidelbergensis*, which was around in Africa at the time, authors said.

If these ancient humans were putting effort into "the furniture of the site," it suggests they may have stayed for a while or made repeat visits — not just roamed around as bands of hunter-gatherers, according to Dirk Leder, an archaeologist at Germany's Lower Saxony State Office for Cultural Heritage who was not involved with the research.

And if "laying a couple of logs down doesn't sound that exciting," said Annemieke Milks, an archaeologist at the University of Reading who also was not involved in the study, consider this — it shows a different perspective from the usual stone tools that are often discovered.

"It's an important window into what these humans were capable of," Milks said.

The Associated Press Health and Science Department receives support from the Howard Hughes Medical Institute's Science and Educational Media Group. The AP is solely responsible for all content.

## **A Batman researcher said 'gay' in a talk to schoolkids. When asked to censor himself, he quit**

By JEFF AMY Associated Press

ATLANTA (AP) — Marc Tyler Nobleman was supposed to talk to kids about the secret co-creator of Batman, with the aim of inspiring young students in suburban Atlanta's Forsyth County to research and write.

Then the school district told him he had to cut a key point from his presentation — that the artist he helped rescue from obscurity had a gay son. Rather than acquiesce, he canceled the last of his talks.

"We're long past the point where we should be policing people talking about who they love," Nobleman said in a telephone interview. "And that's what I'm hoping will happen in this community."

State laws restricting talk of sexual orientation and gender identity in schools have proliferated in recent years, but the clash with Nobleman shows schools may be limiting such discussions even in states like Georgia that haven't officially banned them. Some proponents of broader laws giving parents more control over schools argue they extend to discussion of sex and gender even if the statutes don't explicitly cover them.

Eleven states ban discussion of LGBTQ+ people in at least some public schools in what are often called "Don't say gay" laws, according to the Movement Advancement Project, an LGBTQ+ rights think tank. Five additional states require parental consent for discussion, according to the project.

Legislation restricting LGBTQ+ rights gained steam this year, but suppression is not new. A school district in New Jersey, which requires curriculums to be LGBTQ-inclusive, tried to bar a valedictorian from discussing his queer identity during a graduation speech in 2021. That year, a federal judge ordered an Indiana district to give the same privileges to a gay-straight alliance as to other extracurricular groups. Two years later, Indiana passed a law banning discussion of LGBTQ+ people in grades K-3.

Schools nationwide have been challenged on books with LGBTQ+ themes or characters, and many have removed them, including Forsyth County, which has been a battleground in the politics of schooling.

LGBTQ+ advocates say Nobleman bumped up against a moral panic fomented by conservatives seeking to roll back acceptance.

"The idea that these folks are saying that they just don't want to talk about it at all is very disingenuous," said Cathryn Oakley, a lawyer for the Human Rights Campaign, a leading advocacy group. "What they mean is they don't want views other than theirs to be expressed. And they believe that that means everyone should have to hear what they believe."

Discussion of straight people with traditional gender identities is everywhere, she said, and if all discussion of sexuality is going to be banned, Oakley said, "then you certainly better not be teaching 'Romeo and Juliet.'"

Nobleman, a self-described "superhero geek" who lives in the suburbs of Washington, D.C., is best known as the author of "Bill the Boy Wonder: The Secret Co-creator of Batman." It lays out the story of Bill Finger, the long-uncredited author who helped create Batman and other comic book characters.

Finger died in obscurity in 1974, with artist Bob Kane credited as Batman's only creator. Finger's only child was a son, Fred Finger, who was gay and died in 1992 at age 43 of AIDS complications. Bill Finger was presumed to have no living heirs, meaning there was no one to press DC Comics to acknowledge Finger's work.

But Nobleman discovered Fred Finger had a daughter, Athena Finger. That, he said, is a showcase moment of the presentation he estimates he has given 1,000 times at schools.

"It's the biggest twist of the story, and it's usually when I get the most gasps," Nobleman said. "It's just a totally record-scratch moment."

Nobleman's research helped push DC Comics into reaching a deal with Athena Finger in 2015 to acknowl-

# Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, Sept. 21, 2023 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 089 ~ 75 of 82

edge her grandfather and Kane as co-creators. That led to the documentary "Batman & Bill," featuring Nobleman.

In Forsyth County, the author gave his first presentations at Sharon Elementary on Aug. 21. After Nobleman mentioned in his first talk that Fred Finger was gay, the principal handed him a note during his second talk that said, "Please only share the appropriate parts of the story for our elementary students."

Forsyth County schools spokesperson Jennifer Caracciolo said that just mentioning Fred Finger was gay isn't the problem. But she said it led to questions from students, meaning Nobleman and students might discuss sexuality without parents being warned.

In the past three years, conservatives in the 54,000-student district have tried to tamp down diversity policies and sexually explicit books they view as immoral.

The district was sued by a conservative group called the Mama Bears after banning a member of that group from reading explicit book excerpts at meetings. A federal judge ruled the policy unconstitutional.

The district was also warned by the U.S. Department of Education after pulling some books from libraries, with federal officials saying the discourse may have created a hostile environment that violated federal laws against race and sex discrimination.

Nobleman's discussion of sexual orientation has nothing to do with the state English language arts learning standards his presentation was supposed to bolster, Caracciolo said.

"We have a responsibility to parents and to guardians that they will know what students are learning in school," Caracciolo said.

Nobleman said he was blindsided and agreed to drop the reference to Fred Finger's sexual orientation in remaining presentations that day, as well as in three at another school the next day. But by the morning of the third day, Nobleman started fielding questions from reporters after the principal at Sharon Elementary sent an electronic message to parents apologizing for the mention of Fred Finger's homosexuality.

"This is not subject matter that we were aware that he was including nor content that we have approved for our students," Principal Brian Nelson wrote. "I apologize that this took place. Action was taken to ensure that this was not included in Mr. Nobleman's subsequent speeches and further measures will be taken to prevent situations like this in the future."

And so, on the third day he was presenting, after a discussion with district officials, Nobleman refused to give the last two of his scheduled presentations if required to omit Finger's sexual orientation.

Many parents have applauded Forsyth County's actions, Caracciolo said. Cindy Martin, chair of the Mama Bears, said Nobleman should be "ashamed of himself."

She argues that a 2022 Georgia law bans discussion of sexuality without parental consent for any minor because it gives parents "the right to direct the upbringing and the moral or religious training" of their children.

"No one has the right to talk to a child about sexuality unless it's the parent, or the parent has given permission," Martin said. "Mr. Nobleman did not have permission. So he went against Georgia law."

Matt Maguire, a Sharon Elementary parent who had a daughter who attended one of Nobleman's presentations, said he was disappointed by the message and felt the school district was being bullied by Martin and others into "reactionary" censorship.

The mere mention of the word "gay" didn't merit claims made online by critics that Nobleman was "grooming or sexualizing children," he said, and it ignored that some Sharon Elementary students have gay parents.

"It didn't sit right with me. It made me feel like certain parts of our community were being kept as a dirty secret," Maguire said. "I couldn't imagine coming from a family with gay members and reading that apology just for saying the word 'gay.'"

---

An earlier version of this story incorrectly said Fred Finger was fielding questions from reporters. It was Marc Tyler Nobleman, not Finger.

## Virginia is the next big battleground for abortion rights and may send a signal for 2024

By SARAH RANKIN and SARA BURNETT Associated Press

RICHMOND, Va. (AP) — Democrat Russet Perry has knocked on thousands of doors in a swing district outside the nation's capital as she campaigns for a seat that could decide control of the Virginia state Senate in November. The issue that comes up the most — particularly among women and even from some Republicans and independents, she says — is protecting abortion rights.

The topic has motivated voters and upended traditional political wisdom in election after election since a conservative majority on the U.S. Supreme Court eliminated the federal right to the procedure last year. But it may be especially front of mind in Virginia, the only state in the South that has not imposed new abortion restrictions since *Roe v. Wade* fell.

Republican Gov. Glenn Youngkin — whose push to ban the procedure after 15 weeks of pregnancy was blocked by the Democratic-controlled Senate — has pledged to try again if the GOP wins full control in the state.

"I see this fight and this race as being pivotal to what happens to many, many, many people, not just here, but across the entire South," said Perry, a former prosecutor and ex-CIA officer who noted that women from throughout the region have sought abortions in Virginia since *Roe* was overturned.

For those on either side of the debate, Virginia — where all state House and Senate seats are up for election and early voting begins Friday — is among the biggest fights this year over abortion rights. The Commonwealth's odd-year elections are often an indicator of the national mood heading into major election years and offer both parties a chance to test campaign strategies, messaging and policy ahead of 2024 contests for president, Congress and other offices.

Democrats are banking on abortion rights to be a winning issue, just as it was in the 2022 midterms and in earlier contests this year in Virginia and elsewhere. They hope it will lift candidates in a place that Democrat Joe Biden won in 2020 but where voters a year later backed Youngkin, who is still mentioned as a possible late 2024 entry for president.

The Democratic National Committee recently invested \$1.2 million into Virginia races, and Vice President Kamala Harris was in the state Thursday to kick off a college tour aimed at mobilizing young voters to fight for reproductive rights, action on climate change and other issues.

Republicans are centering their focus elsewhere in an echo of Youngkin's winning 2021 campaign — when the businessman defeated a former governor at a time when *Roe* was still law. They're talking about kitchen table issues, such as the cost of living, public safety and protecting the role of parents in directing their children's education.

Zack Roday, the coordinated campaign director at Youngkin's Spirit of Virginia PAC, said Democrats are focused on abortion because they "have nothing to run on." He accused Democrats of misrepresenting Youngkin's proposed 15-week limit on abortions as a total ban. Most abortions take place before 15 weeks, and Youngkin's proposal includes exceptions for rape, incest and to save the life of the mother.

"They have no vision, no agenda, nothing to offer the Commonwealth," Roday said. "It's all fear and lies."

Leading abortion opponents also see Virginia as a place where Republicans can reframe the discussion and avoid the "ostrich strategy" of trying to evade the issue. They have pushed GOP candidates to explain their personal positions, to speak compassionately about both unborn children and the women who may seek abortions, and to push policies such as improving the foster care and adoption systems.

The country's most prominent anti-abortion group hired Kellyanne Conway, a GOP pollster who was President Donald Trump's senior counselor, to advise candidates in Virginia and elsewhere on their handling of the issue.

"It's not enough to just say, well, I'm pro-life," said Kaitlin Makuski, political director for Susan B. Anthony Pro-Life America. She pushed back on Democratic criticism of Youngkin and other Republicans as "extreme" on abortion, saying the 15-week ban was "common-sense legislation."

Abortion rights advocates say they are seeing voter support grow as more states impose restrictions and

# Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, Sept. 21, 2023 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 089 ~ 77 of 82

the reality of life without Roe becomes clearer.

"There's basically a never-ending drip of horror stories from the states on abortion bans," said Mini Timmaraju, president of Reproductive Freedom for All, citing stories about women denied care and young rape victims forced to carry pregnancies to term. She also dismissed anti-abortion activists' attempts to shift their messaging.

"That's their new thing. They want to be 'compassionate.' It's garbage," she said. "It's wild to me that they think anyone will buy that they are compassionate on this issue at all, or that they really, truly believe a 15-week ban is perceived as a compassionate compromise."

Polling shows people's opinions on abortion in the U.S. are complex, though most want the procedure to be legal, at least in the initial stages of pregnancy. An Associated Press/NORC poll conducted in June found about two-thirds of Americans said abortion should generally be legal.

About half of Americans said abortions should be permitted at the 15-week mark, the poll found. By 24 weeks of pregnancy, about two-thirds of Americans said it should be barred.

On the campaign trail in 2021, Youngkin generally sought to avoid discussing abortion in detail and was secretly recorded acknowledging that "as a campaign topic" the issue wouldn't help him win the needed support of independent voters.

Virginia law allows abortion during the first and second trimesters. The procedure may be performed during the third trimester only if multiple physicians certify that continuing the pregnancy is likely to "substantially and irremediably" impair the mental or physical health of the woman or result in her death.

Virginia Democrats point to two in-state elections since the fall of Roe as showing the potency of the issue. One is the victory of Democratic Sen. Aaron Rouse in a January special election. Rouse flipped a previously red seat after campaigning heavily on protecting abortion access. The other is the resounding defeat of incumbent Sen. Joe Morrissey, a scandal-plagued, self-described "pro-life" Democrat, by his June primary challenger, Lashrecse Aird, who centered her campaign around abortion rights.

Nationally, Democrats are buoyed by the outcome in a half dozen states, including conservative Kentucky and Kansas, where voters opted to protect reproductive rights on abortion-related ballot measures. In August, Ohio voters rejected a measure pushed by Republicans that was seen as a proxy for an abortion rights question on the ballot this fall.

Perry used her first TV ad to both introduce herself and hit Republican opponent Juan Pablo Segura on the issue of abortion.

Segura, the founder of a maternal health care startup, has said he supports Youngkin's proposal to ban abortions after 15 weeks. Most abortions in Virginia take place before then, according to federal data.

Segura's campaign did not make him available for an interview.

In a statement, Segura criticized Perry, saying she has a "weak record" as a prosecutor battling crime and in addressing the "skyrocketing cost of living" — issues he said he's hearing about from voters "constantly."

"Voters are making it very clear that this election is about much more than one issue," he said.

Perry defended her record and said she believes Virginia — and her Senate matchup against Segura — will be bellwethers for 2024.

"I see this race as sending a signal across the country as to what the impact of overturning Roe is," she said. "I think that that will play a role next year as well."

— Burnett reported from Chicago.

## **Video shows high school band director shocked with stun gun, arrested after refusing to stop music**

BIRMINGHAM, Ala. (AP) — Police body camera video shows an Alabama high school band director being shocked with a stun gun and arrested by officers in front of screaming students, in a chaotic scuffle that broke out after he refused to immediately stop the band as it played in the bleachers following a football game.

# Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, Sept. 21, 2023 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 089 ~ 78 of 82

State Rep. Juandalynn Givan, who is representing band director Johnny Mims as his attorney, said Tuesday that the incident is an "alarming abuse of power" that instead "should have been should have been deescalated."

The Birmingham Police Department said it remains under investigation but the band director resisted arrest and allegedly pushed an officer.

The altercation erupted after the game last Thursday between Minor and Jackson-Olin high schools.

In the body camera video released by police Monday night, officers are seen approaching Mims, the band director at Minor, as the band plays in the stands. They ask him several times to stop the band and clear the stadium. Mims continues to direct the band and replies to the officer, "Get out of my face."

"We're fixing to go," he continues. "This is their last song."

As the music continues, an officer tells Mims he will go to jail. and another says she will contact the school. Mims flashes two thumbs up and says, "That's cool."

"Put him in handcuffs," an officer is later heard saying.

The video shows that the band played for about two minutes after officers approached Mims.

After the music stops, officers are seen on the video apparently trying to arrest him, in a scrum of bodies. One says Mims swung at an officer and must go to jail, and Mims denies doing so. An officer then shocks Mims with a stun gun.

Students — more than 140 were present, according to Givan — are heard screaming in the night as the arrest plays out.

Police said Friday in a statement that Mims refused to put his hands behind his back and the arresting officer said he was pushed by the band director, which led to the use of the stun gun.

Givan said Tuesday that she is not going to debate "whether my client was right or my client was wrong" but said officers "should have never drawn their Taser."

Givan, who is a graduate of Minor High School, said Birmingham has a high homicide rate "yet you've got law enforcement officers at a darn kids' game that would attack my client excessively and abuse him in front of kids."

Officer Truman Fitzgerald, a spokesman for the department, said Mims was charged with disorderly conduct, physical harassment and resisting arrest. The police chief has met with with the mayor and the superintendents of the two school systems, Fitzgerald said.

Also Tuesday, city Mayor Randall L. Woodfin announced the formation of a civilian-led Public Safety Advisory Committee, though his office said it had been in development for some time and was not related to the incident at the football game.

## Left behind and grieving, survivors of Libya floods call for accountability

By SAMY MAGDY and YOUSEF MURAD Associated Press

DERNA, Libya (AP) — Abdel-Hamid al-Hassadi survived the devastating flooding in eastern Libya but he lost some 90 people from his extended family.

The 23-year-old law graduate rushed upstairs along with his mother and his elder brother, as heavy rains lashed the city of Derna on the evening of Sept. 10. Soon, torrents of water were washing away buildings next to them.

"We witnessed the magnitude of the catastrophe," al-Hassadi said in a phone interview from Derna, referring to the massive flooding that engulfed his city. "We have seen our neighbors' dead bodies washing away in the floods."

Heavy rains from Mediterranean storm Daniel caused the collapse of the two dams that spanned the narrow valley that divides the city. That sent a wall of water several meters high through its heart.

Ten days after the disaster, al-Hassadi and thousands of others remain in Derna, most of them waiting for a word about relatives and loved ones. For al-Hassadi, it's the 290 relatives still missing.

# Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, Sept. 21, 2023 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 089 ~ 79 of 82

The floods inundated as much as a quarter of the city, officials say. Thousands of people were killed, with many dead bodies still under the rubble or at sea, according to search teams. Government officials and aid agencies have given varied death tolls.

The World Health Organization says a total of 3,958 deaths have been registered in hospitals, but a previous death toll given by the head of Libya's Red Crescent said at least 11,300 were killed. The U.N. Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs says at least 9,000 people are still missing.

Bashir Omar, a spokesman for the International Committee of the Red Cross, said the fatalities are in the thousands, but he did not give a specific toll for the number of retrieved bodies, since there are many groups involved in the recovery effort.

Many Derna residents, including women and children, are spending their days at the city's collection points for the bodies. They are desperate to know who is inside body bags carried by ambulances.

Inside a school in the western part of the city, authorities posted photos of the retrieved bodies.

Anas Aweis, a 24-year-old resident of Derna, lost two brothers and is still searching for his father and four cousins. He went to the Ummul Qura school in the Sheiha neighborhood to inspect the exhibited photos.

"It's chaos," he said after spending two hours waiting in lines. "We want to know where they buried them if they died."

The floods have displaced at least 40,000 people in eastern Libya, including 30,000 in Derna, according to the U.N.'s migration agency. Many have moved to other cities across Libya, hosted by local communities or sheltered in schools. There are risks to staying, including potential infection by waterborne diseases.

Rana Ksaifi, assistant chief of mission in Libya for the U.N.'s refugee agency, said the floods have left "unfathomable levels of destruction," and triggered new waves of displacement in the already conflict-stricken nation.

The houseplants on the rooftop of Abdul Salam Anwisi's building survived the waters that reached up to his 4th-floor apartment. Anwisi's and a few other families rode out the deluge on the roof, which overlooks the Mediterranean Sea. They thought they wouldn't live to see daylight. Now, as he sifts through the water-damaged debris of his home, it's unclear what comes next.

"God predetermined and he did what he wanted," he said.

Others across the country are calling for Libya's leaders to be taken to task.

Hundreds of angry protesters gathered Monday outside Derna's main mosque, criticizing the government's lack of preparation and response. They lashed out at the political class that controls the oil-rich nation since the ouster and killing of longtime dictator Moammar Gadhafi in 2011.

The North African country plunged into chaos after a NATO-backed uprising toppled and killed Gadhafi. For most of the past decade, Libya has been split between two rival administrations: one in the west backed by an array of lawless militias and armed groups, a second in the east, allied with the self-styled Libyan National Army, commanded by Gen. Khalifa Hifter. Neither government tolerates dissent.

Derna, as well as east and most of south Libya, is controlled by Hifter's forces. However, funds for municipalities and other government agencies are controlled by the rival government in the capital, Tripoli.

Al-Hassadi, the law graduate, blamed local authorities for giving conflicting warnings to residents, leaving many defenseless. They asked residents to evacuate areas along the Mediterranean coast, but at the same time, they imposed a curfew, preventing people from leaving their homes.

"It was a mistake to impose a curfew," he said.

The dams, Abu Mansour and Derna, were built by a Yugoslav construction company in the 1970s. They were meant to protect the city against heavy flooding, but years of no maintenance meant they were unable to keep the exceptional influx of water at bay.

Many Libyans are now calling for an international investigation and supervision of aid funds. The Supreme Council of State, an advisory body based in the capital of Tripoli, said that a "thorough international investigation" is needed to determine reasons behind the crisis in the city of Derna, the hardest-hit area.

"All are corrupt here ... without exception," said rights activist Tarik Lamloum.

Magdy reported from Cairo.

## The NFC is off to a record-setting start to the NFL season with seven teams at 2-0

By JOSH DUBOW AP Pro Football Writer

The AFC came into the season with the lion's share of the top quarterbacks and Super Bowl contenders, led by passers such as Patrick Mahomes, Josh Allen and Joe Burrow.

Two weeks into the 2023 NFL season, it's the NFC that's off to a record-setting start to the season.

Led by three undefeated teams in both the NFC East and NFC South, the NFC has seven teams off to a 2-0 start, the first time that has ever happened in a single conference.

With the Dallas Cowboys and San Francisco 49ers fresh off two convincing wins, along with last season's Super Bowl runner-up Philadelphia, the NFC currently has three of the four biggest favorites to win this season's Super Bowl.

The other undefeated teams in the NFC are Washington in the East and New Orleans, Atlanta and Tampa Bay in the South, which was slated to be perhaps the worst division in the league.

The AFC has only two undefeated teams — Miami and Baltimore — tied for the fewest of any conference after two weeks since the start of the eight-division era in 2002.

The Cowboys are the fifth team in the Super Bowl era to score at least 70 points and allow 10 or fewer in the first two games of the season, joining the 2019 Patriots, 1970 Lions, 1967 Raiders and 1966 Oilers.

Dallas' plus-60 point differential is 30 points better than the second-place 49ers — the biggest gap between the No. 1 and 2 teams after two weeks since 1989, when the Browns were plus-65 and the Bears plus-34.

### COMEBACK KIDS

Sunday was a day for historic comebacks in the NFL.

The New York Giants came back from 21 points down to beat Arizona 31-28 for their biggest comeback win since 1949, while Washington overcame an 18-point deficit to win 35-33 at Denver.

This was the 12th time that two teams overcame deficits that big to win in the same week. It last happened in Week 2 last season.

The turnaround for the Giants was truly impressive. New York lost the opener 40-0 to Dallas and trailed 20-0 at the half in Arizona. It was the first time since 1934 that New York failed to score in the first six quarters. The Giants recovered that season to win the NFL title.

The 60 points allowed by the Giants before their first score were the second most since 1950, according to Sportradar, trailing only the 86 for the 1978 Colts and 99 for the 1961 Raiders.

Two other teams came back from at least 11 points down, with Atlanta rallying past Green Bay and Tennessee doing the same against the Chargers. That's one shy of the record for one week.

The Chargers and Broncos were both on the wrong side of the comebacks and have started 0-2 despite leading both games in the fourth quarter. They are the first teams to do that since 2015, when Seattle and the Giants did it.

One team that was predictably unable to mount a comeback was Carolina. The Panthers lost 20-17 to New Orleans on Monday night for their 52nd straight loss in a game they trailed in the fourth quarter. Their last fourth-quarter comeback came Oct. 21, 2018, against Philadelphia.

### RARE ROOKIES

A couple of rookie playmakers are shouldering an unusually large load for their offenses.

No. 8 pick Bijan Robinson is living up to high expectations early in his career following his 124-yard rushing performance in Sunday's win over Green Bay.

Robinson is tied for fourth in the NFL with 255 yards from scrimmage through two games. He has gained 36.8% of Atlanta's yards from scrimmage — the second-highest mark for a rookie through two games in the last 14 seasons, behind only Kareem Hunt's 38.8% in 2017.

Rams receiver Puka Nacua has been more of a surprise, going from fifth-round pick to a record-setting

# Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, Sept. 21, 2023 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 089 ~ 81 of 82

start to his career. Nakua's 25 catches are the most for a player in his first two NFL games, shattering the mark of 19 Earl Cooper set in 1980.

Nakua has gained 270 yards — nearly one-third of the Rams' total. He has 43.1% of the Rams' catches so far this season, the highest for any player through two games since Vincent Jackson had 50% of Tampa Bay's catches in the first two games of the 2013 season.

## IRON MAN

Christian McCaffrey is truly the iron man of running backs.

McCaffrey played every offensive snap for the San Francisco 49ers last week — the 15th time he has done that in his career. In an era when teams rotate backs, McCaffrey is an exception.

Sportradar has snap data back to 2006 and the running back with the second-most games playing every snap is Matt Forte with eight. Only four other backs have done it even three times: Le'Veon Bell (6), Frank Gore (4), Steven Jackson (3) and Ronnie Brown (3).

Since McCaffrey entered the league in 2017, all other running backs have played every snap only 10 times.

It's not as if the heavy workload limits McCaffrey's production. He had a 51-yard run Sunday and finished with 116 yards rushing. His 268 yards rushing are the most through two games of a season since DeMarco Murray had 285 for Dallas in 2014.

## JUMPING JEFFERSON

Justin Jefferson is off to a record-setting pace to his career with the Minnesota Vikings.

Jefferson had 153 yards receiving last week to give him 5,134 in 52 career games — tying Hall of Famer Lance Alworth as the quickest player to eclipse 5,000 yards. Jefferson also joined former Vikings star Randy Moss as the only players to do it before turning 25.

Jefferson is the ninth Vikings player to reach that mark. The only franchises with more are Green Bay (13), Denver (10), Arizona (10) and Kansas City (10). Minnesota's NFC North rivals, the Chicago Bears, have only one player with 5,000 yards receiving (Johnny Morris) despite having nearly a four-decade head start on Minnesota.

Jefferson has 20 catches for 309 yards in two games — joining Jimmy Smith (2000), Isaac Bruce (1998) and Andre Rison (1994) as the only players to average at least 10 catches and 150 yards through two games.

AP NFL: <https://apnews.com/hub/nfl>

## Today in History: September 21

### Senate confirms O'Connor as first female Supreme Court justice

By The Associated Press undefined

Today in History

Today is Thursday, Sept. 21, the 264th day of 2023. There are 101 days left in the year.

Today's Highlights in History:

On Sept. 21, 1981, the Senate unanimously confirmed the nomination of Sandra Day O'Connor to become the first female justice on the Supreme Court.

On this date:

In 1792, the French National Convention voted to abolish the monarchy.

In 1937, "The Hobbit," by J.R.R. Tolkien, was first published by George Allen & Unwin, Ltd. of London.

In 1938, a hurricane struck parts of New York and New England, causing widespread damage and claiming some 700 lives.

In 1957, the legal mystery-drama "Perry Mason," starring Raymond Burr, premiered on CBS.

In 1961, the first Boeing CH-47 Chinook military helicopter made its first hovering flight.

In 1973, the Senate confirmed Henry Kissinger to be Secretary of State.

In 1982, National Football League players began a 57-day strike, their first regular-season walkout ever.

In 1985, in North Korea and South Korea, relatives who had been separated for decades were allowed

# Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, Sept. 21, 2023 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 089 ~ 82 of 82

to visit each other as both countries opened their borders in an unprecedented family-reunion program.  
In 1989, Hurricane Hugo crashed into Charleston, South Carolina; the storm was blamed for 56 deaths in the Caribbean and 29 in the United States.

In 1996, President Bill Clinton signed the Defense of Marriage Act denying federal recognition of same-sex marriages, a day after saying the law should not be used as an excuse for discrimination, violence or intimidation against gays and lesbians.

In 2001, Congress gave \$15 billion to the airline industry, which was suffering mounting economic losses since the Sept. 11 attacks.

In 2011, Josh Fattal and Shane Bauer, two Americans jailed in Iran as spies, left Tehran for the Gulf state of Oman, closing a high-profile drama that brought more than two years of hope and heartbreak for their families.

In 2017, millions of Puerto Ricans faced the prospect of weeks or months without power in the aftermath of Hurricane Maria.

In 2018, President Donald Trump directly challenged by name the woman accusing his Supreme Court nominee Brett Kavanaugh of sexual assault, saying that if the attack on Christine Blasey Ford had been as bad as she claimed, then she would have filed charges.

In 2021, Melvin Van Peebles, a playwright, musician and movie director whose work ushered in the "blaxploitation" films of the 1970s, died at his New York home at age 89.

In 2022, Russia's Vladimir Putin ordered a mobilization of reservists for the first time in the nation since World War II nearly seven months after invading Ukraine.

Today's Birthdays: Author-comedian Fannie Flagg is 82. Producer Jerry Bruckheimer is 80. Former Kentucky Gov. Steve Beshear is 79. Musician Don Felder is 76. Author Stephen King is 76. Basketball Hall of Famer Artis Gilmore is 74. Actor-comedian Bill Murray is 73. Former Australian Prime Minister Kevin Rudd is 66. Movie producer-writer Ethan Coen is 66. Actor-comedian Dave Coulier is 64. Actor David James Elliott is 63. Actor Serena Scott Thomas is 62. Actor Nancy Travis is 62. Actor Rob Morrow is 61. Actor Angus Macfadyen is 60. Retired MLB All-Star Cecil Fielder is 60. Actor Cheryl Hines is 58. Country singer Faith Hill is 56. Rock musician Tyler Stewart (Barenaked Ladies) is 56. Country singer Ronna Reeves is 55. Actor-talk show host Ricki Lake is 55. Actor Billy Porter is 54. Actor Rob Benedict is 53. Actor James Lesure is 52. Actor Alfonso Ribeiro (rih-BEHR'-oh) is 52. Actor Luke Wilson is 52. Actor Paulo Costanzo is 45. Actor Bradford Anderson is 44. Actor Autumn Reeser is 43. TV personality Nicole Richie is 42. Actor Maggie Grace is 40. Actor Joseph Mazzello is 40. Actor Ahna O'Reilly is 39. Rapper Wale (WAH'-lay) is 39. R&B singer Jason Derulo is 37. Actor Ryan Guzman is 36. Actor Nikolas Brino is 25.