

# Groton Daily Independent

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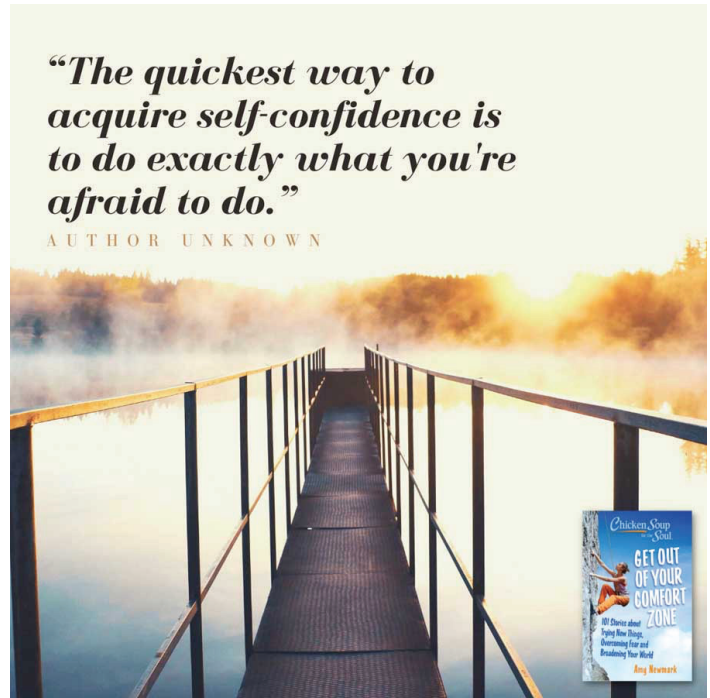
**The Boys Soccer Game with Dakota Valley scheduled on Saturday, September 30th has been rescheduled to Monday, September 25th at 4pm.**

## Friday, Sept. 22

Senior Menu: Taco salad with chips, Mexican rice and black beans, Mandarin oranges, pineapple, breadstick.

Football at Sisseton, 7 p.m.

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



*"The quickest way to acquire self-confidence is to do exactly what you're afraid to do."*

AUTHOR UNKNOWN

## 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

## Sunday, Sept. 24

St. John's Lutheran/Zion worship: St. John's at 9 a.m., Sunday school at 9:45 a.m., Zion at 11 a.m.

Emmanuel Lutheran: Worship, 9 a.m.; Sunday school, 10:15 a.m.; Choir, 7 p.m.

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

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

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

United Methodist: Conde worship, 8:30 a.m.; Coffee Hour, 9:30 a.m.; Sunday School, 9:30 a.m.; Groton worship, 10:30 a.m.

**CLOSED: Recycling Trailer in Groton**

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

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## The Bulletin by Newsweek

### World in Brief

coasts today with strong winds and stormy conditions that could result in flash flooding.

The San Francisco 49ers beat the New York Giants 30-12 in a Thursday Night matchup. Christian McCaffery also tied Jerry Rice's record of 12 consecutive games with a touchdown.

The first big ship carrying Ukrainian grain has set sail from the Black Sea port since Moscow pulled out of a safe-passage agreement in July, Ukrainian Deputy Prime Minister Oleksandr Kubrakov said. The ship is heading toward Egypt.

Roughly 800 military personnel are being sent to Eagle Pass, Texas, after an influx of migrants crossing the border prompted the mayor to declare a state of emergency. One of the international bridges was closed to route agents elsewhere.

Warner Bros Discovery planned to expand production capacity at its Leavesden studios in the U.K. where much of the Barbie blockbuster was filmed by more than 50%. The expansion will help create 4,000 jobs and is expected to be completed by 2027.

In the ongoing war in Ukraine, a video has emerged of a dramatic tank battle in southern Ukraine, as Kyiv's forces seek to widen gaps in Russia's defensive lines by deploying columns of armor.

### TALKING POINTS

"I don't understand why anybody votes against bringing the idea and having the debate, and then you got all these amendments if you don't like the bill. This is a whole new concept of individuals that just want to burn the whole place down. That doesn't work," House Speaker Kevin McCarthy to reporters after MAGA Republicans contributed to a failed vote on Pentagon funding.

"So I took 10 people to the speech, and they were with me virtually every moment that I was there, and if I wasn't talking with them, I was taking pictures with people, so there would have been no occasion for this to happen. It's completely absurd," Rudy Giuliani denying allegations he groped Cassidy Hutchinson on January 6, 2021, later adding that he's thinking of "going after her and the publication" during an appearance on Newsmax.

"If the United States is concerned about China and wants to pivot towards Asia, then you have to ensure that Putin doesn't win in Ukraine. Because if Ukraine wins, then you will have the second biggest army in Europe, the Ukrainian army, battle-hardened, on our side, and we'll have a weakened Russian army, and we have also now Europe really stepping up for defense spending." NATO Secretary-General Jens Stoltenberg said during an event hosted by the Council on Foreign Relations.

### What to Watch in the Day Ahead

It's a busy day for economic events. Federal Reserve officials, including Fed Gov. Lisa Cook, Minneapolis Fed President Neel Kashkari, and San Francisco Fed President Mary Daly, are scheduled to speak at various events from 8:50 a.m. ET. S&P flash services and manufacturing PMI figures are due at 9:45 a.m.

Idaho murder suspect Bryan Kohberger will be back for a court hearing, where Judge John Judge will hear the defense's arguments regarding their motion to dismiss the charges against him. Kohberger is charged with four counts of first-degree murder in the deaths of University of Idaho students and one count of burglary.

Chinese President Xi Jinping will meet his Syrian counterpart Bashar Al-Assad, who arrived in the eastern city of Hangzhou during his first visit to the Asian country for the first since 2004. The leaders will meet on the sidelines of the Asian Games.

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## **Tigers have clean sweep over Tiospa Zina**

Groton Area's volleyball team did not lose a single set from the junior high matches to the varsity matches in action played Thursday at Agency Village.

Three players hit double figures in the varsity match as Groton Area won, 25-7, 25-11 and 25-18. Anna Fjeldheim had 10 kills and three ace serves, Sydney Leicht had 11 kills, nine digs, and two ace serves, Rylee Dunker had 10 kills, Chesney Weber had seven kills and two ace serves, Elizabeth Flihs had 37 assists, nine digs, four kills and four ace serves, Faith Traphagen had four kills, Carly Guthmiller and eight digs and one ace serve and Jerica Locke had an ace serve.

Maryann Garland had four kills for the Wambdi and Gerrica Redday had two kills and two ace serves.

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

Groton Area won the junior varsity match, 25-7 and 25-11. Jaedyn Penning led Groton Area with seven kills and four ace serves, McKenna Tietz had six ace serves, Talli Wright had five kills, Kella Tracy three kills, Sydney Locke three ace serves, Chesney Weber two kills, Taryn Trapahgen and Jerica Locke each had an ace serve and Emerlee Jones had a kill.

The Groton Chiropractic Clinic was the sponsor of the match on GDILIVE.COM with a few words from Avery Crank and Estella Sanchez.

Groton Area won the C match by identical scores of 25-15. Emerlee Jones had eight kills, McKenna Teitz had three kills and two ace serves, Taryn Trapahgen had four kills and an ace serve, Liby Althoff had three kills and an ace serve, Avery Crank had three ace serves and a kill, Hannah Sandness had two ace serves and a kill and Leah Jones and Teagan Hanten each had a kill.

The White House Inn sponsored the match on GDILIVE.COM with Anna Fjeldheim providing the commentary.

## **James Valley Christian beats Groton Area in boys soccer**

The boys soccer team hosted James Valley Christian. The Vikings won, 4-0, leading at 3-0 at half time.

## **Boys golf team take second at Sisseton Invitational**

Groton Area's boys golf team finished just one stroke behind Aberdeen Roncalli at the Sisseton Invitational held Thursday. Roncalli win with a team score of 357 followed by Groton Area with 358, Flandeau 360, Sioux Valley 362, Milbank 375, Dell Rapids 376, Tri-Valley 377, Aberdeen Central JV 397 and Sisseton with 442.

Brevin Flihs placed third with an 86, Carter Simon was fourth with an 86, Jacye Johnson had a 92, Logan Pearson a 94, Jayden Schwan a 99 and Jarrett Erdmann a 108.

The region will be held Monday at Sisseton.

## **Service Notice: Helen "Pat" Nehls**

Services for Helen Patricia "Pat" Nehls will be 11:00 a.m., Wednesday, September 27th at St. John's Lutheran Church, Groton. Rev. Craig Grams will officiate. Burial will follow in Union Cemetery under the direction of Paetznick-Garness Funeral Chapel, Groton.

Visitation will be held for one hour prior to services.

Pat passed away September 20, 2023 at Avera St. Lukes Hospital, Aberdeen.

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We are back in Washington after a great in-state work period spent in South Dakota. I was able to host roundtables, attend events and visit with South Dakotans from all across the state, including Sioux Falls, Mitchell, Aberdeen, Presho, Lake Preston, Rapid City, Custer and Pierre. It was great to catch up with so many of you back home. I was able to spend time with my kids and grandkids, seeing

them in their school activities like cross country. I also attended my 50-year class reunion in Pierre earlier this month. It's always great to be in South Dakota, but we're ready to get back to work in Washington.

Our first week back was short due to the Labor Day holiday, so I've combined the last two weeks for you below – and this past week was a big one here on Capitol Hill, in large part focused on artificial intelligence (AI). I had the opportunity to moderate our AI Insight forum with leaders from the industry to discuss AI and its challenges. More on all of that in my Weekly Round[s] Up:

Meetings this past week: General David W. Allvin, nominee to be Chief of Staff of the Air Force; Michelle Bowman, member of the Board of Governors of the Federal Reserve; Admiral Lisa Franchetti, current Vice Chief of Naval Operations and nominee to be Chief of Naval Operations; Anna Gomez nominee to be FCC Commissioner; Gary Cohn, Vice chairman of IBM; Ryan McInerney, CEO of Visa; Tom Wilson, CEO of Allstate; Nick Clegg, President of Global Affairs at Meta (Facebook); Clement Delangue, CEO of Hugging Face; and Fei-Fei Li, Co-Director at Stanford University's Human-Centered AI Institute. I spoke to Business Roundtable's Technology Committee about our AI Insights forum.

We had our weekly Senate Prayer Breakfast, where Senator Ben Ray Lujan of New Mexico was our speaker.

South Dakota groups I visited with: Members of the South Dakota Farmers Union from Aberdeen, Cavour, Clark, Dallas, De Smet, Elk Point, Huron, Ipswich, Lake Preston, Miller, Mitchell, Pierre, Salem and Wessington Springs.

Artificial Intelligence (AI): This past Wednesday, I moderated an AI Insight forum with Majority Leader Chuck Schumer (D-N.Y.) and co-hosted with Senator Todd Young (R-Ind.) and Senator Martin Heinrich (D-N.M.) as part of our bipartisan AI working group. This panel had leaders from the tech industry that creates AI, including former Google CEO Eric Schmidt, Tesla CEO Elon Musk, Meta (Facebook) CEO Mark Zuckerberg, OpenAI CEO Sam Altman, former Microsoft CEO Bill Gates, Google CEO Sundar Pichai and many others. These leaders sat on a panel in front of dozens of senators and answered all of our most pressing questions about the future of AI, namely the future of AI regulation and Congress's role in it. I had the opportunity to moderate the afternoon session of this panel, and give opening remarks in the morning, which you can read here.

Though the details of the future of AI are still taking shape, and any legislation will work through traditional committees, the panel provided important context as the conversation continues.

Headline of the week: Here's what GOP Sen. Mike Rounds told Musk, Zuckerberg, other experts at closed-door Senate AI Forum (Fox News)

Topics discussed: Artificial intelligence (of course), issues facing our South Dakota farmers and ranchers and the B-21 Raider stealth bomber coming to Ellsworth Air Force Base.

Votes taken: 17 – Most of these were on nominees to executive positions within branches of the federal government.

Hearings: Six – I had two hearings in each of these committees: the Select Committee on Intelligence, the Banking committee and the Armed Services committee. In one of them, we heard from the nominee to be Chief of Staff of the Air Force Gen. David Allvin. I had the opportunity to ask him about the B-21 Raider stealth bomber coming to Ellsworth Air Force Base. You can watch that exchange here.

Classified briefings: I had one classified briefing – our bi-weekly cyber education seminar.

My staff in South Dakota visited: Aberdeen, Beresford, Brookings, Chamberlain, Dakota Dunes, Hartford, Hot Springs, North Sioux City, Rapid City and Sioux Falls.

Steps taken this past week:

Week 1: 57,821 or 26.94 miles

Week 2: 60,609 or 33.8 miles

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## Groton Community Transit

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

Dear Groton family,

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

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

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

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

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

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

Sincerely,

*Dam Hansen & Eugenia Strom*

Groton Transit

Steve Smith, Sherry Koehler, Topper Tostad, Dick Kolker



## SOUTH DAKOTA SEARCHLIGHT

<https://southdakotasearchlight.com>

### State unveils \$3 million grant program for community child care solutions

**BY: MAKENZIE HUBER - SEPTEMBER 21, 2023 5:15 PM**

BROOKINGS — Child care is a workforce issue. Providers, business professionals and experts have been saying that for years.

On Thursday, the Governor's Office of Economic Development and the Department of Social Services announced a \$3 million grant program to expand child care in the state.

The Community Based Child Care Grant, which uses federal American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) dollars, will be awarded to communities that bring several entities together — providers, economic development organizations and governments — to present innovative solutions to child care problems, said Joe Fiala, partner relations director for GOED.

"Child care impacts business, so it makes sense that we would at least be involved to some extent," Fiala told child care providers and experts at the Early Learner Summit in Brookings on Thursday.

States have to obligate or commit ARPA dollars to specific projects by the end of 2024, or the money will be returned to the federal government.

The deadline for communities to apply for the new grant program is Oct. 27. Awardees will be notified the first week of November.

Unaffordable and inaccessible child care has been widely covered by state and national media in the past couple of years. The issue gained attention during Gov. Kristi Noem's reelection campaign and was a topic of discussion during the 2023 legislative session. The city of Sioux Falls released a child care report this summer highlighting the issue at a local level.

Planning grants will be awarded up to \$50,000, which can cover consultant costs, survey and data costs or providing stipends to volunteers, Fiala said. Implementation grants will be awarded up to \$500,000.

"Three million dollars is a nice pool of money and we're excited for that," Fiala said, "but I think it will go relatively quickly once we start approving grants. When you think about the whole state, that's probably a drop in the bucket compared to what's needed."

Examples of ideas across the state include the development of an early childhood and youth development office in Sioux Falls, which was one of several recommendations from the Sioux Falls Child Care Collaborative report, and Madison's new tax increment financing (TIF) district that will help fund a child care center in that city. It has a population of over 6,000 but only has in-home child care operations.

TIF districts provide upfront financing for public improvements and then capture the new and higher property taxes generated by a development project to pay off the financing.

"If we view child care as basic infrastructure," said Brooke Rollag, executive director of the Lake Area Improvement Corporation, "just like roads and streets or any other tool we use to get to work, then we can utilize a TIF for this project as well."

There should be several entities engaged in applying for each grant, Fiala said, such as local economic development organizations, community coalitions, local governments, businesses, school districts, nonprofit organizations and existing child care providers.

"I do not want 25 applications from Sioux Falls," Fiala said. "That's not going to work. I need Sioux Falls to come together tightly and maybe come up with only three or four."

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

## COMMENTARY

### **Bar exam problems persist as jobs go unfilled**

**JESSICA FOUR BEAR**

Chief Justice Steven Jensen's State of the Judiciary message to the Legislature in January of this year suggested that reduced State Bar licensure rates were no longer a problem in South Dakota. But results of the July bar exam indicate otherwise.

The University of South Dakota Knudson School of Law graduated 59 students in May. Of these 59 graduates, only 27 passed the South Dakota Bar Exam. The data demonstrate that South Dakota's law school is supplying lawyers at the rate of 45% per graduating class.

Passage rates dropped dramatically after the Board of Bar Examiners imposed enhanced criteria in 2015. Only 39% of USD Law graduates in the class of 2016 passed the bar exam. There was very little improvement in subsequent years, with passage rates of 45% and 52%.

Despite assurances given by Law School Dean Neil Fulton, there has been no improvement in recent years.

Prior to the 2015 changes, the law school regularly experienced bar passage rates of 90-100%. During the 64 years in which the "diploma privilege" governed in South Dakota — a path to bar licensure without taking an exam — the licensure rate was 100% provided the applicants satisfied the "fitness" requirement.

Today, critical attorney positions in South Dakota are unfilled — in public defender offices, in the offices of state's attorneys, and in the extensive rural areas of South Dakota including Indian country. The impact of South Dakota's attorney shortage falls heavily on low-income and marginalized segments of our society.

Former Chief Justice David Gilbertson sought to ameliorate the deficiencies in the delivery of legal services to rural areas. His efforts were nationally recognized and applauded. The 2015 enhanced scoring requirement greatly impacted this initiative, exacerbating the problem.

*Jessica Four Bear resides in Eagle Butte and is a 2017 graduate of the University of South Dakota Knudson School of Law. She serves as juvenile prosecutor for the Cheyenne River Sioux Tribe.*

### **Shutdown inches closer as U.S. House GOP fails to pass defense bill, lawmakers exit D.C.**

**SD's Johnson votes yes but effort to start debate fails**

**BY: JENNIFER SHUTT - SEPTEMBER 21, 2023 3:01 PM**

WASHINGTON — U.S. House Republicans were unable for a third time Thursday to begin debate on the Defense funding bill, throwing another wrench into Speaker Kevin McCarthy's leadership tenure.

The 212-216 vote that rejected the rule for the \$826 billion Defense spending measure was unexpected, coming less than a day after House GOP lawmakers gathered in a room in the Capitol basement to broker a path forward.

South Dakota Republican Rep. Dusty Johnson voted yes. Arizona Rep. Eli Crane and Georgia Rep. Marjorie Taylor Greene switched their votes to oppose the rule, after voting on Tuesday to adopt it. Colorado Rep. Ken Buck and South Carolina Rep. Ralph Norman both supported adoption of the rule on Thursday after opposing it earlier in the week.

Other Republicans voting no included Andy Biggs of Arizona, Dan Bishop of North Carolina and Matt Rosendale of Montana. The rule would have allowed the House to begin officially debating the bill and voting on nearly 200 amendments.

The failed vote led McCarthy to reverse course on the schedule, with many lawmakers heading home for the weekend on Thursday instead of sticking around for votes throughout the weekend. McCarthy had said exactly one week ago that "When we come back, we're not going to leave. We're going to get this done."

The update to the House schedule sent around Thursday afternoon said "ample notice will be given ahead of any potential votes tomorrow or this weekend."

The stalemate and change of plans does not bode well for efforts to approve the short-term spending bill that's needed to stave off a partial government shutdown when the new fiscal year begins Oct. 1.

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McCarthy has yet to unify his members amid deep disagreements about how much the federal government should spend and what policy restrictions should be included in full-year bills as well as the stopgap measure.

The ongoing dispute has ground the House chamber to a halt as McCarthy searches for a way to unify his razor-thin majority without turning to Democrats to pass a bipartisan bill.

Arkansas Republican Rep. Steve Womack, a senior appropriator, said Thursday that his fellow lawmakers need to accept the Senate will re-work any partisan bills the House sends over.

"Remember, this is all going to go to the Senate, so people don't need to get real hot and bothered over where we are today," Womack said. "It's going to be based on what comes back and whether or not it can get to the floor."

Discussions among House Republicans, he said, are likely to become "heated" once the Senate re-works a short-term spending bill and sends it back to the House for a final approval vote.

Infighting and political differences within the House Republican Conference have so far prevented GOP lawmakers from reaching agreement on their opening offer on a short-term spending bill, which is also called a continuing resolution or CR.

## Defense spending bill falters

Before the Thursday vote, McCarthy had been somewhat optimistic the House could finally approve the rule and begin debate on the full-year Defense spending measure.

Greene wrote on X that she switched her vote "because they refused to take the war money for Ukraine out and put it in a separate bill." The rule approved 184 amendments for floor debate and votes, including one from Florida's Matt Gaetz that would have prohibited "security assistance for Ukraine."

Crane wrote on X on Thursday that he believes votes "on CRs, omnibus bills and raising the debt ceiling should never take place."

"I'm going to do whatever I can to change the way this place works," he wrote.

Oklahoma Republican Rep. Tom Cole, chair of the Rules Committee, switched his vote on Thursday to a no vote after voting yes a few minutes earlier. The procedural maneuver allows him to bring the rule back up for a vote at a later time.

The whip count error appeared to be a surprise for Defense Appropriations Chair Ken Calvert, a California Republican; ranking member Betty McCollum, a Minnesota Democrat; and staff — all of whom were seated at the tables on the House floor ready to lead debate on the measure.

The Republican table held thick white binders as well as a large accordion folder, all filled with paperwork and the Democratic table was stacked with paperwork as well. It's highly unlikely that staff would have brought all the materials needed to debate the bill and amendments if they knew the rule vote was going to fail.

## 'At least a short-term shutdown'

In addition to strong disagreement among House Republicans about the full-year spending bills, the House GOP Conference has yet to solidify a plan to pass the short-term stopgap spending bill that's needed to hold off a funding lapse.

Idaho Republican Rep. Mike Simpson, chair of the Interior-Environment spending subcommittee, said he expects there will be "at least a short-term shutdown" as the House and Senate try to reach agreement on a short-term spending bill.

"That's a lot of work to do in a very short time," Simpson said.

House Freedom Caucus Chair Scott Perry, a Pennsylvania Republican, said Thursday that he hasn't seen details on any new short-term spending bills that might come to the floor.

"I haven't seen the language of any additional CR," he said.

Kansas Sen. Jerry Moran, the top Republican on the Commerce-Justice-Science spending panel, said he's "hoping the House chaos is set aside."

"I keep saying I'm not voting for another CR again, but I keep voting for them because the outcome is worse with a shutdown," Moran said. "But this just needs to be resolved in the House. I don't think there's



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a problem in the Senate that would cause a shutdown.”

Any short-term spending bill will have to be bipartisan in order to get through the Democratically controlled Senate where at least 60 votes are needed to limit debate on legislation. That could take more time than lawmakers have before Oct. 1, he said.

“Nothing about this is conducive to getting something done quickly and we’ve got to start with something that’s acceptable,” Moran said.

## **‘We’re in kind of a desperate situation’**

Senate Majority Whip Dick Durbin, an Illinois Democrat, said he’s unsure when the Senate would take up a short-term government funding bill since House Republicans haven’t announced what they’ll vote on or when they’ll vote to pass a CR.

“The House is a wreck and the speaker doesn’t appear to have a path using his majority to solve a serious national problem, so we’re in kind of a desperate situation,” Durbin said.

The House Appropriations Committee has approved 10 of its 12 spending bills for the fiscal year slated to begin Oct. 1, but the House has approved just one of those so far. All of the bills are partisan and written below the spending levels that McCarthy and President Joe Biden agreed to in the debt limit law.

The Senate spending panel has approved all dozen of its annual bills on broadly bipartisan votes, though efforts to pass a three-bill spending package halted last week after Wisconsin Republican Sen. Ron Johnson objected to leaders scheduling amendment votes.

The biggest hurdle for Congress at the moment is gaining support for the continuing resolution that would extend government funding past the end of the fiscal year on Sept. 30. That short-term spending bill is regularly relied on to give the House and Senate more time to negotiate final versions of the dozen annual spending bills.

Failing to approve a short-term spending bill before the start of fiscal 2024 on Oct. 1. would begin a funding lapse, leading wide swaths of the federal government to shut down.

*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.*

**GDILIVE.COM**

**GT** Groton Area  
Tigers

Friday Sept. 22, 2023  
at Sisseton

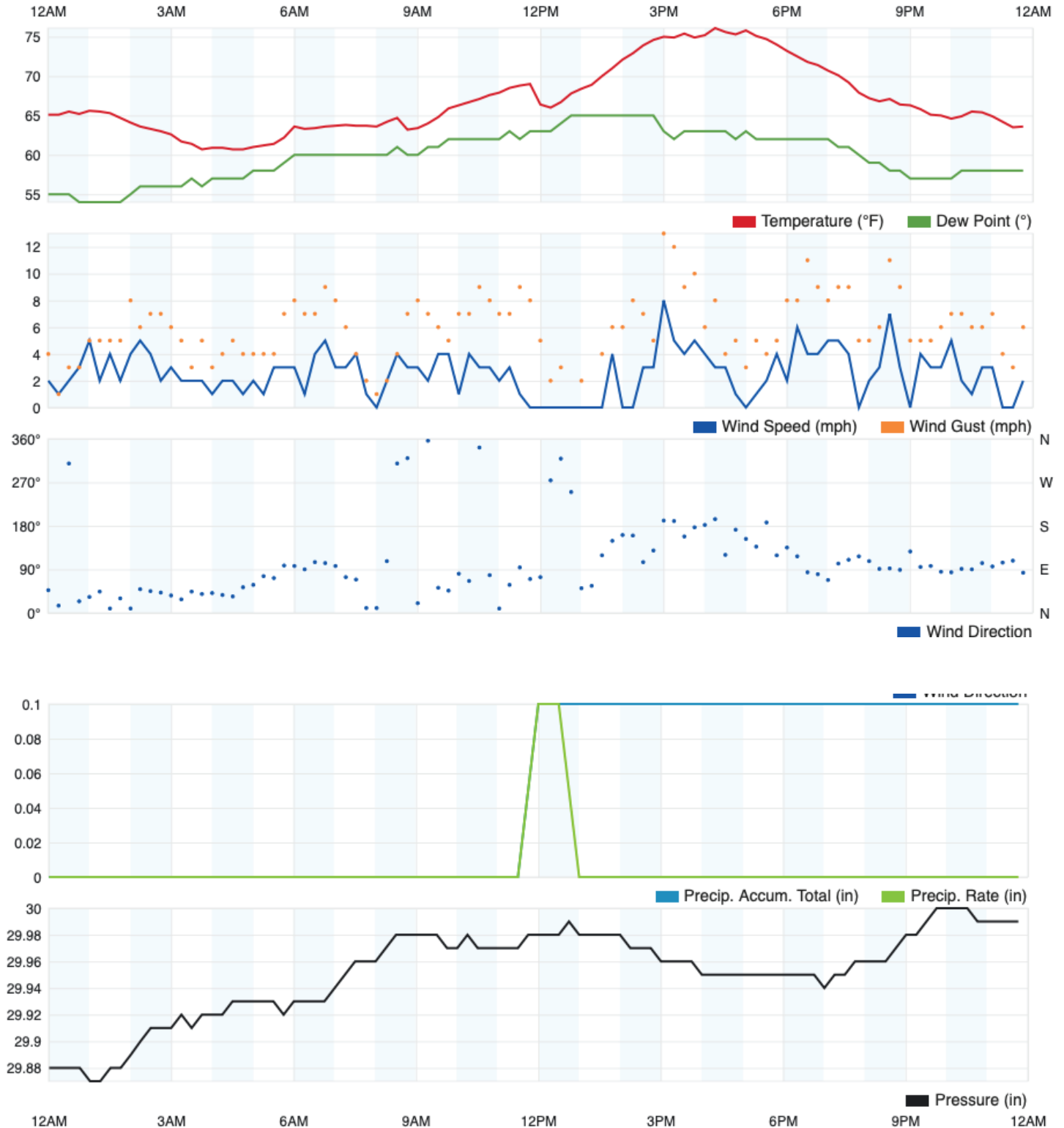


Football game sponsored by Bary Keith at Harr Motors,  
BK Custom Ts & More, Bierman Farm Service,  
Blocker Construction, Dacotah Bank, Full Circle Ag,  
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Groton Ford, John Sieh Agency, Krueger Brothers,  
Locke Electric and Rix Farms/R&M Farms

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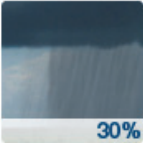

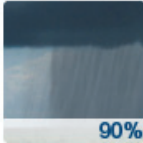

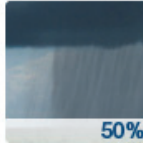


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## Yesterday's Groton Weather Graphs



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Friday	Friday Night	Saturday	Saturday Night	Sunday	Sunday Night	Monday
						
30%	50%	90%	60%	50%	20% 20%	20%
Chance Showers	Chance T-storms	Showers and Breezy	Showers Likely	Chance Showers	Slight Chance T-storms then Showers	Partly Sunny then Slight Chance Showers
High: 74 °F	Low: 58 °F	High: 69 °F	Low: 52 °F	High: 68 °F	Low: 50 °F	High: 70 °F



## Summary of Upcoming Weather

September 22, 2023  
4:57 AM

### Takeaways:

- Series of system crosses the region through the next 48 hours
- Multiple rounds of storms possible
- Severe weather & heavy rain potential

	Probability of Precipitation Forecast																		
	9/22 Fri						9/23 Sat												
	6am	9am	12pm	3pm	6pm	9pm	12am	3am	6am	9am	12pm	3pm	6pm	9pm	12am	3am	6am	9am	12pm
Aberdeen	35	30	20	20	25	35	50	40	55	55	75	90	65	60	60	40	40	40	40
Britton	25	15	10	10	25	25	40	45	50	60	85	95	85	70	70	45	45	40	40
Brookings	5	0	5	10	20	30	45	65	55	60	90	100	90	55	55	30	30	20	20
Chamberlain	25	35	20	20	50	45	30	25	65	70	60	25	20	20	20	25	25	20	20
Clark	20	15	10	10	25	35	40	40	55	60	90	95	70	55	55	30	30	30	30
Eagle Butte	30	35	35	55	70	65	55	60	70	80	70	65	50	40	40	40	40	35	35
Ellendale	30	25	20	20	40	45	45	45	55	60	90	95	80	65	65	50	50	50	50
Eureka	30	35	20	20	45	65	70	50	60	70	85	90	70	60	60	50	50	50	50
Gettysburg	30	30	25	25	50	65	65	45	65	80	75	65	45	45	45	40	40	40	40
Huron	30	15	10	20	30	60	45	40	65	65	85	85	35	35	35	30	30	25	25
Kennebec	25	25	25	25	55	45	35	40	60	70	45	25	25	25	25	25	25	25	25
McIntosh	20	30	40	60	80	80	75	60	60	75	75	80	70	60	60	55	55	40	40
Milbank	5	5	5	10	20	25	30	30	55	65	95	100	85	75	75	40	40	30	30
Miller	50	25	20	20	45	50	45	35	55	70	70	65	35	40	40	35	35	35	35
Mobridge	30	35	30	35	65	75	70	50	60	75	80	75	60	50	50	50	50	40	40
Murdo	25	25	35	45	55	40	35	50	60	60	40	30	35	25	25	25	25	20	20
Pierre	25	25	30	30	60	50	45	40	65	75	60	50	40	30	30	30	30	30	30
Redfield	50	30	20	20	25	40	50	45	65	70	80	80	50	45	45	40	40	35	35
Sisseton	15	10	5	10	20	25	40	35	55	60	90	100	85	75	75	45	45	35	35
Watertown	10	5	5	10	25	30	40	40	60	60	95	100	80	60	60	30	30	30	30
Webster	15	10	5	10	20	25	40	40	55	55	85	100	80	65	65	40	40	30	30
Wheaton	5	5	5	10	15	20	35	30	50	55	90	95	90	85	85	55	55	45	45



National Weather Service  
Aberdeen, SD

Slow moving system will generate multiple rounds of thunderstorms, with a severe weather threat that increased on Saturday. We will also see an increased risk for multiple bouts of heavy rainfall.

# Broton Daily Independent

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## Severe Weather Threat Overview

September 22, 2023  
5:00 AM

### Timing/Location

This Afternoon, Evening and Overnight  
from west to east.

### Tornado Potential

**Very Low**    Low    Medium    High

### Max Hail Size

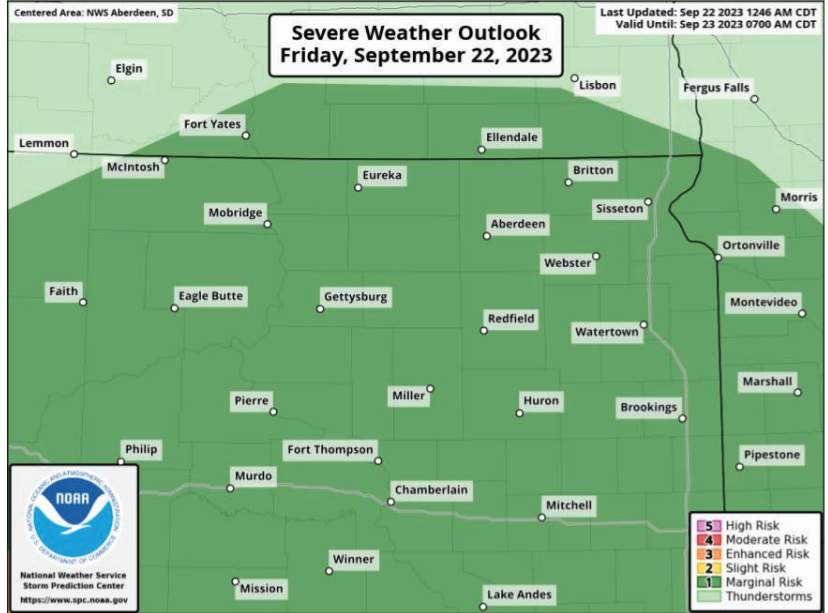
Dimes    **Quarters**    Golfball    Baseball

### Max Wind Speed

< 60 mph    **60-70 mph**    70-80 mph    > 80mph

### Heavy Rain

Very Low    Low    **Medium**    High



National Weather Service  
Aberdeen, SD

Storms develop west river this afternoon and slowly migrate east though the evening and overnight. Risk is mainly for large hail, though we cant rule out gusty winds. Heavy rain potential also exists.

# Broton Daily Independent

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## Severe Weather Threat Overview

September 22, 2023

5:11 AM

Saturday Midday Through Late Afternoon

### Timing/Location

Storms moving through in the morning with increasing potential for severe weather as the day progresses. Main threat area is east of the James valley through western Minnesota

### Hazards

All hazards are possible. Tornado threat is contingent on how much sunshine we receive & how fast storms migrate east and out of the area.

#### Tornado



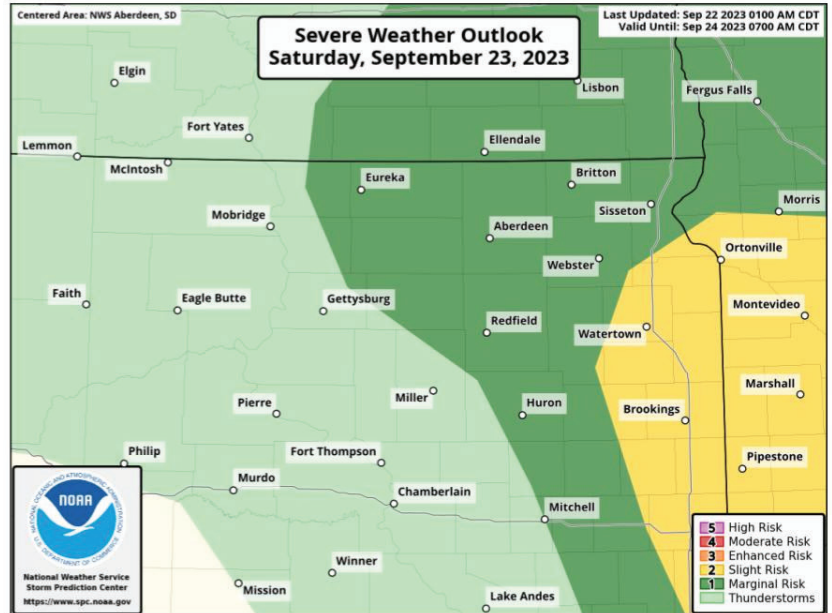
#### Hail



#### Wind



#### Heavy Rain



National Weather Service  
Aberdeen, SD

Storms will continue to move across the area early Saturday, with development of strong to severe storms as the day progresses. Focus area for severe weather is east of the James valley into western Minnesota, with large hail, damaging winds, heavy rain... and even a tornado or two possible. The tornado threat is contingent on how much sunshine we end up getting.

# Groton Daily Independent

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## Rainfall Probabilities For Saturday

September 21, 2023

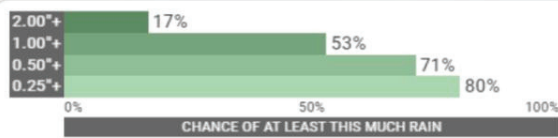
1:41 PM



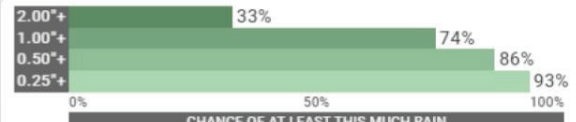
### Rainfall Probabilities

Sat, Sep 23, 2023, 7 AM to Sun, Sep 24, 2023, 7 AM

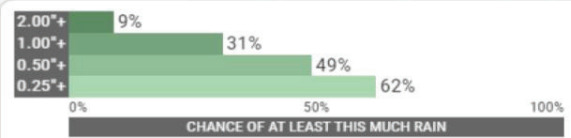
These graphs show the probability that rainfall will reach or exceed the given value for select locations. Values above 50% indicate that rainfall of this amount has a greater than 50/50 chance of occurring.



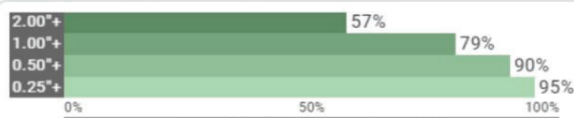
MOBRIDGE



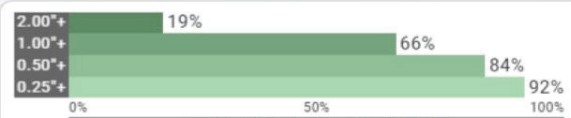
ABERDEEN



PIERRE



SISSETON



WATERTOWN



Issued: Thu, Sep 21, 2023, 1 PM



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

National Weather Service  
Aberdeen, SD

Here are the probabilities for rainfall from 7AM Saturday to 7AM Sunday

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## Yesterday's Groton Weather

High Temp: 76 °F at 4:12 PM

Low Temp: 61 °F at 4:28 AM

Wind: 13 mph at 2:53 PM

Precip: : 0.10

Day length: 21 hours, 14 minutes

## Today's Info

Record High: 103 in 1936

Record Low: 20 in 1995

Average High: 73

Average Low: 44

Average Precip in Sept.: 1.47

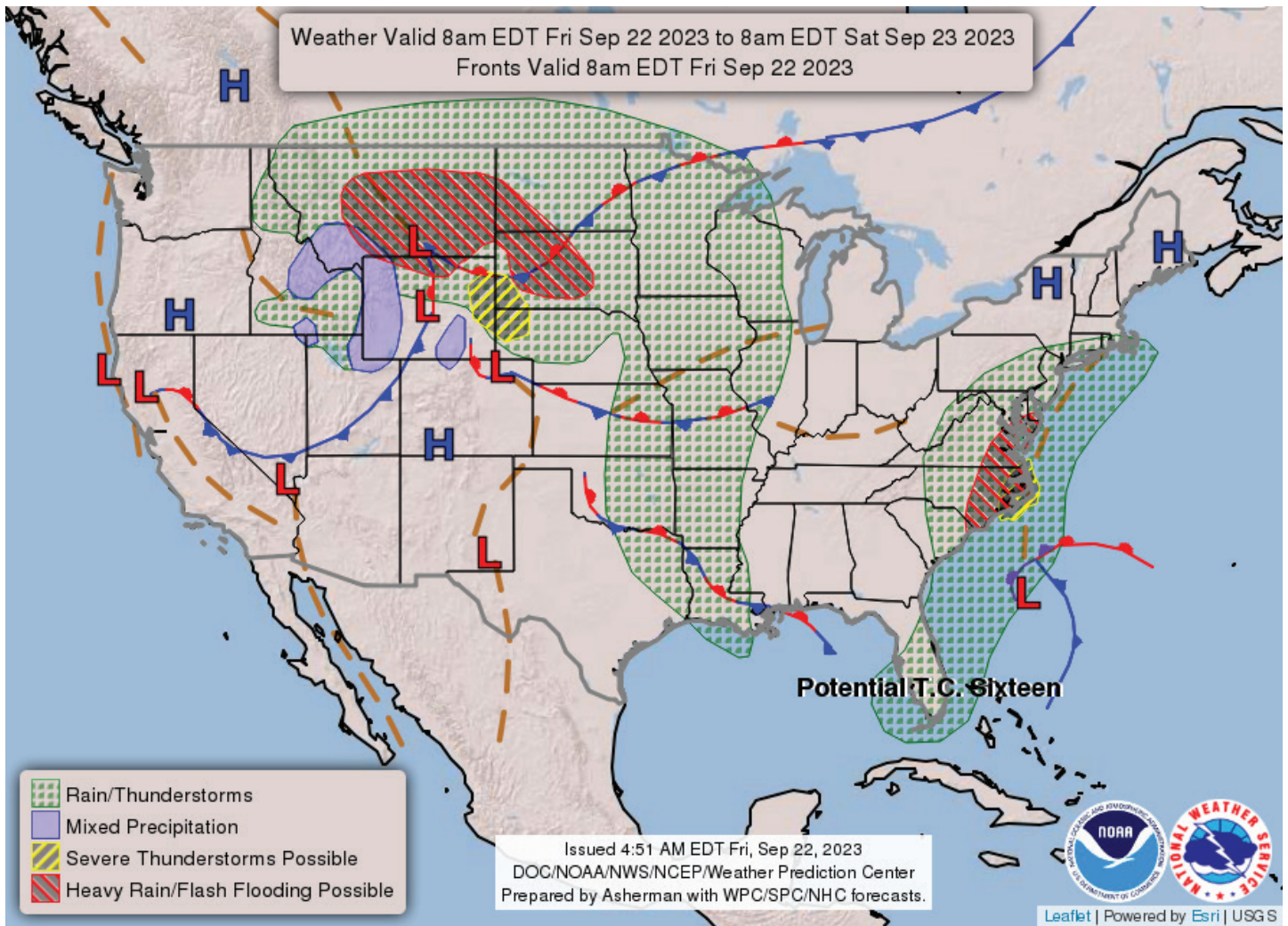
Precip to date in Sept.: 0.67

Average Precip to date: 17.81

Precip Year to Date: 19.26

Sunset Tonight: 7:32:10 PM

Sunrise Tomorrow: 7:19:16 AM



# Groton Daily Independent

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## Today in Weather History

September 22, 1936: Abnormally warm conditions brought record temperatures to much of central and northeast South Dakota along with west central Minnesota on this day in 1936. Temperatures rose into the upper 90s and lower 100s during the afternoon hours. Pierre and Watertown set record highs of 99 degrees. Mobridge and Sisseton warmed to record highs of 101 degrees. Finally, Kennebec and Aberdeen rose to record highs of 102 and 103 degrees, respectively.

1810: A tornado striking Fernhill Heath had a width between 0.5 to 1 mile; making it the widest path ever in Britain.

1890 - A severe hailstorm struck Strawberry, AZ. Five days after the storm hail still lay in drifts 12 to 18 inches deep. (The Weather Channel)

1913 - Des Moines, IA, experienced their earliest freeze of record. (The Weather Channel)

1961 - Hurricane Esther made a near complete circle south of Cape Cod. The hurricane then passed over Cape Cod and hit Maine. Its energy was largely spent over the North Atlantic Ocean, however, heavy rains over Maine resulted in widespread local flooding of cellars, low roads, and underpasses. (David Ludlum)

1983 - Forty-one cities reported record cold temperatures during the morning. Houston, TX, hit 50 degrees, and Williston ND plunged to 19 degrees. (The Weather Channel)

1987 - Hurricane Emily, the first hurricane to roam the Caribbean in nearly six years, made landfall over the Dominican Republic late in the day, packing 125 mph winds. Emily killed three persons and caused thirty million dollars damage. A record high of 92 degrees at Miami FL was their fifth in a row. (Storm Data) (The National Weather Summary)

1988 - An early morning thunderstorm produced baseball size hail at Plainview, in Hale County TX. Late in the evening more thunderstorms in the Southern High Plains Region produced wind gusts to 75 mph at Plainview TX and Crosby TX. (Storm Data) (The National Weather Summary)

1989 - Hurricane Hugo quickly lost strength over South Carolina, but still was a tropical storm as it crossed into North Carolina, just west of Charlotte, at about 7 AM. Winds around Charlotte reached 69 mph, with gusts to 99 mph. Eighty percent of the power was knocked out to Charlotte and Mecklenburg County. Property damage in North Carolina was 210 million dollars, and damage to crops was 97 million dollars. The strongest storm surge occurred along the southern coast shortly after midnight, reaching nine feet above sea level at ocean Isle and Sunset Beach. Hugo killed one person and injured fifteen others in North Carolina. Strong northwesterly winds ushered unseasonably cold air into the north central U.S., in time for the official start of autumn, at 8" 20 PM (CDT). Squalls produced light snow in northern Wisconsin. Winds in Wisconsin gusted to 52 mph at Rhinelander. (Storm Data) (The National Weather Summary)

2005 - For the first time in the historical record, two hurricanes reached category-5 intensity in the Gulf of Mexico in a single season as Hurricane Rita intensified before making landfall (Katrina and Rita).

2006: The tristate area of Missouri, Illinois, and Kentucky was struck by the worst tornado outbreak in the recorded history during the month of September. One supercell produced a long-track F4 tornado across southeastern Missouri into southwestern Illinois. This tornado traveled 27.5 miles.



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Daily Devotionals

## Seeds of Hope

### HOW STRONG IS YOUR BELIEF?

Watching a person walking across a deep crevice on a wire is nerve-racking for most of us. As they carefully make their way from one side to the other with their long pole, it becomes frightening, even breath-taking at times.

There was a "walker" who decided that he was going to walk from one side of Niagara Falls to the other pushing a wheelbarrow that contained 200 pounds of rocks. When he accomplished his goal flawlessly, the reporters in the crowd thronged him with several questions. After answering a few of their questions he looked one of them in the eye and asked, "Do you think I can take my wheelbarrow back to the other side?"

Quickly the reporter responded, "Yes, I certainly do!"

"Good," he said. "Then you believe that I can do it."

"Of course I believe you can," said the reporter.

Dumping the bricks on the ground in front of him he said, "If you believe it - get in the wheelbarrow and let me push you to the other side."

Accepting Christ as our Savior is the first step in our walk of faith. It begins with "believe and be saved!" However, when we recognize Jesus as Lord, it means that we will trust Him completely to get us safely from where we are at that moment until we will be with Him in glory.

Our journey will have times of doubt, fear, and uncertainty but we must always trust Him.

Prayer: Give us courage, Father, to trust You for safe passage through those times in our lives when we fear "letting go and letting God" carry us through scary times. In Jesus' Name, Amen.

Scripture For Today: They replied, "Believe in the Lord Jesus and you will be saved, along with everyone in your household." Acts 16:31



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

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## 2023 Community Events

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

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## WINNING NUMBERS

### MEGA MILLIONS

WINNING NUMBERS:  
09.19.23

6 9 13 29 66 24

MegaPlier: 2x

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

NEXT 16 Hrs 33 Mins 4  
DRAW: 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 1 Days 15 Hrs 48  
DRAW: Mins 3 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

### LUCKY FOR LIFE

WINNING NUMBERS:  
09.21.23

8 12 29 32 34 18

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

NEXT 16 Hrs 3 Mins 4  
DRAW: Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

### DAKOTA CASH

WINNING NUMBERS:  
09.20.23

6 12 22 29 30

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

NEXT 1 Days 16 Hrs 3  
DRAW: Mins 4 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

### POWERBALL

DOUBLE PLAY

WINNING NUMBERS:  
09.20.23

6 20 29 46 68 8

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

NEXT 1 Days 16 Hrs 32  
DRAW: Mins 4 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 1 Days 16 Hrs 32  
DRAW: Mins 4 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

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## News from the Associated Press

### Thursday's Scores

The Associated Press

#### PREP VOLLEYBALL

Aberdeen Christian def. North Central Co-Op, 25-20, 25-21, 25-18  
Aberdeen Roncalli def. Sisseton, 25-16, 25-19, 25-18  
Arlington def. Dell Rapids St. Mary, 25-21, 25-16, 25-14  
Baltic def. Parker, 25-17, 25-16, 25-8  
Bon Homme def. Chamberlain, 25-7, 25-6, 25-8  
Bridgewater-Emery def. Canistota, 25-22, 19-25, 25-15, 25-17  
Chester def. Garretson, 25-22, 25-20, 25-14  
Clark/Willow Lake def. Deuel, 26-24, 21-25, 25-19, 18-25, 15-11  
Corsica/Stickney def. Gregory, 17-25, 25-12, 25-19, 25-13  
Dell Rapids def. Flandreau, 25-15, 25-14, 25-18  
Elk Point-Jefferson def. West Sioux, Iowa, 25-9, 25-7, 25-10  
Florence/Henry def. Britton-Hecla, 25-15, 25-21, 25-23  
Great Plains Lutheran def. Waverly-South Shore, 25-11, 25-13, 25-10  
Groton Area def. Tiospa Zina Tribal, 25-7, 25-11, 25-18  
Hanson def. Irene-Wakonda, 25-17, 25-12, 25-18  
Harrisburg def. Sioux Falls Lincoln, 25-14, 26-24, 25-23  
Huron def. Brookings, 18-25, 19-25, 25-23, 25-22, 18-16  
Iroquois/ Lake Preston Co-op def. Highmore-Harrold, 25-15, 25-22, 12-25, 25-22  
Jones County def. Todd County, 25-11, 25-16, 25-15  
Langford def. Ipswich, 25-22, 25-19, 25-20  
Lennox def. West Central, 25-15, 25-23, 25-18  
Leola-Frederick High School def. Ellendale, N.D., 25-18, 25-23, 25-16  
Linton/HMB, N.D. def. Herreid/Selby Area, 25-19, 25-21, 22-25, 25-16  
Menno def. Freeman, 25-15, 25-23, 25-14  
Milbank def. Redfield, 25-23, 26-24, 25-23  
Northwestern def. Waubay/Summit, 25-3, 25-7, 25-11  
Parkston def. McCook Central/Montrose, 25-18, 25-21, 25-14  
Philip def. Lead-Deadwood, 25-17, 25-15, 25-6  
Rapid City Christian def. St. Thomas More, 19-25, 25-18, 25-12, 25-11  
Sioux Falls Christian def. Dakota Valley, 25-18, 25-23, 25-22  
Sioux Falls Jefferson def. Brandon Valley, 25-13, 25-14, 25-22  
Sioux Falls Lutheran def. Oldham-Ramona/Rutland, 25-23, 25-18, 25-19  
Sioux Falls O'Gorman def. Sioux Falls Roosevelt, 25-23, 25-20, 20-25, 25-21  
Spearfish def. Custer, 25-11, 25-17, 25-22  
Stanley County def. Potter County, 25-22, 9-25, 25-20, 26-24  
Sully Buttes def. Sunshine Bible Academy, 25-20, 25-13, 25-21  
Tripp-Delmont/Armour def. Mitchell Christian,  
Viborg-Hurley def. Howard, 20-25, 27-25, 25-16, 15-25, 15-10  
Wagner def. Kimball/White Lake, 25-11, 25-15, 25-18  
Wall def. White River, 25-17, 25-20, 26-24  
Watertown def. Mitchell, 25-19, 25-11, 25-14  
Wessington Springs def. Lower Brule, 25-9, 25-15, 25-17  
Wilmot def. Tri-State, N.D., 25-18, 25-18, 25-23

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Wolsey-Wessington def. James Valley Christian, 25-10, 25-23, 25-16

Yankton def. Vermillion, 25-21, 25-17, 25-13

Chamberlain Triangular=

Burke def. Bon Homme, 20-25, 25-17, 25-18, 22-25, 15-9

Elk Point Jefferson Triangular=

Elk Point-Jefferson def. Alcester-Hudson, 25-16, 25-23, 25-10

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## PREP FOOTBALL

St. Francis Indian 52, Red Cloud 8

Todd County 30, Winnebago, Neb. 26

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

## Biden deal with tribes promises \$200M for Columbia River salmon reintroduction

PORTLAND, Ore. (AP) — The Biden administration has pledged over \$200 million toward reintroducing salmon in the Upper Columbia River Basin in an agreement with tribes that includes a stay on litigation for 20 years.

The Confederated Tribes of the Colville Reservation, the Coeur d'Alene Tribe and Spokane Tribe of Indians signed the deal with federal officials on Thursday, The Seattle Times reported.

The funds from the Bonneville Power Administration will be paid over 20 years to implement a plan led by the tribes to restore salmon and steelhead in the basin.

Constructing the Grand Coulee Dam about 80 years ago in eastern Washington, and Chief Joseph Dam downstream, stopped salmon from migrating into the basin and through tribal lands, cutting off tribal access to the fish, which leaders say has caused devastating cultural harm.

Salmon runs in the Upper Columbia had been abundant for thousands of years and were a mainstay of tribal cultures and trade.

The Upper Columbia United Tribes, which includes tribes in Washington and Idaho, have been working on the reintroduction plan. Now in the second of four stages, it includes research over the next two decades to establish sources of donor and brood salmon stocks for reintroduction, test biological assumptions, develop interim hatchery and passage facilities, and evaluate how the program is working.

"In 1940, Tribes from around the Northwest gathered at Kettle Falls for a Ceremony of Tears to mourn the loss of salmon at their ancestral fishing grounds," Jarred-Michael Erickson, chairman of the Confederated Tribes of the Colville Reservation, said in a statement from the White House Council on Environmental Quality. "The federal government is taking a major step toward righting that historic wrong. ... The Colville Tribes (look) forward to our children celebrating a Ceremony of Joy when salmon are permanently restored to their ancestral waters."

The U.S. Bureau of Reclamation additionally is committing \$8 million in federal money toward juvenile salmon outmigration studies, genetic sampling and fish passage design development.

Northwest RiverPartners, which represents users of the Columbia and Lower Snake rivers, including barge operators and utilities, has been against dam removal on the Lower Snake for salmon recovery but supports this effort, which leaves dams intact.

"Taking this next step in studying salmon reintroduction above these blocked areas is the right thing to do and lays the foundation for the possibility of sustainable salmon runs in the upper Columbia River Basin," executive director Kurt Miller said in a statement. "Reintroduction has the potential to create hundreds of miles of upstream habitat for salmon, responds to important Tribal commitments, and does so without negatively impacting the hydropower our region relies on."

## Scout Clean Energy Holds Blade Signing Ceremony for Sweetland Wind Farm

Scout Celebrated Sweetland's Successful and Rapidly Advancing Construction Progress

Sweetland Will Be the First Project Constructed since acquisition by Brookfield Renewable

MILLER, S.D., Sept. 21, 2023 /PRNewswire/ -- Scout Clean Energy (Scout), a Colorado based renewable energy developer-owner-operator, recently celebrated the on-going construction of the 200 MW Sweetland Wind Project (Sweetland) with landowners, stakeholders and the construction team at a Blade Signing Ceremony outside Miller, South Dakota. Sweetland, located in Hand County, SD will be owned and operated by Scout Clean Energy.

"We are excited about the progress we have made toward completing this greenfield wind farm project and we wanted to celebrate this milestone with the construction team, stakeholders and our landowners," said Michael Rucker, CEO and founder of Scout Clean Energy. "Due to COVID restrictions, we were not able to host a blade signing event at Bitter Ridge, another greenfield wind project in Indiana. Now, we are glad we were able to host this blade signing event for Sweetland."

The Blade Signing Ceremony was an opportunity to celebrate Sweetland's successful and rapidly advancing construction progress as well as thank the landowners who have worked in partnership with Scout to bring this renewable energy project to South Dakota. The event started with a speech from Mr. Rucker, followed by a luncheon hosted by Scout, and culminated in everyone coming together to sign one of the turbine blades that will be installed on one of the project's wind turbines. Joining the landowners in attendance were representatives of Scout Clean Energy, Bradley Construction Management, Blattner Energy, AEI, GE, and other key local and state officials.

"For me to be gathered with all the people who made this project possible is a special moment and another huge milestone for Scout Clean Energy," explained Rucker. "None of this would be possible without all the hard work and dedication from everyone at this event as well as the many others who have worked tirelessly to make this blade signing possible. Thank you."

Scout is installing GE's 2.8-127 series turbines, which have been named by the American Clean Power Association (ACPA) as the most widely deployed wind turbine in the US. With the GE turbines, Sweetland is expected to produce over 903,500 megawatt hours of low cost, renewable power each year, offsetting approximately 615,000 tons of annual carbon emissions. This is the equivalent to powering approximately 82,100 homes with carbon free electricity.

Scout is managing construction of the project and Blattner Energy is serving as the Balance of Plant (BOP) Contractor. Sweetland is supporting over 400 temporary construction jobs and plans to provide 10 permanent full-time positions once the project begins operations. The economic benefits to the community are estimated to meet or exceed \$35 million in new local revenues over the expected life of the Sweetland project.

Scout is a portfolio company of Brookfield Renewable, one of the world's largest publicly traded, pure-play renewable power platforms.

## 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 died. No named suspects. No arrests.

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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 whom 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.

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 mishandling 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.



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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 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."

## **Pope Francis visits Marseille as anti-migrant views grow in Europe with talk of fences and blockades**

By NICOLE WINFIELD, TRISHA THOMAS and MASHA MACPHERSON Associated Press

VATICAN CITY (AP) — Pope Francis is visiting the French port city of Marseille, for centuries a multiethnic and multifaith melting pot, to amplify his call for the Mediterranean to be a place of welcome for migrants.

It's an increasingly lonely voice in Europe, where some countries are turning more and more to border fences, repatriations and talk of a naval blockade to keep a new influx of would-be refugees out.

Francis is presiding over the closing session of a gathering of Mediterranean Catholic bishops, but his two-day visit that begins Friday is aimed at sending a message well beyond the Catholic faithful to Europe, North Africa and beyond.

After a prayer at Marseille's basilica, Francis holds an interfaith prayer at a monument dedicated to those who have died at sea — a number estimated to top 28,000 since 2014, according to the International

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Organization of Migration.

Francis, who has long lamented that the Mediterranean has become “the world’s biggest cemetery,” confirmed his visit months ago, but it comes as Italy is once again coping with an increasing number of migrants setting off in flimsy boats from Tunisia.

After the numbers arriving last week on the island of Lampedusa briefly exceeded the resident population of 6,100, Italian Premier Giorgia Meloni resurrected calls for a naval blockade and announced new centers to hold those who don’t qualify for asylum until they can be sent home.

France, for its part, beefed up border patrols at its southern frontier with Italy, a few hours’ drive from Marseille, and increased drone surveillance of the Alps to keep the newcomers from crossing over. With a European Parliament election looming next year and the far-right challenging the centrist government’s line, French government officials stood firm.

“France will not take in migrants from Lampedusa,” French Interior Minister Gerald Darmanin said this week on national TF1 television. “It’s not by taking in more people that we’re going to stem a flow that obviously affects our ability to integrate” them into French society, he said.

Marseille’s archbishop, Cardinal Jean-Marc Aveline, who himself was born in Algeria and moved to France as a child, said such “aggressive” measures weren’t the answer. But he also said “naïve” and peacenik speeches about everyone living together happily ever after weren’t helpful either.

“The church must measure these evils well and find a path that is neither naively irenic nor aggressive out of special interests, but prophetic,” by being close to migrants and living among them, he told reporters in Rome before the visit.

Marseille is one of the most multicultural, multireligious and multiethnic cities on the shores of the Mediterranean, long characterized by a strong presence of migrants living together in a tradition of tolerance. France’s INSEE national statistics agency show that there were more than 124,000 immigrants in a city of 862,000 residents in 2019, or about 14.5% of the population, with almost 30,000 Algerians and thousands from Turkey as well as Morocco, Tunisia and other former French colonies in Africa.

“The pope is proposing a path, as others do, whether you’re a believer or not, whether Muslim, Jew, atheist or Catholic,” Marseille Mayor Benoit Payan said. “He’s telling us that we have something in common, and that this Mediterranean must be preserved in its biodiversity, of course, but also in its human relationships.”

The visit comes on the eve of the Catholic Church’s annual celebration of migrants and refugees, with this year’s theme noting the internationally recognized right to migrate but also the right to not migrate, and to live at home safely and securely.

“They choose to leave, but because they did not necessarily have the choice to stay,” Aveline said of this year’s message. “You seldom leave your country with joy in your heart.”

And for those who are forced to leave, the Catholic Church has been working with other evangelical churches to provide legal ways for migrants to reach Europe, so-called humanitarian corridors that so far have brought more than 6,000 refugees to Italy.

Marco Impagliazzo, head of the Sant’Egidio Community that is helping organize the corridors, said the numbers of migrants arriving by boat in Italy this year are high but by no means constitutes an emergency. Migration, he said, isn’t an emergency but rather “a long-term problem, a structural phenomenon that requires medium and long-term solutions” that could also be of enormous benefit to Italy, given its demographic crisis.

Among other things, he proposed increasing the number of humanitarian visas granted and restoring funding for local community programs to teach new migrants Italian — a relatively low-cost investment that is crucial to successfully integrating them in society.

Njifon Njiemessa, a student from Cameroon who came to Italy in May in a humanitarian corridor, said he hoped to return one day to Cameroon, but for now he hoped to integrate into Italy.

“If there is any possibility of pushing my studies it will be welcome because my dream, my main dream is to, is still to be useful for those that are back in Cameroon, because my mission is to help those that are there,” Njiemessa told reporters.

## US education chief considers new ways to discourage college admissions preference for kids of alumni

By COLLIN BINKLEY and CAROLE FELDMAN Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Joe Biden's education chief said he's open to using "whatever levers" are available — including federal money — to discourage colleges from giving admissions preference to the children of alumni and donors.

In an interview with The Associated Press, Education Secretary Miguel Cardona said legacy admissions must be revisited for the sake of diversity on campuses following the recent Supreme Court ruling against affirmative action. In a step beyond his previous comments, Cardona said he would consider taking stronger action to deter the practice.

"I would be interested in pulling whatever levers I can pull as secretary of Education to ensure that, especially if we're giving out financial aid and loans, that we're doing it for institutions that are providing value," Cardona said Wednesday. He made the remark when asked about using federal money as a carrot or rod on legacy admissions.

Legacy admissions, long seen as a perk for the white and wealthy at selective colleges, have come under renewed fire since the ruling in June that colleges can no longer consider the race of applicants. By banning affirmative action but allowing legacy preferences, critics say the court left admissions even more lopsided against students of color.

Cardona didn't elaborate on his options, but the federal government oversees vast sums of money that go to colleges in the form of student financial aid and research grants. The Education Department can also issue fines for civil rights violations, including racial discrimination.

The agency recently opened an investigation at Harvard University after a federal complaint alleged that legacy admissions amount to racial discrimination.

A handful of small colleges have disavowed legacy admissions in the wake of the affirmative action decision, but there's been no sign of change in the upper echelons of America's universities.

Some colleges and alumni defend the practice, saying it builds community and encourages fundraising. And as campuses become more diverse, they argue, the benefit increasingly extends to students of color and their families.

Cardona, who attended a technical high school and earned his bachelor's degree from Central Connecticut State University, has added his voice to the advocates, civil rights groups and Democratic lawmakers denouncing the practice.

"Your last name could get you into a school, or the fact that you can write a check could get you into a school," he said. But using affirmative action to promote diversity — "that tool was taken away."

Still, he shied away from supporting a ban of the type proposed by some Democrats in Congress and in several states. Cardona sees it as a matter of local control, with universities having the final decision.

"There is no edict coming from the secretary of Education," he said.

Without action, Cardona warned that the nation could face the same setbacks seen in California after it ended affirmative action in 1996. The state's most selective colleges saw steep decreases in Black and Latino enrollment, and the numbers never fully rebounded.

"If we go the route that California went when they abolished affirmative action, what chance do we have competing against China?" Cardona said. "This is more than just ensuring diverse learning environments. This is about our strength as a country."

Advocates have also pushed the Education Department to start collecting data showing the number and demographics of legacy students.

"I was hopeful we'd be seeing more colleges volunteering to drop it," said James Murphy, a deputy director at Education Reform Now, a nonprofit think tank. "I think I think they've got to keep the pressure on and shine a light on it."

On other issues:

— Cardona said during the interview that students should be taught about the impact of slavery, includ-

ing effects that linger today. When slavery ended, it didn't end the belief in some that African Americans were inferior, and the country is still seeing the effects of unfair housing and lending policies adopted in more recent decades, he said.

"What we don't want to do is hide the truth and act as if it didn't happen, or that when it ended, everything was fine. I definitely don't want to teach that there were some benefits to that for those who were enslaved," he said.

His remarks were a veiled reference to new education standards in Florida, endorsed by Republican Gov. Ron DeSantis, that require instruction that enslaved people developed skills that "could be applied for their personal benefit."

Conservatives in many states have pushed for restrictions around how schools address topics related to race and slavery.

— He said "schools should be open, period," even if there is a new COVID-19 surge. "I worry about government overreach, sending down edicts that will lead to school closures because either folks are afraid to go in or are infected and can't go," he said.

He said the sense of community was lost when schools closed early in the pandemic, and that in-person instruction "should not be sacrificed for ideology."

— Cardona declined to speculate on what the administration's new student loan forgiveness proposal might look like or whether a final regulation could be in place before the 2024 presidential election. "We are going to work as quickly as possible," he said. "We know there are students that are waiting, borrowers that are waiting. So many folks are struggling right now to get back up."

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## **Some crossings on US-Mexico border still shut as cities, agents confront rise in migrant arrivals**

By VALERIE GONZALEZ and ELLIOT SPAGAT Associated Press

EAGLE PASS, Texas (AP) — The week began in Eagle Pass with rumors that large crowds of migrants might show up. On Friday, the small Texas border city was scrambling: nearly 9,000 asylum-seekers and counting had crossed from Mexico, an international bridge remained closed and a 3-year-old boy had drowned in the Rio Grande.

"Before we would hear rumors, nothing happened," Maverick County Sheriff Tom Schmerber said. "But this time something happened."

The unfolding response in Eagle Pass, where the mayor declared a state of emergency, illustrates how Border Patrol agents have become overwhelmed in recent days by asylum-seekers on parts of the U.S. border with Mexico. In San Diego and El Paso, Texas, officials this week also closed border crossings so agents could help with the influx.

After a dip in illegal crossings that followed new asylum restrictions in May, President Joe Biden's administration is again on its heels. Democratic mayors and governors are seeking more relief for hosting asylum-seekers and Republicans are seizing on the issue ahead of 2024 elections.

Traffic jammed the heart of Eagle Pass on Thursday evening after officials closed down one of the city's two international bridges to reroute agents elsewhere. Throughout the day, hundreds of migrants sat underneath the shade of the bridge as Border Patrol agents processed and transported them out in groups.

Mayor Rolando Salinas said about 2,000 migrants had crossed Thursday, about half as many as the day prior. But after emerging from a meeting with Texas state police and Border Patrol agents, Salinas said he was told large numbers could continue through the weekend.

"Hopefully that's not the case," he said.

The Homeland Security Department said Wednesday it would grant Temporary Protected Status to an estimated 472,000 Venezuelans who were in the U.S. on July 31, easing paths to work authorization. That is in addition to 242,700 Venezuelans who already had qualified for temporary status.

The administration is also sending 800 active-duty military troops to the border, adding to 2,500 National Guard members there. Border holding facilities are expanding by 3,250 people to nearly 23,000 and ex-

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tending home surveillance nationwide for families awaiting initial asylum screenings.

The administration renewed pressure — and blame — on Congress, which has long failed to agree on comprehensive changes to the nation's immigration system. The Biden administration is now asking Congress for \$4 billion in emergency funding.

Homeland Security said in a statement it was "using the limited tools it has available to secure the border and build a safe, orderly, and humane immigration system."

Theresa Cardinal Brown, the Bipartisan Policy Center's senior advisor for immigration and border policy, said it was normal to see a dip in illegal crossings after changes like those imposed in May, but that is usually short-lived once migrants see how things play out.

"People see what happened to the last group of people that tried and they're like, 'Oh, well maybe it's not as harsh as they say,'" Brown said.

The journey to Eagle Pass this week ended in tragedy for some.

On Wednesday, a 3-year-old boy crossing the Rio Grande was swept in the strong current and drowned before rescue teams could save him, said Lt. Chris Olivarez, a spokesman for the Texas Department of Public Safety. The body of another man in his 30s also was found by the river Thursday, Eagle Pass Fire Chief Manuel Mello said.

An increase in families arriving at the border led to unacceptable conditions in two of the busiest Border Patrol sectors, a court-appointed monitor reported to a federal court last week. Dr. Paul H. Wise said children as young as 8 years old were separated from parents during processing in South Texas, a practice that has been mainly used for boys 13 to 17.

U.S. Customs and Border Protection said it was reviewing Wise's report, noting limited, temporary separations may occur during processing for safety reasons but they are nothing like the long-term separations under former President Donald Trump. Wise said even short-term separation can have "lasting, harmful effects."

U.S. authorities closed a bridge and international railway in Eagle Pass on Wednesday to redirect staff. Union Pacific Railroad Co. said Thursday that thousands of rail cars cross the border there daily.

CBP told business leaders they have no estimate of when rail traffic would resume in Eagle Pass or when U.S.-bound commercial truck traffic would reopen at a bridge in El Paso. Traffic slowed at other border crossings.

In San Diego, a pedestrian crossing has been closed since Sept. 14 to direct staff to an area where migrants from Cameroon to Colombia are waiting between a double-layer border wall in San Diego. Volunteers are handing the migrants food and bottled water while they wait to be processed.

Near Jacumba Hot Springs, a town of less than 1,000 people with a small hotel and general store within boulder-strewn mountains an hour's drive east of San Diego, migrants camps began forming last week for the first time since May.

Smugglers drive migrants to a spot in Mexico where the border wall ends. One of three camps in the Jacumba Valley is about a half-hour walk on a gravel road used almost exclusively by border agents. On Wednesday, none had stayed longer than one night, occupying tents left behind by others.

The Border Patrol gives migrants colored wristbands marking their arrival date to determine who gets shuttled first to a processing location. Campfires and juniper shrub shield migrants from evening chills. Some climbed atop boulders hoping to get a cellphone signal.

Angel Sisa, 40, left Ecuador's coastal region with his wife and two children, ages 15 and 13, selling his general store to escape death threats from criminals demanding monthly payments. The Sisa family paid smugglers to take them by plane and bus until they reached a hotel in Tecate, the nearest town in Mexico from the roadside drop where they crossed.

They hope to settle in Minneapolis with family members who left Ecuador about a year ago.

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Spagat reported from Jacumba Hot Springs, California. Associated Press writers Colleen Long in Washington and Josh Funk in Omaha, Nebraska, contributed.

## Want a place on the UN stage? Leaders of divided nations must first get past this gatekeeper

By DAVID BILLER and JOSEPH KRAUSS Associated Press

UNITED NATIONS (AP) — It's one of the United Nations' more obscure bodies, with no space to call its own within the riverside headquarters. And there is scant insight into how it decides a question of far-reaching impact: Who gets let through the door?

With an anodyne name, the U.N. Credentials Committee has long gone unnoticed; it doesn't even appear on the U.N.'s own organizational chart of its many agencies, councils, committees and departments. But when it comes to countries riven by political divisions or coups, the nine-member body is the gatekeeper to the world's stage at the U.N. General Assembly's annual meeting.

Credentialing is a mere formality for universally recognized governments. But leaders of factions within divided nations know that the committee's decision stands to withhold or bestow some much-desired legitimacy — especially when their claims aren't necessarily the strongest.

So how does the committee decide who speaks for member states?

The workings of the Credentials Committee received little scrutiny until recently — when the Taliban and Myanmar military junta sought entry — and remains “an astonishingly opaque body,” said Richard Gowan, U.N. director for the International Crisis Group.

The president of the General Assembly proposes the members at the start of each yearlong session. Russia, China and the U.S. have occupied committee seats since its 1947 inception. The six other seats rotate, and newly selected members are Andorra, Grenada, Nigeria, Solomon Islands, Suriname and Togo.

The committee meets a couple times a year behind closed doors, issuing recommendations in a report that sheds virtually no light on the tenor of their evaluation or discussions. Last year's was barely three pages. The General Assembly rarely discusses or debates the report before approving.

“I think everyone finds the Credentials Committee a bit of a mystery. It is one of the least transparent U.N. bodies,” Gowan said by phone. “To some extent, everyone sort of lives with this, because the fact that it isn't transparent allows it to fudge certain decisions and kick hard decisions down the road.”

What if there is a dispute over representation?

Rival authorities may submit documents to try to credential their own would-be U.N. representatives. The committee's criteria for recommending the U.N. grant or deny entry remain a matter of some conjecture.

Chief among them appears to be effective control of territory, though that may not be enough, according to an article in the American Society of International Law penned by Catherine Amirfar, a former president of the association, and two associates from her law firm Debevoise & Plimpton.

“It is difficult to distill rules or principles on representation determinations from the Credentials Committee's recommendations,” they wrote. “The Committee appears to apply a presumption of continuity from the prior session, while accounting for factors such as democratic legitimacy and commitment to human rights. Whatever factors the Committee might consider relevant, the nature of the criteria considered surely leave room for political considerations.”

Although no country has diplomatically recognized the Taliban, it holds power throughout Afghanistan. Myanmar's junta likewise controls the country. Yet both countries have gone unrepresented at the General Assembly in 2021 and 2022.

In December, having once again received competing submissions, the Credentials Committee issued its report. It put off making a decision on the two countries, leaving the Taliban and the junta still boxed out.

It also declined to issue a recommendation on dueling requests from Libya. That left credentials in the hands of the internationally recognized administration seated in the capital Tripoli rather than the rival government in the east, where devastating floods killed thousands of people earlier this month.

There are several other countries where power is contested domestically, but not at the U.N.

Addressing the General Assembly on Thursday was Sudan's Gen. Abdel-Fattah Burhan, who seized power in a 2021 coup, sidelined a broad-based pro-democracy movement and for the last five months has been battling an equally autocratic rival general for control of Sudan. Despite controlling much of the country's

territory — even in the capital, Khartoum — the paramilitary Rapid Support Forces did not submit a request for U.N. credentials.

Are there any unresolved disputes this year?

Following a coup in July, two competing credentials were submitted for Niger — but as of Thursday afternoon, the Credentials Committee had not scheduled a meeting, Stéphane Dujarric, spokesperson for the Secretary-General, said in an emailed statement.

Niger appeared on a preliminary General Assembly schedule earlier this month, but no speaker was slated to speak as of Thursday.

Before the coup, Bakary Yaou Sangaré had been Niger's representative at the U.N. Afterward, the ruling junta made him their minister of foreign affairs and circulated his photos to journalists in the General Assembly hall on Monday, along with a statement proclaiming that he would "reaffirm the nation's sovereignty."

However, the U.N. received a letter from the deposed government's foreign minister "informing of the end of functions of Mr. Bakary as Permanent Representative of Niger to the United Nations," and Dujarric said on Thursday that Sangaré was no longer allowed onto the premises.

"This team, led by the army, enjoys the unconditional support of the people and we're going to demand that our government react," Insa Garba Saidou, a local activist who assists Niger's new military rulers with their communications, told The Associated Press.

What impact does UN representation have back home?

The U.N. General Assembly is a once-a-year opportunity to address fellow leaders and international media, weigh in on key issues and unveil major initiatives. Speaking confers prestige and a certain degree of legitimacy back home.

Juan Guaidó, who declared himself Venezuela's leader in 2019 following President Nicolas Maduro's widely considered sham reelection the previous year, was initially recognized by dozens of countries, including the United States. He never submitted documents to speak at the General Assembly, although representatives of his parallel government held meetings on its sidelines.

A U.S. attempt to advocate for the transfer of credentials from Maduro's government to Guaidó recognition went nowhere, and Guaidó's effort to topple Maduro eventually fizzled.

"That U.S. effort failed, and I think that was one step back for Guaidó in trying to position himself as legitimate president of Venezuela," Gowan said.

The committee's recommendations can have other knock-on effects: The article by Amirfar and her co-authors noted that the Credentials Committee's reluctance to make a decision on Myanmar created confusion over who — a representative of the junta or the prior government — would represent the country at the International Court of Justice.

"The role of the Credentials Committee and the impact of its recommendations has grown substantially since U.N. member states first adopted the rules that govern its procedure," it read. "Far from its original ministerial function ... the Credentials Committee has emerged as a key player in critical questions of global governance."

## **Nevada Republicans brace for confusion as party eyes election rules that may favor Trump**

By MICHELLE L. PRICE and GABE STERN Associated Press

RENO, Nev. (AP) — Former President Donald Trump's push to bend state Republican parties to his will — and gain an advantage in his effort to return to the White House — is coming to a head in Nevada.

The state GOP, which is led by Trump allies, is insisting on moving forward with a presidential caucus on Feb. 8 despite a new state law that set a primary election two days earlier. Caucuses, which typically reward grassroots support and organizing, are expected to benefit Trump given his solid grip on the GOP's most loyal voters.

But the party is poised to go further on Saturday when it's expected to approve plans that some Nevada

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Republicans and Trump rivals argue would confuse and anger voters and further tilt the caucus for the former president. The proposed rules, copies of which were obtained by The Associated Press, include provisions to bar any candidate from the caucus if they're on the primary ballot. They would also restrict super PACs, like the one Florida Gov. Ron DeSantis is relying on, from trying to bolster support for candidates in a caucus.

The result, some Republicans and Trump rivals argue, will be chaos at a crucial point in the presidential nomination process. Voters could be confused about which election to participate in and risk being disenfranchised if they vote in the primary. The Nevada GOP says it will only recognize — and award delegates to presidential candidates — based on the results of the caucus.

"Trump hates rigged elections, except when he's doing the rigging, like he's doing in Nevada," said Ken Cuccinelli, who was the deputy secretary of Homeland Security during the Trump administration and is now the founder of the Never Back Down super PAC, which is backing DeSantis' campaign.

Other campaigns have privately voiced similar concerns. And the Nevada Republican Club, which says it represents about 400 members in the state, sent a letter to local GOP officials this month urging them to speak out about the potential problems with the state having both a primary and a caucus and to defeat the proposed rule changes.

Having both will "frustrate, anger and confuse Nevada's Republican voters," and create bad publicity for the Nevada GOP, the club leaders wrote in the letter. They also questioned whether there are enough volunteers to staff a caucus across 17 counties and if the party should spend its money on other goals, like voter registration and getting out the vote in the general election.

"This process will hurt the Republican Party and our candidates in 2024," the leaders added. "The Nevada Republican Party will give average voters the impression they don't care about them or their votes."

Nevada GOP Chairman Michael McDonald didn't return multiple phone calls and text messages. He previously told the AP that the party pushed the caucus, which they have before, because the Democrat-controlled state Legislature would not pass a law requiring proof of identification at the ballot box, instead of just when registering to vote, among other measures.

The Trump campaign didn't respond to a message seeking comment.

Jim DeGraffenreid, a Republican National Committeeman for the Nevada GOP, declined to discuss the proposals that the party was considering, referring to them as "housekeeping." But he called the idea that Nevada's process is skewed for Trump "one of the most ridiculous things that I think I've ever heard."

"It appears that Donald Trump is the last person that needs a thumb on the scale," DeGraffenreid said, citing the former president's polling and fundraising strength. "It is not in our interest to rig anything for anyone, especially for someone who apparently doesn't need to have anything rigged for him."

Still, the dynamic is a reminder of how Trump is approaching the 2024 campaign far differently than his first bid in 2016. During his initial run as a political neophyte, Trump and his team had little understanding of state parties and the intricate — yet significant — role they play in shaping rules that govern how delegates are awarded to the eventual Republican nominee.

That's not the case this time.

In Michigan, where the state GOP has become increasingly loyal to Trump, the party's leadership this year voted to change the state's longtime process of allocating all its presidential delegates based on an open primary election. Under a new plan widely expected to benefit Trump, 16 of the state's 55 delegates will be awarded based on the results of a Feb. 27 primary. The other 39 will be distributed four days later in closed-door caucus meetings of party activists.

In Idaho, one of the country's most Republican states, a new law passed by the state legislature earlier this year eliminated the presidential primary process by moving the state elections to May as lawmakers tried to consolidate the voting calendar. The party's state central committee decided to instead hold caucuses on March 2.

Trump's ties to the Nevada GOP are especially deep, with the organization led by longstanding allies, including McDonald and DeGraffenreid. Both served as fake presidential electors in 2020 as part of a scheme in Nevada and other battleground states to try to overturn Trump's election loss. The party's executive



director, Alida Benson, left that job this summer to run Trump's campaign in the state.

With Trump seeming to have such a heavy advantage in the caucus, some Republicans have speculated that other GOP presidential candidates might forgo trying to win the state's relatively small number of GOP delegates, instead opting to run in the primary.

A primary run by the state of Nevada would offer early and absentee voting and same-day registration, processes that typically broaden participation. A win in that election, while not helping candidates collect some delegates needed to secure the nomination, could help them gain attention and early momentum by proving their electability among a broader pool of voters.

So far, Vivek Ramaswamy is the only presidential candidate to officially file for the caucus, though Trump is expected to join him.

Former South Carolina Gov. Nikki Haley's campaign did not respond to questions about Nevada and representatives for South Carolina Sen. Tim Scott and former Vice President Mike Pence declined to say whether they'll try to run in one or both processes in Nevada, which is scheduled to vote third, after Iowa and New Hampshire.

"We're exploring all options in Nevada to best position Ron DeSantis to be the next president," DeSantis' Communications Director Andrew Romeo said in a statement.

Never Back Down, which was organizing support for DeSantis, pulled its door-knockers from Nevada and other states — a move that Cuccinelli said was prompted in Nevada because of the GOP's plans. The party's proposed rules would bar the super PAC's employees from attending any caucuses, conventions or local precinct meetings, bar them from obtaining lists of caucus attendees and bar them from handing out pamphlets outside of meetings, among other restrictions.

"If he's going to keep putting his thumb on the scale and then put his arm on the scale and then climb on the frickin' scale," Cuccinelli said of Trump, "You know, does it really make sense to pour resources into an uphill, unfair fight like that versus other states?"

David Gibbs, president of the Nevada Republican Club, said he's not concerned about criticism that the process could favor Trump. He worried, however, that the dueling election processes could disenfranchise voters — especially those who may wonder why all of the major candidates aren't on their ballot when it's time to vote.

"I like caucuses. I actually prefer caucus to a primary election," he said. "But doing both is not good. And that's what we face right now."

## Some providers are dropping gender-affirming care for kids even in cases where it's legal

By JIM SALTER and GEOFF MULVIHILL Associated Press

ST. LOUIS (AP) — As Republican-led states have rushed to ban gender-affirming for minors, some families with transgender children found a bit of solace: At least they lived in states that would allow those already receiving puberty blockers or hormone therapy to continue.

But in some places, including Missouri and North Dakota, the care has abruptly been halted because medical providers are wary of harsh liability provisions in those same laws — one of multiple reasons that advocates say care has become harder to access even where it remains legal.

"It was a completely crushing blow," said Becky Hormuth, whose 16-year-old son was receiving treatment from the Washington University Gender Center at St. Louis Children's Hospital until it stopped the care for minors this month. Hormuth cried. Her son cried, too.

"There was some anger there, not towards the doctors, not toward Wash U. Our anger is towards the politicians," she said. "They don't see our children. They say the health care is harmful. They don't know how much it helps my child."

Since last year, conservative lawmakers and governors have prioritized restricting access to transgender care under the name of protecting children. At least 22 states have now enacted laws restricting or ban-

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ning gender-affirming medical care for transgender minors. Most of the bans face legal challenges and enforcement on some of them has been put on hold by courts.

All the laws ban gender-affirming surgery for minors, although it is rare, with fewer than 3,700 performed in the U.S. on patients ages 12 to 18 from 2016 through 2019, according to a study published last month. It's not clear how many of those patients were 18 when they received the surgeries.

There's more variation, though, in how states handle puberty-blockers and hormone treatments under the new bans. Georgia's law does not ban those for minors. The others do. But some states, including North Carolina and Utah, allow young people taking them already to continue. Others require the treatments to be phased out over time.

These treatments are accepted by major medical groups as evidence-based care that transgender people should be able to access.

James Thurow said the treatment at the Washington University center changed everything for his stepson, a 17-year-old junior at a suburban St. Louis high school who is earning As and Bs instead of his past Cs, has a girlfriend and a close group of friends.

"His depression, his anxiety had pretty much dissipated because he was receiving the gender-affirming care," Thurow said. "He's doing the best he's ever done at school. His teachers were blown away at how quickly his grades shot up."

For its part, the center said in a statement that it was "disheartened" to have to stop the care. Its decision followed a similar one from University of Missouri Health Care, where the treatment for minors stopped Aug. 28, the same day the law took effect.

Both blamed a section of the law that increased the liability for providers. Under it, patients can sue for injury from the treatment until they turn 36, or even longer if the harm continues past then. The law gives the health care provider the burden of proving that the harm was not the result of hormones or puberty-blocking drugs. And the minimum damages awarded in such cases would be \$500,000.

Neither state Sen. Mike Moon, the Republican who was the prime sponsor of the Missouri ban, state Sen. Justin Brown nor state Rep. Dale Wright, whose committees advanced the measure, responded immediately to questions left Thursday by voicemail, email or phone message about the law's intent.

In North Dakota, the law allows treatment to continue for minors who were receiving care before the law took effect in April. But it does not allow a doctor to switch the patient to a different gender dysphoria-related medication. And it allows patients to sue over injuries from treatment until they turn 48.

Providers there have simply stopped gender-affirming care, said Brittany Stewart, a lawyer at Gender Justice, which is suing over the ban in the state. "To protect themselves from criminal liability, they've just decided to not even risk it because that vague law doesn't give them enough detail to understand exactly what they can and cannot do," Stewart said.

Jasmine Beach-Ferrara, the executive director of the Campaign for Southern Equality, said it's not just liability clauses that have caused providers to stop treatment.

Across the South, where most states have adopted bans on gender-affirming care for minors, she said she's heard of psychologists who wrongly believe the ban applies to them and pharmacists who stop filling orders for hormones for minors, even in places where the laws are on hold because of court orders.

"It's hard to overstate the level of kind of chaos and stress and confusion it's causing on the ground," she said, "particularly ... for people who live in more rural communities or places where even before a law went into effect, it still took quite a bit of effort to get this care."

Her organization is providing grants and navigation services to help children get treatment in states where it's legal and available. That system is similar to networks that are helping women in states where abortion is not banned get care.

But there's one key difference: gender-affirming care is ongoing.

For 12-year-old Tate Dolney in Fargo, North Dakota, continuing care means traveling to neighboring Minnesota for medical appointments. "It's not right and it's not fair," his mother, Devon Dolney, said at a news conference this month, "that our own state government is making us feel like we have to choose

between the health and well-being of our child and our home.”

Hormuth’s son is on the waiting list for a clinic in Chicago, at least a five-hour drive away, but is looking at other options, too. Hormuth, a teacher, has asked also her principal to write a recommendation in case the family decides to move to another state.

“Should we have to leave?” she asked. “No one should have to have a plan to move out of state just because their kid needs to get the health care they need.”

In the meantime, the family did what many have: saving leftover testosterone from vials. They have enough doses stockpiled to last a year.

## From an old-style Afghan camera, a new view of life under the Taliban emerges

By ELENA BECATOROS Associated Press

KABUL, Afghanistan (AP) — The odd device draws curious onlookers everywhere. From the outside, it resembles little more than a large black box on a tripod. Inside lies its magic: a hand-made wooden camera and darkroom in one.

As a small crowd gathers around the box camera, images of beauty and of hardship ripple to life from its dark interior: a family enjoying an outing in a swan boat on a lake; child laborers toiling in brick factories; women erased by all-covering veils; armed young men with fire in their eyes.

Sitting for a portrait in a war-scarred Afghan village, a Taliban fighter remarks: “Life is much more joyful now.” For a young woman in the Afghan capital, forced out of education because of her gender, the opposite is true: “My life is like a prisoner, like a bird in a cage.”

The instrument used to record these moments is a kamra-e-faoree, or instant camera. They were a common sight on Afghan city streets in the last century — a fast and easy way to make portraits, especially for identity documents. Simple, cheap and portable, they endured amid half a century of dramatic changes in this country — from a monarchy to a communist takeover, from foreign invasions to insurgencies — until 21st-century digital technology rendered them obsolete.

Using this nearly disappeared homegrown art form to document life in post-war Afghanistan, from Herat in the west and Kandahar in the south to Kabul in the east and Bamiyan in the center, produced hundreds of black-and-white prints that reveal a complex, sometimes contradictory narrative.

Made over the course of a month, the images underscore how in the two years since U.S. troops pulled out and the Taliban returned to power, life has changed dramatically for many Afghans — whereas for others, little has changed over the decades, regardless of who was in power.

A tool of a bygone era, the box camera imparts a vintage, timeless quality to the images, as if the country’s past is superimposed over its present, which in some respects, it is.

At first glance the faded black-and-white, sometimes slightly out-of-focus images convey an Afghanistan frozen in time. But that aesthetic is deceiving. These are reflections of the country very much as it is now.

### AN UNEASY RELATIONSHIP WITH THE CAMERA

During their first stint in power from 1996 to 2001, the Taliban banned photography of humans and animals as contrary to the teachings of Islam. Many box cameras were smashed, though some were quietly tolerated, Afghan photographers say. But it was the advent of the digital age that sounded the device’s death knell.

“These things are gone,” said Lutfullah Habibzadeh, 72, a former kamra-e-faoree photographer in Kabul. “Digital cameras are on the market, and (the old ones) are out of use.” Habibzadeh still has his old box camera, a relic of the last century passed down to him by his photographer father. It no longer works, but he has lovingly preserved its red leather coating, decorated with sample photos.

On Afghan city streets today, billboard advertisements have faces spray-painted out, and clothing store windows display mannequins with their heads wrapped in black plastic bags, to adhere to the renewed ban on the depictions of faces.

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But the advent of the internet age and of smartphones have made a ban on photography impossible to impose. The novel sight of an old box camera elicits excitement and curiosity – even among those who police the new rules. From foot soldiers to high-ranking officials, many Taliban were happy to pose for box camera portraits.

Outside a warehouse in Kabul, a group of men watch intently as the camera is set up. At first, they seem shy. But as the first portraits emerge, curiosity overtakes their reservations. Soon, they're smiling and joking as they wait to have their photos taken, pitching in to help when a black cloth backdrop slips off the wall. As each man steps forward for his portrait, set jaws replace tentative smiles. Adjusting their grip on their assault rifles, they look straight into the camera's tiny lens and hold their poses.

Most of these men joined the Taliban as teenagers or in their early 20s and have known nothing but war. They were drawn to the fundamentalist movement because of their fervent Muslim faith – and their determination to expel U.S. and NATO troops who invaded their country and propped up two decades of Afghan governments that failed to crack down on rampant corruption and crime.

Bahadur Rahaani, a 52-year-old Taliban member with piercing light blue eyes beneath his black turban, says he's happy to see the Taliban back in power. With them in government, "Afghanistan will be rebuilt," he says. "Without them, it is not possible."

## PEACE, AT A PRICE

Two years after Taliban militias swept across the country to seize power again, there are strong echoes of life as it was before U.S.-led NATO forces toppled them from government in 2001.

Once more, the country is ruled by a fundamentalist movement that has restored many of the strict rules it imposed in the 1990s. The first Taliban regime was notorious for destroying art and cultural patrimony it deemed un-Islamic, such as the giant ancient buddhas carved into cliffs in Bamiyan. They imposed brutal punishments, chopping off hands of thieves, hanging supposed blasphemers in public squares and stoning women accused of adultery.

Once again, executions and lashings are back. Music, movies, dancing and performances are banned, and women are again excluded from nearly all public life, including education and all but a few professions.

The return to fundamentalist policies has chased away Western donors, aid workers and trade partners. Poverty has spiraled to crisis levels, fueled by the ban on women working, deep cuts in foreign aid and international sanctions. But there is nearly universal relief that the relentless bloodshed of the past four decades of invasions, multiple insurgencies and civil war has largely ceased.

There are still sporadic bombings, most attributed to enemies of the Taliban, the extremist group Islamic State-Khorasan Province, or IS-K. But Afghans interviewed say their country is more peaceful than they've known for decades.

The United Nations recorded 1,095 civilians killed in deliberate attacks between Aug. 15, 2021, when the Taliban reclaimed power, through May 30, 2023. That's a fraction of the annual civilian death toll over two decades of war between U.S.-led NATO forces and insurgents.

Even those who dislike the current regime say banditry, kidnapping and corruption, which were rampant under the previous governments, have been largely reined in.

But less crime and violence does not necessarily translate to prosperity and happiness.

## WOMEN, ERASED

In a three-story building tucked in a Kabul alleyway, a group of women work silently at a loom. Zamarod's hands move swiftly, nimble fingers flitting between strands of yarn as she knots colored wool around them, making a carpet. Her movements are rapid, almost brusque, but her voice is soft and sad. "My life is like a prisoner," she says. "Like a bird in a cage."

The 20-year-old had been studying computer science, but the Taliban banned women from universities before she could graduate. Now she and her 23-year-old sister work in a carpet factory, falling back on a skill their mother taught them as children. They are among very few women who can earn money outside the home and, like others, asked that only their first names be used for fear of retribution for speaking out.

Women have experienced the starkest changes since the Taliban's return. They must adhere to a strict dress code, are banned from most jobs and denied simple pleasures such as visiting a park or going to

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a restaurant. Girls can no longer attend school beyond sixth grade, and women must be escorted by a male relative to travel.

For all intents and purposes, women have been being erased from public life.

Even in this environment, Zamarod hasn't given up on her dream of graduating. "We have to have hope. We hope that one day we will be free, that freedom is possible," she says. "That's why we live and breathe."

In another room, 50-year-old Hakima is introducing her teenage daughter Freshta to weaving. It is their only way of eking out a living, though she still dreams her 16-year-old daughter will someday become a doctor. "Afghanistan has gone backwards," she says, donning an all-encompassing burka to pose for a portrait. "People go door to door for a piece of bread and our children are dying."

While the clock has turned back for women who've lost financial independence and a voice in public life and government, in conservative, tribal parts of the country, expectations for women have always been different and have changed little over the years — even during U.S. and NATO military presence.

Even so, education is a priority for many Afghans. In dozens of interviews across the country, nearly everyone — including some members of the Taliban — said they wanted girls and women to be educated. Most said they believed the education ban was temporary, and that older girls would eventually be allowed back into schools. They say keeping girls and women confined at home doesn't help the country, or its economy.

"We need doctors, teachers," says Haji Muhibullah Aloko, a 34-year-old teacher in the village of Tabin, west of Kandahar. Women must be educated "so that Afghanistan improves in every sector."

The international community has withheld recognition of the Taliban and pressed its leadership to roll back their restrictions on women — to no avail.

"That is up to Afghans and not foreigners, they shouldn't get involved," Taliban government spokesman Zabiullah Mujahid says during an interview in Kandahar, the birthplace of the movement in southern Afghanistan and a stronghold of conservative values.

"We are waiting for the right moment regarding the schools. And while the schools are closed now, they won't be forever," he says. He won't give a timeline but insists "the world shouldn't use this as an excuse" not to recognize the Taliban government.

## VICTORIOUS INSURGENTS

The village of Tabin lies deep in the Arghandab River valley, a fertile swath of fruit orchards and irrigation canals cutting through Kandahar Province's dusty desert.

But around it, the remnants of war are everywhere. The derelict remains of American combat outposts have faded warnings of mines and grenades spraypainted on their wind-blown blast walls. Tangles of abandoned razor wire litter the ground. Bombed-out houses lie in ruins. And there's the ubiquitous presence of armed young men adjusting from a life of fighting to one of living in peace.

The new jobs — policing streets, guarding buildings, collecting garbage — are the mundane, necessary tasks of governing. It's less dramatic than waging war, but there is palpable relief to be free of the violence.

Without fear of airstrikes or bullets, children shriek in delight as they splash about in an irrigation canal, leaping into the murky water from a bridge.

"Life is much more joyful now. Before there used to be lots of brutality and aggression," 28-year-old Abdul Halim Hilal says, sheltering from the blazing sun under a mulberry tree before posing for a portrait. "Innocent people would die. Villages were bombed. We couldn't bear it."

He joined the Taliban as a teenager, believing it was his moral duty to fight foreign troops. He lost as many as 20 friends to the war, and more were wounded. He's stung by the memory of his dead brothers-in-arms when he sees their fatherless children, but he's comforted by an unshakeable belief that their sacrifice was worth it.

"The ones that were killed were fighting to sacrifice themselves for the country," he says. "It's because of the blood they gave that we're now here, giving interviews freely, and the Muslims here are living in peace."

A villager walks by, glancing at the gaggle of curious children and adults gathered around the box camera. "It's so strange," he mutters. "We used to fight against these foreigners, and now they're here taking

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pictures.”

Mujeeburahman Faqer, a 26-year-old Taliban fighter, now mans an uneventful security checkpoint in Kabul. Like many others, he’s struggling to adapt to a peacetime mentality, because all he’s ever known was war. “I had prepared my head for sacrifice,” he says, “and I am still ready.”

## A FOUNDERING ECONOMY — AND A STRUGGLE TO SURVIVE

Security has improved since the end of the insurgency against U.S. forces. But with peace came an economy in freefall.

When the Taliban seized power again in 2021, international donors withdrew funding, froze Afghan assets abroad, isolated its financial sector and imposed sanctions.

That squeeze, combined with the near-total ban on women working, has crippled the economy. Per capita income shrank by an estimated 30 percent last year compared to 2020, according to the United Nations Development Program.

Nearly half of Afghanistan’s 40 million people now face acute food insecurity, the U.N.’s World Food Program says. Malnutrition is above emergency thresholds in 25 of 34 provinces.

Struggling to survive is something Kasnia already knows at age 4. In a brick factory outside Kabul, she scoops out a chunk of mud with her tiny hands, kneading it until it is pliable enough for a brick mold. After countless repetitions, her movements are automatic. She works six days a week from sunrise until sunset, with brief breaks for breakfast and lunch, toiling next to her siblings and her father — one family among many in a sprawling factory where children become laborers at age 3.

“Everyone wishes that their children study and become teachers, doctors, engineers, and benefit the future of the country,” says her father, Wahidullah, 35, who goes by one name, as do his children.

Even with the entire family working, there’s often not enough money for food and they live hand to mouth on credit from shopkeepers. Of his three sons and three daughters, all except the youngest one are brickmakers.

“When I was young, my dream was to have a comfortable life, to have a nice office, to have a nice car, to go to parks, to travel around my country and abroad, to go to Europe,” he recalls. Instead, “I make bricks.” There is no bitterness in his voice, just acceptance of an inevitable fate.

Many Afghans have resorted to selling their belongings — everything from furniture to clothing and shoes — to survive.

When the Taliban banned movies, Nabi Attai had nothing to fall back on. In his 70s, the actor appeared in a dozen television series and 76 films, including the Golden Globe-winning 2003 movie “Osama.” Now he is destitute.

His home, tucked in a warren of steep alleys, is now nearly devoid of furniture, which he sold in the bazaar to feed his extended family. Sold, too, is his beloved TV.

After 42 years of acting, Attai has no work. Neither do his two sons, who were also in the movie and music business. Attai is glad the streets are now safe, but he has 13 family members to feed and no way to feed them.

He asked local authorities for any job, even collecting garbage. There was nothing. So he started selling his belongings. “I have no hope right now,” he says. Even begging is now punished by imprisonment under the Taliban.

Over the past year, he has become frail. His cheeks are sunken, his frame thinner. There’s a sadness in his eyes that rarely leaves, even when he recounts his glory days.

“We made good movies before,” he says. “May God have mercy that music and cinema will be allowed again, and the people will rebuild the country hand in hand, and the government will come closer to the people and embrace each other as friends and brothers.”

## PINPRICKS OF GLITZ

The shimmering lights of wedding halls cut through the gloom as night encroaches on Kabul, pinpricks of glitz in the darkness.

Despite the economic slump, wedding halls are doing a brisk trade, buoyed in part by wealthier Afghan emigres returning home for traditional marriage ceremonies now that the security situation has improved.

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Weddings are a big part of Afghan culture, and families sometimes bankrupt themselves to ensure a lavish party for hundreds or even thousands of guests.

Construction of the Imperial Continental wedding hall began four years ago but was disrupted by the COVID pandemic and the Taliban takeover. The opulent venue finally opened its doors last year.

Manager Mohammad Wesal Quaoni, 30, cuts a dapper figure in a sharp suit as he sweeps through the glamorous, cavernous halls, juggling four weddings in one night. The former Kabul University lecturer in economics and politics is trying to ensure the business thrives amid the country's economic woes. It's not easy.

"Business is weak," he says, and onerous government rules and regulations don't help. The Taliban are raising taxes, but he says there isn't enough commerce to support a healthy tax base.

The ban on music and dancing doesn't help. Gone are the live musicians and even the DJs who would bring in extra revenue, Quaoni says. Weddings are segregated by gender but, for once, there's sometimes a bit more fun for the women.

Occasionally women and girls enjoy taped music in the ladies' section. "If they want, they do it," restrictions or not, he said. "Women will be women."

Five hundred miles west of the capital, on the outskirts of the city of Herat, businessman Abdul Khaleq Khodadadi, 39, has an entirely different set of challenges.

Rayan Saffron Company, where he is vice president, exports the prized spice to customers, mainly in Europe and the U.S. But the Taliban takeover and ensuing sanctions left many foreign clients reluctant to do business with an Afghan company – even though it's one of the few still allowed to employ women, whose hands are deemed more suitable than men's to extracting and handling the delicate crocus flowers.

The isolation of the banking sector has also left many Afghan companies with no way to trade except through a third country, usually Pakistan, which significantly increases costs. Then there's drought that has decimated crops, including saffron.

His company had aimed to increase their production this year. Instead, their production fell to half of what it was three years ago, he says.

Khodadadi says he is determined to persevere. For him, successful businesses are the best way to heal Afghanistan's wounds.

In the chaotic early days of the Taliban takeover, Khodadadi felt intense pressure to join the tens of thousands of people who fled, he says. He had a visa and family and friends urged him to leave, but he refused to go.

"It was very, very hard," he recalls. "But ... if I leave, if all the talented people, educated people leave, who will make this country? When will this country solve the problems?"

## Lahaina residents brace for what they'll find as they return to devastated properties in burn zone

By JENNIFER SINCO KELLEHER Associated Press

HONOLULU (AP) — Soon after one of Maui's Japanese Buddhist temples, the Lahaina Hongwanji Mission, burned in the deadliest U.S. wildfire in more than a century, its resident minister was desperate to go back and see what remained.

Six weeks later, he's more hesitant.

"Now I feel like I have to have mental preparation to go there," the Rev. Ai Hironaka said. "I'm kind of afraid."

Hironaka and other Lahaina residents are grappling with a range of emotions as Maui authorities plan next week to begin allowing some on supervised visits back into the areas devastated by the Aug. 8 fire, which killed at least 97 people and demolished thousands of buildings.

Lana Vierra is bracing to see the ruins of the home where she raised five children, a house that started with three bedrooms in 1991 and was expanded to six to accommodate her extended family as the cost of living in Hawaii soared.

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She's been telling her family to be ready when it's their turn, so that they can all visit together.

"We're preparing our minds for that," she said. "I don't know know if our hearts are prepared for that."

Authorities have divided the burned area into 17 zones and dozens of sub-zones. Residents or property owners of the first to be cleared for reentry — known as Zone 1C, along Kaniau Road in the north part of Lahaina — will be allowed to return Monday and Tuesday on supervised visits.

Government agencies including the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and Maui County's highways division are involved in clearing the zones for reentry by, among other things, removing any hazardous materials, checking buildings for structural safety and ensuring safe road access.

Those returning will be provided water, shade, washing stations, portable toilets, medical and mental health care, and transportation assistance if needed, said Darryl Oliveira, Maui Emergency Management Agency interim administrator.

Authorities are also offering personal protective equipment, including respirator masks and coveralls. Officials have warned that ash could contain asbestos, lead, arsenic or other toxins. There are other hazards, too, Oliveira said, such as burned out cars along roads and chunks of metal or concrete in the ruins.

"We really want to help guide them, provide them the support, but also provide them the privacy, that space and quiet, so they can get the closure they're looking for," Oliveira said in a video message Thursday.

Some people might want to sift through the ashes for any belongings or mementos that survived, but officials are urging them not to, for fear of stirring up toxic dust that could endanger them or their neighbors downwind. Other residents said they didn't immediately have plans to return to the properties because jobs or the hassle of obtaining a pass to reenter the burn zone would keep them away.

Melody Lukela-Singh plans to take a hazardous materials course before visiting the Front Street property where the house she lived in with about a dozen relatives once stood.

"I'm hoping to learn what we're going to encounter as far as exposure to things we know nothing about," she said. "The winds pick up and it's going to be all in the air. It's going to be a while before all of that is gone."

Hironaka reflected on how his feelings toward reentry have changed as the weeks have passed — and as the magnitude of losing the temple, along with his home on the temple grounds, has set in.

"After a week, I feel like I still have energy, like a car with full tank of gas," Hironaka said. "After I use all the gasoline, I don't know where to fill it up, what to fill it up. No gas. I feel like I'm pushing the empty-gas car only by myself. Pushing from the back."

He, his wife, their four children and their French bulldog piled into his Honda Civic to escape the flames. As they drove off, he said, he imagined the temple as protecting their home.

In a phone interview, he said he initially intended not to cry until he could return to thank the temple and apologize to the Buddha statue that had been at its main altar. But he became emotional and sobbed as he spoke, saying, "The temple building, I was supposed to protect as resident minister."

He has found solace, he said, in Buddhism's teachings of wisdom and compassion, that Buddha has no judgment and allows him to feel whatever he feels in the moment.

Hironaka said he often sees a photo taken by The Maui News and distributed worldwide by The Associated Press that shows the temple burning alongside Waiola Church next door. He considered the temple, built in 1933, to be like a family member, he said.

"That's the end-of-life picture to me," he said.

Lahaina's two other Japanese Buddhist temples also burned down.

Jarom Ayoso is eager to get back to the property where he and his wife rented a house for nearly 15 years. His son was able to get in the day after the fire and took video of the destruction.

"I want closure for my end," he said. "The only way I going get that is if I go and see it."

Ayoso wants to see what's left of the vehicles he lovingly rebuilt, including his 1986 GMC Sierra pickup truck. There were also motors he built on the property, including one that cost more than \$13,000. He was just about to install it, he said, and "poof — gone."



## Indigenous people in Brazil shed tears of joy as the Supreme Court enshrines their land rights

By DIANE JEANTET and ELÉONORE HUGHES Associated Press

RIO DE JANEIRO (AP) — Indigenous people celebrated Thursday after Brazil's Supreme Court ruled to enshrine their land rights, removing the imminent threat those protections could be rolled back.

The justices had been evaluating a lawsuit brought by Santa Catarina state, backed by farmers, seeking to block an Indigenous group from expanding the size of its territorial claim. Nearly all of the high court's justices voted to support the Indigenous group, which has far-reaching implications for territories nationwide.

Dozens of Indigenous people in traditional yellow feather headdresses and body paint danced, sang and jumped around in front of a multitude of flashing cameras in the capital of Brasilia after the decisive vote was cast. Some wiped away tears of joy.

"I'm shaking. It took a while, but we did it. It's a very beautiful and strong feeling. Our ancestors are present — no doubt about it," said Jéssica Nghe Mum Priprá, who is from the Xokleng-Laklano Indigenous group.

In the case before the court, Santa Catarina state argued a legal theory being pushed by opponents of further land allocations for Indigenous groups. It said that the date Brazil's Constitution was promulgated — Oct. 5, 1988 — should be the deadline for when Indigenous peoples to have already either physically occupied land or be legally fighting to reoccupy territory. They also claimed it would provide legal certainty for landholders.

Nine of the court's 11 justices rejected that argument.

"Areas occupied by Indigenous people and areas that are linked to the ancestry and tradition of Indigenous peoples have constitutional protection, even if they are not demarcated," said Justice Luiz Fux, who cast the vote that established the majority.

The two justices who voted to support Santa Catarina's position were appointed by the President Jair Bolsonaro, who was a vocal opponent of expanding Indigenous territories and supported their assimilation.

Indigenous rights groups argued the concept of the deadline was unfair, saying it does not account for expulsions and forced displacements of Indigenous populations, particularly during Brazil's two-decade military dictatorship.

The lawsuit put at risk the status of Brazil's hundreds of Indigenous territories, said rights group Articulation of Indigenous Peoples of Brazil, known by the Portuguese acronym Apib.

Large groups of Indigenous men and women from different states and ethnicities had gathered in and around Brasilia in recent months during the high court's deliberations.

Francisco Cali Tzay, the U.N. special investigator on the rights of Indigenous peoples, had urged Brazil's Supreme Court to protect Indigenous lands.

"Under the constitution, Indigenous peoples are entitled to the permanent possession of the lands they traditionally occupy," Tzay said in a 2021 statement.

He said a ruling in favor of business interests "could legitimize violence against Indigenous peoples and inflame conflicts in the Amazon rainforest and other areas."

Though the case involved only one Indigenous group, the Supreme Court gave it "general repercussion" status, meaning the ruling will serve as a precedent for all instances of justice involving Indigenous groups.

It thus applies to hundreds of administrative procedures and legislative initiatives that are in progress and is likely to torpedo a proposal in Congress to enact the same 1988 deadline.

However, that legislation also carries other threats to Indigenous rights, potentially opening the door to an easing of restrictions on mining, dam construction, agricultural and transportation projects in Indigenous lands.

"We've won the battle, but not the war," Dinamam Tuxá, executive coordinator of Apib, said in Brasilia. "We will continue to fight for Indigenous territories to be demarcated, so that the rights of indigenous peoples are safeguarded and protected."

Since taking office in January, President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva has given significantly more attention

to the demands of Indigenous peoples than his predecessor, Bolsonaro.

He created the country's first Ministry of Indigenous Peoples, headed by Indigenous woman Sonia Guajajara, and demarcated eight new Indigenous territories.

Indigenous territories cover nearly 14% of Brazil's vast expanse, according to data from the Instituto Socioambiental. The process to officially establish an Indigenous territory can take decades.

## Surveillance of Indian diplomats in Canada led to allegations around Sikh killing, official says

By ROB GILLIES Associated Press

TORONTO (AP) — The allegation of India's involvement in the killing of a Sikh Canadian is based on surveillance of Indian diplomats in Canada, including intelligence provided by a major ally, a Canadian official told The Associated Press on Thursday.

The official said the communications involved Indian officials and Indian diplomats in Canada and that some of the intelligence was provided by a member of the "Five Eyes" intelligence-sharing alliance, which includes the U.S., Britain, Australia and New Zealand, in addition to Canada.

The official did not say which ally provided intelligence or give details of what was contained in the communications or how they were obtained. The official spoke on condition of anonymity because they were not authorized to discuss the matter publicly.

The Canadian Broadcasting Corporation first reported the intelligence.

The revelation came as India stopped issuing visas to Canadian citizens and told Canada to reduce its diplomatic staff as the rift widened over allegations by Prime Minister Justin Trudeau of suspected Indian involvement in the killing of Hardeep Singh Nijjar, a 45-year-old Sikh separatist.

Ties between the two countries have plunged to their lowest point in years after Trudeau told Parliament Monday there were "credible allegations" of Indian involvement in the assassination on Canadian soil.

Nijjar, a plumber who was born in India and became a Canadian citizen in 2007, had been wanted by India for years before he was gunned down in June outside the temple he led in Surrey, a suburb of Vancouver.

Speaking Thursday on the sidelines of the U.N. General Assembly, Trudeau acknowledged the complicated diplomatic situation.

"The decision to share these allegations on the floor of the House of Commons was not done lightly," he said. "There is no question that India is a country of growing importance and a country that we need to continue to work with."

"We are not looking to provoke or cause problems but we are unequivocal around the importance of the rule of law and unequivocal about the importance of protecting Canadians."

The bombshell allegation set off an international tit-for-tat, with each country expelling a diplomat. India called the allegations "absurd."

Canada has yet to provide public evidence to back Trudeau's allegations, and Canada's U.N. ambassador, Bob Rae, indicated that might not come soon.

"This is very early days," Rae told reporters Thursday, saying that while facts will emerge, they must "come out in the course of the pursuit of justice."

"That's what we call the rule of law in Canada," he said.

Meanwhile, the company that processes Indian visas in Canada announced services had been suspended. Canadians are among the top travelers to India, with 277,000 Canadian tourists visiting the country in 2022, according to India's Bureau of Immigration.

Indian External Affairs Ministry spokesperson Arindam Bagchi blamed the visa suspension, which includes visas issued in third countries, on safety issues.

"Security threats being faced by our High Commission and consulates in Canada have disrupted their normal functioning," Bagchi told reporters. He gave no details on the alleged threats.

The announcement quickly rippled across Canada, especially among people with ties to India.

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Maitreyi Bhatt, a 27-year-old Indian citizen whose partner is Canadian and needs a visa, was distraught because her wedding is scheduled for late October in India, when he was to meet her family for the first time.

"I've been crying all day," she said. "It's so difficult. I was just so excited for him to meet my family."

She said the venue is booked and the couple has non-refundable flights. She said her partner went to the Indian Consulate in Toronto but was escorted out by security.

"People like me are just caught up in this and it's just not fair," she said.

Sukhwinder Dhillon, a 56-year-old grocery store owner in Montreal, said he had a trip planned to India to see family and sort out his deceased father's estate. Dhillon, who came to Canada in 1998, makes the trip every two or three years and has lost two family members since he was last home.

"My father passed, and my brother passed," Dhillon said. "I want to go now. ... Now I don't know when we'll go."

Bagchi, the Indian foreign ministry spokesman, also called on Canada to cut its diplomatic corps in India, saying they outnumbered Indian diplomats in Canada.

The Canadian High Commission in New Delhi said Thursday that its consulates in India were open and continue to serve clients. It said some of its diplomats had received threats on social media, adding that Canada expects India to provide security for its diplomats and consular officers working there.

On Wednesday, India warned its citizens to be careful when traveling to Canada because of "growing anti-India activities and politically condoned hate-crimes."

India's security and intelligence branches have long been active in South Asia and are suspected in a number of killings in Pakistan. But arranging the killing of a Canadian citizen in Canada, home to nearly 2 million people of Indian descent, would be unprecedented.

India has criticized Canada for years over giving free rein to Sikh separatists, including Nijjar. New Delhi had accused him of links to terrorism, which he denied.

Nijjar was a local leader in what remains of a once-strong movement to create an independent Sikh homeland, known as Khalistan. A bloody Sikh insurgency shook north India in the 1970s and 1980s until it was crushed in a government crackdown in which thousands of people were killed, including prominent Sikh leaders.

While the active insurgency ended decades ago, the Indian government has warned that Sikh separatists are trying to stage a comeback and pressed countries like Canada, where Sikhs comprise over 2% of the population, to do more to stop them.

At the time of his killing, Nijjar was working to organize an unofficial Sikh diaspora referendum on independence from India.

New Delhi's anxieties about Sikh separatist groups in Canada have long been a strain on the relationship.

In March, Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi's government summoned the Canadian high commissioner in New Delhi, its top diplomat in the country, to complain about Sikh independence protests in Canada.

Signs of a broader diplomatic rift emerged at the summit of the Group of 20 leading world economies hosted by India earlier this month. Trudeau had frosty encounters with Modi, and a few days later Canada canceled a trade mission to India planned for the fall. A trade deal between the two is now on pause.

## Zelenskyy delivers upbeat message to US lawmakers on war progress as some Republican support softens

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

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Volodymyr Zelenskyy worked to shore up U.S. support for Ukraine on a whirlwind visit to Washington on Thursday, delivering an upbeat message on the war's progress while facing new questions about the flow of American dollars that for 19 months have helped keep his troops in the fight against Russian forces.

The Ukrainian leader received a far quieter reception than the hero's welcome he was given last year

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from Congress, but also won generally favorable comments on the next round of U.S. aid he says he needs to stave off defeat.

Zelenskyy, in long-sleeve olive drab, came to the Capitol with a firm message in private talks with Republican and Democratic leaders. The Ukrainians have a solid war plan, and "they are winning," lawmakers quoted him as assuring them, at a time that the world is watching Western support for Kyiv.

President Joe Biden gave Zelenskyy a red-carpet arrival on the White House South lawn and more ceremony than world leaders normally receive, and made clear his concern with Congress.

Intensifying opposition to continued Ukraine funding from a faction of congressional Republicans largely aligned with the party's presidential frontrunner Donald Trump is threatening what had been easier congressional approval for four previous rounds of funding for Ukraine, delivering \$113 billion. Any momentum toward opposing U.S. aid for Ukraine also potentially risks public backing for the war effort.

Asked about the funding issue after meeting with Zelenskyy, Biden answered, "I'm counting on the good judgment of the United States Congress. There's no alternative."

It was Zelenskyy's second visit to Washington since Russia invaded Ukraine in February 2022 and came as Biden's request to Congress for an additional \$24 billion for Ukraine's military and humanitarian needs is hanging in the balance. Resistance to the latest request could lead to delays or reductions.

The administration did announce another \$325 million Thursday in what's known as presidential draw-down assistance for Ukraine. Secretary of State Antony Blinken said the package would include additional air defense, artillery ammunition, cluster munitions and other arms.

House Speaker Kevin McCarthy, who faces opposition to the Ukrainian funding package from the Republicans aligned with Trump, notably chose not to join House Minority Leader Hakeem Jeffries, a Democrat, in greeting Zelenskyy when he arrived. And Republican McCarthy also confirmed that he declined Zelenskyy's request for a joint session of Congress, as happened during the Ukrainian president's dramatic visit to Washington last winter, saying there wasn't time for that on short notice.

But McCarthy praised the answers that Ukrainians delivered to lawmakers Thursday.

"It was direct, I thought it was honest, they were answering the questions," McCarthy said. "I heard a lot of positive things."

Lawmakers who attended the private meeting described questioning Zelenskyy on the way forward for Ukraine's counteroffensive, as the fight to roll back invading Russian forces moves closer to the two-year mark without major breakthroughs in Russia's heavily mined lines.

Zelenskyy "conceded that it's tough, very tough to overcome entrenched defenses," Independent Sen. Angus King said. "They believe they will make slow but steady progress, but it's not going to be quick."

Back home, Russia launched its heaviest strikes in a month in the hours before Zelenskyy's arrival at Congress, killing three, igniting fires and damaging energy infrastructure as Russian missiles and artillery pounded cities across Ukraine.

White House national security adviser Jake Sullivan underscored Thursday that Biden would seek to drive home with Zelenskyy's visit that the U.S. and the world "send the unmistakable message that in the 21st century, a dictator cannot be allowed to conquer or carve up his neighbor's territory."

"If we allow that here, it will happen elsewhere in ways that will undermine the fundamental security, not to mention the values that the American people hold so dear," Sullivan said.

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 Trump, Biden's chief rival in the 2024 race for the White House, is increasingly opposed to sending more money overseas.

Zelenskyy was scheduled to address the Canadian Parliament and meet with Prime Minister Justin Trudeau in Ottawa on Friday.

He faces challenges in Europe, as cracks emerge in what had been a largely united Western alliance behind Ukraine.

Late Wednesday, Poland's prime minister said his country is no longer sending arms to Ukraine, a comment that appeared aimed at pressuring Kyiv and put Poland's status as a major source of military equip-

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ment in doubt as a trade dispute between the neighboring states escalates.

Zelenskyy's visit comes with U.S. and world government leaders watching as Ukrainian forces struggle to take back territory that Russia gained over the past year. Their progress in the next month or so before the rains come and the ground turns to mud could be critical to rousing additional global support over the winter. Russian President Vladimir Putin, who hopes to outlast allied backing for Kyiv, will be ready to capitalize if he sees Ukraine is running low on air defense or other weapons.

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.

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

Zelenskyy received a warm welcome from both parties on his stop in the Senate. Minority Leader Mitch McConnell and Majority Leader Chuck Schumer flanked him as he walked in. A few lawmakers of both parties wore clothes with blue and yellow, the colors of the Ukrainian flag.

Schumer told reporters afterward one sentence summed up the meeting: "Mr. Zelenskyy said if we don't get the aid, we will lose the war."

Senate Republican leader McConnell, who is trying to keep his party in line behind support for Ukraine, said afterward he was proud to welcome Zelenskyy to the Capitol.

"Americans' support for Ukraine is not a charity," he said. "It's an investment in our own self-interest."

## North Korea's Kim sets forth steps to boost Russia ties as US and Seoul warn about weapons deals

By HYUNG-JIN KIM Associated Press

SEOUL, South Korea (AP) — North Korean leader Kim Jong Un ordered unspecified steps to further develop relations with Russia after his recent visit to the country as his foreign rivals warn that any cooperation on military weapons would be dangerous and bring consequences.

Experts speculated North Korea and Russia likely discussed banned arms transfer deals and other cooperation measures during Kim's six-day trip last week. They say the two countries are serious about sharply boosting their ties while they are engaged in separate confrontations with the West.

During a Politburo meeting on Wednesday, Kim arranged for work to be done on further developing bilateral ties at "a new high level at the practical stage" to consolidate "the success" of his Russia trip, the official Korean Central News Agency said Friday.

Kim underscored the need to expand bilateral cooperation in every field, making a substantial contribution to the promotion of the well-being of the people of the two countries, KCNA said.

While traveling in Russia's Far East, Kim met with President Vladimir Putin and visited key Russian military and technology sites. The two suggested they would cooperate on defense issues but gave no specifics, which left South Korea and its allies — including the United States — uneasy.

Observers say Kim could ship ammunitions to refill Putin's exhausted arms stores to back his war efforts in Ukraine in return for receiving sophisticated weapons technologies and economic aid.

The U.S., South Korea and their partners have warned that Russia and North Korea would pay a price if they proceed with such deals in breach of U.N. Security Council resolutions that ban any weapons trade with North Korea. Russia, a permanent member of the U.N. Security Council, voted for those U.N. resolutions.

Speaking before the U.N. General Assembly on Wednesday, South Korean President Yoon Suk Yeol said any action by a permanent U.N. Security Council member to circumvent international norms would be dangerous and "paradoxical." Yoon said that South Korea, together with its allies, "will not sit idly by" over a possible Pyongyang-Moscow weapons deal that he said would pose a threat to not only Ukraine but also South Korea.

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Many experts say North Korea would seek Russian help to complete the development of high-tech weapons systems such as spy satellites, nuclear-powered submarines and powerful long-range missiles. They say Kim wants to modernize his weapons arsenals to wrest greater concessions from the U.S. and South Korea.

## After a lull, asylum-seekers adapt to US immigration changes and again overwhelm border agents

By ELLIOT SPAGAT Associated Press

JACUMBA HOT SPRINGS, Calif. (AP) — A group of migrants from China surrendered to a Border Patrol agent in remote Southern California as gusts of wind drowned the hum of high-voltage power lines, joining others from Ecuador, Brazil, Colombia and elsewhere in a desert campsite with shelters made from tree branches.

Their arrival Wednesday was another sign that agents have become overwhelmed in recent days by asylum-seekers on parts of the U.S. border with Mexico. In tiny Eagle Pass, Texas, nearly 6,000 migrants crossed from Mexico in to the U.S. in two days, prompting authorities to close one of the town's two official border crossings so those agents could instead help with the influx. Border crossings have closed recently for similar reasons in San Diego and El Paso, Texas.

After a dip in illegal crossings that followed new asylum restrictions in May, President Joe Biden's administration is again on its heels. Democratic mayors and governors are seeking more relief for hosting asylum-seekers and Republicans are seizing on the issue ahead of 2024 elections.

The Homeland Security Department said Wednesday it would grant Temporary Protected Status to an estimated 472,000 Venezuelans who were in the U.S. on July 31, easing paths to work authorization. That's in addition to 242,700 Venezuelans who already had qualified for temporary status.

The administration is also sending 800 active-duty military troops to the border, adding to 2,500 National Guard members there. It's expanding border holding facilities by 3,250 people to nearly 23,000, and extending home surveillance nationwide for families awaiting initial asylum screenings.

The administration renewed pressure — and blame — on Congress, which has long failed to agree on comprehensive changes to the nation's immigration system. The Biden administration is now asking Congress for \$4 billion in emergency funding.

Homeland Security said in a statement that it was "using the limited tools it has available to secure the border and build a safe, orderly, and humane immigration system."

Theresa Cardinal Brown, the Bipartisan Policy Center's senior advisor for immigration and border policy, said it's normal to see a dip in illegal crossings after changes like those imposed in May, but that is usually short-lived once migrants see how things play out.

"People see what happened to the last group of people that tried and they're like, 'Oh, well maybe it's not as harsh as they say,'" Brown said.

An increase in families arriving at the border led to unacceptable conditions in two of the busiest Border Patrol sectors, a court-appointed monitor reported to a federal court last week. Dr. Paul H. Wise said children as young as 8 years old were separated from parents during processing in South Texas, a practice that has been mainly used for boys 13 to 17.

U.S. Customs and Border Protection said it was reviewing Wise's report, noting limited, temporary separations may occur during processing for safety reasons but they are nothing like the long-term separations under former President Donald Trump. Wise said even short-term separation can have "lasting, harmful effects."

In Eagle Pass, a town of 28,000 people, about 2,700 migrants crossed Tuesday and 3,000 Wednesday, according to Maverick County Sheriff Tom Schmerber. Mayor Rolando Salinas declared the city a disaster area on Tuesday.

U.S. authorities closed a bridge and international railway in Eagle Pass on Wednesday to redirect staff.

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Union Pacific Railroad Co. said Thursday that thousands of rail cars cross the border there daily.

CBP told business leaders they have no estimate of when rail traffic would resume in Eagle Pass or when U.S.-bound commercial truck traffic would reopen at a bridge in El Paso. Traffic slowed at other border crossings.

"All along the border, we're experiencing large numbers of migrants, so you will see slowdowns and disruptions" at border crossings, said Dennis McKenzie, CBP deputy director for cargo and conveyance security. "It's all hands on deck."

In San Diego, a pedestrian crossing has been closed since Sept. 14 to direct staff to an area where migrants from Cameroon to Colombia are waiting between a double-layer border wall in San Diego. Volunteers are handing the migrants food and bottled water while they wait to be processed.

Near Jacumba Hot Springs, a town of less than 1,000 people with a small hotel and general store amid boulder-strewn mountains an hour's drive east of San Diego, migrants camps began forming last week for the first time since May.

Smugglers drive migrants to a spot in Mexico where the border wall ends. One of three camps in the Jacumba Valley is about a half-hour walk on a gravel road used almost exclusively by border agents. On Wednesday, none had stayed longer than one night, occupying tents that were left behind by others.

The Border Patrol gives migrants colored wristbands marking their arrival date to determine who gets shuttled first to a processing location. Campfires and juniper shrub shield migrants from evening chills. Some climbed atop boulders hoping to get a cellphone signal.

Angel Sisa, 40, left Ecuador's coastal region with his wife and two children, ages 15 and 13, selling his general store to escape death threats from criminals demanding monthly payments. The Sisa family paid smugglers to take them by plane and bus until they reached a hotel in Tecate, the nearest town in Mexico from the roadside drop where they crossed. They hope to settle in Minneapolis with family members who left Ecuador about a year ago.

Carlos Andres Vasquez, 37, flew from his home country of Colombia to Mexico City as a tourist and paid a smuggler \$800 to be driven from Tijuana on a road filled with bumps and potholes before arriving near where they would cross into the U.S.

"They treated like cattle, like animals," Vasquez said. "They put 20, 18 of us in a van, women and children in front and we went in back."

He said he and other South Americans walked to the campsite Tuesday under a "very pleasant" Border Patrol agent's watch. Vasquez, whose father was killed and who left Colombia because of death threats, plans to settle with a friend in Holyoke, Massachusetts, and save money for his wife and children, ages 7 and 2, to join him.

## Government shutdown risk spikes as House Republicans leave town in disarray amid hard-right revolt

By LISA MASCARO and STEPHEN GROVES Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — With House Speaker Kevin McCarthy's latest funding plan in ruins and lawmakers leaving town for the weekend, there's no endgame in sight as hard-right Republicans push dangerously closer to a disruptive federal shutdown.

The White House will tell federal agencies on Friday to prepare for a shutdown, according to an official with the Office of Management and Budget who insisted on anonymity to discuss the upcoming instructions. That's standard seven days out from a federal disruption.

The Republican McCarthy has repeatedly tried to appease his hard-right flank by agreeing to the steep spending cuts they are demanding to keep government open. But cheered on by Donald Trump, the Republican front-runner for president in 2024, the conservatives have all but seized control in dramatic fashion.

In a crushing defeat Thursday, a handful of Republican hardliners blocked a typically popular defense bill from advancing — the second time this week it was set back, an unheard-of loss for a House speaker.

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Even a stopgap bill to keep government funding past the Sept. 30 deadline, called a continuing resolution or CR, is a non-starter for some on the right flank who have essentially seized control of the House.

"This is a whole new concept of individuals who just want to burn the whole place down," McCarthy said after Thursday's vote, acknowledging he was frustrated. "It doesn't work."

The open revolt was further evidence that McCarthy's strategy of repeatedly giving in to the conservatives is seemingly only emboldening them, allowing them to run roughshod over their own House majority. Their conservative bills have almost no chances in the Senate.

Trump urged the conservatives to hold the line against the higher funding levels McCarthy had agreed to with President Joe Biden earlier this year and to end the federal criminal indictments against him.

"This is also the last chance to defund these political prosecutions against me and other Patriots," Trump wrote on social media.

"They failed on the debt limit, but they must not fail now. Use the power of the purse and defend the Country!" the former president wrote.

The White House and Democrats, along with some Republicans, warn that a shutdown would be devastating for people who rely on their government for everyday services and would undermine America's standing in the world.

"We need the extreme MAGA Republicans to get their act together," said House Democratic leader Haakeem Jeffries of New York, referring to Trump's "Make America Great Again" slogan.

"End the civil war," Jeffries urged the Republicans. "Get your act together."

But one of Trump's top allies, Rep. Matt Gaetz, R-Fla., who is leading the hard-right flank, said the House Republicans now have almost no choices left but to spend the time it takes to pass each of the 12 spending bills needed to fund the government — typically a laborious process — even if it means going into a shutdown.

Or they can join with Democrats to pass a CR, which is sure to put McCarthy's job at risk.

What Gaetz said he, and several others, would not do is vote for a continuing resolution that fails to slash spending.

"I'm giving a eulogy for the CR right now," Gaetz told reporters after a late afternoon meeting at the Capitol.

"I represent Florida's first congressional district, where during the shutdown tens of thousands of people will go without a paycheck, and so I know the impact of a shutdown," Gaetz said. "So it may get worse before it gets better, and I have little to offer but blood, sweat, toil and tears, but that may be what it takes."

A government closure is increasingly likely as time runs out for Congress to act.

McCarthy's bid to move ahead with a traditionally popular defense funding bill as a first step toward keeping the government running was shattered, on a vote of 212-216. Five Republicans refused to vote with the increasingly endangered speaker. A sixth Republican voted no on procedural grounds so the bill could be reconsidered.

Moving forward with the defense bill was supposed to be a way for McCarthy to build goodwill among the GOP House majority as he tries to pass a temporary measure just to keep government running for another month. It, too, had catered to other hard-right priorities, such as slashing spending by 8% from many services and bolstering security at the U.S.-Mexico border.

Many on the right flank opposed the deal McCarthy struck with Biden this year over the spending levels and are trying to dismantle it now. They want to see progress on the individual appropriations bills that would fund the various federal departments at the lower levels these lawmakers are demanding.

The morning test vote shattered a McCarthy strategy that had emerged just the night before. Republicans had appeared on track, in a tight roll call, to advancing the measure Thursday. Then the Democrats who had not yet voted began rushing into the chamber.

New York Rep. Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez and fellow Democrats yelled out to hold open the vote. She was a "no." A few others came in behind her and tipped the tally toward defeat.

The Democrats oppose the military bill on many fronts, including Republican provisions that would gut



diversity programs at the Pentagon.

As passage appeared doomed, attention turned to the five Republican holdouts to switch their votes. GOP leaders spent more than an hour on the floor trying to recruit one of them, Rep. Dan Bishop, R-N.C., to vote "yes."

"Every time there's the slightest relief of the pressure, the movement goes away from completing the work," Bishop said.

When asked what it would take to gain his vote, Bishop said, "I think a schedule of appropriations bills over Kevin McCarthy signature would be meaningful to you to me."

Others were dug in, including some who had supported advancing the defense bill just two days ago when it first failed.

Rep. Marjorie Taylor Greene, R-Ga., a chief opponent of more aid for Ukraine in the war against Russia, said she voted against the defense bill this time because her party's leadership refused to separate out the war money. Her stand came as Ukraine's president, Volodymyr Zelenskyy, was at the Capitol during a high-profile visit to Washington.

McCarthy had pledged to keep lawmakers in session this weekend for as long as it took to finish their work. But they were sent home, told they could be called back on ample notice.

Many Republicans were starting to speak up more forcefully against their hard-right colleagues.

New York Rep. Mike Lawler, who represents a swing district, said he would not "be party to a shutdown." "There needs to be a realization that you're not going to get everything you want," he said. "Just throwing a temper tantrum and stomping your feet — frankly, not only is it wrong — it's just pathetic."

## Rupert Murdoch's surprise exit from Fox leaves son Lachlan in line of succession at media empire

By DAVID BAUDER AP Media Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — Magnate Rupert Murdoch's surprise announcement Thursday that he's stepping down as leader of his two companies leaves his son Lachlan firmly in line of succession at Fox and the rest of the media empire.

The 92-year-old Australian billionaire's creation of Fox News Channel has made him an enduring force in American politics. He inherited a newspaper in Adelaide, Australia, from his father in 1952 and eventually built a news and entertainment enterprise dominant in the United States and Britain.

Fox said Murdoch would become chairman emeritus of both the news network's parent company, Fox Corp., and the News Corp. media holdings, effective in November. Lachlan will become News Corp. chairman and continue as chief executive officer of Fox Corp.

Lachlan Murdoch said that "we are grateful that he will serve as chairman emeritus and know he will continue to provide valued counsel."

Fox News Channel has profoundly influenced television and national politics since its start in 1996, making Murdoch a hero to some and pariah to others. The 24-hour network converted the power and energy of political talk radio to television. Within six years, it outrated CNN and MSNBC, and still does.

But it's been a rough year for Fox, which was forced to pay \$787 million to settle a defamation lawsuit related to its coverage of false claims following the 2020 presidential election. Fox also fired its most popular personality, Tucker Carlson.

Stock in Fox Corp., while positive this year, began to decline early in 2022, due in part to lawsuits and investor anxiety.

Besides Fox News, Rupert Murdoch started the Fox broadcast network, the first to successfully challenge the Big Three of ABC, CBS and NBC, with shows like "The Simpsons." He owns The Wall Street Journal and the New York Post. He slimmed his corporate holdings with the 2019 sale of many entertainment assets to the Walt Disney Co.

Murdoch has also controlled the New York Post, which, like Fox, has promoted his conservative world view.

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Despite Murdoch's advanced age, Thursday's announcement took some by surprise.

"I do find it shocking because I figured that Rupert would be around until he couldn't take a breath," said writer Claire Atkinson, who's working on a biography of Murdoch.

In a letter Thursday to staff, Murdoch thundered about elites who have "open contempt for those who are not members of their rarified class." Murdoch's letter made it clear he doesn't consider himself one of them, despite his status as a media executive and his family's wealth, estimated by Forbes in 2020 at about \$19 billion.

He also indicated his retirement won't include much beach time.

"I can guarantee you that I will be involved every day in the contest of ideas," he wrote. "Our companies are communities, and I will be an active member of our community. I will be watching our broadcasts with a critical eye, reading our newspapers and websites and books with much interest."

Murdoch and his family, particularly children James, Lachlan, Elisabeth and Prudence, were said to be the model for the HBO drama "Succession."

"Rupert is certainly engineering a cleaner exit than Logan Roy's departure from WaystarRoyco," said former CNN president Jon Klein, who consulted on the series. "And he's leaving behind a lot less of a mess."

That may be the case — for now, said Murdoch biographer Michael Wolff, who next week is publishing a book, "The End of Fox News."

"He is 92, and that has taken a toll on him, of course, but the company, too," Wolff told The Associated Press. "He has remained up until today the singular decision-maker, and he can't communicate what he wants and people don't understand what he wants" like they did in the past.

Major changes are unlikely right away under Lachlan Murdoch, who's largely been running things as CEO for a couple of years.

When Murdoch dies, control of the Fox empire will revert to his four adult children, each of whom has an equal say in the business, Wolff said. "That's when the real new chapter begins," he said.

Since Lachlan most closely shares his father's politically conservative views, Wolff predicted that James Murdoch — known as the more liberal sibling - would eventually take control of Fox News, or that it would be sold.

"It will certainly not exist as the Fox News Channel that we have known and loved, or hated, for the past 25 years," Wolff said.

Atkinson said that she has talked with people at the company, and they're saying Murdoch is "fine and as engaged as ever."

Thursday's announcement, she said, "is really just Lachlan taking the mantle and saying, 'now it's time.' It's his company. His company only."

One of Murdoch's chief television competitors, Newsmax CEO Chris Ruddy, said that over many decades, no other individual has had as much impact on the media.

"His contributions to the news industry across several continents have been enormous, helping to ensure a balanced and truly free media," Ruddy said.

Among those who believe Fox has pushed disinformation and is a singular force in worsening the country's partisan divisions, the reaction to the announcement was, essentially, good riddance.

"They changed how people think of politics in this country, and I think when historians look back on how they changed it, it won't be a positive look back," commentator Mike Barnicle said on MSNBC.

While Murdoch never ran for political office, politicians in the United States and Britain anxiously sought his approval. He had a complicated relationship with Donald Trump. Wolff reported in 2018 that Murdoch had called Trump an "idiot," adding an expletive for emphasis, but Fox News is built with an audience that largely admires Trump.

For decades, Murdoch was one of the most powerful media figures in Britain, a market he entered after buying the tabloid News of the World in 1969. He reinvigorated Britain's stodgy newspaper scene with sex, scandal and celebrity and helped shake up television with satellite broadcaster Sky.

His clout has waned since the revelation more than a decade ago that employees of the News of the World had eavesdropped on phones and used other underhanded methods to get scoops on celebrities,

politicians and royals. News Corp. owns the Times, Sunday Times and Sun newspapers, but News of the World closed and Murdoch sold his 40% stake in Sky when he failed to get complete control of the company.

Fox News went through a series of sexual harassment scandals in the 2010s, which led to top executive Roger Ailes and prime-time personality Bill O'Reilly being pushed out. Murdoch dismissed them as isolated instances that were "largely political because we're conservative."

Shares of News Corp. and Fox closed higher Thursday.

## **Police suggested charging a child for her explicit photos. Experts say the practice is common**

By CLAUDIA LAUER and SAMANTHA HENDRICKSON Associated Press

COLUMBUS, Ohio (AP) — When an Ohio father learned that his 11-year-old daughter had been manipulated into sending explicit photos to an adult, he turned to the police for help.

But instead of treating the girl as a crime victim, an officer seemingly threatened to charge her under a law most people view as designed to protect child victims.

The shocking interaction was recorded last week on body camera audio and by the father's doorbell camera in Columbus, Ohio. The footage drew criticism from the public and from experts who said law enforcement officials have long misused laws meant to protect children by threatening to charge them with being part of the same crime.

Experts said the incident also showed that training for officers on how to respond to child exploitation cases is spotty and not standardized between police departments.

"It was a complete fail on a legal level and on a human level," said Scott Berkowitz, founder and president of the Rape, Abuse and Incest National Network — the nation's largest anti-sexual violence organization. "I don't know who immediately goes to blaming a child in a situation like that. It's inconceivable."

In the redacted body camera recording obtained by The Associated Press, the father asks if there's anything the police can do. A female officer is heard replying that his 11-year-old could be charged with creating "child porn."

The parent protests that she is a child, a victim who was manipulated by an adult.

"It doesn't matter," the officer said. "She's still creating it."

The angry father ends the conversation and slams the door behind him. The video he posted to TikTok had been watched more than 750,000 times as of Thursday.

Police have not released the father's name. The AP, which does not identify victims of alleged sexual abuse, reached out to him on social media and by phone this week but did not receive a response.

Columbus Police Chief Elaine Bryant responded quickly in a statement that the officers' conduct was being investigated and that it did not meet the division's standards for how victims should be treated.

Columbus police spokesperson Andrés Antequera said the agency has a nuanced policy that considers each case individually, but that "the focus is to protect the minor through education, counseling and social services, not criminal charges."

He said the department sometimes provides information on those resources to parents, as well as referrals for services.

But Antequera said Ohio statutes are clear that minors who create, possess or distribute images of child sexual abuse, even of themselves, are violating the law. He said prosecutors ultimately decide when to file charges, but he did not answer when asked whether Columbus police had arrested minors under similar circumstances in the past.

The AP filed a written request with the Franklin County prosecuting attorney's office seeking information on whether minors have been charged under the statute, but had not received a response as of Thursday afternoon.

Rebecca Epstein, the executive director of the Center on Gender Justice and Opportunity at Georgetown Law, said charges against victims are common. Epstein co-authored a report in April looking at how survivors of sexual assault and abuse are often criminalized.

"Girls who experience sexual abuse are often the ones who are punished for the sexual abuse that they experience. Rather than being treated as survivors who need support, they are funneled into the criminal justice system," she said. "Our culture assigns complicity to girls who are too young to legally even consent to sex."

Epstein said minors who are trafficked or coerced into sexual acts or into creating or soliciting sexual materials can often be charged with crimes.

In the early 2000s, as cellphone cameras became common and "sexting" entered the national vernacular, juvenile justice advocates began fighting against prosecutors who wanted to charge minors for consensually sharing explicit images with other minors.

Riya Saha Shah, the senior managing director of the Juvenile Law Center, said the center was part of that advocacy and has continued to raise concerns about sexual exploitation laws being used against child victims.

"These laws were really intended to prevent sexual abuse of children, to protect against the exploitation of children," Shah said. "So weaponizing these laws against children to bring charges against them really misunderstands the law, and even worse, is flouting the law's purpose."

It's hard to know how many children are charged, partly because prosecutors can use the charges to elicit guilty pleas to lesser offenses, she said.

Shah, who said she also has an 11-year-old daughter, called the police response to a parent seeking help disappointing but not surprising.

"There was no investigation into who the individual was who has these images in their possession," Shah said. "It went right to punishing her, which unfortunately is all too common in a system that really isn't designed to help first, but rather to punish first."

Berkowitz said the interaction reflected the importance of training and the scarcity of standardized training for interviewing and interacting with child victims of sexual crimes.

The AP requested information on any training the responding officers had received, and asked why the father's call was not directed to specialized departments within the Columbus Division of Police, but police had not responded as of Thursday afternoon.

Berkowitz said a possible lack of training resources doesn't excuse the officers' behavior.

"This should be pretty basic stuff that when an adult abuses a child, you do everything you can to stop it, not to blame the child," he said.

## **As mayors, governors scramble to care for more migrants, a look at what's behind the numbers**

By REBECCA SANTANA Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — A small town on the Texas border declares a state of emergency as tens of thousands of migrants cross the border. The Biden administration grants protection to nearly half a million Venezuelans in the country, giving them the ability to work. This comes after some Democratic mayors and governors warn that growing numbers of migrants in their care are busting their budgets.

The various scenarios playing out across the country paint a picture of a strained immigration system making an impact far from the U.S.-Mexico border. The Biden administration late Wednesday announced measures intended to alleviate the problems.

The U.S. has had immigration surges before so what's different now, and why?

HOW DOES THE NUMBER OF MIGRANTS ARRIVING NOW COMPARE TO PREVIOUS DECADES?

Part of the issue is that a lot more people are coming to the U.S. The numbers dropped earlier this summer after pandemic-era migration rules ended and tougher enforcement measures kicked in. But the numbers are climbing again.

On Wednesday, the border town of Eagle Pass, Texas, announced a state of emergency after nearly 6,000 migrants crossed the Rio Grande River from Mexico into the town of roughly 28,000 people in two days.

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In fiscal year 2022, Border Patrol encountered 2.2 million people crossing the border illegally. The numbers have gone down in the fiscal year ending this month — about 1.6 million so far — but that's still high.

You have to go back decades to see comparable numbers. From 1990 to 2006, Border Patrol encounters nearly always topped one million a year, with a peak of 1.6 million in 2000. Then the numbers began to fall. From 2010 to 2020, the agency recorded below half a million encounters a year, except for 2019 when they climbed to 859,501.

Statistics aren't always a perfect measure, of course. The numbers from the 1990s and 2000s are considered vast undercounts because migrants often evaded authorities as they entered the U.S. Now, migrants often turn themselves in so they can request asylum.

In recent years, the measures used to contain the COVID-19 pandemic skewed the count. The government relied heavily on a public health tool called Title 42 to quickly eject people from the country. But there was no penalty so experts say migrants returned again and again, thus pushing up the statistics.

## WHAT'S THE GOVERNMENT DOING?

The Biden administration late Wednesday announced it was giving Temporary Protected Status to an estimated 472,000 Venezuelans who arrived in the country as of July 31. That makes it easier for them to work in the U.S. Venezuelans make up such a large proportion of the people coming to the U.S. that changing their status has an outsized effect. In New York City, about 40% of the rough 60,000 asylum seekers the city is paying to house are from Venezuela.

The administration also vowed to speed up the time it takes for migrants who are already eligible to work to get their authorizations processed — a key demand from Democratic governors and mayors.

More broadly, the administration has relied on a carrot and stick approach over the last year to deal with immigration. That's involved doing things like giving humanitarian parole to people from certain countries provided they have a financial sponsor and fly into the country. And then relying heavily on consequences for those who don't follow the rules. For example, they have beefed up deportations and expulsions.

Republicans say it's not enough and accuse the administration of doing little to control the southern border.

## WHO IS COMING AND DOES THAT AFFECT RESOURCES?

Julia Gelatt, of the Migration Policy Institute, said there are key differences between what's going on now and during past immigration surges.

In the late 1990s and early 2000s, there were more single adults coming to the U.S. Now, families with children are increasingly arriving, and they have different needs. While a single adult traveling by himself may be OK crashing on a friend's couch, families often expect more for their children and may be more likely to need government services to protect them. Kids need to go to school.

Also, communications have advanced. These days, migrants can easily share information on social media about the best places to go and what services are available.

Gelatt noted that many of the migrants crossing the border don't hide from the government. Some have been granted humanitarian parole or have a notice to appear in immigration court. They may feel more empowered to ask for assistance.

## WHERE ARE MIGRANTS STAYING?

One of the challenges that has thrust immigration into the spotlight is housing.

New York City and Massachusetts have right-to-shelter rules, meaning they must provide housing to people who need it with certain restrictions. In addition to the roughly 60,000 migrants New York is housing, Massachusetts is also paying to shelter about 11,000 new arrivals.

Murad Awawdeh, who heads the New York Immigration Coalition that advocates for immigrants' rights, said immigrants arriving in the city previously didn't really use the city-run shelter system. They had friends or relatives to help them find places to stay. But that's changing.

"The most unique thing about this situation is simply that folks don't have a family connection here or community connections like they have had historically," Awawdeh said.

Decades ago, migrants arriving in the U.S. were almost all Mexican nationals. Experts and officials note that migrants today arrive from a vast array of countries across South and Central America and Africa, as

well as from China and India. Their disparate countries of origin complicate deportations, because they have to be flown. In some cases, migrants can't be deported because the U.S. has no agreement with their native countries, notably Venezuela.

## WHAT'S THE IMPACT OF MIGRANTS BEING BUSED FROM THE BORDER?

In 2022, Texas began busing migrants to Democrat-led cities around the country to challenge the Biden administration's border policies. Arizona has also bused migrants out of state.

The numbers are relatively small compared to the overall migrant flow. For example, since the spring of 2022, New York says it has counted 113,000 newly arrived migrants compared to the 8,200 Texas said it bused there.

But the Migration Policy Institute wrote last year that the Republican-sponsored trips had repercussions far beyond the numbers. After crossing the southern border, migrants used to spread "organically, quietly, and gradually" across the U.S., the Institute wrote.

"The buses have instead brought migrants to these cities in an orchestrated, visible, and deliberately disorderly way. ... In generating this chaos, the busing scheme has succeeded at least in showcasing the challenges at the border," the organization wrote.

## Fighting 'through hell.' To reclaim Bakhmut, a Ukrainian brigade must first survive the forest

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 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 Services 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

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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 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

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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 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 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 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 battles 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."



## Trump says he always had autoworkers' backs. Union leaders say his first-term record shows otherwise

By JOEY CAPPELLETTI and MICHELLE L. PRICE Associated Press

LANSING, Mich. (AP) — When former President Donald Trump visits Detroit next week, he'll be looking to blunt criticisms from a United Auto Workers union leadership that has said a second term for him would be a "disaster" for workers.

Trump will bypass the second Republican presidential debate on Sept. 27 to instead visit striking auto-workers in Michigan, where he has looked to position himself as an ally of blue-collar workers by promising to raise wages and protect jobs if elected to a second term.

But union leaders say Trump's record in the White House speaks for itself. Union leaders have said his first term was far from worker-friendly, citing unfavorable rulings from the nation's top labor board and the U.S. Supreme Court, as well as unfulfilled promises of automotive jobs. While the United Auto Workers union has withheld an endorsement in the 2024 presidential race, its leadership has repeatedly rebuffed Trump.

Nevertheless, Trump plans to speak directly to a room of former and current union members. A Trump campaign radio ad released Tuesday in Detroit and Toledo, Ohio, praised auto workers and said the former president has "always had their back."

Not everyone thinks so. Despite Trump's history of success in courting blue-collar workers in previous elections, union leaders say their members would do well to believe their own eyes.

"Just look who Trump put in the courts," said Dave Green, the UAW regional director for Ohio and Indiana. "Look at his record with the labor relations board. He did nothing to support organized labor except lip service."

The National Labor Relations Board, which enforces the country's labor laws and oversees union elections, came under Republican control during the Trump administration for the first time since 2007. The board reversed several key Obama-era rulings that made it easier for small unions to organize, strengthened the bargaining rights of franchise workers and provided protection against anti-union measures for employees.

In 2017, the Trump-era board reversed a decision holding employers responsible for labor violations by subcontractors or franchisees. In 2019, the board gave a boost to companies that use contract labor, such as Lyft and Uber, by emphasizing "entrepreneurial opportunity" in determining a worker's employment status, making organizing harder.

Mark McManus, president of the plumbers and pipefitters union, said in a statement Tuesday that Trump "tried to gut" the labor relations board under his administration "to undo the safeguards that protect working families." Michigan AFL-CIO President Ron Bieber told The Associated Press in an emailed statement that the board was stacked with "anti-worker appointees who trampled on collective bargaining rights."

The union leaders also point to unfavorable U.S. Supreme Court rulings under a conservative majority that grew during Trump's term. The nation's high court has dealt a number of blows to unions, most recently ruling against unionized drivers who walked off the job with their trucks full of wet cement, allowing a civil suit against them to go forward.

In 2018, the court's conservative majority overturned a decades-old pro-union decision involving fees paid by government workers. The justices in 2021 rejected a California regulation giving unions access to farm property so they could organize workers.

"If you're appointing conservatives to the court, you're often appointing people who relate to the preference for business or property owners or shareholders, more than the preference of stakeholders like workers," said Peter Berg, a professor of labor relations at Michigan State University.

As president, Trump largely sat on the sidelines during a 40-day walkout at a General Motors plant in 2019.

Still, the Trump campaign vigorously defended his record as pro-worker.

"President Trump has always been on the side of American workers," his campaign spokesman Steven Cheung said in a statement.

Cheung responded to the criticisms from labor leaders with a long list of economic gains and policies from Trump's time as president, ranging from the surging stock market to low unemployment. He cited

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Trump's broad push to remove regulations and abandon or renegotiate trade deals as beneficial to American workers across a range of industries.

Republicans have long tried to position themselves as being anti-union while remaining pro-worker. The party has branded itself as being for "the working class" while attacking organized labor, which has supported the Democratic Party for decades.

Trump has used a similar tactic in an effort to separate workers from a UAW leadership that endorsed Democrat Joe Biden in 2020 and that has attacked Trump since. In a recent campaign video addressed to autoworkers, Trump encouraged them not to pay union dues and claimed union leaders have "got some deals going for themselves." Trump also claimed he would raise their wages and protect their jobs.

Job growth figures in the auto industry during Trump's presidency contradict his claim that the industry thrived under his watch. The total number of auto manufacturing jobs in Michigan, which holds the most automotive jobs in the U.S., stayed even during Trump's presidency.

In Ohio, the number of auto manufacturing jobs grew by fewer than 2,000 jobs during Trump's four years in the White House. But Green, the UAW director, said some communities that had backed Trump in 2016 were abandoned by him. He pointed to Lordstown, Ohio, an area that Trump won by a significant margin in 2016 and where Green previously served as the local UAW president.

In 2017, during a visit to the region, Trump pledged that jobs there were "all coming back" and implored residents to stay put. A year later, General Motors announced the closure of its Lordstown plant, one of the largest employers in the area.

"The guy came to my community and flat out lied to everybody," Green said last week. "Banks were closing, schools were shutting down. I wrote the guy two letters, and he didn't even reply."

AP VoteCast shows that in the 2020 presidential election, Trump was the choice of 62% of white voters without a college degree, whereas Biden won the vote of 37% in this group. Biden performed better than Trump did among union members, receiving 56% of union members' votes in the 2020 election, compared with Trump's 42%.

Trump hopes in 2024 to win back the support of union-friendly states such as Michigan, which became the first in nearly 60 years to repeal a union-restricting law known as "right-to-work." It's one of three Rust Belt states along with Pennsylvania and Wisconsin that broke for Democrats but where Trump narrowly won in 2016, carrying him into the White House. He lost those states to Biden in the 2020 election.

## Appeals court takes up transgender health coverage case likely headed to Supreme Court

By LEAH WILLINGHAM Associated Press

CHARLESTON, W.Va. (AP) — A federal appeals court is considering cases out of North Carolina and West Virginia that could have significant implications on whether individual states are required to cover health care for transgender people with government-sponsored insurance.

The Richmond-based 4th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals heard oral arguments in cases Thursday involving the coverage of gender-affirming care by North Carolina's state employee health plan and the coverage of gender-affirming surgery by West Virginia Medicaid.

During the proceedings, at least two judges said it's likely the case will eventually reach the U.S. Supreme Court. Both states appealed separate lower court rulings that found the denial of gender-affirming care to be discriminatory and unconstitutional. Two panels of three Fourth Circuit judges heard arguments in both cases earlier this year before deciding to intertwine the two cases and see them presented before the full court of 15.

Tara Borelli, senior attorney at Lambda Legal — the organization representing transgender people denied services in both states — said excluding the coverage is a clear example of discrimination outlawed by the 14th Amendment.

"The exclusion here is actually quite targeted, it's quite specific," Borelli said in court, arguing that a

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faithful interpretation of the U.S. Constitution and the equal protection clause ensures transgender people coverage.

"One of the most important things that a court can do is to uphold those values to protect minority rights who are not able to protect themselves against majoritarian processes," she said.

Attorneys for the state of North Carolina said the state-sponsored plan is not required to cover gender-affirming hormone therapy or surgery because being transgender is not an illness. Attorney John Knepper claimed only a subset of transgender people suffer from gender dysphoria, a diagnosis of distress over gender identity that doesn't match a person's assigned sex.

Knepper said North Carolina's insurance plan does not discriminate because it does not allow people to use state health insurance to "detransition," either.

Before offering pharmaceutical or surgical intervention, medical guidelines call for thorough psychological assessments to confirm gender dysphoria before starting any treatment.

In updated treatment guidelines issued last year, the World Professional Association for Transgender Health said evidence of later regret is scant, but that patients should be told about the possibility during psychological counseling.

West Virginia attorneys said the U.S. Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services has declined to issue a national coverage decision on covering gender-affirming surgery.

Caleb David, attorney for the state defendants, said West Virginia's is not a case of discrimination, either, but of a state trying to best utilize limited resources. West Virginia has a \$128 million deficit in Medicaid for the next year, projected to expand to \$256 million in 2025.

"West Virginia is entitled to deference where they're going to take their limited resources," he said. "They believe that they need to provide more resources towards heart disease, diabetes, drug addiction, cancer, which are all rampant in the West Virginia population."

Unlike North Carolina, the state has covered hormone therapy and other pharmaceutical treatments for transgender people since 2017. "That came from a place of caring and compassion," he said.

There's no indication of when the court will rule.

In June 2022, a North Carolina trial court demanded the state plan pay for "medically necessary services," including hormone therapy and some surgeries, for transgender employees and their children. The judge had ruled in favor of the employees and their dependents, who said in a 2019 lawsuit that they were denied coverage for gender-affirming care under the plan.

The North Carolina state insurance plan provides medical coverage for more than 750,000 teachers, state employees, retirees, lawmakers and their dependents. While it provides counseling for gender dysphoria and other diagnosed mental health conditions, it does not cover treatment "in connection with sex changes or modifications and related care."

In August 2022, a federal judge ruled that West Virginia's Medicaid program must provide coverage for gender-affirming care for transgender residents.

U.S. District Judge Chuck Chambers in Huntington said the Medicaid exclusion discriminated on the basis of sex and transgender status and violated the equal protection clause of the 14th Amendment, the Affordable Care Act and the Medicaid Act.

Chambers certified the lawsuit as a class action, covering all transgender West Virginians who participate in Medicaid.

An original lawsuit filed in 2020 also named state employee health plans. A settlement with The Health Plan of West Virginia Inc. in 2022 led to the removal of the exclusion on gender-affirming care in that company's Public Employees Insurance Agency plans.

After the proceedings Thursday, West Virginia Republican Attorney General Patrick Morrisey released a statement saying that, under Medicaid, states have wide discretion to determine what procedures their programs can cover.

"Taxpayers should not be required to pay for these surgeries under Medicaid — our state should have the ability to determine how to spend our resources to care for the vital medical needs of our citizens," he said.

Borelli, on the other hand, said reversing the lower courts' decisions would cause "true harm" to the lives and health of transgender people in both states.

"It is disappointing that state officials in North Carolina and West Virginia have chosen to double-down on the discriminatory denial of medically necessary, evidence-based care," she said.

## **Alex Murdaugh pleads guilty to financial crimes — the first time he's admitted blame to a judge**

By JAMES POLLARD and JEFFREY COLLINS Associated Press

CHARLESTON, S.C. (AP) — Convicted murderer Alex Murdaugh did something Thursday he hasn't done in the two years since his life of privilege and power started to unravel — plead guilty to a crime.

Murdaugh admitted in federal court to 22 counts of financial fraud and money laundering.

Murdaugh, 55, is serving life without parole in a South Carolina prison for shooting his wife, Maggie, and younger son Paul. He has denied any role in the killings since their deaths in June 2021 and insisted he was innocent in two days of testimony earlier this year before he was convicted of two counts of murder.

"There's two things Alex will tell you. One, he stole the money. Two, he did not kill Maggie and Paul," defense attorney Dick Harpootlian said after the hearing.

The federal guilty plea likely locks in years if not decades in prison for the disbarred lawyer, even if his murder conviction and sentence in state court are overturned on appeal.

Murdaugh told the judge he wanted to be held accountable for stealing from his clients and do right by his surviving son.

"I want to take responsibility. I want my son to see me take responsibility. It's my hope that by taking responsibility that the people I've hurt can begin to heal," said Murdaugh, standing in his orange South Carolina prison jumpsuit.

He will be sentenced at a later date. Federal prosecutor Emily Limehouse suggested at a news conference after the hearing that prosecutors will ask for a lengthy term.

"Our goal in holding him accountable for the financial crimes in federal court is to ensure that he's never a free man again," Limehouse said.

Investigators think Murdaugh started stealing from his family law firm by keeping fees meant to be shared by everyone and inflating his expenses as early as 2005, Limehouse said.

The deal for pleading guilty in federal court is straightforward. Prosecutors will ask that the federal sentence Murdaugh gets run at the same time as any prison term he serves from a state court. They won't give him credit defendants typically receive for pleading guilty.

In exchange, authorities get a requirement placed in almost every plea deal, which is especially significant in this case: "The Defendant agrees to be fully truthful and forthright with federal, state and local law enforcement agencies by providing full, complete and truthful information about all criminal activities about which he/she has knowledge," reads the standard language included in Murdaugh's deal.

That could be a broad range of wrongdoing. The federal charges against the disgraced attorney, whose family were both prosecutors and founders of a heavy-hitting law firm that no longer carries the Murdaugh name in tiny Hampton County, deal with stealing money from at least five clients and creating fraudulent bank accounts.

Murdaugh admitted Thursday to stealing from money meant to provide care for a man paralyzed from the neck down in a wreck, from two sisters who were children when they lost their mother and brother in a crash, the estate of his longtime maid who died in a fall at the family home and from others.

Murdaugh still faces about 100 different charges in state court. Authorities said he committed insurance fraud by trying to have someone kill him so his surviving son could get \$10 million in life insurance, but the shot only grazed Murdaugh's head. Investigators said Murdaugh also failed to pay taxes on the money he stole, took settlement money from several clients and his family's law firm, and ran a drug and money laundering ring.

He is scheduled to face trial on at least some of those charges at the end of November. State prosecu-

tors have insisted they want him to face justice for each one. Murdaugh's lawyers suggested Thursday there are serious questions if that trial will happen, but didn't specify why.

As Limehouse gave the judge details in federal court about each scheme to steal money, Murdaugh rocked back and forth.

Judge Richard Gergel asked Murdaugh if he disagreed with any of the prosecution's description and the former attorney, whose law license is now revoked, referred to his lawyer Jim Griffin.

When Murdaugh represented a woman who died in a wreck, he didn't steal from her estate — just her surviving husband's money, Griffin said.

"Doesn't make it any better, but that's just one fine point of clarification," he added.

Murdaugh's previous job was also mentioned a few times during the hearing. As it started, Gergel said he knew Murdaugh was familiar with the standard questions that defendants get asked as they plead guilty and mostly struck to the script.

But when Gergel asked if Murdaugh was sober, the former lawyer — who blames decades of painkiller and other drug abuse for his crimes — said he has been "proudly clean" for 744 days.

That would be Sept. 7, 2021, three days after police said he asked a friend to kill him on the side of that lonely Lowcountry two-lane road.

Griffin said Murdaugh's drug use will likely play a big part in the sentencing report that will be written before his next hearing. Neither side would commit to a specific amount of time they hope Murdaugh spends behind bars until that report is completed.

Murdaugh pleaded guilty to 14 counts of money laundering, five counts of wire fraud, one count of bank fraud, one count of conspiracy to commit wire and bank fraud, and one count of conspiracy to commit wire fraud. The click of his pen as he signed the documents reverberated around the quiet courtroom.

Each charge carries a maximum of at least 20 years in prison. Some have a maximum 30-year sentence.

Other requirements of the plea deal include Murdaugh taking a lie detector test if asked and that he pay back the \$9 million he is accused of stealing.

That money must be turned over to federal authorities immediately, which could create friction because what assets Murdaugh still has are currently controlled by the state.

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## Census shows 3.5 million Middle Eastern residents in US, Venezuelans fastest growing Hispanic group

By MIKE SCHNEIDER Associated Press

The United States had 3.5 million residents who identify as Middle Eastern or North African, Venezuelans were the fastest-growing Hispanic group last decade and Chinese and Asian Indians were the two largest Asian groups, according to the U.S. Census Bureau.

The most detailed race and ethnicity data to date from the 2020 census was released Thursday more than three years after the once-a-decade head count, which determines political power, the distribution of \$2.8 trillion in annual federal funding and holds up a mirror to how the U.S. has changed in a decade. The delay was caused by the COVID-19 pandemic and the implementation of a new method to protect the confidentiality of participants.

The Census Bureau says the 2020 census provided more details on the nation's racial and ethnic groups than ever before, offering counts for about 1,550 racial, ethnic and tribal groups, although some tables aren't available at smaller geographies for some groups because of the new confidentiality methods.

### MIDDLE EASTERN OR NORTH AFRICAN POPULATION

The 2020 census was the first to allow respondents to identify themselves as coming from a Middle Eastern or North African country, otherwise known as MENA. While there was no separate MENA category in the 2020 census, respondents were encouraged to write-in their backgrounds, and if they wrote Jordanian or Moroccan, for instance, they could be classified as MENA. The data showed that more than 3.5 million people did so or in combination with another group.

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The results come as the Biden administration contemplates updating the nation's racial and ethnic categories for the first time since 1997. Right now, MENA residents are classified as white, but they would have their own category under the proposed changes. The process also would combine the race and ethnic origin questions into a single query, because some advocates say the current method of asking about race and separately about ethnic origin often confuses Hispanic respondents.

The bureau's American Community Survey previously has asked a question about ancestry, from which MENA figures could be inferred, but the survey collects data only from 3.5 million households while census forms go to every U.S. household.

"This is a monumental change," said Maya Berry, executive director of the Arab American Institute, a Washington-based advocacy group. "For us, it's a wonderful indication of what is to come when we secure a MENA category."

However, Berry believes the MENA population may have been undercounted because of the extra steps needed to write down respondents' detailed backgrounds on the 2020 census form, instead of being able to just check a category box.

According to the 2020 census, the two largest groups of people who identified as MENA, either alone or in combination with another group, were Lebanese, with more than 685,000 people, and Iranian with more than 568,000 people. The states with the largest MENA populations were California, Michigan and New York.

## HISPANIC POPULATION

Venezuelans were the fastest-growing Hispanic group. They nearly tripled their numbers, from more than 215,000 people to more than 605,000 people from 2010 to 2020, as they fled a political, economic and humanitarian crisis that has lasted the entirety of President Nicolás Maduro's government.

"This shows, really, what is going on in Venezuela," said Ernesto Ackerman, president of Independent Venezuelan American Citizens, an advocacy group in Miami. "There is nothing there and it's getting worse."

The Biden administration on Wednesday said it was granting temporary legal status to hundreds of thousands of Venezuelans who are already in the U.S. — quickly making them eligible to work.

Mexicans were, far and away, the largest Hispanic group in the U.S. with a population of 35.9 million people, followed by Puerto Ricans with 5.6 million people and Salvadorans at 2.3 million people.

## WHITE POPULATION

Among the census respondents who identified as white, English was the most common detailed group written down on the form where people were asked to elaborate on their backgrounds, with 46.6 million people saying they were English alone or in any combination. They were followed by those identifying as German, with 45 million people, and Irish, with 38.6 million people.

## BLACK OR AFRICAN AMERICAN POPULATION

Among the 46.9 million Black respondents, African American was the most common answer, either alone or combined with another group, at 24.5 million people, when asked about their backgrounds. That answer was followed in more or less a tie between Jamaican and Haitian at more than 1 million people each. Nigerians had the next highest responses, with more than 604,000 people, followed by Ethiopians at more than 325,000 people.

## ASIAN POPULATION

More than 5.2 million people identified as Chinese, the largest group among respondents who were Asian alone or in combination with another group. They were followed by Asian Indians with 4.7 million people, Filipinos with 4.4 million people and the Vietnamese population at 2.2 million people. The Nepalese population was the fastest growing Asian group, growing from almost 52,000 people in 2010 to almost 206,000 people in 2020. California was home to the largest share of the six most common Asian groups in the U.S. New York had the second-largest share of Chinese residents, while Texas had the second-largest share of Asian Indian residents.

The Asian, Hawaiian and Pacific Islander communities are very diverse "and we know that lumping our groups together can have harmful impacts by hiding the disparities that certain racial or ethnic groups face, including gaps in wages earned, health outcomes, or educational attainment," said Rep. Judy Chu,

a Democrat from California, who chairs the Congressional Asian Pacific American Caucus.

## AMERICAN INDIAN AND ALASKA NATIVE POPULATION

For the American Indian and Alaska Native population in the U.S., Cherokee was the largest group alone or in combination with another group, with 1.5 million people. The next highest was Aztec with almost 584,000 respondents and Navajo Nation with more than 423,000. Tlingit was the largest Alaska Native alone or in any combination group, with more than 22,600 people.

## SOME OTHER RACE

Almost 94% of the almost 28 million respondents who answered "some other race" for the race question were Hispanic, supporting previous research that showed Hispanics often are unsure how to answer the question with the current race categories. Some 1.9 million respondents who picked "some other race" identified as multiracial or multi-ethnic, and more than a half million said they were Brazilian, either alone or in combination with another group.

## Man executed for the 1996 killing of a University of Oklahoma dance student

By SEAN MURPHY Associated Press

McALESTER, Okla. (AP) — Oklahoma executed an inmate Thursday for the 1996 killing of a University of Oklahoma dance student, in a case that went unsolved for years until DNA from the crime scene was matched to a man serving prison time for burglary.

Anthony Sanchez, 44, was pronounced dead at 10:19 a.m. following a three-drug injection at the Oklahoma State Penitentiary in McAlester. Even though he maintained that he had nothing to do with the killing of 21-year-old Juli Busken, he took the unusual step of opting not to present a clemency application to the state's Pardon and Parole Board, which many viewed as the last chance to spare his life.

"I'm innocent," Sanchez said as he was strapped to a gurney inside the death chamber. "I didn't kill nobody."

Sanchez criticized his former attorneys and thanked his supporters, including his spiritual adviser who was in the chamber with him and the anti-death penalty group Death Penalty Action.

The lethal drugs, beginning with the sedative midazolam, were administered starting at around 10:08 a.m.

At one point during the execution, a member of the execution team entered the chamber and reattached an oxygen monitor that prison officials said had malfunctioned during the procedure.

Shortly before he was put to death, the U.S. Supreme Court rejected a request for a stay of execution submitted by his new lawyer, Eric Allen, of Columbus, Ohio. Allen had said he needed more time to go through the case evidence.

Sanchez was convicted of raping and murdering 21-year-old Juli Busken, a Benton, Arkansas, native who had just completed her last semester at the university when she was abducted on Dec. 20, 1996, from the parking lot of her Norman apartment complex. Her body was found that evening near Lake Stanley Draper in far southeastern 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.

None of Busken's family attended Thursday's execution, but state Attorney General Gentner Drummond said he had spoken to them several times in recent months.

"Juli was murdered 26 years, nine months and one day ago. The family has found closure and peace," Drummond said.

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 the AP that 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."

Drummond maintained that the DNA evidence unequivocally linked 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 contended that 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."

Sanchez is the third inmate put to death in Oklahoma this year and the 10th since the state 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.

Oklahoma's next scheduled execution is Nov. 30, when Phillip Hancock is set to receive a lethal injection for killing two men in Oklahoma City in 2001.

## **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



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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 of 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 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.

## Government shutdown risk spikes as House Republicans leave town in disarray amid hard-right revolt

By LISA MASCARO and STEPHEN GROVES Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — With House Speaker Kevin McCarthy’s latest funding plan in ruins and lawmakers leaving town for the weekend, there’s no endgame in sight as hard-right Republicans push dangerously closer to a disruptive federal shutdown.

The White House will tell federal agencies on Friday to prepare for a shutdown, according to an official with the Office of Management and Budget who insisted on anonymity to discuss the upcoming instructions. That’s standard seven days out from a federal disruption.

The Republican McCarthy has repeatedly tried to appease his hard-right flank by agreeing to the steep spending cuts they are demanding to keep government open. But cheered on by Donald Trump, the Republican front-runner for president in 2024, the conservatives have all but seized control in dramatic fashion.

In a crushing defeat Thursday, a handful of Republican hardliners blocked a typically popular defense bill from advancing — the second time this week it was set back, an unheard-of loss for a House speaker.

Even a stopgap bill to keep government funding past the Sept. 30 deadline, called a continuing resolution or CR, is a non-starter for some on the right flank who have essentially seized control of the House.

“This is a whole new concept of individuals who just want to burn the whole place down,” McCarthy said after Thursday’s vote, acknowledging he was frustrated. “It doesn’t work.”

The open revolt was further evidence that McCarthy’s strategy of repeatedly giving in to the conservatives is seemingly only emboldening them, allowing them to run roughshod over their own House majority. Their conservative bills have almost no chances in the Senate.

Trump urged the conservatives to hold the line against the higher funding levels McCarthy had agreed to with President Joe Biden earlier this year and to end the federal criminal indictments against him.

“This is also the last chance to defund these political prosecutions against me and other Patriots,” Trump wrote on social media.

“They failed on the debt limit, but they must not fail now. Use the power of the purse and defend the Country!” the former president wrote.

The White House and Democrats, along with some Republicans, warn that a shutdown would be devastating for people who rely on their government for everyday services and would undermine America’s standing in the world.

“We need the extreme MAGA Republicans to get their act together,” said House Democratic leader Hakeem Jeffries of New York, referring to Trump’s “Make America Great Again” slogan.

“End the civil war,” Jeffries urged the Republicans. “Get your act together.”

But one of Trump’s top allies, Rep. Matt Gaetz, R-Fla., who is leading the hard-right flank, said the House Republicans now have almost no choices left but to spend the time it takes to pass each of the 12 spending bills needed to fund the government — typically a laborious process — even if it means going into a shutdown.

Or they can join with Democrats to pass a CR, which is sure to put McCarthy’s job at risk.

What Gaetz said he, and several others, would not do is vote for a continuing resolution that fails to slash spending.

“I’m giving a eulogy for the CR right now,” Gaetz told reporters after a late afternoon meeting at the Capitol.

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"I represent Florida's first congressional district, where during the shutdown tens of thousands of people will go without a paycheck, and so I know the impact of a shutdown," Gaetz said. "So it may get worse before it gets better, and I have little to offer but blood, sweat, toil and tears, but that may be what it takes."

A government closure is increasingly likely as time runs out for Congress to act.

McCarthy's bid to move ahead with a traditionally popular defense funding bill as a first step toward keeping the government running was shattered, on a vote of 212-216. Five Republicans refused to vote with the increasingly endangered speaker. A sixth Republican voted no on procedural grounds so the bill could be reconsidered.

Moving forward with the defense bill was supposed to be a way for McCarthy to build goodwill among the GOP House majority as he tries to pass a temporary measure just to keep government running for another month. It, too, had catered to other hard-right priorities, such as slashing spending by 8% from many services and bolstering security at the U.S.-Mexico border.

Many on the right flank opposed the deal McCarthy struck with Biden this year over the spending levels and are trying to dismantle it now. They want to see progress on the individual appropriations bills that would fund the various federal departments at the lower levels these lawmakers are demanding.

The morning test vote shattered a McCarthy strategy that had emerged just the night before. Republicans had appeared on track, in a tight roll call, to advancing the measure Thursday. Then the Democrats who had not yet voted began rushing into the chamber.

New York Rep. Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez and fellow Democrats yelled out to hold open the vote. She was a "no." A few others came in behind her and tipped the tally toward defeat.

The Democrats oppose the military bill on many fronts, including Republican provisions that would gut diversity programs at the Pentagon.

As passage appeared doomed, attention turned to the five Republican holdouts to switch their votes.

GOP leaders spent more than an hour on the floor trying to recruit one of them, Rep. Dan Bishop, R-N.C., to vote "yes."

"Every time there's the slightest relief of the pressure, the movement goes away from completing the work," Bishop said.

When asked what it would take to gain his vote, Bishop said, "I think a schedule of appropriations bills over Kevin McCarthy signature would be meaningful to you to me."

Others were dug in, including some who had supported advancing the defense bill just two days ago when it first failed.

Rep. Marjorie Taylor Greene, R-Ga., a chief opponent of more aid for Ukraine in the war against Russia, said she voted against the defense bill this time because her party's leadership refused to separate out the war money. Her stand came as Ukraine's president, Volodymyr Zelenskyy, was at the Capitol during a high-profile visit to Washington.

McCarthy had pledged to keep lawmakers in session this weekend for as long as it took to finish their work. But they were sent home, told they could be called back on ample notice.

Many Republicans were starting to speak up more forcefully against their hard-right colleagues.

New York Rep. Mike Lawler, who represents a swing district, said he would not "be party to a shutdown." "There needs to be a realization that you're not going to get everything you want," he said. "Just throwing a temper tantrum and stomping your feet — frankly, not only is it wrong — it's just pathetic."

## Side hustles take center stage in paying bills for Hollywood workers on strike

By LEANNE ITALIE AP Entertainment Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — Lighting for the entertainment industry is Ryan Meyer's lifeblood.

Before the Hollywood strikes, he worked 40 hours a week or more as a gaffer or director of photogra-

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phy. He also has a company that usually earns more than a million dollars a year in production support. Most of that is gone, for now, dried up in the contract disputes that have led to months of picket lines by writers and actors. One day recently, the 50-year-old Meyer, who lives in Los Angeles, lit an actor's home foyer, "so when she opens the door," he said, "she looks good."

While waiting out the strikes, Meyer and many thousands of others in the business are taking most any paycheck they can get, from Trader Joe's to teaching to hitting up friends for writing gigs. Some are turning hobbies into money. Anything to pay the bills.

"We've become handymen," Meyer said. "My neighbor needed help with his Jacuzzi so we powered that up for him. Somebody else bought a trailer with a saw and is cutting people's firewood."

Side hustles are nothing new to many actors and writers. Turning them into life support is the issue now. That includes industry workers not striking but thrown out of work.

Jesse McLaren is a staff writer in Los Angeles for "Jimmy Kimmel Live!" and has written for the Oscars and the Emmys. As a hobby during the pandemic, he bought a 3D printer and began making custom snow globes featuring the houses of loved ones. He doled them out as gifts.

"They've become my full time living, basically," he said.

McLaren has sold about 40 custom snow globes since the writers went on strike, at \$299 a piece, through his Etsy shop.

"I've made the equivalent of one full mortgage payment so far this month," he said. "I'm fully committed to snow globes right now. No joke," he said.

As the strikes near historic records, and with renewed contract talks for writers continuing Thursday, industry funds offering help are juggling intense demand.

"In the past month our counselors have been reporting an increase in applicants facing eviction notices, utility shutoffs and mortgage foreclosures. And we know that even a quick end to the current strikes will not put an end to people's financial hardships for quite some time," Keith McNutt, executive director of the Entertainment Community Fund's western region, said Friday.

As of Sept. 1, the fund has distributed about \$6.5 million to about 3,100 film and TV workers. It has doled out \$400,000 to \$700,000 a week during the strikes, compared to an average of \$75,000 weekly during the first half of 2023.

Cameo, a site where celebrities record personalized video messages for fans, has seen 156% growth from July 15 to Sept. 1 from the same period a year ago. Since the writers strike began, 3,124 people joined or reactivated their Cameo accounts, the company said.

Meyer, with most of his six staff and 70 or so satellite crew members on furlough, faces a double whammy. His company was once routinely busy on commercials, which is work not impacted by the strike. Now, with that market flooded with new competition submitting miniscule budget bids, he can't compete.

"Now it's, 'What bills get paid this month and what doesn't,'" he said.

It's been nearly five months since members of the Writers Guild of America stopped working, and just over two months since the actors union joined them in their fight against studios and streamers.

The use of artificial intelligence has emerged as a top issue in the disputes, along with better pay, benefits and more traditional job protections. Actors fear they will lose control of their likenesses if AI is deployed. Unknown actors fear they will be replaced altogether. Writers worry they will have to share credit or lose credit to the technology.

Actor Autumn Monroe splits her time between Atlanta and New York. While walking a picket line recently in downtown Manhattan, she said she has an Alpha Kappa Alpha sorority sister to thank for helping her stay afloat during the strikes.

"She called and I was able to pick up some consulting and writing. It's for her research as part of a fellowship. I have a doctorate. She's paying me, thank God," Monroe said.

Monroe appeared in the recently canceled reboot of "The Wonder Years" and wrapped an upcoming movie starring Vince Vaughn. In the business for 13 years, she remains on her union's health insurance and has enough banked hours to preserve her coverage for a while longer.

With the help of her sorority sister, Monroe won't have to touch her savings.

As a showrunner, writer, producer and story editor for 16 years, Shadi Petosky in Los Angeles has worked on "Parks & Recreation" and the Netflix hit "The Sandman," among many other projects. She was busy with a development deal when the strikes hit.

Last year, Petosky made \$220,000. Now, she's an hourly worker.

"I'm doing every job I can find," she said. "Lots of bookkeeping and administrative assistant type work. I've been doing some appliance repair."

Petosky has also helped people liquidate storage units and assisted a retired professor in cataloging his work. Keeping up with her \$5,000 plus in monthly expenses has been a terrifying struggle. She recently owed back rent, back child support and was behind on car payments.

"About two months into the strike I was just fully out of money," Petosky said. "My landlord has been kind enough to defer half my rent for the duration of the strike."

Sometimes, it's about the impacted helping the impacted.

Actor Bethany Layla Johnson in New York said on a recent picket line in New York that she has befriended on-set photographers over the years. When the actors strike began, she signed on to help them sell images to photo agencies, including celebrity-fueled rallies and picket lines in the strikes. She takes an 8% fee.

"I'm thinking about getting my notary," she said. "New York City is a real estate city. It would be great if I could become a go-to notary for real estate brokers."

Acting and modeling work for Briza Covarrubias had picked up significantly since 2019, when the pandemic stalled her livelihood. Her husband's salary as an engineer helps, but it doesn't get them all the way there in paying their bills.

"Right now, there's nothing. Social media has really changed the modeling industry," she said. "My sister does work at Trader Joe's. She offered to help, or I go back to bartending."

Covarrubias, 30, has done some unpaid stage work during the strikes that fed her hunger to act. Born and raised in Los Angeles, she and her husband had moved into her parents' converted garage with their dog during the pandemic and were in the process of moving out when the strikes hit.

"There were some awesome auditions coming through, then in March things started to slow down and my agent was like, 'There might be a strike.' Then the WGA strike happened and by June an audition a week went to nothing," she said.

Covarrubias considers herself lucky. Her French husband, who she supported while he pursued a work visa, now has that in hand and is able to earn. His salary is about \$50,000 a year. They pay her parents about \$1,500 a month in rent.

"He reminds me every day, you were there for me. I'm here for you now. But, you know, we're still struggling," she said.

## **Fighting 'through hell.' To reclaim Bakhmut, a Ukrainian brigade must first survive the forest**

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 near his mortally wounded commander. Then he decided: There would be no turning back. "Forward!" he howled.

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.

Days later, as he prepared for Gagarin's funeral, Courier predicted his own future, his pale eyes unfocused.

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"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 leading toward the village of Andriivka is one of countless like it on the road to Russian-controlled Bakhmut, which has 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.

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. 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 Services 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.

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.

The questions now facing the brigade 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 forest and held it for four full days. On either side of them were mined fields, now sprouting only craters.

Courier would then go to western Ukraine and represent the platoon at Gagarin's funeral in his hometown of Polonne, a 550-mile (900-kilometer) drive from the battlefield.

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.

"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, and yet he did not want to return to the forest. His commanders ordered 10 days' leave, a break for a fighter whose anguish they sensed despite his outward calm.

"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, 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 joined in. After two months of inching between scorched 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?"

A 24-year-old with a smooth and unlined face, Fedya wears his authority lightly, introspective but with little time or energy to spare on self-doubt or guilt.

"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.

On Sept. 14, they finally did it — more than three months after receiving the order to reclaim Andriivka.

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They broke through the shelling and the drone-launched grenades, firing at Russian forces who fled in front of them.

The Ukrainians pummeled the tiny village with artillery and then threw a smokescreen 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.

That night of Sept. 15, Fedya dreamed he was covering behind a shrapnel-pierced truck on the battlefield and was hit by artillery fire. The next morning, he carried a Ukrainian flag to hoist in Andriivka.

He was ready to hand control to the next brigade to reclaim the next forest.

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

## 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 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

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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.



## **A third party signed up 15,000 voters in Arizona. Democrats worry that's enough for 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, 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.”

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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.

## Today in History: September 22

### Lincoln issues preliminary Emancipation Proclamation

By The Associated Press undefined

Today in History

Today is Friday, Sept. 22, the 265th day of 2023. There are 100 days left in the year.

Today's Highlight in History:

On Sept. 22, 1862, President Abraham Lincoln issued the preliminary Emancipation Proclamation, declaring all slaves in rebel states should be free as of January 1, 1863 if the states did not end the fighting and rejoin the union.

On this date:

In 1776, during the Revolutionary War, Capt. Nathan Hale, 21, was hanged as a spy by the British in New York.

In 1911, pitcher Cy Young, 44, gained his 511th and final career victory as he hurled a 1-0 shutout for the Boston Rustlers against the Pittsburgh Pirates at Forbes Field.

In 1949, the Soviet Union exploded its first atomic bomb.

In 1961, the Interstate Commerce Commission issued rules prohibiting racial discrimination on interstate

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buses.

In 1975, Sara Jane Moore attempted to shoot President Gerald R. Ford outside a San Francisco hotel, but missed.

In 1980, the Persian Gulf conflict between Iran and Iraq erupted into full-scale war.

In 1985, rock and country music artists participated in "Farm Aid," a concert staged in Champaign, Illinois, to help the nation's farmers.

In 1993, 47 people were killed when an Amtrak passenger train fell off a bridge and crashed into Big Bayou Canot near Mobile, Alabama.

In 1994, the situation comedy "Friends" debuted on NBC-TV.

In 1995, an AWACS plane carrying U.S. and Canadian military personnel crashed on takeoff from Elmendorf Air Force Base near Anchorage, Alaska, killing all 24 people aboard.

In 2014, the United States and five Arab nations launched airstrikes against the Islamic State group in Syria, sending waves of planes and Tomahawk cruise missiles against an array of targets.

In 2020, U.S. deaths from the coronavirus topped 200,000, by far the highest confirmed death toll from the virus in the world at that point, according to a count by Johns Hopkins University.

In 2017, as the scale of the damage from Hurricane Maria started to become clearer, Puerto Rican officials said they could not contact more than half of the communities in the U.S. territory, where all power had been knocked out to the island's 3.4 million people.

In 2018, Paul Simon ended what was billed as his final concert tour in a park in Queens, New York.

Today's Birthdays: Dancer/choreographer/singer Toni Basil is 80. Actor Paul Le Mat is 78. Musician King Sunny Adé (ah-DAY') is 77. Capt. Mark Phillips is 75. Rock singer David Coverdale (Deep Purple, Whitesnake) is 72. Actor Shari Belafonte is 69. Singer Debby Boone is 67. Country singer June Forester (The Forester Sisters) is 67. Singer Nick Cave is 66. Rock singer Johnette Napolitano is 66. Actor Lynn Herring is 66. Classical crossover singer Andrea Bocelli (an-DRAY'-ah boh-CHEL'-ee) is 65. Singer-musician Joan Jett is 65. Actor Scott Baio is 63. Actor Catherine Oxenberg is 62. Actor Bonnie Hunt is 62. Actor Rob Stone is 61. Actor Dan Bucatinsky (TV: "24: Legacy") is 58. Musician Matt Sharp is 54. Rock musician Dave Hernandez is 53. Rapper Mystikal is 53. R&B singer Big Rube (Society of Soul) is 52. Actor James Hillier (TV: "The Crown") is 50. Actor Mireille Enos is 48. Actor Daniella Alonso is 45. Actor Michael Graziadei (GRAHT'-zee-uh-day-ee) is 44. Actor Ashley Eckstein is 42. Actor Katie Lowes is 41. Rock musician Will Farquarson (Bastille) is 40. Actor Tatiana Maslany is 38. Actor Ukweli Roach (TV: "Blindspot") is 37. Actor Tom Felton is 36. Actor Teyonah Parris is 36. Actor Juliette Goglia is 28. Actor Dalya Knapp is 13.