

# Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, Sept. 27, 2023 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 095 ~ 1 of 70

- [1- Upcoming Events](#)
- [2- Newsweek Bulletin](#)
- [3- Netters have clean sweep over GPL](#)
- [7- Sound of Freedom to be played in Groton](#)
- [8- Community Transit Letter](#)
- [9- Nehls service on GDILIVE.COM](#)
- [10- SD SearchLight: Details scant on Guard's border deployment as Noem visits troops](#)
- [11- SD SearchLight: State to pay inmate in federal excessive force lawsuit](#)
- [12- SD SearchLight: How a looming government shutdown could hit national parks](#)
- [14- SD SearchLight: Active-duty military would work without pay in shutdown, White House warns](#)
- [16- SD SearchLight: The farm bill is on the verge of expiring. Congress is months away from a new version.](#)
- [19- Weather Pages](#)
- [23- Daily Devotional](#)
- [24- 2023 Community Events](#)
- [25- Subscription Form](#)
- [26- Lottery Numbers](#)
- [27- News from the Associated Press](#)

## Wednesday, Sept. 27

9:30 a.m. Marching Band at Roncalli Marching Event

Senior Menu: Beef stew, biscuit, Waldorf salad, muffin, tomato juice.

St. John's Lutheran Bible Study, 2:45 pm.; Confirmation, 3:45 p.m.

Emmanuel Lutheran: Confirmation, 6 p.m.

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

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

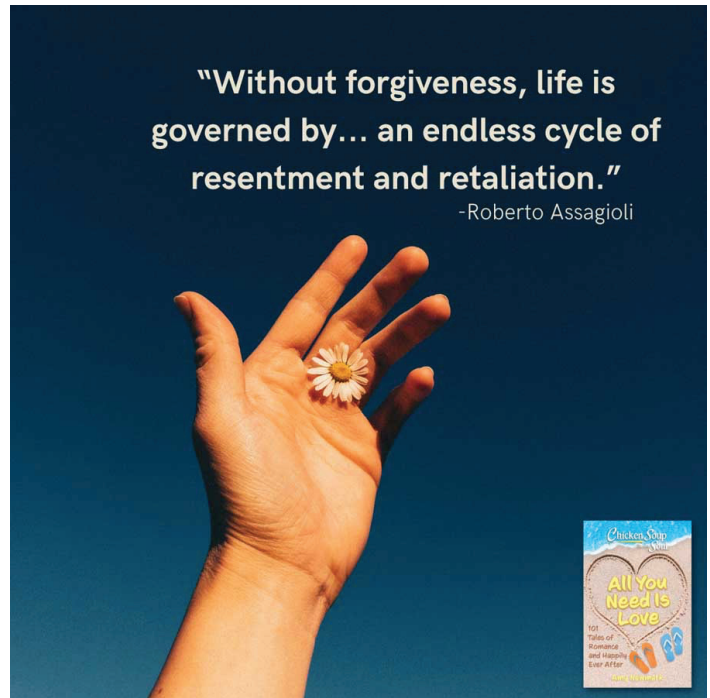
## Thursday, Sept. 28

Senior Menu: Ham, au gratin potatoes, broccoli and cauliflower blend, fruit, cookie, whole wheat bread.

Parent-Teacher Conference, 1:30 p.m. to 8 p.m.

Cross Country at Sisseton, 4 p.m.

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



Junior High Volleyball hosts Britton-Hecla, 7th at 4 p.m., 8th at 5 p.m.

Junior High Football at vs. Clark/Willow Lake at Clark, 4:30 p.m.

## Friday, Sept. 29

Senior Menu: Chicken strips, tri-tators, peas and carrots, fruit, whole wheat bread.

Faculty In-Service, no school.

Football at Webster Area, 7 p.m.

Youth Football at Webster, 5 p.m.

## Saturday, Sept. 30

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.

Girls Soccer at Garretson, 1 p.m.

Youth Football at Waubay Jamboree

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

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

# Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, Sept. 27, 2023 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 095 ~ 2 of 70

## The Bulletin by Newsweek

### World in Brief

claimed the top prize in Monday's draw.

The Senate voted 77-19 to begin a debate on a short-term spending bill meant to avoid a government shutdown, but it faces headwinds from Republicans. The House GOP advanced four conservative spending bills unlikely to pass the Senate.

At least 100 people have died, and 150 others were injured after a fire broke out after fireworks were reportedly lit at a wedding celebration in northern Iraq. State media said the toll is expected to rise.

The Milwaukee Brewers clinched the NL Central title for the third time in six seasons Tuesday night, despite a 4-1 loss to the Saint Louis Cardinals. Milwaukee got help from The Atlanta Braves who eliminated the Chicago Cubs from the division race.

Convicted double murderer Charles Lorraine, who killed an elderly couple in their Ohio home in 1986, died on Sunday before his death sentence could be carried out.

Azerbaijan has confirmed that 192 Azerbaijani troops were killed, and over 500 were wounded during its offensive in the disputed Nagorno-Karabakh region last week.

France's ambassador to Niger was flown out of the country today, two months after the country's government was overthrown by a military junta.

In the ongoing war in Ukraine, Russia's defense ministry published a video showing its Black Sea Fleet's commander, Adm. Viktor Sokolov, participating at a conference on Tuesday, a day after Ukraine claimed that he and 33 others were killed in a missile strike on the fleet's headquarters in Sevastopol in Crimea..

### What to Watch in the Day Ahead

New Jersey Democratic Sen. Bob Menendez will make his first appearance in Manhattan court today to answer to charges that he accepted hundreds of thousands of dollars in bribes and used his power to protect businessmen "and to benefit the Arab Republic of Egypt."

Google celebrates its 25th birthday. CEO Sundar Pichai recently reflected on the silver anniversary and shared his views on another technological shift: "Making AI more helpful for everyone, and deploying it responsibly, is the most important way we'll deliver on our mission for the next 10 years and beyond."

Facebook's parent company is holding a two-day Meta Connect 2023 conference at its headquarters in Menlo Park, California. CEO Mark Zuckerberg will address the event. The virtual developer conference will bring together engineers, designers, and others to look at new products and hear about Meta's future plans.

The Times Higher Education is set to publish its annual World University Rankings 2024 at 10 a.m. ET. The 20th edition includes rankings of more than 1,900 institutions globally.

Durable goods data for August is on the economic calendar; due at 8:30 a.m. ET.

### Talking Point

"I don't think that Jimmy Fallon should be canceled...From what I've experienced... he's always been very, very kind... Every experience I've ever had with Jimmy Fallon has been a positive one. But it has always been in my mind that it must be so exhausting to be so cheery and so positive and so 'on.'" TV personality Bethenny Frankel on Jimmy Fallon's toxic workplace allegations.

# Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, Sept. 27, 2023 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 095 ~ 3 of 70



**What do you get for a clean sweep? A broom! Paper Paul presented Groton Area Volleyball Coach Chelsea with a broom for a clean sweep over Great Plains Lutheran Tuesday night in Groton. A clean sweep is winning the C, JV and Varsity match. She was also given brooms for clean sweeps over Sisseton, Clark/Willow Lake and Florence/Henry.** (Photo lifted from GDILIVE.COM)

## Netters have clean sweep over Great Plains Lutheran



**Carly Guthmiller**

(Photo by Jeslyn Kosel)

Groton Area's volleyball teams won all three matches for a clean sweep over Great Plains Lutheran in action played in Groton on Tuesday.

The varsity team shook off a stubborn Panther team, winning in set scores of 25-21, 26-24 and 25-21.

The first set was tied five times with two lead changes. The Tigers had a 23-21 lead down the stretch and went on to score the last two points for the win.

The second set was tied eight times with four lead changes. The Panthers jumped out to a 6-0 lead before Groton Area called time out. The Tigers rallied to the the set at eight and then the battle continued for the rest of the set. Groton Area trailed, 24-23, but came back to score the last three points for the win.

The third set was tied three times and there was one lead change when Groton captured the lead at 11-10 and slowly pulled away for the win.

Chesney Weber led Groton Area with 34 of 36 attacks and 11 kills, was six of seven from the serving line with three ace serves and had one assisted block. Anna Fjeldheim was 27 of 34 in attacks with 11 kills and was 13 of 13 from the serving line with one ace serve. Sydney Leicht had five kills, was 11

of 13 in serving with two ace serves, had one assisted block and 14 digs. Elizabeth Flihs had 24 assists, had 11 digs, was 18 of 18 in attacks with five kills and one ace serve. Rylee Dunker had four kills and three assisted blocks, Faith Traphagen had two kills, Carly Guthmiller had 15 digs, four assists, one kill and one ace serve.

Kaylee Carlson had eight kills and two assisted blocks to lead the Panthers while Abby Kjenstad had five kills, Olivia Holmen had six kills and four assisted and three solo blocks, Esta Cameron had eight kills, Kate Holmen had four assisted and one solo kill, Emma Dornbusch had one kill and Jolie Lein had one ace serve.

The match was broadcast live on GDLIVE.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 Ford, John Sieh Agency and Locke Electric

Groton Area won the junior varsity match, 25-12 and 25-16. Emma Kutter led the Tigers with eight kills while Jaedyn Penning had six kills, Kella Tracy had four kills, two ace serves and one block, McKenna Tietz had three kills and one ace serve, Jerica Locke had three ace serves, Emerlee Jones and Taryn Traphagen each had two kills and Sydney Locke had one ace serve.

Brad and Pam Hanson were the sponsors for the event on GDILIVE.COM.

Groton Area won the C match, 25-13 and 25-17. Tom Tietz was the sponsor on GDILIVE.COM.

- Paul Kosel

# Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, Sept. 27, 2023 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 095 ~ 5 of 70



**Sydney Leicht**  
(Photo by Jeslyn Kosel)



**Elizabeth Flihs**  
(Photo by Jeslyn Kosel)



**Chesney Weber**  
(Photo by Jeslyn Kosel)

# Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, Sept. 27, 2023 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 095 ~ 6 of 70



**Anna Fjeldheim**  
(Photo by Jeslyn Kosel)



**Jerica Locke**  
(Photo by Jeslyn Kosel)

# Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, Sept. 27, 2023 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 095 ~ 7 of 70

JIM CAVIEZEL



S O U N D O F

# FREEDOM

A FILM BY ALEJANDRO MONTEVERDE

BASED ON THE INCREDIBLE TRUE STORY

ANGEL STUDIOS PRESENTS A SANTA FE FILMS PRODUCTION AN EDUARDO VERÁSTEGUI PRODUCTION "SOUND OF FREEDOM" JIM CAVIEZEL WITH MIRA SORVINO AND BILL CAMP  
CASTING BY DEANNA BRIGIDI, CSA MUSIC BY JAVIER NAVARRETE EDITED BY F. BRIAN SCOFIELD DIRECTOR OF PHOTOGRAPHY GORKA GÓMEZ ANDREU AEC PRODUCED BY EDUARDO VERÁSTEGUI  
EXECUTIVE PRODUCED BY JAIME HERNÁNDEZ WRITTEN BY ROD BARR & ALEJANDRO MONTEVERDE DIRECTED BY ALEJANDRO MONTEVERDE [angel.com/freedom](http://angel.com/freedom)

ANGEL  
STUDIOS

**Sunday, Oct. 1 - 6:30 p.m.**  
**C & MA Church, 706 N. Main St., Groton**  
Tickets are \$5 at the door for Teens and Adults  
A children's movie/activity will be provided  
downstairs for ages 12 and under

# Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, Sept. 27, 2023 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 095 ~ 8 of 70



## 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



**GDILIVE.COM**



**The service of Helen  
Patricia "Pat" Nehls  
11 a.m.  
Wed., Sept. 27, 2023  
St. John's  
Lutheran Church  
Groton**



## SOUTH DAKOTA SEARCHLIGHT

<https://southdakotasearchlight.com>

### Details scant on Guard's border deployment as Noem visits troops

BY: JOSHUA HAIAR - SEPTEMBER 26, 2023 6:27 PM

Gov. Kristi Noem confirmed Tuesday that 50 South Dakota National Guard soldiers are on a previously announced deployment to the nation's southern border, but she didn't say what unit they're from, how long they'll be there, what it'll cost, or exactly what they're doing.

South Dakota Searchlight sent messages about those and other aspects of the deployment to Noem's office and the South Dakota National Guard. Noem's spokesman, Ian Fury, responded with a message that said the best summary of the Guard's work is provided by the office of Texas Gov. Greg Abbott.

"Beyond that, I will not be able to answer further questions until after the unit's return for operational security reasons," Fury said.

He included a link to a page on Abbott's website, which says the operation aims to "secure the border; stop the smuggling of drugs, weapons, and people into Texas; and prevent, detect, and interdict transnational criminal activity between ports of entry."

Noem's office said in a news release Tuesday that she visited the border and participated in a briefing with the Guard troops. She announced plans for the deployment in June and said last month that the troops would deploy Sept. 1.

Noem, a Republican, and some other states' governors are sending troops to the border in Texas at the invitation of Abbott. The operation is intended to strengthen border protections against illegal immigration beyond the actions taken by the federal government.

"With the federal response falling short, our National Guard troops are providing support alongside forces from Texas and other states to help manage the situation," Noem said in Tuesday's press release, which described the border as a "warzone."

Accompanying Noem at the border were South Dakota Adjutant Gen. Mark Morrell and South Dakota



**Gov. Kristi Noem with members of the South Dakota National Guard in Texas at the U.S.-Mexico border in September 2023.**

(Courtesy of the Governor's Office)

Secretary of Public Safety Bob Perry.

In June, Noem's office told South Dakota Searchlight the deployment would be funded by the state's Emergency and Disaster Fund, which her own budget described as being for emergencies and disasters "in South Dakota." Noem has not provided a cost estimate for the deployment.

Noem has sent National Guard troops to the nation's southern border before. In 2021, she ignited controversy with her acceptance of a \$1 million donation from Tennessee billionaire Willis Johnson to pay most of the cost for deploying 48 troops. That deployment cost a total of \$1.45 million, according to records obtained by Citizens for Responsibility and Ethics in Washington, through a Freedom of Information Act lawsuit. The \$1 million donation was routed through the Emergency and Disaster Fund, and the fund covered the portion of the deployment's cost not covered by the donation.

Also in 2021, Noem approved the sending of additional National Guard soldiers to the border at the request of the federal government. She said at the time that those additional troops were on "federal pay status."

Joshua Haiar is a reporter based in Sioux Falls. Born and raised in Mitchell, he joined the Navy as a public affairs specialist after high school and then earned a degree from the University of South Dakota. Prior to joining South Dakota Searchlight, Joshua worked for five years as a multimedia specialist and journalist with South Dakota Public Broadcasting.

## State to pay inmate in federal excessive force lawsuit

**Settlement follows an officer's simple assault conviction in state court**

**BY: JOHN HULT - SEPTEMBER 26, 2023 5:45 PM**

The state of South Dakota will pay \$6,000 to an inmate who represented himself in a lawsuit over his assault by a correctional officer in 2022.

The settlement, filed this week in federal court, comes on the heels of a state-level trial at which a jury convicted the officer of simple assault.

Shawn Albrecht was the victim in that case against Joshua Westenkirchner.

The DOC did not return a message seeking clarification on the practice. The DOC policy on suicide prevention says restraints may be recommended to prevent inmates from harming themselves or others. It also says inmates are to be monitored every 15 minutes while in restraints, and that periods of restraint longer than two hours must be approved by the warden or a designee.

The settlement in Albrecht's civil lawsuit was filed on Monday. The document was signed by Wasko, Westenkirchner, Penitentiary Warden Teresa Bittinger, former Penitentiary Warden Dan Sullivan and a DOC employee named Ring Kuol-Arob.

It stipulates that the two disciplinary infractions logged on the two days during which the assaults took



**The minimum security center of the South Dakota State Penitentiary in Sioux Falls, pictured on Feb. 16, 2023.** (John Hult/South Dakota Searchlight)

place will be stricken from Albrecht's inmate record, and that the DOC will deposit \$6,000 into his DOC offender account. Albrecht is serving time for drug and firearm possession in Minnehaha County, and was sentenced to suspended prison time for drug possession and multiple counts of forgery in Codington County. His initial parole date comes in September 2025, according to the DOC's offender locator website.

The defendants in his civil lawsuit denied all claims of constitutional violations in the settlement. It specifies that the DOC will "adhere to its long-standing practice or policy of not subjecting any inmate to retaliation as a result of his having filed a lawsuit against the State."

The case was dismissed "with prejudice," meaning Albrecht cannot bring the case again at a later date based on the 2022 incidents.

The South Dakota Attorney General's Office represented the state defendants in the case. Tony Mangan, spokesman for that office, said that the document "speaks for itself."

The DOC did not immediately respond to a request for comment on the settlement.

Ron Volesky, who represented Westenkirchner at trial, declined to comment on the settlement on Tuesday afternoon.

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

## How a looming government shutdown could hit national parks

BY: JACOB FISCHLER - SEPTEMBER 26, 2023 5:52 PM

National parks and nearby communities could forgo millions of dollars per day during a partial government shutdown that could start this weekend.

Would-be visitors will likely see restrictions on park access, though the extent of those restrictions was still unclear just days before a potential lapse in federal appropriations set to begin Sunday. Parks would lack the regular funds used for daily operations, but some could be covered temporarily by states or other funding sources.

The National Park Service furloughed about seven out of every eight workers during shutdowns in October 2013 and December 2018-January 2019, according to a report last week from the Congressional Research Service.

But the Interior Department took different approaches to visitor access in each shutdown under presidents of different parties.

In 2013, under Democratic President Barack Obama, parks were closed to the extent possible, and visitors asked to leave. Concessionaires inside parks closed and park roads, where possible, were blocked.

In 2018 and 2019, under Republican Donald Trump, most parks remained at least partially open with services reduced. In part, that approach relied on visitor fees, which was legally dubious. It also left visi-



**Visitors drive into Badlands National Park on Oct. 1, 2013, near Wall.** (Scott Olson/Getty Images)

# Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, Sept. 27, 2023 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 095 ~ 13 of 70

tors without access to even basic services like restrooms and trash removal.

That move also left parks severely understaffed and irresponsibly put visitor health and safety — and the wellbeing of the parks themselves — at risk, said John Garder, senior director for budget and appropriations at the advocacy group National Parks Conservation Association.

“The decision of the last administration to keep parks open using fees was reckless,” Garder said.

The parks had limited resources to educate visitors, he said. Some used sensitive areas of Joshua Tree National Park for camping, damaging the park’s delicate namesake flora, he said.

## No shutdown plan online

But the Interior Department has not updated its plan of action in the event of a shutdown as a funding lapse approaches.

The 2019 plan has been removed from a White House Office of Management and Budget web page listing all current agency and department shutdown plans but had not been replaced by Tuesday afternoon.

“When the Department has final lapse plans, they will be published,” Interior spokesperson Melissa Schwartz wrote in a Monday email. Department spokespeople declined further comment.

NPS parkways, such as the Blue Ridge Parkway in North Carolina and Virginia, would likely stay open because of the difficulty in closing them.

Government funding is set to lapse Oct. 1. The U.S. House Republican Conference, which controls that chamber, has shown little progress in resolving internal disputes about whether and how to reduce federal spending, leaving negotiations over regular spending bills as well as a short-term stop-gap measure to keep the government open at a standstill.

## Lost revenue and research

If park access is severely restricted, every day of a shutdown next month could result in 1 million fewer visitors to national parks, Garder said.

Visitors seeking to enter many parks — including those on long-planned trips or celebrating weddings and other special events — would likely be turned away, Garder said.

It would also mean a roughly \$70 million per day loss for so-called gateway communities outside park boundaries whose economies largely depend on tourism, according to the NPCA.

“It’s deeply disappointing for visitors, but it’s alarming and disheartening for those who worry about their bottom lines, and for park employees, whose morale is deeply affected,” Garder said.

The 16-day 2013 shutdown saw a loss of nearly 8 million visitors and \$414 million in economic activity, according to a 2014 NPS report cited by the Congressional Research Service.

A government funding lapse could also threaten long-term scientific research and park assets.

For example, a 60-year study of wolves and moose on Isle Royale, an island park 15 miles from Minnesota in Lake Superior, was interrupted by the 2018-2019 shutdown.

And the damage to the desert-dwelling Joshua trees from campers also showed the potential long-term harm to parks, said Lisa Frank, the executive director of the federal legislative office for the advocacy group Environment America.

“These trees grow very, very slowly,” she said. “They’re in a really harsh environment, that it’s totally a miracle that they grow at all in that part of the world. And so damage to some of those trees, when they’re already suffering from climate change and everything else, is a pretty severe problem.”

Senate Republican calls for parks to stay open

U.S. Sen. John Barrasso, a Wyoming Republican and ranking member of the Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee that has jurisdiction over the Park Service, wrote to Interior Secretary Deb Haaland last week asking to use visitor fees to cover operational costs during a shutdown.

The NPS used fees collected under the Federal Lands Recreation Enhancement Act to keep parks open to visitors during the last shutdown and could do so again, he said.

“Your judicious use of FLREA fees will protect the millions of people who plan and save for trips to these special places, ensure that gateway communities that rely on park visitation for jobs and economic stabilities do not needlessly suffer, and sustain the dedicated National Park Service employees who rely on a regular paycheck,” Barrasso wrote.

But the Trump administration's use of those funds was illegal, the Government Accountability Office found, as those fees were supposed to be used for other purposes.

### State funding?

In previous shutdowns, states have signed memoranda of understanding with the federal government to allow state funds to cover park costs and keep them open, Garder said.

In Arizona, Gov. Katie Hobbs, a Democrat, said last week she would sign an executive order to use state lottery revenue to keep Grand Canyon National Park open during a shutdown, according to The Associated Press. Republican Gov. Doug Ducey spent about \$200,000 to keep that park open in 2019.

While on sounder legal footing than using entrance fees, Garder said state partnerships do not excuse federal lawmakers from passing a spending law.

"It's certainly not a long-term solution," he said.

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

## Active-duty military would work without pay in shutdown, White House warns

**3,300 potentially affected service members in South Dakota**

**BY: ASHLEY MURRAY - SEPTEMBER 26, 2023 5:30 PM**

WASHINGTON — The White House is warning that a partial government shutdown would mean 1.3 million active-duty armed services members must keep working without receiving paychecks and hundreds of thousands of Pentagon employees would face furloughs.

The Biden administration on Tuesday blasted what it's now calling an "Extreme Republican Shutdown," saying it would undermine national security.

According to September 2022 figures, numerous states are home to large numbers of troops who would work without pay until after the shutdown, including Virginia with 129,400; North Carolina with 95,900; Florida with 66,900; Georgia with 63,800; and Washington with 62,100.



**U.S. Air Force ceremonial guardsmen from the 28th Bomb Wing present the colors during a change of command ceremony at Ellsworth Air Force Base, June 23, 2023.** (U.S. Air Force Photo by Airman 1st Class Yendi Borjas)

On Thursday the GOP-led U.S. House failed for a third time to begin debate on the \$826 billion defense spending bill. Another procedural vote on a multi-bill package was expected on Tuesday night as members

# Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, Sept. 27, 2023 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 095 ~ 15 of 70

return from the weekend.

"Nobody joins the military to get rich. You join because you love your country. You want to serve, and you're willing to do it at some risk to yourself. But you have every expectation that the government is going to be able to pay a decent wage and take care of your family," John Kirby, spokesperson for the administration's National Security Council, said on a call with reporters Tuesday.

"When (service members) don't get their paychecks, electrical bills, water bills, rent, mortgage, grocery bills, all that stacks up to the great detriment of these young men and women," he continued. "So in total, more than 1.3 million could actually face real financial hardship as they continue to show up to defend the rest of us."

Service members would be paid retroactively upon the end of a shutdown, which could last hours, days or weeks.

Five GOP members voted against the rule Thursday that would have allowed the House to begin debating the defense spending bill and considering nearly 200 amendments.

Among the no votes were Andy Biggs of Arizona, Dan Bishop of North Carolina and Matt Rosendale of Montana. Arizona Rep. Eli Crane and Georgia Rep. Marjorie Taylor Greene, who both supported moving forward earlier in the week, flipped to vote no.

## Government shutdown Saturday

House Speaker Kevin McCarthy has been unable to unify his party members on full-year government spending bills or even a short-term stopgap measure that would avoid a shutdown, which would occur Saturday night without action by Congress.

Far-right members of the conference want to further cut nondefense spending beyond an agreement that McCarthy reached with President Joe Biden, who signed it into law. Some also want to sever any Ukraine funding from a government funding deal.

The fiscal year ends Saturday, and McCarthy has only a slim margin of votes he can afford to lose.

And, any spending bills or short-term deals to avoid a funding lapse would need to be bipartisan enough to appeal to the Democrat-led Senate.

If no deal is reached before the year's fiscal deadline, other parts under the Defense Department's massive scope will be affected, the administration also warned.

Kirby said the Pentagon's military recruitment programs as well as procurement and management of existing defense contracts will be disrupted if the department's civilian employees are furloughed.

"All of this would prove disruptive to our national security and our efforts to address the critical needs of the American people. And again, the reason is these extreme House Republicans are basically turning their backs on a bipartisan budget deal that they worked out with the president, that two-thirds of them voted for just a few months ago."

The department's civilian workforce totals 804,422, and roughly 430,000 could face furloughs, according to the Pentagon on Tuesday.

McCarthy's office did not respond to a request for comment on the possibility of troops working without pay or Pentagon furloughs.

The offices of Biggs, Bishop, Crane, Greene and Rosendale also did not respond.

*Ashley Murray covers the nation's capital as a senior reporter for States Newsroom. Her coverage areas include domestic policy and appropriations.*

## The farm bill is on the verge of expiring. Congress is months away from a new version.

BY: ALLISON WINTER - SEPTEMBER 26, 2023 5:18 PM

WASHINGTON — As the deadline for Congress to pass a new farm bill looms this weekend, staff members of the House and Senate Agriculture committees say it will be months – if not longer – until they reach agreement on a new bill.

Lawmakers must rewrite the sweeping farm bill every five years to set both policy and funding levels for farm, food and conservation programs. The current farm bill expires at midnight Saturday, but Congress is nowhere near ready to consider a new farm bill.

“At this point, it will not be possible to pass a farm bill by Saturday,” Emily Pilscott, an economist for the Democratic staff of the House Agriculture Committee, said at a forum Tuesday with the Farm Foundation, a nonpartisan farm policy group.

The House and Senate Agriculture committees have been working over the past year to get input on the new farm bill, with dozens of hearings, field hearings, listening sessions and staff meetings in each chamber. But with a few days left before the current bill expires, lawmakers have not yet put forward legislation at the committee level and staff say they are still divided on some of the big-ticket items on the bill.

Republican and Democratic staff from both the House and Senate say both sides want to find a bill that will support farms and farmers, but there is still significant disagreement about major programs, including the “safety net” of payments to farmers, crop insurance and conservation programs.

They do not even have enough consensus on potential changes to ask for a “score” from the Congressional Budget Office – the process of seeing how much different proposals would cost over the course of the farm bill.

“We are all on the same page about wanting to help farmers, but there are definitely some disagreements about the best way to do that,” Pilscott said of House Agriculture Committee members.

Another key area of disagreement in the House is the SNAP program, a huge spending portion of the farm bill that helps low-income families buy food.

Republicans want to place more limits on the funds – a move that Democrats have warned would doom the farm bill. Congress put some restrictions on SNAP as part of the debt limit legislation.

But House Speaker Kevin McCarthy and other Republicans said afterwards they want more work re-



**Mike Scully harvests soybeans at Scully Family Farms in Spencer, Indiana, on Sept. 29, 2022.** (USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service photo by Brandon O'Connor)



# Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, Sept. 27, 2023 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 095 ~ 17 of 70

quirements for SNAP funds. Democrats on the House Agriculture Committee sent a letter to McCarthy in August that said further limits to SNAP could jeopardize the farm bill.

SNAP is considered a mandatory appropriation and would continue at current levels as long as there is an appropriations bill or a continuing resolution to keep the Agriculture Department running — another problem right now in Congress.

## 'A terrible time to do a farm bill'

The massive five-year farm bill is usually one of the more bipartisan efforts of Congress, at least on the committee level. But farm policy experts say this year's farm bill has particular challenges — both because of the partisan divide in Congress and because of the current state of the farm economy.

Jonathan Coppess, a professor of agriculture law and policy at University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, said the prospects for the farm bill are in "serious doubt," given the far-right faction that is holding up legislation in the House.

"We have an incredibly difficult political hurdle in the House and on the House floor," Coppess said.

"This is a terrible time to do a farm bill," said Joe Outlaw, an agricultural economist and professor at Texas A&M University.

Outlaw's concern is not only the political strife in the Capitol but the current farm economy. Relatively high crop prices have masked a tenuous economy for farmers.

"The farm safety net is all about the bad times, and frankly the bad times are coming, they just aren't here right now," Outlaw said.

On the Senate side, Democratic and Republican staff are meeting regularly, but there is still a divide on major issues like how to address the farm safety net.

Sen. John Boozman of Arkansas, the top ranking Republican on the Senate Agriculture Committee, has said his chief concern is to help farmers face rising input costs for things like fertilizer and fuel, along with the possibility of lower crop prices.

"Title One support does not reflect the reality on the ground today," said John Newton, chief economist for the Republicans on the Senate Agriculture Committee, in remarks at the Farm Foundation Forum.

Title One is the section of the farm bill that provides crop subsidies. Newton said Republicans would like to see a "meaningful increase in reference prices," the amount at which the government will step in and help farmers.

Meanwhile, the economist for the Democratic majority on the Senate Agriculture Committee said he is looking at how the Title One commodity programs and crop insurance work together.

"We are looking closely at program interactions, how programs work together or overlap. The farm safety net — that is where there are some really challenging interactions," said Steven Wallander, senior economist for the Democratic staff of the Senate Agriculture Committee.

## A lengthening deadline

Like many bills on Capitol Hill, the farm bill has some "discretionary" programs, which are set up in the bill but have to be funded through the annual appropriations process.

But the farm bill is unique in that most of its programs have "mandatory" spending. That funding is set in the farm bill itself and is paid out over the next five years, regardless of congressional appropriations. Those mandatory programs include crop subsidies, conservation programs, some forms of crop insurance and SNAP, formally called the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program.

Most of the mandatory programs will continue without any action through the end of the calendar year — delaying some of the urgency for Congress. In recent history, lawmakers have not passed any farm bills before the Sept. 30 deadline.

The 2018 farm bill passed in December, three months after the prior bill expired. And the three farm bills before that each passed in the year following their original deadline.

But Outlaw predicts that if lawmakers do not finish the new farm bill by February, the election cycle will take over and it could be years before they return to the farm bill.

# Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, Sept. 27, 2023 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 095 ~ 18 of 70

Wallander said he hopes the Senate committee is on a timeline similar to the 2018 farm bill, when lawmakers rolled out legislation in the fall and passed a bill by the end of the year.

Senate Democratic and Republican staff are meeting together regularly. Senate Agriculture Committee Chairwoman Debbie Stabenow, a Democrat from Michigan, and Boozman meet together weekly.

"There is strong bipartisan support for getting this done, we've seen that with the chairwoman and ranking member and their experiences working together. We think that strength is something we can leverage towards a finished product," Wallander told the Farm Foundation Forum.

On the House side, Agriculture Committee Chairman Glenn "GT" Thompson, a Republican from Pennsylvania, has said he will not bring a farm bill to the committee until there is scheduled time for debate on the House floor.

That could be a stretch this year, with the House placing a priority on spending bills to fund the government. There are only 28 voting days on the House calendar between now and the end of the calendar year.

Without a new farm bill or an extension of the current bill, crop support programs will continue through the end of the calendar year. The conservation programs are extended through 2031 as part of the Inflation Reduction Act.

## **Government shutdown another complication**

Another challenge for the farm bill is the debate over spending bills and the possibility of a government shutdown next week.

The conflict over spending has already slowed the farm bill process. If the government shuts down, committee staff will not be able to get technical assistance or new reports from the Agriculture Department.

U.S. Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack said during a Monday White House briefing that it would be nearly impossible to enact a new farm bill if there are disruptions from a federal shutdown.

"It is pretty tough to do if there is a shutdown, you can't do it," Vilsack, former Iowa governor, said.

The White House released a state-by-state breakdown, estimating that nearly 7 million people who rely on a nutrition program for women, infants and children could be at risk of losing funds to purchase select food and receive vouchers for vegetables and fruit.

The House has passed only one of its 12 appropriations bills, which need to be in place by the end of the fiscal year on Saturday. A group of far-right Republicans are pushing for steeper cuts to nondefense federal spending, even if it means a partial government shutdown.

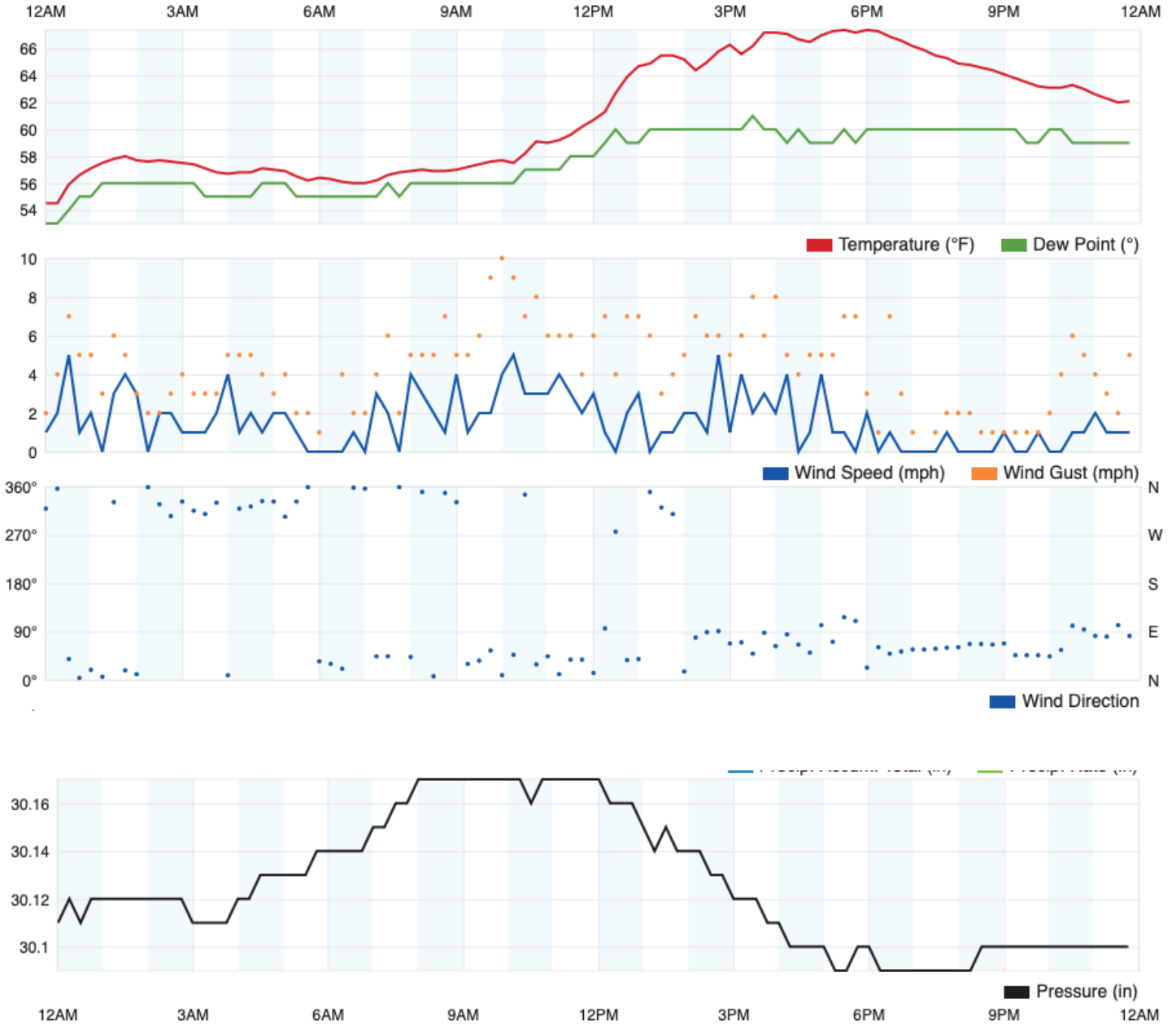
Lawmakers usually turn to a continuing resolution, or CR, to keep the government afloat for the weeks or months it takes to finish the annual spending bills. But lawmakers have not yet agreed to a CR this year, and some House Republicans have said they will block it.

*Allison Winter is a Washington D.C. correspondent for States Newsroom, a network of state-based nonprofit news outlets that includes South Dakota Searchlight.*

# Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, Sept. 27, 2023 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 095 ~ 19 of 70

## Yesterday's Groton Weather Graphs



# Broton Daily Independent

Wednesday, Sept. 27, 2023 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 095 ~ 20 of 70

Day	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat	Sun	Mon	Tue
Date	Sep 27	Sep 28	Sep 29	Sep 30	Oct 1	Oct 2	Oct 3
Icon							
High	71°F	77°F	71°F	80°F	82°F	81°F	72°F
Low	56°F	57°F	58°F	64°F	62°F	61°F	54°F
Wind	SE 10 MPH	SSE 21 MPH	ENE 10 MPH	E 16 MPH	S 17 MPH	SSE 17 MPH	S 16 MPH
Chance			50%		20%		30%



## Above Average Warmth & Mostly Dry

September 27, 2023  
3:41 AM

	<b>Wednesday</b> ➤ Highs 68-78°	
	<b>Thursday</b> ➤ Highs 75-80°	5-15° Above Normal
	<b>Friday</b> ➤ Weak Thunderstorms (20-60% Chance) ➤ Highs 72-78°	Up to 10° Above Normal
	<b>Sat &amp; Sun</b> ➤ Highs Sat 77-83° ➤ Highs Sun 80-87°	10-15° Above Normal 15-20° Above Normal

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

National Weather Service  
Aberdeen, SD

Above normal temperatures are expected through the next several days, with highs some 5 to 20 degrees above normal. Mostly dry conditions are expected, though there'll be some weak thunderstorms passing through on Friday.

# Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, Sept. 27, 2023 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 095 ~ 21 of 70

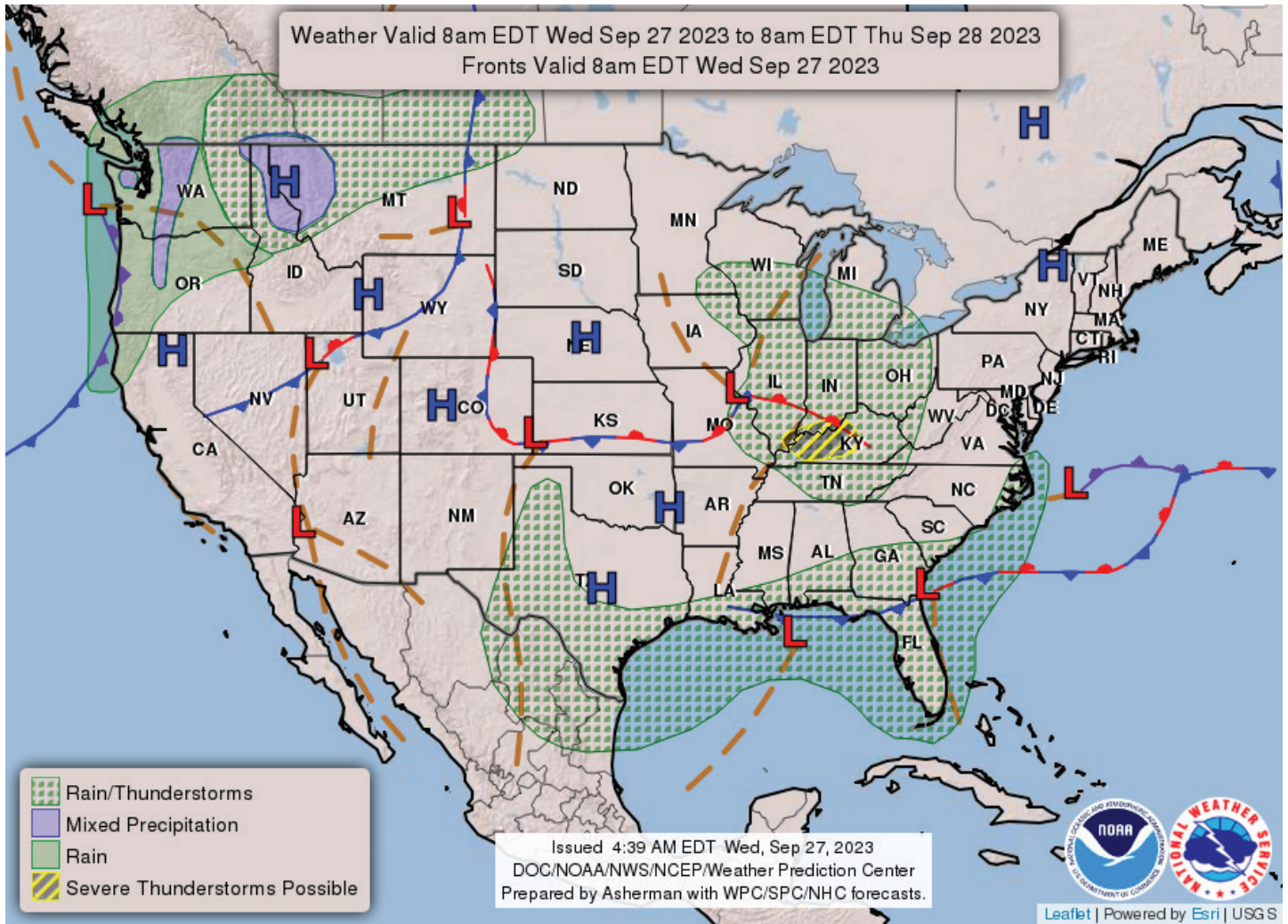
## Yesterday's Groton Weather

**High Temp: 68 °F at 5:22 PM**  
**Low Temp: 54 °F at 12:07 AM**  
**Wind: 11 mph at 2:50 PM**  
**Precip: : 0.00**

Day length: 11 hours, 58 minutes

## Today's Info

Record High: 95 in 1952  
Record Low: 22 in 1900  
Average High: 70  
Average Low: 42  
Average Precip in Sept.: 1.79  
Precip to date in Sept.: 2.79  
Average Precip to date: 18.13  
Precip Year to Date: 21.38  
Sunset Tonight: 7:22:31 PM  
Sunrise Tomorrow: 7:25:27 AM



# Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, Sept. 27, 2023 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 095 ~ 22 of 70

## Today in Weather History

September 27, 1983: Lightning caused a grass fire which burned 25,000 acres northwest of Reliance during the evening hours. At its peak, the fire was four miles wide by ten miles long.

September 27, 1985: Snow fell across south-central South Dakota from the evening of the 27th until the early afternoon of the 28th. Three to five inches of snow occurred with up to 18 inches reported around Winner. Eight to 12 inches fell around Gregory and Burke.

1816 - A black frost over most of New England kills unripened corn in the north resulting in a year of famine. (David Ludlum)

1822: Using various documents and meteorological observations determined a hurricane moved ashore on this day in South Carolina. One account from Bull Island, South Carolina records the eye passing directly over that location.

1906: The second September storm of 1906 was one of great violence. On the 27th the hurricane reached the central Gulf Coast with destructive winds and unprecedented tides. At Pensacola, FL, the tide was 10 feet above normal. At Mobile, AL property damage was severe. An estimated 134 lives were lost from Pensacola, FL to Mississippi from this storm.

1911: The earliest photograph of a tornado in Australia occurred on this day. The estimated F3 tornado tore through Marong, Victoria, or about 150 km from Melbourne.

1959 - A tornado 440 yards in width traveled twenty miles from near Hollow, OK, to western Cherokee County KS. Although a strong tornado, it was very slow moving, and gave a tremendous warning roar, and as a result no one was killed. (The Weather Channel)

1959: Typhoon Vera was the strongest and deadliest typhoon on record to make landfall on the islands of Japan. Damage totals from this typhoon are estimated at \$4.85 billion (USD 2015). An estimated 4,000 deaths occurred from Typhoon Vera. This Category 5 Typhoon first made landfall on September 26 near Shionomisaki on Honshu. Vera transitioned to an extratropical cyclone on September 27, which continued to affect the island for an additional two days.

1970 - Afternoon highs of 103 degrees at Long Beach, CA, and 105 degrees at the Los Angeles Civic Center were the hottest since September records were established in 1963. Fierce Santa Ana winds accompanying the extreme heat resulted in destructive fires. (The Weather Channel)

1985: Hurricane Gloria swept over the Outer Banks then rushed across Long Island, New England, and Canada. It was the first significant hurricane to hit New England in twenty-five years and brought heavy rains and high winds to the Mid-Atlantic states as well.

1985 - A record early season snowstorm struck the Central High Plains Region. The storm left up to nineteen inches of snow along the Colorado Front Range, and as much as a foot of snow in the High Plains Region. (Storm Data)

1987 - While those at the base of Mount Washington, NH, enjoyed sunny skies and temperatures in the 70s, the top of the mountain was blanketed with 4.7 inches of snow, along with wind gusts to 99 mph, and a temperature of 13 degrees. Severe thunderstorms developed along a cold front in the south central U.S. A thunderstorm west of Noodle TX produced golf ball size hail and wind gusts to 70 mph. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1988 - Thunderstorms developing ahead of a cold front produced large hail in southeastern Wyoming during the afternoon, with tennis ball size hail reported at Cheyenne. Strong winds ushering the cold air into the north central U.S. gusted to 59 mph at Lander WY. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1989 - Freezing temperatures were reported in the Great Lakes Region and the Ohio Valley. Houghton Lake MI reported a record low of 21 degrees. Thunderstorms in the western U.S. produced wind gusts to 50 mph at Salt Lake City UT, and gusts to 58 mph at Cody WY. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

2014: A squall line impacted central Arizona, including the Phoenix Metro area.

Daily Devotionals

## Seeds of Hope

### THE GREATEST OFFERING

It was the final night of the annual missionary conference. There were missionaries from many nations gathered to tell of the work of God all around the world. Hearts were deeply touched, and many lives were changed.

The pastor concluded the final service with an offering that was to be shared among the speakers. The plates were filled with money and checks. But on one plate was a note that simply read, "Myself." Underneath the word "Myself" was the name and phone number of the person who signed it.

The next day the pastor called the young man who signed it and asked, "What do you mean, James?" "I'm giving myself to become a missionary," he said. And then he added, "I'm willing to go anywhere and do anything at any cost to serve the Lord."

James made an important gift to God: his body. Unfortunately, many Christians believe that God is only concerned about our souls. Not so! We need to realize that our bodies belong to God just as much as our souls. When we give Him our souls, He expects our bodies as well.

The body is the temple of the Holy Spirit and is the only instrument through which the Holy Spirit works. So, Paul says, "Take your body and think of all that it does each day - the skills and the abilities it performs, and with training, can perform - and offer your body and its potential - to God. And when you do, follow Him where He leads You."

Prayer: May we realize, Father, that You expect us to give our bodies to You just as Your only Son did. May we not limit what You can do because we fail to give our bodies. In Jesus' Name, Amen.

Scripture For Today: And so, dear brothers and sisters, I plead with you to give your bodies to God because of all he has done for you. Let them be a living and holy sacrifice-the kind he will find acceptable. This is truly the way to worship him. Romans 12:1



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

# Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, Sept. 27, 2023 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 095 ~ 24 of 70

## 2023 Community Events

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



# Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, Sept. 27, 2023 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 095 ~ 25 of 70

## The Groton Independent Printed & Mailed Weekly Edition

### Subscription Form

All prices listed include 6.5% Sales Tax

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

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

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

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

City \_\_\_\_\_

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

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

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

Mail Completed Form to:

Groton Independent

P.O. Box 34

Groton, SD 57445-0034

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

## Groton Daily Independent

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

### Subscription Form

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

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

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

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

City \_\_\_\_\_

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

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

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

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

Password \_\_\_\_\_

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

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



# Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, Sept. 27, 2023 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 095 ~ 26 of 70



## WINNING NUMBERS

### MEGA MILLIONS

WINNING NUMBERS:

09.26.23

15 30 35 42 60 16

MegaPlier: 4x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:

**\$267,000,000**

NEXT 2 Days 17 Hrs 22  
DRAW: Mins 22 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

### LOTTO AMERICA

WINNING NUMBERS:

09.25.23

19 23 31 38 52 8

All Star Bonus: 2x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:

**\$2,350,000**

NEXT 16 Hrs 37 Mins 22  
DRAW: Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

### LUCKY FOR LIFE

WINNING NUMBERS:

09.26.23

12 14 16 32 33 4

TOP PRIZE:

**\$7,000/week**

NEXT 16 Hrs 52 Mins 21  
DRAW: Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

### DAKOTA CASH

WINNING NUMBERS:

09.23.23

2 5 9 14 23

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:

**\$20,000**

NEXT 16 Hrs 52 Mins 21  
DRAW: Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

### POWERBALL

DOUBLE PLAY

WINNING NUMBERS:

09.25.23

5 16 18 38 40 19

TOP PRIZE:

**\$10,000,000**

NEXT 17 Hrs 21 Mins 22  
DRAW: Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

### POWERBALL

WINNING NUMBERS:

09.25.23

10 12 22 36 50 4

Power Play: 2x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:

**\$835,000,000**

NEXT 17 Hrs 21 Mins 22  
DRAW: Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

# Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, Sept. 27, 2023 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 095 ~ 27 of 70

## News from the Associated Press

### Tuesday's Scores

The Associated Press

PREP VOLLEYBALL=

Aberdeen Christian def. Wilmot, 25-15, 22-25, 25-11, 25-13  
Andes Central/Dakota Christian def. Colome, 25-16, 25-20, 25-16  
Baltic def. Dell Rapids St. Mary, 25-16, 25-13, 25-10  
Belle Fourche def. Custer, 25-16, 27-25, 25-23  
Bon Homme def. Gregory, 25-9, 25-17, 25-14  
Burke def. Tripp-Delmont/Armour, 25-21, 25-11, 25-16  
Canistota def. Tri-Valley, 25-16, 25-15, 22-25, 25-13  
Canton def. West Central, 25-13, 25-13, 25-20  
Centerville def. Marty Indian, 25-5, 25-8, 25-11  
Chester def. Deubrook, 25-9, 25-14, 25-12  
Clark/Willow Lake def. DeSmet, 19-25, 18-25, 25-20, 25-16, 15-5  
Colman-Egan def. Howard, 25-9, 25-12, 25-17  
Crow Creek Tribal School def. St. Francis Indian, 25-19, 25-21, 25-20  
Dell Rapids def. McCook Central/Montrose, 25-21, 25-11, 26-24  
Elkton-Lake Benton def. Flandreau, 25-23, 25-19, 16-25, 24-26, 15-12  
Estelline/Hendricks def. Flandreau Indian, 25-5, 25-8, 25-1  
Ethan def. Bridgewater-Emery, 23-25, 25-16, 25-21, 25-21  
Faulkton def. Langford, 22-25, 25-20, 25-10, 25-17  
Garretson def. Alcester-Hudson, 28-26, 22-25, 25-20, 25-23  
Groton Area def. Great Plains Lutheran, 25-21, 26-24, 25-21  
Hamlin def. Castlewood, 10-25, 26-24, 25-19, 21-25, 15-13  
Harrisburg def. Sioux Falls Roosevelt, 0-25, 25-0, 26-24, 25-22  
Hitchcock-Tulare def. Sunshine Bible Academy, 25-6, 25-14, 25-13  
Hot Springs def. Sturgis Brown, 24-26, 26-24, 26-24, 25-23  
James Valley Christian def. Kimball/White Lake, 18-25, 25-22, 25-12, 25-22  
Kadoka Area def. Bennett County, 25-15, 25-9, 25-15  
Lakota Tech def. Little Wound, 25-19, 25-15, 25-18  
Lemmon High School def. Bison, 25-20, 25-15, 25-18  
Lennox def. Beresford, 25-11, 25-11, 25-14  
Leola-Frederick High School def. North Central Co-Op, 25-20, 25-15, 25-18  
Lyman def. Lower Brule, 25-15, 25-11, 25-13  
Madison def. Parker, 25-12, 25-14, 25-16  
Menno def. Irene-Wakonda, 25-19, 25-22, 25-22  
Miller def. Chamberlain, 25-8, 25-12, 25-14  
Mobridge-Pollock def. Cheyenne-Eagle Butte, 25-7, 25-4, 25-9  
Northwestern def. Redfield, 25-17, 25-17, 25-10  
Pierre T F Riggs High School def. Rapid City Christian, 25-22, 25-15, 19-25, 24-26, 15-10  
Platte-Geddes def. Mt. Vernon/Plankinton, 25-17, 25-18, 20-25, 22-25, 15-7  
Red Cloud def. Lead-Deadwood, 26-24, 25-10, 25-19  
Sanborn Central/Woonsocket def. Highmore-Harrold, 25-22, 25-20, 25-22  
Sioux Falls Christian def. Western Christian, Iowa, 25-18, 25-15, 25-13  
Sioux Falls Jefferson def. Yankton, 25-16, 25-20, 25-21  
Sioux Falls Washington def. Huron, 25-10, 25-14, 25-17

# Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, Sept. 27, 2023 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 095 ~ 28 of 70

Sisseton def. Britton-Hecla, 27-25, 25-15, 25-16  
Spearfish def. St. Thomas More, 27-25, 25-16, 25-12  
Sully Buttes def. Potter County, 17-25, 25-23, 25-14, 25-14  
Wagner def. Hanson, 25-14, 25-20, 25-20  
Wall def. Jones County, 25-17, 25-13, 25-19  
Warner def. Aberdeen Roncalli, 25-8, 25-12, 25-15  
Watertown def. Brookings, 27-29, 25-13, 25-17, 22-25, 20-18  
Webster def. Waubay/Summit, 25-14, 25-10, 25-23  
Wessington Springs def. Corsica/Stickney, 25-14, 25-18, 25-18  
Winner def. Todd County, 25-10, 25-10, 25-18  
Oelrichs Triangular=  
Edgemont def. Oelrichs, 25-7, 25-9, 25-9  
Edgemont def. Takini, 25-4, 25-4, 25-14

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

## A fire at a wedding hall in northern Iraq has killed around 100 people and injured 150

By FARID ABDULWAHED Associated Press

MOSUL, Iraq (AP) — A raging fire seemingly caused by fireworks set off to celebrate a Christian wedding consumed a hall packed with guests in northern Iraq, killing around 100 people and injuring 150 others as authorities warned Wednesday the death toll could still rise.

Authorities said that flammable building materials also contributed to the latest disaster to hit Iraq's dwindling Christian minority. In the fire's chaotic aftermath, officials offered conflicting death tolls and security officials said they detained staff at the wedding hall as part of their investigation.

The fire happened in the Hamdaniya area of Iraq's Nineveh province, authorities said. That's a predominantly Christian area just outside of the city of Mosul, some 335 kilometers (205 miles) northwest of Baghdad.

There was no official word on the cause of the blaze, but the Kurdish television news channel Rudaw aired footage showing pyrotechnics shooting flames up from the floor of the event and setting a chandelier aflame.

After the blaze, charred metal and debris could be seen as people walked through the scene of the fire, the only light coming from television cameras and the lights of onlookers' mobile phones.

Survivors arrived at local hospitals in bandages, receiving oxygen, as their families milled through hallways and outside as workers organized more oxygen cylinders. Some of those burned included children. Ambulance sirens wailed for hours after the fire as paramedics brought out the injured.

Other footage shown on other local television networks appeared to show the bride and groom on the dance floor when the fire began Tuesday night, stunned by the sight of the burning debris. It wasn't immediately clear if they were among those hurt.

Multiple witnesses, including 50-year-old wedding attendee Faten Youssef, said the fire started as the bride and groom began their slow dance. The flames raced through plastic decorations and the ceiling started collapsing, she said.

"Flames started falling on us," Youssef told The Associated Press. "Things were falling down and blocked the way to the exit."

She said her family found their way out through a kitchen, after the family struggled through smoke and flames and her son failed to kick through a jammed exit door.

Extravagant wedding ceremonies are common in Iraq, like many countries in the Middle East. Families often invite hundreds of relatives and members of the broader community, spending heavily on spectacular ceremonies with elaborately decorated halls, music and entertainers, often including pyrotechnics.

# Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, Sept. 27, 2023 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 095 ~ 29 of 70

Casualty figures fluctuated in the hours after the incident, which is common in Iraq. An initial Health Ministry statement, carried by the state-run Iraqi News Agency, said the blaze killed over 100 people and injured 150. Health officials in Nineveh province put the death toll at 114.

A Health Ministry official, speaking to the AP at midday Wednesday on condition of anonymity as he did not have authorization to talk to journalists, put the death toll at 92, with 101 people still receiving medical treatment.

"The death toll is expected to rise as some are in critical condition," he said.

Ahmed Dubardani, a health official in the province, told Rudaw that many of those injured suffered serious burns.

"The majority of them were completely burned and some others had 50 to 60% of their bodies burned," Dubardani said. "This is not good at all. The majority of them were not in good condition."

Father Rudi Saffar Khoury, a priest at the wedding, said "It was a disaster in every sense of the word."

The number of Christians in Iraq today is estimated at 150,000, compared to 1.5 million in 2003. Iraq's total population is more than 40 million.

Over the past two decades, Iraq's Christian minority has been violently targeted by extremists first from al-Qaida and then the Islamic State militant group. Although the Nineveh Plains, their historic homeland, was wrested back from the Islamic State group six years ago, some towns are still mostly rubble and lack basic services, and many Christians have left for Europe, Australia or the United States.

Prime Minister Mohammed Shia al-Sudani ordered an investigation into the fire and asked the country's Interior and Health officials to provide relief, his office said in a statement online.

Hamdaniya is on Iraq's Nineveh Plains and under the control of its central government, though it is close to and claimed by Iraq's semiautonomous Kurdish regional government. Masrour Barzani, the prime minister of the Kurdish region, ordered hospitals there to help those hurt in the blaze.

The different governments being involved in the response to the fire added to the uncertainty over the blaze's toll.

The United Nations' mission to Iraq offered its condolences over the blaze as well, describing its staff as "shocked and hurt by the huge loss of life and injuries" in the blaze.

Interior Ministry spokesman Saad Maan in a video from the wedding venue said that the primary forensic report described a "lack of safety and security measures" at the venue. Iraqi security forces arrested nine workers at the venue as part of their investigation, said Abdullah Al-Jabouri, a security official who heads the Nineveh Operations Command.

Civil defense officials quoted by the Iraqi News Agency described the wedding hall's exterior as decorated with a highly flammable type of "sandwich panel" cladding that is illegal in the country.

"The fire led to the collapse of parts of the hall as a result of the use of highly flammable, low-cost building materials that collapse within minutes when the fire breaks out," civil defense said.

Experts say cheaper sandwich panels don't always meet stricter safety standards, and are especially dangerous on buildings without any breaks to slow or halt a possible blaze. That includes the 2017 Grenfell Fire in London that killed 72 people in the greatest loss of life in a fire on British soil since World War II, as well as multiple high-rise fires in the United Arab Emirates.

Similar panels have been blamed in several previous fires in Iraq. In July 2021, a blaze at a hospital in the Iraqi city of Nasiriyah was determined to have been fueled by sandwich panels. It killed between 60 to 92 people, according to conflicting statements by officials at the time.

## **A hard-right party gathers strength in Poland, pushing a new, less friendly course on Ukraine**

By VANESSA GERA Associated Press

KATOWICE, Poland (AP) — Poland's hard-right Confederation party opened its electoral campaign convention as if it were a rock concert, with a singer riding up on a motorcycle, its engine revving, and a pyrotechnic show of flames and sparklers.

# Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, Sept. 27, 2023 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 095 ~ 30 of 70

The party has been growing in popularity, especially among young men fed up with the political parties that have dominated Poland for most of the post-Communist era. Its convention in Katowice on Saturday, billed as its largest ahead of parliamentary elections on Oct. 15, was aimed at energizing more voters and at playing down antisemitism and other extreme views among some of its members.

Through smoke and fire, Confederation's leaders made their case for lower taxes, less regulation and an anti-European Union and anti-Ukraine foreign policy.

Confederation has turned up the heat on the Polish political establishment, riding a wave of support for nationalist conservative parties across Europe. Similar political forces have surged on opposition to widespread migration to Europe and anger over COVID-19 lockdowns and vaccine mandates. Such parties now govern in Italy, belong to the government in Finland and support a minority government in Sweden.

The Polish party, which won nearly 7% of the vote four years ago, was polling at around 15% in the summer, creating the prospect of a third-place finish after the governing national conservative party Law and Justice, which is the frontrunner in surveys, and the opposition Civic Coalition, led by former Prime Minister Donald Tusk, which is trailing in second place.

That created speculation that it could end up as a coalition partner in the next government with Law and Justice. Such a scenario could push the EU and NATO even further to the political right and weaken Poland's support for the Western alliance defending Ukraine.

For now, Confederation's leaders insist they have no intention of joining established powers at the table.

"We are going to these elections to overturn the table where all the politicians are sitting," said Krzysztof Bosak, a party co-leader, speaking at the convention in Katowice where the party introduced its campaign slogan, "We can do anything."

No matter what happens on election day, Confederation has already altered the central European nation's relationship with neighboring Ukraine, which is fighting for its survival against a brutal invasion from Russia.

The party's poll numbers rose as its leaders hammered their message that Poland, a key ally, was not getting the gratitude it deserved for sending Kyiv weapons and helping large numbers of refugees.

Like other European hard-right parties, Confederation not only opposes vaccine mandates and mass migration, it is also hostile to LGBTQ+ people and skeptical on climate change.

But on Ukraine, it had to tread carefully. Poland spent more than 40 years behind the Iron Curtain and memories of Russian domination still sting. The party used a wedge issue to build support for its stance. Ukrainian grain and other agricultural products have entered Polish markets, causing a glut and driving down prices for local farmers.

Feeling the heat, Poland's government hardened its line. It has banned imports of Ukrainian grain, triggering angry words and retaliation from Kyiv at the World Trade Organization. Ties fell to their lowest point since Russia's invasion. Prime Minister Morawiecki suggested last week that the days of sending Polish weapons to Ukraine could be over.

Confederation's leaders are gloating — but their poll numbers have fallen as the government moved closer to their position.

"The myth of this (Polish-Ukrainian) partnership ... lies in ruins," Bosak said. "It is clear that Confederation was the only one that correctly read the dynamics of relations between Poland and Ukraine, which was based on taking advantage of Polish naivety."

The party, whose full name is Confederation, Liberty and Independence, is an alliance of radical nationalists and free-market libertarians founded in 2018.

The party criticizes the government's social spending and regulations, saying they stifle small businesses. It opposes a monthly payment of 500 zlotys (\$116) to families, regardless of their income, for each child under 18. During the campaign, the governing party voted to raise the payment to 800 zlotys (\$185).

Confederation argues that such policies are contributing to double-digit inflation. It says it prefers tax cuts over cash handouts, a stance that appeals to some entrepreneurs and adults with no children who are paying into the system but not seeing the money flow back to them.

While Confederation stresses its free-market credentials, many Poles remain concerned over troubling

# Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, Sept. 27, 2023 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 095 ~ 31 of 70

statements by some of its members.

One that keeps coming back to haunt them is a comment by Slawomir Mentzen, another party co-leader. "We don't want Jews, homosexuals, abortion, taxes or the European Union," he said in 2019, describing his supporters.

Mentzen, who runs a brewery, also faced allegations of racism in 2021 by producing a beer called "White IPA Matters." He said it was just a humorous reference to the Black Lives Matter movement in the United States.

"Poland has no racist or colonial past. We don't have to apologize to anyone for anything in connection with this," he told the AP at the time.

And the party counts other controversial men in its ranks.

One, 80-year-old Janusz Korwin-Mikke, was suspended as a lawmaker in the European Parliament for making Nazi salutes during sessions. He has said that Poland should have cooperated with Adolf Hitler, and repeated a false claim that Hitler did not know about the Holocaust.

He has questioned whether women should have the right to vote, claiming wrongly that they are "less intelligent." And he also defended Russian President Vladimir Putin after the invasion of Ukraine.

Another, Grzegorz Braun, has falsely claimed that there is a plot to turn Poland into a "Jewish state" and has called for homosexuality to be criminalized.

The largest applause on Saturday was for those two men.

Wojciech Przybylski, editor-in-chief of Visegrad Insight, a policy journal focused on Central Europe, said that extremist voters only make up a small fraction of Polish society. If Confederation wants to win more votes, it must move to the political center, putting "a brighter face on the nationalism and extremist policies it represents," he says.

The party is working to improve its image. Participants who registered for Saturday's convention were warned that unless they arrived in elegant clothes, they wouldn't be let in.

Mentzen seemed to try to take on the issue head on and use it to the party's advantage.

"We may be a bit unconventional. We sometimes have controversial views or controversial statements," he said. "But believe me, you don't have to agree with every statement of every member of ours to be able to vote for us."

Some supporters who were interviewed after the convention stressed that they were voting for the party for its economic policies. Most did not want to give their last names.

A sales representative from Poznan said he was giving Confederation his vote because "another power wanted to suffocate us with vaccinations and lockdowns" during the COVID-19 pandemic.

"Confederation was on our side and they fought for us," Rafal Iks said as he left the convention. "We are fighting for them today."

## **Iran says it has successfully launched an imaging satellite into orbit amid tensions with the West**

DUBAI, United Arab Emirates (AP) — Iran claimed on Wednesday that it successfully launched an imaging satellite into space, a move that could further ratchet up tensions with Western nations that fear its space technology could be used to develop nuclear weapons.

Iran's Communication Minister Isa Zarepour said the Noor-3 satellite had been put in an orbit 450 kilometers (280 miles) above the Earth's surface, the state-run IRNA news agency reported. It was not clear when exactly the launch took place.

There was no immediate acknowledgment from Western officials of the launch or of the satellite being put into orbit. The U.S. military did not immediately respond to a request for comment. Iran has had a series of failed launches in recent years.

Zarepour said the aerospace arm of Iran's paramilitary Revolutionary Guard, which has had success in launching satellites in the past, had carried out the most recent launch.

Authorities released footage of a rocket taking off from a mobile launcher without saying where the launch occurred. Details in the video corresponded with a Guard base near Shahroud, some 330 kilometers (205 miles) northeast of the capital, Tehran. The base is in Semnan province, which hosts the Imam Khomeini Spaceport from which Iran's civilian space program operates.

The Guard operates its own space program and military infrastructure parallel to Iran's regular armed forces and answers only to Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei.

It launched its first satellite into space in April 2020. But the head of the U.S. Space Command later dismissed it as a "tumbling webcam in space" that would not provide vital intelligence. Western sanctions bar Iran from importing advanced spying technology.

The United States has alleged that Iran's satellite launches defy a U.N. Security Council resolution and has called on Tehran to undertake no activity related to ballistic missiles capable of delivering nuclear weapons.

The U.S. intelligence community's 2022 threat assessment claims the development of satellite launch vehicles "shortens the timeline" for Iran to develop an intercontinental ballistic missile because it uses similar technology.

Iran has always denied seeking nuclear weapons, and says its space program, like its nuclear activities, is for purely civilian purposes. U.S. intelligence agencies and the International Atomic Energy Agency say Iran abandoned an organized military nuclear program in 2003.

Over the past decade, Iran has sent several short-lived satellites into orbit and in 2013 launched a monkey into space. The program has seen recent troubles, however. There have been five failed launches in a row for the Simorgh program, another satellite-carrying rocket.

A fire at the Imam Khomeini Spaceport in February 2019 killed three researchers, authorities said at the time. A launchpad rocket explosion later that year drew the attention of then-President Donald Trump.

Tensions are already high with Western nations over Iran's nuclear program, which has steadily advanced since Trump five years ago withdrew the U.S. from the 2015 nuclear agreement with world powers and restored crippling sanctions on Iran.

Efforts to revive the agreement reached an impasse more than a year ago. Since then, the IAEA has said Iran has enough uranium enriched to near-weapons grade levels to build "several" nuclear weapons if it chooses to do so. Iran is also building a new underground nuclear facility that would likely be impervious to U.S. or Israeli airstrikes. Both countries have said they would take military action if necessary to prevent Iran from developing a nuclear weapon.

Iran has expressed willingness to return to the 2015 nuclear deal, but says the U.S. should first ease the sanctions.

## **Azerbaijan says 192 of its troops were killed in last week's offensive in Nagorno-Karabakh**

By The Associated Press undefined

A total of 192 Azerbaijani troops were killed and 511 were wounded during Azerbaijan's offensive in Nagorno-Karabakh last week, the country's Health Ministry announced on Wednesday. It also said that one Azeri civilian died in the hostilities.

Nagorno-Karabakh officials said earlier that at least 200 people on their side, including 10 civilians, were killed and over 400 were wounded in the fighting.

The military operation allowed Azerbaijan to reclaim full control over the breakaway region that was run by separatists for about 30 years. Tens of thousands of ethnic Armenians — more than a third of the region's population — have already left. More are likely to follow after separatist troops agreed to lay down arms and Azerbaijan lifted a 10-month blockade of the road linking the territory to Armenia.

Azerbaijan and separatist officials have held two rounds of talks on the "reintegration" of Nagorno-Karabakh and its ethnic Armenian population into the mainly Muslim country, but how exactly it would happen remains unclear.

Nagorno-Karabakh is a region of Azerbaijan that came under the control of ethnic Armenian forces,



backed by the Armenian military, in separatist fighting that ended in 1994. During a six-week war in 2020, Azerbaijan took back parts of Nagorno-Karabakh along with surrounding territory that Armenian forces had claimed during the earlier conflict.

In December, Azerbaijan imposed a blockade of the only road connecting Nagorno-Karabakh with Armenia, alleging that the Armenian government was using the road for mineral extraction and illicit weapons shipments to the region's separatist forces.

Armenia charged that the closure denied basic food and fuel supplies to Nagorno-Karabakh's approximately 120,000 people. Azerbaijan rejected the accusation, arguing the region could receive supplies through the Azerbaijani city of Aghdam — a solution long resisted by Nagorno-Karabakh authorities, who called it a strategy for Azerbaijan to gain control of the region.

Some 42,500 people, or about 35% of Nagorno-Karabakh's ethnic Armenian population, had left for neighboring Armenia as of Wednesday morning, according to Armenian authorities. Hours-long traffic jams were reported on Tuesday on the road linking Nagorno-Karabakh to Armenia.

An explosion at a gas station near the region's capital Stepanakert, where people were queuing to fuel up their cars before leaving for Armenia, on Monday night killed at least 68 people, according to Nagorno-Karabakh's human rights ombudsman Gegham Stepanyan. Another 290 were wounded, and a total of 105 were considered missing as of Tuesday evening, he said.

The Armenian Health Ministry on Wednesday said 237 people wounded in both the hostilities last week and the gas station explosion on Monday had been evacuated by ambulance and helicopter from Nagorno-Karabakh.

They're receiving necessary treatment, and the process of evacuating the injured continues, the ministry said.

## **How did the Maui fire spread so quickly? Overgrown gully, stubborn embers may be key to probe**

By MICHAEL BIESECKER, JENNIFER McDERMOTT and BERNARD CONDON Associated Press

Melted remains of an old car tire. Heavily burned trees. A charred stump of an abandoned utility pole.

Investigators are examining these and other pieces of evidence as they seek to solve the mystery of last month's deadly Maui wildfire: How did a small, wind-whipped fire sparked by downed power lines and declared extinguished flare up again hours later into a devastating inferno?

The answer may lie in an overgrown gully beneath Hawaiian Electric Co. power lines and something that harbored smoldering embers from the initial fire before rekindling in high winds into a wall of flame that quickly overtook the town of Lahaina, destroying thousands of structures and killing at least 97 people.

But as investigators sift through blackened debris to explain the deadliest U.S. wildfire in more than a century, one fact has become clear: Hawaiian Electric's right-of-way was untrimmed and unkempt for years, despite being in an area classified as being at high risk for wildfires.

Aerial and satellite imagery reviewed by The Associated Press show the gully has long been choked with thick grass, shrubs, small trees and trash, which a severe summer drought turned into tinder-dry fuel for fires. Photos taken after the blaze show charred foliage in the utility's right-of-way still more than 10 feet high.

"It was not manicured at all," said Lahaina resident Gemsley Balagso, who has lived next to the gully for 20 years and never saw it mowed. He watched and took video Aug. 8 after the flames reignited there and were stoked by winds from a hurricane churning offshore.

"The winds were blowing 90 miles an hour (145 kmh) downhill," Balagso told the AP. "From the time of reignition or rekindling to the time it passed my house, it was less than a minute."

Though findings of a cause are not expected for months, the focus on Hawaiian Electric's role in managing brush in its right-of-way could strengthen claims of negligence against the utility, which is facing an onslaught of lawsuits blaming it for failing to proactively cut electricity in the face of high-wind warnings, upgrade its power poles and clear foliage from around its lines.

# Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, Sept. 27, 2023 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 095 ~ 34 of 70

Hawaiian Electric has acknowledged its downed lines caused the initial fire but has argued in court filings it couldn't be responsible for the later flare-up because its lines had been turned off for hours by the time the fire reignited and spread through the town. The utility instead sought to shift the blame to Maui County fire officials for what it believes was their premature, false claim that they had extinguished the first fire. The county denies firefighters were negligent.

Since taking that position in late August, Hawaiian Electric's besieged stock has rebounded by over a third as investors bet the company will survive a legal fight over liability for the disaster estimated to have caused \$5.5 billion in damage.

Asked about the overgrown gully, Hawaiian Electric said in a statement to AP that the right-of-way allows it to "remove anything that interferes with our lines and could potentially cause an outage" but does not allow it to "go on to private property to perform landscaping or grass-mowing."

The landowner, Kamehameha Schools, run by a \$15 billion educational endowment and also named in litigation over the Maui fire, told AP it has "no control over and cannot interfere with" Hawaiian Electric's equipment in the right-of-way but "never had any objection" to the utility doing work to keep the area safe from its poles and lines.

It's a point of contention. National standards don't specifically call for utilities to clear away vegetation unless it is tall enough to reach their lines, but fire science experts say utilities should go beyond that in wildfire areas to remove excess brush that could fuel a fire.

## CLUES IN THE INVESTIGATION

Investigators led by the federal Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives and Maui County have declined to comment on specifics of the ongoing probe.

But AP reviewed more than 950 photos taken last month showing ATF and Maui investigators combing through the gully area, marking items with yellow tape, and examining splintered power poles, severed electrical lines and other evidence. The photos were given to the AP by Morgan & Morgan, a law firm suing Hawaiian Electric on behalf of residents who lost their homes.

Three fire science experts who examined the photos for the AP noticed several items that could be possible ignition sources for the rekindled fire. They include a heavily charred, hollowed 4-foot-tall stump of a utility pole that was marked with yellow tape, pulled from the ground with a crane and trucked to an evidence warehouse. Investigators also examined two heavily burned trees and piles of rocks strewn with trash, including the remains of an old car tire, its frayed steel belts poking through melted rubber.

While experts cautioned the right-of-way was full of places where embers could fester, they noted that these larger items stood out because the second fire erupted hours later, and stumps and roots have been known to keep embers glowing a long time, in some cases weeks.

"Obviously a quarter-inch diameter twig is probably not going to smolder for five hours because there's not going to be enough fuel," said Vyto Babrauskas, a New York-based expert on smoldering fires. "But a big thing like a tree stump or a power pole stump, certainly there's no reason it would be unable to smolder."

Hawaiian Electric said the old pole stump was left behind when a new pole was installed next to it. It did not respond to questions about whether it is company policy to leave old poles in place after they are replaced.

The utility said the charred stump was removed at the request of ATF investigators, but that lots of material in the area was collected out of an "abundance of caution."

## TIMELINE OF TWO FIRES

The investigation also appears to be focusing on what happened between the first and second flare-ups, particularly a crucial 36-minute gap between the time fire crews left the scene and the first 911 calls reporting that the fire had rekindled.

As the AP first reported last month, videos taken by two Lahaina homeowners on Aug. 8 show that utility poles and lines along Lahainaluna Road were snapped by strong winds shortly after 6:30 a.m., igniting tall grass and brush below. Maui County firefighters arrived within minutes and began dousing the flames.

By 10 a.m., firefighters deemed the 3-acre blaze "100 percent contained." Maui County lawyer John Fiske said firefighters continued to spray the area with 23,000 gallons of water, and after seeing no more smoke

# Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, Sept. 27, 2023 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 095 ~ 35 of 70

or flame, declared the fire "extinguished and left at 2:18 p.m.

Balagso, who lives about 130 yards (119 meters) from where the utility's power lines snapped in the morning, said that at 2:50 p.m. he saw smoke again, billowing from the overgrown gully next to his yard. He called 911 at 2:54 and began recording video that shows orange flames as high as a house leaping from the gully.

Firefighters returned to the area within minutes. But by then it was too late.

Fiske said fire crews attacked the fire with water at both ends of the gully, but winds were so strong that embers flew over their heads, lighting a field of tall grass behind them.

"When the fast winds come in ... it just picks the fire up and puts it right over the firefighters," said Fiske, who represents the county in a lawsuit against Hawaiian Electric. "There's nothing the firefighters can do."

Within about 20 minutes, the fire had moved through the field and jumped the four-lane Lahaina Bypass, igniting homes on the other side. From there, it burned through Lahaina's historic downtown all the way to the ocean, moving so quickly that many residents were forced to jump into the sea to escape.

Balagso, who was interviewed by ATF investigators, says he isn't sure what caused the fire to rekindle in the gully. But he doesn't think it was the abandoned utility pole stump, which he remembers seeing in Hawaiian Electric's right-of-way for the 20 years he's lived there. He said the flames began farther uphill and were already growing by the time they reached the stump, which kept burning until around 5 p.m., when he extinguished it with a garden hose.

## 'VEGETATION MANAGEMENT'

Hawaiian Electric has faced scrutiny before for potentially sparking a wildfire in that same area.

In 2018, a brush fire broke out nearby during high winds from a passing hurricane, destroying 21 buildings. Though officials were unable to conclusively determine a cause, a copy of the investigative report obtained by the AP said Hawaiian Electric's power lines couldn't be ruled out.

It's not clear when Hawaiian Electric last cleared the grass and shrubs from under its lines on the Kamehameha tract. But AP's review of public regulatory filings shows the company has a history of falling behind on what the electricity industry calls "vegetation management."

A 2020 audit of Hawaiian Electric by an outside consulting firm found the company failed to meet its goals for clearing vegetation from its rights-of-way for years, and the way it measured its progress needed to be fixed "urgently." The 216-page audit by Munro Tulloch said the utility tracked money it spent on clearing and tree trimming but had "zero metrics" on things that really mattered, such as the volume of vegetation removed or miles of right-of-way cleared.

Hawaiian Electric told the AP that since that audit it has "completely transformed" its trimming program, spending \$110 million clearing vegetation in the past five years, using detailed maps to find critical areas and tracking outages caused by trees and branches.

AP previously reported that Hawaiian Electric was also years behind its own schedule for replacing poles that were leaning and near the end of their projected lifespan. Much of the utility's aging infrastructure was nowhere close to meeting a 2002 national standard that key components be able to withstand 105-mph (169 kmh) winds.

Last June, Hawaiian Electric asked regulators to approve a \$190 million plan to strengthen its electric grid against climate change, including hardening or replacing 80 poles on Maui deemed "critical."

Fourteen months later, that request is still pending.

"We are looking at every decision we made, every tactic we employed to act on the wildfire threat on Maui," the utility said in its statement. "Outside voices speak confidently about what happened and what we did or didn't do but the facts are that we took the threat seriously."

## Black Americans express concerns about racist depictions in news media, lack of coverage efforts

By DAVID BAUDER AP Media Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — In a new study, Black Americans expressed broad concerns about how they are depicted in the news media, with majorities saying they see racist or negative depictions and a lack of effort to cover broad segments of their community.

Four in five Black adults say they see racist or racially insensitive depictions of their race in the news either often or sometimes, according to the Pew Research Center.

Three years after George Floyd's killing triggered a racial reckoning in the news media, Pew took its first broad-based look at Black attitudes toward the media with a survey of nearly 5,000 Black adults this past winter and follow-up focus groups.

The survey found 63% of respondents saying news about Black people is often more negative than it is toward other racial or ethnic groups, with 28% saying it is about equal.

"It's not surprising at all," said Charles Whitaker, dean of the Medill journalism school at Northwestern University. "We've known both anecdotally, and through my personal experience with the Black press, that Blacks have long been dissatisfied with their coverage.

"There's a feeling that Black Americans are often depicted as perpetrators or victims of crime, and there are no nuances in the coverage," Whitaker said.

That attitude is reflected in the Pew study's finding that 57% of respondents say the media only covers certain segments of Black communities, compared to 9% who say that a wide variety is depicted.

"They should put a lot more effort into providing context," said Richard Prince, a columnist for the Journalism's newsletter, which covers diversity issues. "They should realize that Blacks and other people of color want to be portrayed as having the same concerns as everybody else, in addition to hearing news about African American concerns."

Advertising actually does a much better job of showing Black people in situations common to everybody, raising families or deciding where to go for dinner, he said.

Prince said he's frequently heard concerns about Black crime victims being treated like suspects in news coverage, down to the use of police mug shots as illustrations. He recently convened a journalist's roundtable to discuss the lingering, notorious issue of five Black men who were exonerated after being accused of attacking a white jogger in New York's Central Park in the 1980s.

During a time of sharp partisan differences, the study found virtually no difference in attitudes toward news coverage between Black Democrats and Republicans, said Katerina Eva Matsa, director of news and information research at Pew.

For example, 46% of Republicans and 44% of Democrats say that news coverage largely stereotyped Black people, Pew said.

Negative attitudes toward the press tended to increase with income and education levels, Matsa said. While 57% of those in lower income levels said news coverage about Black people was more negative than it was about other groups. That number jumped to 75% of wealthier respondents, the study found.

A large majority of those surveyed, young and old, expressed little confidence that things would improve much in their lifetime.

While 40% of survey participants said it was important to see Black journalists report on issues about race and racial inequality, the race of journalists wasn't that important about general news.

Prince said it's important for journalists to know history; he wrote on Monday about the idea of a government shutdown was raised in 1879 when former Confederates in Congress wanted to deny money to protect Black people at the polls, and how the filibuster started to prevent civil rights legislation.

At Northwestern, professors are trying to teach students of the importance of having a broader sense of the communities that they're covering, Whitaker said. Medill is also a hub for solutions journalism, which emphasizes coverage of people trying to solve societal problems.

"We're trying to get away from parachute journalism," he said.

Prince said there was notable progress, post-Floyd, in the hiring of Black journalists into leadership roles in the media. Unfortunately, the news industry continues to contract while social media increases in importance, he said.

"We're integrating an industry that's shrinking," he said.

## In a win for Black voters in redistricting case, Alabama to get new congressional lines

By KIM CHANDLER Associated Press

MONTGOMERY, Ala. (AP) — Alabama is headed to the first significant revamp of its congressional map in three decades after the U.S. Supreme Court rejected the state's bid to keep using a plan with a single majority-Black district.

The decision on Tuesday sets the stage for a new map with greater representation for Black voters to be put in place for the 2024 elections. The ruling marks a victory for Black voters in the state who had challenged the existing districts as racially discriminatory. Advocates said they hope it will bolster similar redistricting challenges elsewhere around the country.

### WHAT HAPPENED

Justices denied Alabama's emergency request to keep Republican-drawn congressional lines in place and stop a three-judge panel from drawing new lines as the state appeals. The three-judge panel had ruled the state plan — with one majority-Black district out of seven in a state that is 27% Black — likely violated the U.S. Voting Rights Act. The three-judge panel said the new lines must include a second district where Black voters constitute a majority or "quite close to it."

### WHAT HAPPENS NEXT

The three-judge panel will quickly proceed with the redrawing of new districts for use in the 2024 elections. The panel will hold a Tuesday hearing on three possible replacement plans proposed by a court-appointed special master. The court told plaintiffs and the state to submit any objections to the proposed plans this week. Alabama Attorney General Steve Marshall said the state will continue the legal fight to restore state-drawn lines, but Alabama will face a "court-drawn map for the 2024 election cycle."

### WHAT WILL THE NEW LINES LOOK LIKE

The three proposals would alter the boundaries of Congressional District 2 in southeast Alabama, now represented by Republican Rep. Barry Moore, so that Black voters comprise between 48.5% to 50.1% of the voting-age population. It's a shift that could put the seat in Democratic hands. The special master said that candidates supported by Black voters would have won 13 or more of the last 17 elections in the district. By contrast, the district drafted by GOP lawmakers had a Black voting-age population of 39.9%, meaning it would continue to elect mostly white Republicans.

### WHAT IS THE REACTION

The decision was a victory years in the making for Black voters and advocacy groups that had filed lawsuits challenging the Alabama districts. Deuel Ross, a lawyer with the NAACP Legal Defense Fund who argued the case before the Supreme Court, said the high court rejected Alabama's bid to "relitigate issues that have already been decided and openly defy what the court has said is a Voting Rights Act violation."

Plaintiffs had likened the state's resistance to that of segregationist Gov. George Wallace's efforts in 1963 to fight integration orders. "Despite these shameful efforts, the Supreme Court has once again agreed that Black Alabamians deserve a second opportunity district," plaintiffs in the case said.

The decision was a loss for the state that had tried to argue the Supreme Court's June ruling didn't necessarily require the creation of a second majority-Black district. Marshall accused plaintiffs of prioritizing "racial quotas" over traditional redistricting principle, and said the state will "now be encumbered with a racially gerrymandered, court-drawn map for the 2024 election cycle."

"We are confident that the Voting Rights Act does not require, and the Constitution does not allow, 'separate but equal' congressional districts," Marshall said.

## A WINDING PATH

The winding legal saga in Alabama began when groups of Black voters challenged Alabama's congressional map as racially discriminatory. A three-judge panel agreed and ordered new lines drawn, but the Supreme Court in 2022 granted Alabama's request to put that order on hold ahead of the 2022 elections. However, justices in a 5-4 June ruling upheld the panel's decision. Lawmakers in July drafted new lines that maintained one majority-Black district. The three-judge panel on Sept. 5 chastised the state for flouting their directive and said they would step in to oversee the drawing of new lines.

## OTHER STATES

The redraw in Alabama comes as redistricting cases are moving through the legal pipeline in Louisiana, Georgia, Florida and elsewhere, making similar arguments that the states illegally weaken the political influence of Black voters. Ross, who is involved in the Louisiana litigation, said he hopes the Supreme Court decision sends a message that the "Louisiana case should move forward" similar to how Alabama did.

Kareem Crayton, a redistricting expert at the Brennan Center for Justice, which had filed a brief on behalf of the Alabama plaintiffs, said, "I do think everyone in these other states is paying attention to this case."

## Sen. Bob Menendez will appear in court in his bribery case as he rejects calls to resign

By LARRY NEUMEISTER and ALANNA DURKIN RICHER Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — U.S. Sen. Bob Menendez is due in court Wednesday to answer to charges that he used his powerful post to secretly advance Egyptian interests and do favors for New Jersey businessmen in exchange for bribes of cash and gold bars.

The New Jersey Democrat will make his first appearance in a federal court in Manhattan amid growing calls from colleagues that he resign from Congress.

A defiant Menendez — who was forced to step down as chairman of the Foreign Relations Committee after the indictment was brought last week — says allegations that he abused his power to line his own pockets are baseless. He has said he's confident he will be exonerated and has no intention of leaving the Senate.

It's the second corruption case in a decade against Menendez, whose last trial involving different allegations ended with jurors failing to reach a verdict in 2017.

Fellow New Jersey Democratic Sen. Cory Booker on Tuesday joined the calls for Menendez to resign, saying in a statement that the indictment contains "shocking allegations of corruption and specific, disturbing details of wrongdoing." Around half of Senate Democrats have now said that Menendez should step down, including several running for reelection next year.

Also set to be arraigned Wednesday is Menendez's wife, Nadine, who prosecutors say played a key role in collecting hundreds of thousands of dollars worth of bribes from three New Jersey businessmen seeking help from the powerful lawmaker. An attorney for Nadine Menendez has said she also denies the allegations and will fight the charges.

Two of the businessmen — Jose Uribe and Fred Daibes — are also expected to be arraigned. The third man, Wael Hana, pleaded not guilty Tuesday to charges including conspiracy to commit bribery. Hana was arrested at New York's Kennedy airport Tuesday after returning voluntarily from Egypt to face the charges, and was ordered freed pending trial.

Authorities say they found nearly \$500,000 in cash — much of it hidden in clothing and closets — as well as more than \$100,000 in gold bars in a search of the New Jersey home Menendez, 69, shares with his wife.

In his first public remarks since the indictment, Menendez said Monday that the cash found in his home was drawn from his personal savings accounts over the years, and which he kept on hand for emergencies.

One of the envelopes full of cash found at his home, however, bore Daibes' DNA and was marked with the real estate developer's return address, according to prosecutors.

Prosecutors say Hana promised to put Menendez's wife on his company's payroll in a low-or-no-show

job in exchange for Menendez using his influential post to facilitate foreign military sales and financing to Egypt. Prosecutors allege Hana also paid \$23,000 toward her home mortgage, wrote \$30,000 checks to her consulting company, promised her envelopes of cash, sent her exercise equipment and bought some of the gold bars that were found in the couple's home.

The indictment alleges repeated actions by Menendez to benefit Egypt, despite U.S. government misgivings over the country's human rights record that in recent years have prompted Congress to attach restrictions on aid.

Prosecutors, who detailed meetings and dinners between Menendez and Egyptian officials, say Menendez gave sensitive U.S. government information to Egyptian officials and ghost wrote a letter to fellow senators encouraging them to lift a hold on \$300 million in aid to Egypt, one of the top recipients of U.S. military support.

Prosecutors have accused Menendez of pressuring a U.S. agricultural official to stop opposing a lucrative deal that gave Hana's company a monopoly over certifying that imported meat met religious standards.

Prosecutors also allege Menendez tried to interfere in criminal investigations involving associates. In one case, he pushed to install a federal prosecutor in New Jersey whom Menendez believed he could influence to derail a criminal case against Daibes, prosecutors allege.

## **Trump heads to Michigan to compete with Biden for union votes while his GOP challengers debate**

By JILL COLVIN Associated Press

As his Republican rivals gather onstage in California for their second primary debate, former President Donald Trump will be in battleground Michigan Wednesday night working to win over blue-collar voters in the midst of an autoworkers' strike.

Trump's trip comes a day after President Joe Biden became the first sitting president in U.S. history to walk a picket line as he joined United Auto Workers in Detroit. The union is pushing for higher wages, shorter work weeks and assurances from the country's top automakers that new electric vehicle jobs will be unionized.

The dueling appearances reflect what will likely be a chief dynamic of the 2024 general election, which is increasingly looking like a rematch between Trump and Biden. Michigan is expected to be a critical battleground state as both candidates try to paint themselves as champions of the working class.

Trump is scheduled to deliver primetime remarks at Drake Enterprises, a non-unionized auto parts supplier in Clinton Township, about a half-hour outside Detroit. He'll speak before a crowd of several hundred current and former UAW members, as well as members of plumbers and pipefitters unions.

Trump has tried to capitalize on the strike to drive a wedge between Biden and union workers, a constituency that helped pave the way for the ex-president's surprise 2016 victory. Trump in that election won over voters in Democratic strongholds like Michigan, Wisconsin and Pennsylvania, fundamentally reshaping voting alliances as he railed against global trade deals and vowed to resurrect dying manufacturing towns.

But Biden won those states back in 2020 as he emphasized his working-class roots and commitment to organized labor. He often calls himself the "most pro-union president" in U.S. history and argues the investments his administration is making in green energy and electric vehicle manufacturing will ensure the future of the industry unfolds in the U.S.

Trump, this time around, is seeking to capitalize on discontent over Biden's handling of the economy amid persistent inflation. He has repeatedly warned Biden's embrace of electric vehicles — a key component of his clean-energy agenda — will ultimately lead to lost jobs, amplifying the concerns of some autoworkers who worry that electric cars require fewer people to manufacture and that there is no guarantee factories that produce them will be unionized.

"Joe Biden's draconian and indefensible Electric Vehicle mandate will annihilate the U.S. auto industry and cost countless thousands of autoworkers their jobs," Trump railed in a statement after Biden's Tuesday visit.

# Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, Sept. 27, 2023 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 095 ~ 40 of 70

While Trump has cast himself as pro-worker, he has clashed repeatedly with union leadership and tried to drive a wedge between union members and their leaders. In a recent campaign video, he urged auto-workers not to pay union dues and claimed their leaders have "got some deals going for themselves." "I WILL KEEP YOUR JOBS AND MAKE YOU RICH!!!" he has told them.

While the union has withheld its support for Biden after endorsing him in 2020, UAW President Shawn Fain appeared at Biden's side during his visit Tuesday and remained deeply critical of Trump.

"I don't think he cares about working-class people. I think he cares about the billionaire class, he cares about the corporate interests. I think he's just trying to pander to people and say what they want to hear, and it's a shame," Fain said.

The Trump campaign has vigorously defended his record as pro-worker, but union leaders say 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 and the closure of a General Motors plant in Lordstown, Ohio.

Aides say Trump will use his speech to lambast Biden's economic policies, arguing that middle- and working-class families have suffered under Biden's presidency. He will also highlight Biden's record supporting free trade deals, which Trump has blamed for shifting jobs overseas.

"Anyone who's a working, middle-class voter in Michigan and all around the country is feeling the direct impacts of Biden's terrible economic policies," said Trump senior adviser Jason Miller.

Trump has not weighed on the union's proposal, but aides insist its rank-and-file members "are in a much different place than their political leaders."

Along the picket line, workers were split. Adrian Mitchell, who works at the GM parts warehouse that Biden visited, said he believes Biden would be better for the middle class than a second Trump term.

"He supports the people in regards to coming out here, showing solidarity with the UAW workers," Mitchell said. "He's always been for the middle class."

Still, Mitchell said workers are worried that the transition from internal combustion vehicles to electric cars may cost them jobs.

"I think we're all worried about that," he said. "But I think eventually it'll come together."

But Matthew Coleman of Romulus, Michigan, who has worked at the parts warehouse for the last nine years, said he believes Trump would probably be a better president for the middle class, largely because he's against the transition from internal combustion to electric vehicles.

"I don't think it benefits the middle class," he said. "We can hardly afford the cars that we make now. I think it's going to cut a lot of jobs that we have right now."

The UAW's targeted strikes against the Big Three automakers — General Motors, Stellantis and Ford — began at midnight on Sept. 14 and have since expanded to 38 parts distribution centers in 20 states.

The union is asking for 36% raises in general pay over four years and has also demanded a 32-hour week with 40 hours of pay and a return of cost-of-living pay raises, among other benefits. It also wants to be allowed to represent workers at 10 electric vehicle battery factories, most of which are being built by joint ventures between automakers and South Korean battery makers. The union wants those plants to receive top UAW wages.

While Biden has not implemented an electric vehicle mandate, he has set a goal that half of all new vehicle sales be electric by 2030. His administration has also proposed stiff new automobile pollution limits that would require up to two-thirds of new vehicles sold in the U.S. to be electric by 2032, a nearly tenfold increase over current electric vehicle sales. That proposal is not final.

One of Trump's Republican rivals, Arkansas Gov. Asa Hutchinson, will also be in Detroit Wednesday. He's set to hold a press conference to highlight Trump's "false promises to blue collar and union workers in Michigan and across America."



## Republicans face growing urgency to stop Trump as they enter the second presidential debate

By WILL WEISSERT and STEVE PEOPLES Associated Press

SIMI VALLEY, Calif. (AP) — Republicans are meeting for their second presidential debate Wednesday as his top rivals seek to blunt the momentum of Donald Trump, who is so confident of cruising through the party's primary that he again won't share a stage with them.

Seven GOP candidates will be at the Ronald Reagan Presidential Library for an event hosted by Fox Business Network. Trump will be in Michigan, delivering a prime-time speech attempting to capitalize on the Auto Workers Union strike and trying to appeal to rank-and-file union members in a key state for the general election.

The debate comes at a critical moment in the GOP campaign, with less than four months before the Iowa caucuses formally launch the presidential nomination process. For now, Trump is dominating the field even as he faces a range of vulnerabilities, including four criminal indictments that raise the prospect of decades in prison. His rivals are running out of time to dent his lead, which is building a sense of urgency among some to more directly take on the former president before an audience of millions.

"This is not a nomination that's going to fall in your lap. You have to go and beat the other candidates and one of those happens to be Donald Trump," said Kevin Madden, a Republican strategist and veteran of Mitt Romney's 2008 and 2012 presidential campaigns. "This debate, it'll be interesting to see whether or not folks realize that the sand is going through the hourglass pretty quickly right now."

The former president also skipped the first debate last month in Milwaukee, where the participants laid into one another while mostly avoiding attacks on Trump. Nearly 13 million people tuned in anyway.

Nikki Haley, the former South Carolina governor and United Nations ambassador, drew larger crowds and new interest after her first debate performance in which she attacked entrepreneur Vivek Ramaswamy on foreign policy and pointed out that she was the only woman in the field.

Her team has raised expectations even higher going into Wednesday night, telling donors in a recent pitch that they are "ready to capitalize on the momentum after Nikki walks off stage."

"As more voters across America tune in to watch the second debate, it'll be a great opportunity to bring even more supporters into the fold," Haley's campaign manager, Betsy Ankney, wrote in her email.

Also hoping for a big night is Florida Gov. Ron DeSantis, who will be at center stage despite recent struggles to emerge as the field's top Trump alternative. His campaign announced that he also saw a jump in fundraising after the first debate, but a strong performance on Wednesday will likely be necessary to replicate that.

"It's too late for just a fine performance," said Christine Matthews, a national Republican pollster. "DeSantis has gone from leading alternative to Trump to just one of the pack of challengers and he will be under pressure to perform."

Former Vice President Mike Pence, South Carolina Sen. Tim Scott and Ramaswamy are similarly looking for breakout moments. Ramaswamy seized the spotlight frequently in Milwaukee, but was criticized by many candidates who sought to expose his lack of political experience.

Also on stage will be North Dakota Gov. Doug Burgum and Chris Christie, the former New Jersey governor, who has built his White House bid around slamming Trump.

Former Arkansas Gov. Asa Hutchinson failed to qualify after making the first debate. Hutchinson's campaign says he'll also go to Michigan to hold a press conference criticizing Trump.

Ahead of the debate, many participants were meeting with top supporters, donors and reporters to make the case that they are best positioned going forward.

Reed Galen, co-founder of the Lincoln Project, an organization founded by conservatives who oppose Trump, said that while he still believes the former president will ultimately be the Republican nominee in 2024, Wednesday's debate offers a chance for others to make up ground.

"There are opportunities in the offing because Trump is taking this for granted," Galen said.

The site is symbolic given that Reagan has long been a Republican icon whose words and key moments

still shape GOP politics today. But in addition to fighting with the Reagan library's leaders, Trump has reshaped the party and pushed away from traditional GOP policy positions — including a muscular foreign policy and opposition to Moscow.

While Reagan is remembered for going to a divided Berlin and calling on Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev to "tear down this wall," Trump has often sympathized with Russian President Vladimir Putin and recently said, "I was the apple of his eye."

Pence, in a recent speech, called on conservatives to reject Trump's "siren song of populism." But Ramaswamy attacked Pence in the first debate by declaring "it's not morning in America" — a reversal of Reagan's famous 1984 campaign slogan — and saying Republicans following Reagan were out of step with a Trump-dominated party.

"The sad thing is, the irony — and I don't know how many people there will get it — is that Ronald Reagan could not get the Republican nomination today," said former Republican New Jersey Gov. Christine Todd Whitman, who is now teaming with Democratic voices to promote the centrist Forward Party. "He's not far enough out there."

## **The Hollywood writers strike is over after guild leaders approve contract with studios**

By ANDREW DALTON AP Entertainment Writer

LOS ANGELES (AP) — Hollywood's writers strike was declared over after nearly five months Tuesday night when board members from their union approved a contract agreement with studios, bringing the industry at least partly back from a historic halt in production.

The governing boards of the eastern and western branches of the Writers Guild of America and their joint negotiating committee all voted to accept the deal, two days after the tentative agreement was reached with a coalition of Hollywood's biggest studios, streaming services and production companies. After the vote they declared that the strike would be over and writers would be free to start on scripts at 12:01 a.m. Wednesday.

Late-night talk shows — the first to go dark when writers walked out on May 2 — are likely the first shows that will resume. Scripted shows will take longer to return, with actors still on strike and no negotiations yet on the horizon.

The writers still have to vote to ratify the contract themselves in early October, but lifting the strike will allow them to work during that process, the guild told members in an email.

After Tuesday's board votes, the contracts were released for the first time to the writers, who had not yet been given any details on the deal, which their leaders called "exceptional."

The three-year agreement includes significant wins in the main areas writers had fought for — compensation, length of employment, size of staffs and control of artificial intelligence — matching or nearly equaling what they had sought at the outset of the strike.

The union had sought minimum increases in pay and future residual earnings from shows of between 5% and 6%, depending on the position of the writer. The studios had wanted between 2% and 4%. The compromise deal was a raise of between 3.5% and 5%.

The guild also negotiated new residual payments based on the popularity of streaming shows, where writers will get bonuses for being a part of the most popular shows on Netflix, Max and other services, a proposal studios initially rejected. Many writers on picket lines had complained that they weren't properly paid for helping create heavily watched properties.

The writers also got the requirement they sought that shows intended to run at least 13 episodes will have at least six writers on staff, with the numbers shifting based on the number of episodes. They did not get their desire for guaranteed staffs of six on shows that had not yet been ordered to series, settling instead for a guaranteed three.

Writers also got a guarantee that staffs on shows in initial development will be employed for at least 10 weeks, and that staffs on shows that go to air will be employed for three weeks per episode.

# Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, Sept. 27, 2023 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 095 ~ 43 of 70

On artificial intelligence, the writers got the regulation and control of the emerging technology they had sought. Under the contract, raw, AI-generated storylines will not be regarded as "literary material" — a term in their contracts for scripts and other story forms a screenwriter produces. This means they won't be competing with computers for screen credits. Nor will AI-generated stories be considered "source" material, their contractual language for the novels, video games or other works that writers may adapt into scripts.

Writers have the right under the deal to use AI in their process if the company they are working for agrees and other conditions are met. But companies cannot require a writer to use AI.

Still-striking members of the Screen Actors Guild-American Federation of Television and Radio Artists returned to the picket lines earlier Tuesday for the first time since the writers struck their tentative deal, and they were animated by a new spirit of optimism.

"For a hot second, I really thought that this was going to go on until next year," said Marissa Cuevas, an actor who has appeared on the TV series "Kung Fu" and "The Big Bang Theory." "Knowing that at least one of us has gotten a good deal gives a lot of hope that we will also get a good deal."

Writers' picket lines had been suspended, but they were encouraged to walk in solidarity with actors, and many were on the lines Tuesday, including "Mad Men" creator Matthew Weiner, who picketed alongside friend and "ER" actor Noah Wyle as he has throughout the strikes.

"We would never have had the leverage we had if SAG had not gone out," Weiner said. "They were very brave to do it."

The Alliance of Motion Picture and Television Producers, which represents the studios in negotiations, chose to deal with the longer-striking writers first, and leaders of SAG-AFTRA said they had received no overtures on resuming talks. That's likely to change soon.

Actors also voted to authorize their leadership to potentially expand their walkout to include the lucrative video game market, a step that could put new pressure on Hollywood studios to make a deal with the performers who provide voices and stunts for games.

SAG-AFTRA announced the move late Monday, saying that 98% of its members voted to go on strike against video game companies if ongoing negotiations are not successful.

Acting in video games can include a variety of roles, from voice performances to motion capture work as well as stunts.

Some of the same issues are at play in the video game negotiations as in the film and TV strike, including wages, safety measures and protections on the use of artificial intelligence. The companies involved include gaming giants Activision, Electronic Arts, Epic Games, Take 2 Productions as well as Disney and Warner Bros.' video game divisions.

"It's time for the video game companies to stop playing games and get serious about reaching an agreement on this contract," SAG-AFTRA President Fran Drescher said in a statement.

Audrey Cooling, a spokesperson for video game producers, said they are "continuing to negotiate in good faith" and have reached tentative agreements on more than half of the proposals on the table.

## 9 years later, families of 43 missing Mexican students march to demand answers in emblematic case

By DANIEL SHAILER The Associated Press

MEXICO CITY (AP) — Chanting from one to 43, relatives of students abducted nine years ago counted out the number of the missing youths as they marched through Mexico City Tuesday to demand answers to one of Mexico's most infamous human rights cases.

With President Andrés Manuel López Obrador's term ending next year, family members face not only the prospect of a ninth year of not knowing what happened to their sons but fears that the next administration will start the error-plagued investigation over from scratch yet again.

In 2014, a group of students were attacked by municipal police in the southern city of Iguala, Guerrero, who handed them over to a local drug gang that apparently killed them and burned their bodies. Since the Sept. 26 attack, only three of their remains have been identified.

# Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, Sept. 27, 2023 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 095 ~ 44 of 70

After an initial coverup, last year a government truth commission concluded that local, state and federal authorities colluded with the gang to murder the students in what it called a "state crime."

Ulises Gutierrez Solano joined the march in honor of his brother, Aldo, a student who survived the initial kidnapping but was left in a "vegetative state" since 2014 after police shot him in the head while the others students were being abducted.

"This is an atrocity to humanity, to society," said Solano. "How could they do so much harm to so many people?"

López Obrador had pledged to solve the case and recent years have seen a painstakingly slow release of documents from the abduction, as well as a slew of arrests. But activists and human rights organizations say the government has not done enough to atone for the murders, investigate exactly what happened, and punish the culprits.

Tensions rose just hours before the march, when the families and their lawyers rejected a series of documents the Mexican government offered to make public, claiming the specific military files they requested months ago were not included. The army said it didn't have those files.

"Since August the families have been asking, but they just gave us part of the information" said Nicholas Mendéz, leading a group of students from the National Autonomous University of Mexico. "That's worrying because we're changing government next year."

López Obrador's six-year term ends in September 2024 and, Mendéz feared, petitioning a new president for information could mean starting from scratch.

"We can't have another six years of nothing," Mendéz said.

In a press conference Tuesday morning, Mexico's president insisted all of the relevant documents had been released.

"We have principles; we have ideals, and we speak the truth," López Obrador said, promising also to publish government social media messages about the case.

The students from a radical teachers' college had travelled to Iguala to hijack buses to get to a protest in Mexico City, but were intercepted by corrupt police linked to the Guerreros Unidos gang. Iguala officials thought the students were going to disrupt a local political event, and one of the hijacked buses may have carried a drug shipment.

Recent years have seen a run of government and army officials from the time arrested, but no more remains have been found.

Then-Attorney General, Jesús Murillo Karam, and the head of his anti-kidnapping unit have been arrested for their initial, botched investigation following the abductions. Almost a dozen military personnel, including the commander of the area where the students were abducted, have also been arrested.

After evidence used to assemble an expert report in August was undermined, the case's chief prosecutor, Omar Gómez Trejo, resigned. Just this year a party from the Inter-American Human Rights Commission which has been investigating the incident since 2015 also withdrew from Mexico.

As families marched through the city, they passed barricades erected to protect monuments. The march was peaceful, notwithstanding isolated incidents of violence when demonstrators attacked and damaged some stores, according to local media.

At one traffic circle, activists had plastered posters in remembrance not just of the 43 students, but of all Mexico's missing.

The Ayotzinapa atrocity has taken on symbolic significance for a country with more than 110,000 missing people.

Pablo Hector Gonzalez has traveled from Guerrero every year to join the march.

"After nine years, in force, we will insist until the truth appears and until all the guilty are punished," he said.

## Lahaina family finds cherished heirlooms and devastation in first home visit after deadly wildfire

By AUDREY McAVOY and GENE JOHNSON Associated Press

LAHAINA, Hawaii (AP) — Leola Vierra stepped gingerly among the hardened pools of melted metal, charred wood and broken glass that are almost all that remain of the home where she lived for nearly 50 years.

Sifting through the rubble, she found two cow-patterned vessels, part of her extensive collection of bovine figurines. Nearby, her son discovered the blackened remnants of his late grandfather's pistol from his days as a Lahaina policeman from the late 1940s to 1970s. There was no sign of the beloved cat, Kitty Kai, that used to greet her when she came home from work and church.

"I'm so sad — devastated," she said. "This was my home."

Vierra, her husband and two adult children returned to the property Tuesday for the first time since the deadliest U.S. wildfire in more than a century whipped through on Aug. 8, obliterating the historic town of Lahaina and killing at least 97 people. They were among the first small group of residents to be allowed back into the burn zone to see where their homes once stood.

They wore boots, white coveralls, face masks and gloves to protect them from toxic ash and other dangers, but their visit was cut short after about 15 minutes when workers showed up and cordoned off the property with yellow caution tape.

A U.S. Environmental Protection Agency official informed them over the phone that a crew did a "last quality assurance check" on Saturday afternoon and didn't like not knowing what was underneath the crumpled remnants of the roof. A team would return Wednesday morning and the agency would call with an update, the official said.

Afterward, the family milled about on the sidewalk and looked toward the property. Vierra's son, Mika, said they would come back when they get clearance so they can look around some more.

The four-bedroom house, which Vierra designed, was in the hills overlooking the ocean on Maui's coast. It had a pool, which now sits half full, and an outdoor kitchen — she called it the cabana — which is gone.

The family ran four stores that catered to tourists, selling aloha shirts and muumuus along with leis that Vierra's husband, Mike Vierra, would make from plumeria blossoms he picked in their yard. Three of the stores burned down. Of the family's dozen plumeria trees, three survived.

Three small banyan trees — one planted for each of her three children — also appeared to have survived and even showed signs of new growth.

Officials opened the first area for reentry — a section of about two dozen parcels in the north of Lahaina — on Monday and Tuesday from 8 a.m. to 4 p.m. Residents and property owners could obtain passes to enter the burn zone.

The Vierras have been staying at a resort hotel, like thousands of other survivors whom the government has put up in temporary housing across Maui. They waited until Tuesday so that Mika could join them after arriving from Utah, where he works in sales.

Mika drove to the property with his parents straight from the airport. He said he and his sister have decided to rebuild when the cleanup is done, whenever that is.

"We'll be sure to rebuild something nice where our old house used to be," he said.

## Calls are mounting for Menendez to resign as Democrats grapple with 'shocking' bribery allegations

By MARY CLARE JALONICK and JAKE OFFENHARTZ Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Sen. Bob Menendez came under heavy pressure to resign Tuesday as a surging number of his Democratic colleagues in the Senate, including fellow New Jersey Democrat Cory Booker, urged him to step aside over the federal bribery allegations against him.

Around half of Senate Democrats have now said that Menendez should resign, including several run-

# Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, Sept. 27, 2023 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 095 ~ 46 of 70

ning for reelection next year. Calls for his resignation, including from the head of the Senate Democrats' campaign arm, Michigan Sen. Gary Peters, came in quick succession after Booker called on his colleague to step aside. Menendez has refused to leave office but has not yet said whether he will run for reelection next year.

Menendez, the longtime chairman and top Democrat on the powerful Senate Foreign Relations Committee, and his wife, Nadine, are accused in an indictment released Friday of using his position to aid the authoritarian government of Egypt and to pressure federal prosecutors to drop a case against a friend, among other allegations of corruption. The three-count indictment says they were paid bribes — gold bars, a luxury car and cash — by three New Jersey businessmen in exchange for the corrupt acts.

In a statement, Booker said that while Menendez deserves the presumption of innocence, senators should adhere to a higher standard, and the details of the allegations against Menendez have "shaken to the core" the faith and trust of his constituents. He said the indictment of Menendez includes "shocking allegations of corruption and specific, disturbing details of wrongdoing."

"As senators, we operate in the public trust," Booker said. "That trust is essential to our ability to do our work and perform our duties for our constituents."

Menendez has denied any wrongdoing, saying he merely performed as any senator would and that the nearly half million dollars in cash found in his home — including some stuffed in pockets of clothing — was from personal savings and kept at hand for emergencies. Authorities recovered about 10 cash-filled envelopes that had the fingerprints of one of the other defendants in the case on them, according to the indictment.

Menendez, along with his wife and two of the businessmen co-defendants, are to be arraigned Wednesday.

Another defendant, Wael Hana, was arrested at New York's Kennedy Airport Tuesday after returning voluntarily from Egypt to face the charges. According to the indictment, Hana served as a conduit to Menendez for Egyptian military and intelligence officials, passing messages to and from the senator and arranging meetings.

Menendez's defiance in recent days is similar to his insistence that he was innocent after he first faced federal bribery charges eight years ago — a case that ended with a deadlocked jury in 2017. As he did then, he is stepping down from his leadership position on the Foreign Relations panel, as per Senate Democratic caucus rules. But he has otherwise made clear that he's not going anywhere.

"I recognize this will be the biggest fight yet, but as I have stated throughout this whole process, I firmly believe that when all the facts are presented, not only will I be exonerated, but I still will be New Jersey's senior senator," Menendez said Monday at Hudson County Community College's campus in Union City, where he grew up.

In the Capitol on Tuesday evening, Menendez declined to answer reporters' questions about Booker's statement. "I would refer you to all the previous statements I've already made. I think that's plenty," he said.

The calls for his resignation are in sharp contrast to his first case. And Booker's call is especially significant in the clubby Senate, where home state colleagues tend to stay away from public criticism of each other. Booker and Republican Sen. Lindsey Graham of South Carolina testified as character witnesses in Menendez's last trial.

The increasing Democratic calls for Menendez to resign also put increased pressure on Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer, who has so far stopped short of recommending that Menendez step down. Schumer has not commented on the indictment since saying in a statement Friday that Menendez would step down from the Foreign Relations panel.

On Tuesday evening, Michigan Sen. Debbie Stabenow became the highest-ranking Democrat in leadership to call for his resignation. "Bob is a longtime colleague, and it saddens me to come to this decision," Stabenow, the No. 3 Democrat, said in a statement.

Other Democratic senators who have called for Menendez to step down included Sherrod Brown of Ohio, Peter Welch of Vermont, Tammy Baldwin of Wisconsin, Jon Tester of Montana, Jacky Rosen of Nevada,

# Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, Sept. 27, 2023 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 095 ~ 47 of 70

Michael Bennet of Colorado, Mark Kelly of Arizona, Mazie Hirono of Hawaii, Martin Heinrich of New Mexico, Amy Klobuchar of Minnesota, Raphael Warnock of Georgia, Kirsten Gillibrand of New York, Maggie Hassan of New Hampshire and Chris Murphy and Richard Blumenthal of Connecticut, John Fetterman and Bob Casey of Pennsylvania and Elizabeth Warren and Ed Markey of Massachusetts.

Independent Sen. Bernie Sanders of Vermont, who caucuses with Democrats, also called on Menendez to resign.

While the number of Democratic senators calling for Menendez was expected to grow, some said they would not. Sens. Ben Ray Lujan of New Mexico, Catherine Cortez Masto of Nevada and Joe Manchin of West Virginia all said they believe the decision is up to New Jersey voters.

The White House also declined to weigh in. Press secretary Karine Jean-Pierre told reporters aboard Air Force One that "the senator did the right thing by standing down from his chairmanship." She did not say whether President Joe Biden believed he should resign from his seat, nor would she comment on how his presence would affect public faith in the Senate.

"That is for Senate leadership to speak to, that's for Sen. Menendez to speak to," she said.

If Menendez does run for reelection, he will face at least one challenger in a primary: Democratic Rep. Andy Kim announced over the weekend that he will run for the Senate because of the charges against the state's senior senator.

And Menendez would likely be running without the support of his party. Peters, who urged his resignation Tuesday, is the chairman of the Democratic Senatorial Campaign Committee, which provides campaign support to incumbent Democratic senators and challengers.

Peters said in a statement Tuesday evening that Menendez is not able to serve effectively. "As elected officials, the public entrusts us to serve in their best interests and in the best interests of our country," Peters said.

In court earlier in the day, a judge ordered Hana freed pending trial on \$300,000 cash bail and a \$5 million bond.

Hana's lawyer, Lawrence Lustberg, said after the hearing that his client is innocent and has a long friendship with Nadine Menendez that predated her marriage to the senator by years. "He has pleaded not guilty because he is not guilty," Lustberg said.

Prosecutors say Hana gave the senator's wife, Nadine Menendez, a "low-show or no-show job," paid \$23,000 toward her home mortgage, wrote \$30,000 checks to her consulting company, promised her envelopes of cash, sent her exercise equipment and bought some of the gold bars that were found in the couple's home.

Hana also sought the senator's help in fending off criticism from U.S. agricultural officials after Egyptian officials gave his company a lucrative monopoly over certifying that imported meat met religious standards, the indictment said.

## **Congress says its wants to avoid a shutdown. But the House and Senate are moving even further apart.**

By LISA MASCARO and STEPHEN GROVES Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — The Congress is starkly divided over very different paths to preventing a federal shutdown — the Senate charging ahead with a bipartisan package to temporarily fund the government but the House slogging through a longshot effort with no real chance of finishing by Saturday's deadline.

With days remaining before a federal closure, the stakes are rising with no resolution at hand.

A shutdown would furlough millions of federal employees, leave the military without pay, disrupt air travel and cut off vital safety net services, and it would be politically punishing to lawmakers whose job it is to fund government.

President Joe Biden, who earlier this year reached a budget deal with Speaker Kevin McCarthy that became law, believes it's up to the House Republicans to deliver.

"A deal is a deal," said White House press secretary Karine Jean-Pierre. "This is for them to fix."

# Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, Sept. 27, 2023 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 095 ~ 48 of 70

Late Tuesday, the Senate pushed ahead in sweeping bipartisan fashion to break the stalemate, advancing a temporary measure, called a continuing resolution, or CR, to keep government running through Nov. 17. It would maintain funding at current levels with a \$6 billion boost for Ukraine and \$6 billion for U.S. disaster relief, among other provisions.

It's on track for Senate approval later this week but faces long odds in the House.

The Republican McCarthy, pushed by a hard-right flank that rejects the deal he made with Biden and is demanding steep spending cuts, showed no interest in the Senate's bipartisan effort — or the additional money for Ukraine.

"I think their priorities are bad," he said about the Senate effort.

Instead, McCarthy is reviving plans for the House Republicans' own stopgap funding measure that would slash federal spending by 8% for many agencies and attach a hardline border security measure that conservatives are demanding. He's planning a Friday vote, but Biden, Democrats and even some Republicans have said the package is too extreme.

McCarthy is trying to goad Biden into negotiations over the border package, highlighting the record numbers of migrants crossing the Southern border with Mexico, but the speaker has little leverage at this point and the White House has downplayed the prospect of talks.

But first, McCarthy is expected to spend much of this week trying to pass some of the bills needed to fund government agencies — Defense, Homeland Security, Agriculture and State and Foreign Operations.

It's a daunting task ahead. The House Republicans advanced those bills late Tuesday after a days of setbacks and disarray, but it is not at all clear McCarthy has the votes from his hard-right flank to actually pass the four bills this week.

One of the key right-flank holdouts, Rep. Marjorie Taylor Greene, R-Ga., who is fighting for more cuts and opposes the funds for Ukraine, said she voted against advancing the package because the bills are headed toward defeat anyway.

"I'm trying to save everybody from wasting time," she said.

The 79-page Senate bill would fund the government at current levels and would include the Ukraine and U.S. disaster aid that has been in jeopardy. It also includes an extension of Federal Aviation Administration provisions expiring Saturday.

Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer said the Senate bill shows "bipartisanship can triumph over extremism."

Schumer said, "We all know together that a government shutdown will be devastating, devastating to this country."

Senate Republican leader Mitch McConnell appeared on board with the bipartisan Senate plan, saying, "Government shutdowns are bad news."

The hard-right House Republicans are being egged on by Donald Trump, the front-runner in the 2024 Republican presidential primary, who has urged them to stand firm in the fight or "shut it down."

It is setting up a split-screen later this week as House Republicans hold their first Biden impeachment inquiry hearing probing the business dealings of his son, Hunter Biden. It also comes as former Trump officials are floating their own plans to slash government and the federal workforce if the former president retakes the White House.

McCarthy, who said he spoke to McConnell on Tuesday, brushed off Trump's influence as just a negotiating tactic, even as the far-right members keep torpedoing his plans.

While their numbers are just a handful, the hard-right Republican faction holds sway because the House majority is narrow and McCarthy needs almost every vote from his side for partisan bills without Democratic support.

The speaker has given the holdouts many of their demands, but it still has not been enough as they press for more — including gutting funding for Ukraine, which Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy told Washington last week is vital to winning the war against Russia.

The hard-line Republicans want McCarthy to drop the deal he made with Biden and stick to earlier



promises for spending cuts he made to them in January to win their votes for the speaker's gavel, citing the nation's rising debt load.

Republican Rep. Matt Gaetz of Florida, a key Trump ally leading the right flank, said on Fox News Channel that a shutdown is not optimal but "it's better than continuing on the current path that we are to America's financial ruin."

Gaetz, who has also threatened to call a vote to oust McCarthy from his job, wants Congress to do what it rarely does anymore: debate and approve each of the 12 annual bills needed to fund the various departments of government — typically a process that takes weeks, if not months.

Even if the House is able to complete its work this week on some of those bills, which is highly uncertain, they would still need to be merged with similar legislation from the Senate, another lengthy process.

## US suspends aid to Gabon after military takeover

WASHINGTON (AP) — The Biden administration on Tuesday suspended most non-humanitarian aid to Gabon after a military takeover in the country last month that was at least the second this year in an African nation.

Secretary of State Antony Blinken announced a "pause in certain foreign assistance programs" to Gabon, pending a review of the circumstances that led to the ouster of the country's former leader President Ali Bongo Ondimba.

Blinken said in a statement that the suspension would not affect U.S. government operations in the oil-rich central African nation. The statement did not elaborate on what U.S.-funded programs would be affected or how much money would be placed on hold.

Gabon is the second country to have seen a military takeover following the overthrow of the government in Niger earlier this year. The U.S. also suspended some aid to Niger but has yet to formally determine if what happened was a coup.

"This interim measure is consistent with steps taken by the Economic Community of Central African States, the African Union, and other international partners, and will continue while we review the facts on the ground in Gabon," Blinken said. "We are continuing U.S. government operational activities in Gabon, including diplomatic and consular operations supporting U.S. citizens."

Earlier this month, Gabon's new military leader was sworn in as the head of state less than a week after ousting the president whose family had ruled the nation for more than five decades.

Gen. Brice Clotaire Oligui Nguema took the oath in the presidential palace in Libreville. Oligui is a cousin of the ousted President Ali Bongo Ondimba, served as a bodyguard to his late father and is head of the Republican guard, an elite military unit.

Bongo had served two terms since coming to power in 2009 after the death of his father, who ruled the country for 41 years, and there was widespread discontent with his family's reign. Another group of mutinous soldiers attempted a coup in 2019 but was quickly overpowered.

The former French colony is a member of OPEC, but its oil wealth is concentrated in the hands of a few — and nearly 40% of Gabonese aged 15 to 24 were out of work in 2020, according to the World Bank. Its oil export revenue was \$6 billion in 2022, according to the U.S. Energy Information Administration.

## Judge rules Donald Trump defrauded banks, insurers while building real estate empire

By MICHAEL R. SISAK Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — A judge ruled Tuesday that Donald Trump committed fraud for years while building the real estate empire that catapulted him to fame and the White House, and he ordered some of the former president's companies removed from his control and dissolved.

Judge Arthur Engoron, ruling in a civil lawsuit brought by New York Attorney General Letitia James, found that Trump and his company deceived banks, insurers and others by massively overvaluing his assets and

# Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, Sept. 27, 2023 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 095 ~ 50 of 70

exaggerating his net worth on paperwork used in making deals and securing loans.

Engoron ordered that some of Trump's business licenses be rescinded as punishment, making it difficult or impossible for them to do business in New York, and said he would continue to have an independent monitor oversee Trump Organization operations.

If not successfully appealed, the order would strip Trump of his authority to make strategic and financial decisions over some of his key properties in the state.

Trump, in a series of statements, railed against the decision, calling it "un-American" and part of an ongoing plot to damage his campaign to return to the White House.

"My Civil rights have been violated, and some Appellate Court, whether federal or state, must reverse this horrible, un-American decision," he wrote on his Truth Social site. He insisted his company had "done a magnificent job for New York State" and "done business perfectly," calling it "A very sad Day for the New York State System of Justice!"

Trump's lawyer, Christopher Kise, said they would appeal, calling the decision "completely disconnected from the facts and governing law."

Engoron's ruling, days before the start of a non-jury trial in James' lawsuit, is the strongest repudiation yet of Trump's carefully coiffed image as a wealthy and shrewd real estate mogul turned political powerhouse.

Beyond mere bragging about his riches, Trump, his company and key executives repeatedly lied about them on his annual financial statements, reaping rewards such as favorable loan terms and lower insurance costs, Engoron found.

Those tactics crossed a line and violated the law, the judge said, rejecting Trump's contention that a disclaimer on the financial statements absolved him of any wrongdoing.

"In defendants' world: rent regulated apartments are worth the same as unregulated apartments; restricted land is worth the same as unrestricted land; restrictions can evaporate into thin air; a disclaimer by one party casting responsibility on another party exonerates the other party's lies," Engoron wrote in his 35-page ruling. "That is a fantasy world, not the real world."

Manhattan prosecutors had looked into bringing criminal charges over the same conduct but declined to do so, leaving James to sue Trump and seek penalties that aim to disrupt his and his family's ability to do business.

Engoron's ruling, in a phase of the case known as summary judgment, resolves the key claim in James' lawsuit, but several others remain. He'll decide on those claims and James' request for \$250 million in penalties at a trial starting Oct. 2. Trump's lawyers have asked an appeals court for a delay.

"Today, a judge ruled in our favor and found that Donald Trump and the Trump Organization engaged in years of financial fraud," James said in a statement. "We look forward to presenting the rest of our case at trial."

Trump's lawyers, in their own summary judgment bid, had asked the judge to throw out the case, arguing that there wasn't any evidence the public was harmed by Trump's actions. They also argued that many of the allegations in the lawsuit were barred by the statute of limitations.

Engoron, noting that he had rejected those arguments earlier in the case, equated them to the plot of the film "Groundhog Day." He fined five defense lawyers \$7,500 each as punishment for "engaging in repetitive, frivolous" arguments, but denied James' request to sanction Trump and other defendants.

James, a Democrat, sued Trump and the Trump Organization a year ago, accusing them of routinely inflating the value of assets like skyscrapers, golf courses and his Mar-a-Lago estate in Florida, padding his bottom line by billions.

Engoron found that Trump consistently overvalued Mar-a-Lago, inflating its value on one financial statement by as much as 2,300%. The judge also rebuked Trump for lying about the size of his Manhattan apartment. Trump claimed his three-story Trump Tower penthouse was nearly three times its actual size, valuing it at \$327 million.

"A discrepancy of this order of magnitude, by a real estate developer sizing up his own living space of decades, can only be considered fraud," Engoron wrote.

On X in the wake of the ruling, Eric Trump insisted his father's claims about Mar-a-Lago were correct, writing that the Palm Beach estate is "speculated to be worth well over a billion dollars making it arguably the most valuable residential property in the country." He called the ruling and the lawsuit "an attempt to destroy my father and kick him out of New York."

Under the ruling, limited liability companies that control some of Trump's key properties, such as 40 Wall Street, will be dissolved and authority over how to run them handed over to a receiver. Trump would lose his authority over whom to hire or fire, whom to rent office space to, and other key decisions.

"The decision seeks to nationalize one of the most successful corporate empires in the United States and seize control of private property all while acknowledging there is zero evidence of any default, breach, late payment or any complaint of harm," Kise said after the decision.

James' lawsuit is one of several legal headaches for Trump, the Republican front-runner in next year's election. He has been indicted four times in the last six months — accused in Georgia and Washington, D.C., of plotting to overturn his 2020 election loss, in Florida of hoarding classified documents, and in Manhattan of falsifying business records related to hush money paid on his behalf.

The Trump Organization was convicted of tax fraud last year in an unrelated criminal case for helping executives dodge taxes on perks such as apartments and cars. The company was fined \$1.6 million. One executive, Trump's longtime finance chief Allen Weisselberg, pleaded guilty and served five months in jail.

James' office previously sued Trump for misusing his charitable foundation to further his political and business interests. Trump was ordered to give \$2 million to charity as a fine while his own charity, the Trump Foundation, was shut down.

## **Amazon sued by FTC and 17 states over allegations it inflates online prices and overcharges sellers**

By HALELUYA HADERO AP Business Writer

U.S. regulators and 17 states are suing Amazon over allegations the e-commerce behemoth abuses its position in the marketplace to inflate prices on and off its platform, overcharge sellers and stifle competition.

The lawsuit, filed Tuesday in federal court in Amazon's home state of Washington, is the result of a yearslong investigation into the company's businesses and one of the most significant legal challenges brought against it in its nearly 30-year history.

The Federal Trade Commission and states that joined the lawsuit allege Amazon is violating federal and state antitrust laws. They are asking the court to issue a permanent injunction that they say would prohibit Amazon from engaging in its unlawful conduct and loosen its "monopolistic control to restore competition."

The complaint accuses the company of engaging in anti-competitive practices through measures that deter sellers from offering lower prices for products on non-Amazon sites, an argument mirroring allegations made in a separate lawsuit filed last year by the state of California.

The lawsuit says Amazon buries listings offered at lower prices on other sites. At the same time, it also charges sellers high fees, forcing merchants to raise their prices on the platform, as well as on other e-commerce sites in order to keep their products competitive on Amazon.

"The complaint sets forth detailed allegations noting how Amazon is now exploiting its monopoly power to enrich itself while raising prices and degrading service for the tens of millions of American families who shop on its platform and the hundreds of thousands of businesses that rely on Amazon to reach them," FTC Chairman Lina Khan said in a prepared statement.

Seattle-based Amazon.com Inc. said the FTC is "wrong on the facts and the law" and had departed from its role of protecting consumers and competition.

"If the FTC gets its way, the result would be fewer products to choose from, higher prices, slower deliveries for consumers, and reduced options for small businesses — the opposite of what antitrust law is designed to do," Amazon General Counsel David Zapolsky said in a prepared statement.

The lawsuit also accuses Amazon of degrading customers' experience by replacing relevant search results with paid advertisements, favoring its own brands over other products it knows to be of better quality,

# Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, Sept. 27, 2023 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 095 ~ 52 of 70

and charging heavy fees that force sellers to pay nearly half of their total revenues to Amazon. According to the anti-monopoly organization Institute for Local Self-Reliance, the cut sellers give to Amazon from their revenue is up from 35% in 2020 and 19% in 2014.

The lawsuit also says Amazon compels sellers to use its logistics service, Fulfillment by Amazon, in order to make their products eligible for Amazon Prime, even though many of them would rather use alternative fulfillment services to get orders to customers.

Some estimates show Amazon controls about 40% of the e-commerce market. A majority of the sales on its platform are facilitated by independent sellers consisting of small- and medium-sized businesses and individuals. In return for the access it provides to its platform, Amazon rakes in billions through referral fees and other services like advertising, which makes products sold by sellers more visible on the platform.

The vast majority of third-party merchants also use the company's fulfillment service to store inventory and ship items to customers. Amazon has been consistently raising fees for those reliant on the program and more recently imposed — and then abandoned — another fee on some who don't, a move that was blasted by the company's critics. Last quarter, Amazon reported \$32.3 billion in revenue from third-party services.

Consumer advocacy groups applauded the lawsuit, while an industry group said many large retail businesses have policies that mirror Amazon's.

There has been speculation the agency would seek to a forced breakup of the retail giant, which is also dominant in cloud computing and has a growing presence in other sectors, like groceries and health care. In a briefing with reporters, Khan dodged questions of whether that will happen.

"At this stage, the focus is more on liability," she said.

Amazon has long faced allegations of undercutting businesses that sell on its platform by assessing merchant data and creating its own competing products that it then boosts on its site. In August, the company said it was eliminating some in-house brands that weren't resonating with customers and would relaunch some items under existing brands like Amazon Basics and Amazon Essentials. Booksellers and authors have also been urging the Department of Justice to investigate what they've called Amazon's "monopoly power over the market for books and ideas."

If successful, a court case could be a big boost for the FTC's Khan, a Big Tech critic who gained prominence as a Yale law student in 2017 for her scholarly work "Amazon's Antitrust Paradox." In 2021, Amazon had sought to get her recused from agency probes against the company because of her earlier criticism.

Under Khan's watch, the FTC has aggressively attempted to blunt Big Tech's influence but has been unsuccessful recently in some of the most high-profile cases, including its bid to block Microsoft's takeover of the video game maker Activision Blizzard and Meta's acquisition of the virtual reality startup Within Unlimited. The agency is now in the middle of a protracted lawsuit against Facebook parent Meta, which it alleges to have engaged in monopolistic behavior. The Justice Department is also challenging Google's market power in court.

In addition to the lawsuit in California, the District of Columbia has also sued Amazon over its treatment of third-party sellers. That lawsuit was thrown out by a federal judge earlier last year and is currently under appeal.

The federal complaint follows other actions the FTC has taken against Amazon in the past few months. In June, the agency sued the company, alleging it was using deceptive practices to enroll consumers into Amazon Prime and making it challenging for them to cancel their subscriptions. Amazon disputes the allegations.

In late May, the company agreed to pay a \$25 million civil penalty to settle allegations that it violated a child privacy law and misled parents about data deletion practices on its popular voice assistant Alexa.

## California governor signs law raising taxes on guns and ammunition to pay for school safety

By ADAM BEAM Associated Press

SACRAMENTO, Calif. (AP) — California will ban people from carrying firearms in most public places while doubling the taxes on guns and ammunition sold in the state under two new laws Gov. Gavin Newsom signed Tuesday that will test the limits of the U.S. Supreme Court's new standard for interpreting the Second Amendment.

The federal government already taxes the sale of guns and ammunition at either 10% or 11%, depending on the type of gun. The law Newsom signed adds another 11% tax on top of that — making California the only state with a separate tax on guns and ammunition, according to the gun control advocacy group Brady.

The money will pay for security improvements at public schools and a variety of gun violence prevention programs, including those geared toward young people in gangs. The money from the federal tax, which has been in place for more than 100 years, pays for wildlife conservation and hunter education programs.

The laws were some of nearly two dozen gun control measures Newsom signed on Tuesday. But he acknowledged many of these laws might not survive legal challenges now that the U.S. Supreme Court has imposed a new standard on interpreting the nation's gun laws. Just last week, a federal judge struck down a California law banning guns with detachable magazines that carry more than 10 rounds — one of three major pending cases challenging California's gun restrictions.

"It may mean nothing if the federal courts are throwing them out," Newsom said. "We feel very strongly that these bills meet the (new standard), and they were drafted accordingly. But I'm not naive about the recklessness of the federal courts and the ideological agenda."

The California Rifle and Pistol Association has already sued to block one new law Newsom signed on Tuesday that bans people from carrying guns in most public places. The law overhauls the state's rules for concealed carry permits in light of the U.S. Supreme Court's decision in *New York State Rifle and Pistol Association v. Bruen*.

It specifically bans people from carrying guns in 26 places, including public parks and playgrounds, public demonstrations and gatherings, amusement parks, churches, banks, zoos and "any other privately owned commercial establishment that is open to the public" unless the owner puts up a sign saying guns are allowed.

"These laws will not make us safer. They are an unconstitutional retaliatory and vindictive response to the Supreme Court's affirmation that the Second Amendment protects an individuals' right to choose to own a firearm for sport or to defend your family," said Chuck Michel, president of the California Rifle and Pistol Association. "They are being challenged, and the second they are signed, the clock starts ticking towards a judgment striking them down."

Newsom — a potential Democratic candidate for president beyond 2024 — has a reputation as one of the country's most liberal governors. But he has often refused to raise taxes, even for causes he supports like combating climate change. However, Newsom said he viewed this tax differently than the other general increases he tends to oppose. He argued that gun violence already costs taxpayers a lot of money in health impacts and in the criminal justice system.

"I think this is a pretty modest investment in prevention and reducing those costs, ultimately," he said, later adding, "The carnage, it's too much. We can't normalize it, we can't accept it. This is a small price to pay."

California has some of the lowest gun death rates in the country, ranking 43rd out of 50 states with 9 deaths for every 100,000 people, according to 2021 data from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. But violent crimes have increased recently. The violent crime rate increased by 6.1% in 2022, according to the California Department of Justice.

No other state has a special tax just for guns and ammunition, although some local governments do. Tennessee once had a 10-cent tax on shotgun shells, but that tax was repealed in 2019. Pennsylvania collects a \$3 surcharge on gun sales to pay for background checks. Fees on California gun purchases cur-

rently total more than \$37, with most of that money paying for background checks.

"Taxing firearm sales to fund violence intervention programs is essential to interrupting the cycle of violence and stopping gun violence before it begins, and we encourage other states to follow suit," said Kris Brown, president of Brady.

The tax has some exceptions. It would not apply to police officers and it would not apply to businesses with sales of less than \$5,000 over a three-month period. State officials estimate it would generate about \$159 million annually.

The law says the first \$75 million of that money must go to the California Violence Intervention and Prevention Grant Program. The program has funded projects targeting young people in gangs, including sports programs, life coaching and tattoo removal.

The next \$50 million would go to the State Department of Education to boost security at public schools. That includes things like physical security improvements, safety assessments, after-school programs for at-risk students and mental and behavioral health services for students, teachers and other school employees.

That brought comfort to state Sen. Catherine Blakespear, a Democrat from San Diego, who said she was on the Senate floor earlier this year when she got a text message from her ninth-grader saying they were hiding under their desk. No one was injured.

"I know that there are thousands of families that are going through this and normalizing the hardening of our schools," she said. "The reality that we have to protect people by doing things like that is something that we don't want in this state and in this country."

## **Many powerful leaders skipped the UN this year. That created space for emerging voices to rise**

By TED ANTHONY AP National Writer

UNITED NATIONS (AP) — Togo's foreign minister wasn't having any of it. He talked of an accelerating "African awakening," of a resolve to "fight our own battles," of a refusal to be banished to the children's table while the musclebound great powers of the 20th century moved chess pieces around the board.

"Nobody is at the center of the world," Robert Dussey said in French, his voice emphatic. "We don't want to be relegated to the background as the world develops."

Africa was Dussey's subject. But he might have been one of any number of leaders speaking at the United Nations this past week — the voices of smaller nations that typically command less attention. They come, they air grievances and concerns, and then the oxygen is gobbled up by others — often the five permanent members of the U.N. Security Council.

This year, though, Volodymyr Zelenskyy's high-profile presence notwithstanding, things felt different. Top leaders of four of the five permanent member nations didn't attend. Climate change helped amplify the concerns of smaller nations — not coincidentally, those most affected by it. And speech by speech, speaker by speaker, it became clear: On the international stage, other voices are beginning to rise — and to be heard.

"The voice of the Global South is growing louder," said Terrance Michael Drew, prime minister of the Caribbean island nation of Saint Kitts and Nevis. "The voices and experiences of the Pacific matter," said Australian Foreign Minister Penny Wong. "Our appetite for transformative change has never been higher," said Xavier Espot, prime minister of the small European country of Andorra.

"The General Assembly is always the biggest platform for countries that don't get a spotlight," says Anjali Dayal, an associate professor of international politics at Fordham University and an expert on the United Nations and other international organizations.

"But I think this year, we saw that more leaders were paying attention to the biggest constituency of U.N. countries — countries that are not big powers but that suffer the biggest consequences and very seldom get to cast the decisive vote," she said.

Where is the momentum coming from? As with so many matters of import these days, there's no single answer.

# Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, Sept. 27, 2023 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 095 ~ 55 of 70

This year, one development helped clear space for some of the voices: the shallow attendance of major nations' leaders. Of the U.N. Security Council's five permanent members, only the United States, in the personage of President Joe Biden, spoke. The others — Russia, China, France and Britain — chose to send underlings, as did India and Canada.

U.N. Deputy Secretary-General Amina Mohammed called that "disappointing." But it did mean that smaller nations and coalitions had more oxygen. They used some of it to advocate for a broader-based permanent membership of Security Council, the only U.N. body with the power to take military action and impose sanctions. Only its permanent members can veto resolutions, and frustration about that runs long and deep.

"The global governance architecture has not delivered the equity and inclusion that is required," said Tandi Dorji, foreign minister of the Asian nation of Bhutan. He insisted representation on the council — which lacks a permanent member from Africa or Latin America — be broadened. "The increasing fragmentation, polarization, and growing inequity we witness in the world today only serve as an urgent cry for strengthening multilateralism."

The structure of the United Nations, most countries agree, doesn't fit the current global configuration. An organization built in the postwar mid-20th century to, in essence, prevent the nations who could destroy the world from doing so is not equipped to tackle the fragmentation afoot as the mid-21st century steams toward us with a rapidly evolving global power structure, speaker after speaker said.

Other factors, too, are helping softer voices grow louder. Exhibit A: climate change, which has hit the world's poorest countries hardest — in particular, island nations whose very existence is threatened by rising waters. When the president of the island nation of Kirabati, Taneti Maamau, says his country is "experiencing intensifying severe drought and coastal inundation," it's not a secondhand account — and people are starting to listen.

"They're banding together and saying, 'We are the front line of world's biggest problems, and the only way we get attention is if we band together.' That has been remarkably effective in terms of voice," Dayal said. "They're saying, 'Today it's us. Tomorrow it's going to be you.'"

The pandemic and the gradual recognition — finally — of Secretary-General Antonio Guterres' yearslong insistence that a multilateral planet is the only way forward also are helping matters.

Much like climate change, the vaccine inequity that the pandemic produced is a pressing topic; smaller nations, as the most affected constituencies, have natural roles driving that as well. "As we rebuild from the pandemic, we must do so with an unwavering commitment to inclusivity," said Seychelles President Wavel Ramkalawan.

And coalitions are strengthening beyond usual suspects like the G20 and the European Union. There is the Global South in general, with its malleable membership but its commitment to developing countries with unique common needs. There is SIDS, or small island developing states, which tell firsthand stories about climate change. And Africa's voice is stronger than ever as it pushes for equity, buoyed by a new permanent G20 seat for the African Union.

Then there's sheer population. Africa's alone is expected to double from its current 1.3 billion by 2050 and make up a quarter of the planet's people. This year, India surpassed China to become the world's most populous nation; its leader, Narendra Modi, may have skipped the U.N. meeting, but he hosted the G20 two weeks ago and used it as a forum to trumpet India's suitability as a leader of the Global South.

China, too, used the General Assembly last week to cast itself as a member of the Global South and the community of developing nations. While that's a matter of some debate — China also wants to be perceived as a key global power — its oomph carries along other less-heard nations' priorities in its wake, while bigger nations are distracted with other things.

"It seems that the Global North, under the U.S. leadership, is busy resisting China's growing power and weakening Putin's Russia," Zhiqun Zhu, a professor of political science and international relations at Bucknell University, said in an email. "No wonder China is seeking support in the developing world."

Even Biden focused his U.N. speech not on the big powers whose leaders didn't show, but on leaders in

the room. "The United States is working across the board to make global institutions more effective and more inclusive," he said, adding that in the 21st century, "21st-century results are badly needed."

That, like so many other remarks that followed in coming days, was an acknowledgment of something crucial: Both the community of nations and the U.N. itself need to address a world that might not have been recognizable to the architects of the post-World War II order and the global organization that rose from its ashes.

Which brings us back to Togo. Dussey surely voiced the concerns of myriad smaller nations when he said, flatly, that it is time to be heard and listened to — individually or as a group, but in a way that befits a 21st-century civilization where some of the most difficult circumstances are visited upon those with the least resources to cope.

"We are wearied by paternalism," Dussey said. "We are weary at your condescension. We are weary of your arrogance. We are weary. We are weary. We are weary."

## **India and Canada steer clear, in UN speeches, of their dispute over Sikh separatist leader's killing**

By KRUTIKA PATHI and JENNIFER PELTZ Associated Press

UNITED NATIONS (AP) — Indian and Canadian diplomats didn't directly address their countries' row over the killing of a Sikh separatist leader, but they obliquely underscored some key talking points as they addressed world leaders at the U.N. General Assembly on Tuesday.

Foreign Minister Subrahmanyam Jaishankar said that the world must not "countenance that political convenience determines responses to terrorism, extremism and violence." Canadian U.N. Ambassador Robert Rae, by turn, insisted that "we cannot bend the rules of state-to-state relations for political expediency."

Relations between the two countries frayed after Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau said last week that India may have been involved in the June killing of a Canadian citizen in a Vancouver suburb.

Canada has yet to provide any public evidence to support the claim about the slaying of Hardeep Singh Nijjar, 45. Killed by masked gunmen, Nijjar was a leader in what remains of a once-strong movement to create an independent Sikh homeland, known as Khalistan, and India had designated him a terrorist.

India's foreign ministry dismissed the allegation as "absurd" and accused Canada of harboring "terrorists and extremists." It also implied that Trudeau was trying to drum up domestic support among the Sikh diaspora.

"Such unsubstantiated allegations seek to shift the focus from Khalistani terrorists and extremists, who have been provided shelter in Canada and continue to threaten India's sovereignty and territorial integrity," the ministry said in a statement last week.

India has accused Canada for years of giving free rein to Sikh separatists, including Nijjar. While the active insurgency ended decades ago, Prime Minister Narendra Modi's government has warned that Sikh separatists were trying to stage a comeback. New Delhi has pressed countries like Canada, where Sikhs make up more than 2% of the population, to do more to stop a separatist resurgence.

After Trudeau aired his claim, India suspended visas for Canadians, there were tit-for-tit expulsions of diplomats, and Ottawa said it might reduce consulate staff over safety concerns.

But the dispute is unfolding against a backdrop of geopolitical priorities for both countries. Canada and other Western countries have been seeking to strengthen ties with India as a way to counter Chinese power. Days after airing the allegation about Nijjar's killing, Trudeau said Canada was "not looking to provoke or cause problems."

And India, which is trying to showcase its global stature after a fruitful turn heading the Group of 20 industrialized nations, wasn't seen as keen to use the U.N.'s global platform to draw attention to Canada's accusation and widen a rift that has already grabbed headlines internationally. Experts have said India likely would prefer to treat the matter as an issue just between the two countries involved.

India also has a habit, at the U.N., of keeping its criticisms veiled.

Hence Tuesday's exchange of what could be read, at most, as subtle swipes.



Jaishankar's mention of "terrorism, extremism and violence" echoed his ministry's rhetoric last week about Canada's claims. But it also resembled India's frequent complaints about Pakistan. New Delhi accuses its neighbor of sponsoring terrorism by arming and training insurgents fighting for the independence of Indian-controlled Kashmir or for its integration into Pakistan. Islamabad denies it.

Rae's comments, meanwhile, came after Trudeau told reporters Thursday that Canada was standing up for "the international rules-based order" and "the rule of law" in its approach to Nijjar's killing. But Rae's remarks didn't name any nation that might be trying to "bend the rules."

"But the truth is: If we don't adhere to the rules that we've agreed to, the very fabric of our open and of our free societies may start to tear," Rae said.

The remarks were tucked into a speech that dilated on climate change, immigration, gender equality, Haiti's troubles, Russia's war in Ukraine, and the need for the international community "to create unity where there is division."

"We have to find inside ourselves the capacity to recognize the importance of accepting differences," he said. "And if we can do that, then we can create a United Nations that will be worthy of the name."

Jaishankar sought to spotlight his country's aspirations on the world stage. The world's most populous nation and an increasingly muscular economic power, India has held itself out as "the voice of the Global South" and of developing countries' frustrations with a lopsided international order.

"When we aspire to be a leading power, this is not for self-aggrandizement, but to take on greater responsibility and make more contributions," he said. "The goals we have set for ourselves will make us different from all those whose rise preceded ours."

## **Biden urges striking auto workers to 'stick with it' in picket line visit unparalleled in history**

By SEUNG MIN KIM, TOM KRISHER and CHRIS MEGERIAN Associated Press

VAN BUREN TOWNSHIP, Mich. (AP) — President Joe Biden grabbed a bullhorn on the picket line Tuesday and urged striking auto workers to "stick with it" in an unparalleled show of support for organized labor by a modern president.

Donning a union ballcap and exchanging fist bumps, Biden told United Auto Workers strikers that "you deserve the significant raise you need" as he stopped in the Detroit area just a day ahead of a planned visit by former President Donald Trump, the frontrunner for the Republican nomination in next year's election.

"No deal, no wheels!" workers chanted as Biden arrived at a General Motors parts distribution warehouse, one of several facilities that has been targeted in a widening strike now in its 12th day. "No pay, no parts!"

Despite concerns that a prolonged strike could undermine the economy, particularly in the crucial battleground state of Michigan, the Democratic president encouraged workers to keep fighting for better wages at a time when car companies have seen rising profits.

Asked if UAW members deserved a 40% raise, one of their demands over the course of negotiations, Biden said: "Yes. I think they should be able to bargain for that."

He's repeatedly argued that auto companies have not gone far enough to meet union demands, especially after making concessions in the wake of the 2008 financial crisis.

"The fact of the matter is that you guys, the UAW, you saved the automobile industry back in 2008 ... you made a lot of sacrifices. You gave up a lot. And the companies were in trouble. Now they're doing incredibly well and guess what? You should be doing incredibly well."

The White House said Biden was the first modern president to visit a picket line, a sign of how far he's willing to go to cultivate union support as he runs for reelection.

Lawmakers often appear at strikes to show solidarity with unions, and Biden joined picket lines with casino workers in Las Vegas and auto workers in Kansas City while seeking the 2020 Democratic presidential nomination.

But sitting presidents, who have to balance the rights of workers with disruptions to the economy, supply chains and other facets of everyday life, have stayed out of the strike fray — until Biden.

# Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, Sept. 27, 2023 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 095 ~ 58 of 70

Unimpressed, Trump called Biden's visit "nothing more than a PR stunt from Crooked Joe Biden to distract and gaslight the American people from his disastrous Bidenomics policies that have led to so much economic misery across the country."

The president spent less than half an hour at the Willow Run parts distribution warehouse, where he was joined by UAW President Shawn Fain, who rode with Biden in the presidential limousine to the picket line.

"Thank you, Mr. President, for coming to stand up with us in our generation-defining moment," said Fain, who described the union as engaged in a "kind of war" against "corporate greed."

"We do the heavy lifting. We do the real work," Fain said. "Not the CEOs."

Labor historians said they could not recall an instance when a sitting president had joined an ongoing strike, even during the tenures of ardent pro-union presidents such as Franklin Delano Roosevelt and Harry Truman. Theodore Roosevelt invited labor leaders alongside mine operators to the White House amid a historic coal strike in 1902, a decision that was seen at the time as a rare embrace of unions as Roosevelt tried to resolve the dispute.

Biden's visit to the picket line was the most significant demonstration of his pro-union bona fides, a record that includes vocal support for unionization efforts at Amazon.com facilities and executive actions that promoted worker organizing. He also earned a joint endorsement of major unions earlier this year and has avoided southern California for high-dollar fundraisers amid the writers' and actors' strikes in Hollywood.

The United Farm Workers announced their endorsement of Biden on Tuesday, calling him "an authentic champion for workers and their families, regardless of their race or national origin." Biden's campaign manager, Julie Chavez Rodriguez, is the granddaughter of Cesar Chavez, the union's co-founder.

The UAW has not endorsed Biden. Asked about that after landing in Michigan, Biden told reporters that "I'm not worried about that."

Fain later said any endorsements would come later. "We've got to get good contracts first and we'll work out those things down the road," he said.

At least one warehouse worker on the picket line was not swayed by the visit. Curtis Cranford, who has 38 years with GM, was happy that Biden visited, but said it wouldn't necessarily deter him from voting Republican in 2024.

"I think it means a lot. It should hopefully put some pressure on the company. The White House is behind us" Cranford said.

Still, he said he and many union members disagree with Democrats on securing the borders, abortion and other issues. And he said both Trump and Biden were too old for the job.

Biden and other Democrats are aggressively touting the president's pro-labor credentials as Trump works to make inroads in critical swing states where unions remain influential, including Michigan and Pennsylvania. Biden is leaning on his union support at a time when labor enjoys broad support from the public, with 67% of Americans approving of labor unions in an August Gallup poll.

The UAW strike, which expanded into 20 states last week, remains a dilemma for the Biden administration since a part of the workers' grievances include concerns about a broader transition to electric vehicles. The shift away from gas-powered vehicles has worried some autoworkers because electric versions require fewer people to manufacture and there is no guarantee that factories that produce them will be unionized.

Adrian Mitchell, who works at the GM parts warehouse, said Biden would be better for the middle class than Trump. "He supports the people in regards to coming out here, showing solidarity with the UAW workers," Mitchell said. "He's always been for the middle class. I can't speak about Trump."

On electric vehicles, Mitchell said workers are concerned that the transition from internal combustion vehicles may cost them jobs. "We haven't really gotten to that point to see the job losses yet," he said. "So we can't look into the future to kind of see what's really going to happen. But we're all a little worried about that right now."

Trump is skipping the second Republican primary debate on Wednesday and will meet with striking autoworkers in Michigan, seeking to capitalize on discontent over the state of the economy and anger over the Biden administration's push for more electric vehicles — a key component of its clean-energy agenda.

# Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, Sept. 27, 2023 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 095 ~ 59 of 70

White House officials dismissed any notion that Trump forced their hand and noted that Biden headed to Michigan at the request of Fain, who last week invited the sitting president to join the strikers.

The Biden administration has no formal role in the negotiations, and the White House pulled back a decision from the president earlier this month to send two key deputies to Michigan after determining it would be more productive for the advisers, Gene Sperling and acting Labor Secretary Julie Su, to monitor talks from Washington.

Fain said Tuesday that negotiations were moving slowly and they'll escalate the strike to more plants if they need to.

## Want to tune in for the second GOP presidential debate? Here's how to watch

By MEG KINNARD Associated Press

The second Republican presidential debate is drawing near with a smaller onstage lineup than the first event last month.

Here's all of the information on how to watch:

### TUNING IN

The two-hour debate will start at 9 p.m. ET on Wednesday. It's being moderated by Fox Business Network host Stuart Varney and Fox News Channel host Dana Perino, as well as Univision anchor Ilija Calderón.

The event will air on Fox News Channel and Fox Business, as well as on the network's website and other streaming and digital platforms. There's also a Spanish-language feed airing on Univision.

As with last month's debate, the Republican National Committee has partnered with Rumble — a video-sharing platform popular with some conservatives — to livestream this one, in lieu of the network's YouTube channel. RNC Chair Ronna McDaniel said earlier this year this was a decision aimed toward "getting away from Big Tech."

### WHERE IS IT?

The setting for the second GOP debate is Ronald Reagan's presidential library in Simi Valley, California.

Many of the Republican hopefuls have made recent trips to the library for its "A Time for Choosing" speaking series, named for Reagan's pivotal 1964 speech on behalf of GOP presidential candidate Barry Goldwater.

Some in the field also make references on the stump to the 40th president, who for decades has loomed large over Republican politics.

Florida Gov. Ron DeSantis has framed himself as a possible Reagan-esque figure, aiming to oust what he characterized as a weak and unpopular Democratic incumbent in President Joe Biden. Former Vice President Mike Pence often talks of how he "joined the Reagan revolution and never looked back," and took his oath with his hand on the Reagan family Bible.

In the first debate, biotech entrepreneur Vivek Ramaswamy called himself "the only candidate in this race, young or old, black or white, to bring all of those voters along to deliver a Reagan 1980 Revolution."

### WHO WILL BE THERE?

The RNC confirmed seven candidates will be on the Simi Valley debate stage. The party set a number of markers that candidates needed to meet to qualify, including achieving benchmarks in polling and donor numbers, as well as signing a pledge to support the eventual Republican nominee.

Those who qualified for the debate are DeSantis, Ramaswamy, Pence, Sen. Tim Scott of South Carolina, former United Nations Ambassador Nikki Haley, former New Jersey Gov. Chris Christie and North Dakota Gov. Doug Burgum.

Former Arkansas Gov. Asa Hutchinson, who took part in last month's debate, missed making the cut.

Trump will miss his second debate in a row, deciding there is little upside in joining his lower-polling rivals on stage given his commanding early lead in polls. Instead, he will meet with current and former union workers in Michigan, where thousands of autoworkers have been on strike as part of a labor dispute

involving Detroit's Big Three and the United Auto Workers union.

In lieu of last month's debate, Trump participated in an interview with former Fox News host Tucker Carlson, a pre-taped sit-down that aired on social media just as eight of his rivals took the stage in Wisconsin.

## Canada's House speaker resigns over inviting a man who fought for a Nazi unit to Parliament

By ROB GILLIES Associated Press

TORONTO (AP) — The speaker of Canada's House of Commons resigned Tuesday for inviting a man who fought for a Nazi military unit during World War II to Parliament to attend a speech by the Ukrainian president.

Just after Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy delivered an address in the House of Commons on Friday, Canadian lawmakers gave 98-year-old Yaroslav Hunka a standing ovation when Speaker Anthony Rota drew attention to him. Rota introduced Hunka as a war hero who fought for the First Ukrainian Division.

Observers over the weekend began to publicize the fact that the First Ukrainian Division also was known as the Waffen-SS Galicia Division, or the SS 14th Waffen Division, a voluntary unit that was under the command of the Nazis.

"No one in this House is above any of us. Therefore I must step down as your speaker," Rota said in Parliament. "I reiterate my profound regret for my error in recognizing an individual in the House during the joint address to Parliament of President Zelenskyy.

"That public recognition has caused pain to individuals and communities, including to the Jewish community in Canada and around the world in addition to Nazi survivors in Poland among other nations. I accept full responsibility for my actions," he added.

Rota stepped down after meeting with the House of Commons' party leaders. All main opposition parties had called for Rota to step down, and House government leader Karina Gould said that lawmakers had lost confidence in Rota.

"This is something that has brought shame and embarrassment to all of Parliament and indeed all Canadians. The speaker did the honorable thing in resigning," Gould said.

Gould said that Rota invited and recognized Hunka without informing the government or the delegation from Ukraine, adding that the fact that Rota didn't inform anyone and didn't do diligence broke trust with lawmakers.

Members of Parliament from all parties rose to applaud Hunka on Friday unaware of the details of who he was.

"Never in my life would I have imagined that the speaker of the House would have asked us to stand and applaud someone who fought with the Nazis," Gould said.

"This is very emotional for me. My family are Jewish holocaust survivors. I would have never in a million of years stood and applauded someone who aided the Nazis."

Gould said Rota found out about it over the weekend. "He probably should have resigned as soon as he learned about it," she said.

Canadian Health Minister Mark Holland had called the incident "incredibly embarrassing."

The Friends of Simon Wiesenthal Center for Holocaust Studies said in a statement that the incident "has left a stain on our country's venerable legislature with profound implications both in Canada and globally."

"This incident has compromised all 338 Members of Parliament and has also handed a propaganda victory to Russia, distracting from what was a momentarily significant display of unity between Canada and Ukraine. It has also caused great pain to Canada's Jewish community, Holocaust survivors, veterans and other victims of the Nazi regime."

In an earlier apology on Sunday, Rota said he alone was responsible for inviting and recognizing Hunka, who is from the district that Rota represents. The speaker's office said it was Hunka's son who contacted Rota's local office to see if it was possible if he could attend Zelenskyy's speech.

The prime minister's office said it was unaware that Hunka was invited until after the address. The

speaker's office also confirmed it did not share its invite list with any other party or group. The vetting process for visitors to the gallery is for physical security threats, not reputational threats, the speaker's office said.

In Moscow, a Kremlin spokesman said it was "outrageous" that Hunka received a standing ovation.

Russian President Vladimir Putin has painted his enemies in Ukraine as "neo-Nazis," although Zelenskyy is Jewish and lost relatives in the Holocaust.

"It's highly unfortunate and the only winner here is the Putin regime, which is already spinning what happened on Friday to justify its ongoing military actions in Ukraine," said Daniel Béland, a political science professor at McGill University in Montreal,

The opposition Conservatives in Canada have blamed Prime Minister Justin Trudeau, but Béland noted that the speaker's role in Canada is as an officer of Parliament who does not participate in partisan caucus meetings and is not a member of the Cabinet.

"Canada's reputation is broken. This is by far the biggest hit Canada's diplomatic reputation has ever taken under in history and it happened under Justin Trudeau's watch," Opposition Conservative leader Pierre Poilievre said.

Poilievre said everyone in the House of Commons on Friday should have been vetted with Zelenskyy in attendance.

Robert Bothwell, a historian and professor at the University of Toronto, called Rota clueless for waiting so long to step down. He said an apology from Trudeau is also justified.

"He should not make it personal; there is nothing he personally did wrong, but the event embarrassed the country and as PM he takes responsibility," Bothwell said.

"Trudeau doesn't have the strongest image and this will cause other leaders to see him as damaged goods."

## **Messi Mania has grabbed hold in Major League Soccer, but will it be a long-lasting boost?**

By ANNE M. PETERSON AP Sports Writer

It's highly unlikely any player other than Lionel Messi could have brought Prince Harry, Selena Gomez and Leonardo DiCaprio out to a regular-season Major League Soccer match.

But there they were — very noticeable in fact — in the crowd when Messi's Inter Miami squad took on LAFC in Southern California early this month.

Since Messi arrived in the United States, the league and his team have both been enjoying a rare spotlight, with sell-outs on the road and at home, No. 10 jerseys flying off the shelves, ticket prices at times reaching unheard-of levels and sponsors jumping on board.

"He's the best player in the world. What did you think he was going to do when he came here?" LAFC coach Steve Cherundolo said after Inter Miami's star-studded sold-out match in Los Angeles.

It's almost necessary to be an A-lister to score a good ticket to watch him play: Front-row tickets on the secondary market have been going for thousands of dollars. Regardless of the costs they may incur, more fans are going through the turnstiles to watch the seven-time Ballon d'Or winner and reigning World Cup champion.

"I was never an MLS person," said Kenny Schorr, a fan from Miami Springs and former college soccer player who was at a recent Inter Miami game. "I would watch a game and get frustrated. The talent level was so different. I'm not trying to put anybody down, But you look at what Messi does and the talent is only going to increase with his presence."

Messi Mania has even reached beyond the pitch.

The day after Messi posted on social media about his meal from Banchemo Pizza, a homey Argentine-style pizzeria in Miami's North Beach, there was a line out the door at the restaurant.

Clearly, the demand for all things Messi is off the charts, but will that translate to greater success for

# Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, Sept. 27, 2023 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 095 ~ 62 of 70

MLS in the United States, where "football" means the NFL not soccer?

"With the arrival of Messi, everything is changing, everything is opening eyes," LAFC defender Giorgio Chiellini said. "It's a step. Part of that has to be a step, then many will want to invest and they could have the opportunity to do it. This league has huge potential. Now it's time to show this potential."

Messi, 36, has 11 goals and eight assists in 12 games across all competitions for Inter Miami. He's already helped the team secure one trophy, this summer's League's Cup. On Wednesday, Miami will host the Houston Dynamo for another title, the U.S. Open Cup.

But Messi's status for the game is uncertain: He's been dealing with scar tissue from an old injury, according to coach Tata Martino. Even so, tickets on the secondary market for Wednesday's match were ranging from about \$170 to more than \$5,000 apiece.

MLS has gotten a bump from an international star before. David Beckham, now Messi's boss as co-owner of Inter Miami, was a game-changer for the league when he signed with the LA Galaxy in 2007. The league literally changed the rules for Beckham, devising the Designated Player rule that allows teams to sign high-profile players without them counting toward the salary cap. Messi was signed under the same rule.

With his Hollywood good looks and his Spice Girl wife, Beckham raised the profile of the league.

Fox Soccer analyst Alexi Lalas, who was president of the Galaxy when Beckham joined, said that while Beckham helped boost the league's profile, Messi is elevating the game itself.

"Messi is arguably the greatest player to play the game. That conversation was not had relative to David Beckham, as good as he was as a player," Lalas said. "I think the impact of Messi is going to be greater in terms of the on-field product and the evolution and the growth of that, in that I think that he almost gives license to others to at least consider coming to Major League Soccer."

For now, the fans are responding to what MLS is offering with Messi as the face of the league.

So far, average attendance in MLS is up nearly 5% over last year, although the league also added a new team in St. Louis this season. Inter Miami's attendance is up 36% over last year.

Television viewership is more difficult to gauge because league games are broadcast on Apple TV's MLS Season Pass, a subscription-based streaming platform that was launched this season. Apple TV hasn't shared ratings.

Streaming measurement firm Antenna reported 110,075 new MLS Season Pass signups on the day of Messi's Inter Miami debut. That's a 280% increase from the number of sign-ups on opening day of the 2023 season. Another 65,000 signed up when he played his second game, according to data first reported by the Wall Street Journal.

Messi's No. 10 jersey is the best-selling jersey in the history of the MLS store. Sales surpassed every other jersey sold this season on the league's website within just 45 minutes of its release, and there's a backlog of orders still waiting to be filled.

Sponsors are also buying in. Royal Caribbean signed a multiyear partnership deal with Inter Miami in August.

All told, Inter Miami chief business officer Xavier Asensi has predicted in interviews that the club is on target to hit record revenues of more than \$200 million in 2024, on par with some European clubs.

Still, it remains to be seen how widespread the Messi effect will be, whether fans will be wooed to the league as a whole.

Julio Morales, who was holding a painting he did of Messi before the Miami match at LAFC, said he paid \$600 for his ticket to see Messi.

"We'll see how the games go," Morales said about whether he'll start following MLS. "I mean, if the games get better, then maybe."

## **JPMorgan to pay \$75 million on claims that it enabled Jeffrey Epstein's sex trafficking operations**

By KEN SWEET AP Business Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — JPMorgan Chase agreed Tuesday to pay \$75 million to the U.S. Virgin Islands to settle claims that the bank enabled the sex trafficking acts committed by financier Jeffrey Epstein.

JPMorgan said that \$55 million of the settlement will go toward local charities that provide assistance to victims of domestic abuse and trafficking and other crimes, as well as to enhance the capabilities of local law enforcement. Of that amount, \$10 million will be used to create a fund to provide mental health services for Epstein's survivors, according to the Virgin Islands Department of Justice.

The Virgin Islands, where Epstein had an estate, sued JPMorgan last year, saying its investigation has revealed that the financial services giant enabled Epstein's recruiters to pay victims and was "indispensable to the operation and concealment of the Epstein trafficking enterprise." It had been seeking penalties and disgorgement of at least \$190 million, in addition to other damages.

In effect, the Virgin Islands had argued that JPMorgan had been complicit in Epstein's behavior and did not raise any red flags to law enforcement or bank regulators about Epstein being a "high risk" customer and making repeated large cash withdrawals.

The settlement averts a trial that had been set to start next month.

The bank also said it reached a confidential legal settlement with James "Jes" Staley, the former top JPMorgan executive who managed the Epstein account before leaving the bank. JPMorgan sued Staley earlier this year, alleging that he covered up or minimized Epstein's wrongdoing in order to maintain the lucrative account.

JPMorgan had already agreed to pay \$290 million in June in a class-action lawsuit that involved victims of Epstein's trafficking crimes.

Epstein died by suicide in a federal jail in 2019.

## **Hunter Biden sues Rudy Giuliani and another lawyer over accessing and sharing of his personal data**

By LINDSAY WHITEHURST Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Hunter Biden sued Rudy Giuliani and another attorney Tuesday, saying the two wrongly accessed and shared his personal data after obtaining it from the owner of a Delaware computer repair shop.

The lawsuit was the latest in a new strategy by Hunter Biden to strike back against Republican allies of Donald Trump, who have traded and passed around his private data including purported emails and embarrassing images in their effort to discredit his father, President Joe Biden.

The suit accuses Giuliani and attorney Robert Costello of spending years "hacking into, tampering with, manipulating, copying, disseminating, and generally obsessing over" the data that was "taken or stolen" from Biden's devices or storage, leading to the "total annihilation" of Biden's digital privacy.

The suit filed in California also claims Biden's data was "manipulated, altered and damaged" before it was sent to Giuliani and Costello, and has been further altered since then. Accessing, opening and sharing it broke laws against computer hacking, the suit argues. It seeks unspecified damages and a court order to return the data and make no more copies.

Ted Goodman, a political adviser to Giuliani, said it was false to claim Giuliani manipulated the laptop hard drive, but he was "not surprised ... considering the sordid material and potential evidence of crimes on that thing."

Costello used to represent Giuliani, but recently filed a lawsuit against the former New York City mayor saying he did not pay more than \$1.3 million in legal bills.

Costello declined to comment. In February, he told The Associated Press that a letter from Hunter Biden's lawyers that requested a Justice Department investigation of him and others related to the laptop was

a “frivolous legal document” that “reeks of desperation because they know judgment day is coming for the Bidens.”

Tuesday’s lawsuit marks the latest turn in the long-running laptop saga, which began with a New York Post story in October 2020 that detailed some of the emails it says were found on the device related to Hunter Biden’s foreign business dealings. It was swiftly seized on by Trump as a campaign issue during the presidential election that year.

Biden doesn’t explicitly acknowledge that the laptop left at the computer shop was his, but says “at least some” of the data was on his iPhone or backed up to iCloud.

A Justice Department special counsel is separately pursuing an investigation into Hunter Biden’s taxes, and filed firearm purchase and possession charges against him after a previous plea deal on tax and gun charges imploded. He plans to plead not guilty to the gun counts, according to court records.

House Republicans, meanwhile, have continued to investigate every aspect of Hunter Biden’s business dealings and sought to tie them to his father, the president, as part of an impeachment inquiry. A hearing on Thursday is expected to detail some of their claims anew.

Hunter Biden, meanwhile, after remaining silent as the images are splayed across the country, has changed his tactic, and his allies have signaled there’s more to come. Over the past few months, he’s also sued a former aide to Trump over his alleged role in publishing emails and embarrassing images, and filed a lawsuit against the IRS saying his personal data was wrongly shared by two agents who testified as whistleblowers as part of a probe by House Republicans into his business dealings.

Biden has also pushed for an investigation into Giuliani and Costello, along with the Wilmington computer repair shop owner who has said Hunter Biden dropped a laptop off at his store in April 2019 and never returned to pick it up.

Giuliani provided the information to a reporter at the New York Post, which first wrote about the laptop, Biden’s attorney said in a letter pushing for a federal investigation.

## California, a liberal bastion, may give Donald Trump an unlikely boost in 2024

By MICHAEL R. BLOOD AP Political Writer

LOS ANGELES (AP) — Few corners of the U.S. may be less hospitable to Donald Trump than California, where he lost by more than 5 million votes in the 2020 election. But as the former president seeks to return to the White House, the liberal bastion may give him an unlikely boost.

A state GOP rule change has opened the possibility that Trump could sweep each of the state’s 169 delegates on March 5, when California is among more than a dozen states participating in the so-called Super Tuesday contests. With Trump already leading his rivals in many state and national polls, a dominant performance in California could move him much closer to the GOP nomination.

“This race is quickly consolidating,” said GOP fundraiser Charles Moran, a Trump delegate in 2016 and 2020. With a win in California, he added, “I truly think Trump could take the nomination on Super Tuesday — then this is over.”

With less than four months before the Iowa caucuses officially kick off the GOP nomination process, the dynamics of the race could still change. But Trump is keeping a close eye on the state, where his most prominent Republican rivals will gather without him on Wednesday for the second presidential debate. While Trump is skipping the event, he has made sure to be in California on Friday to appear at the state’s GOP convention, where many of the people who will ultimately serve as delegates will be in attendance.

In what would be an ironic twist, the state where the former president is widely loathed outside his conservative base could help him tighten his grip on the Republican White House nomination.

Trump, who is facing criminal charges in four separate cases, has long had a conflicted relationship with California, the nation’s most populous state, where Democrats haven’t lost a statewide election since 2006 and outnumber registered Republicans by about 2-to-1.

California was home to the so-called Trump resistance during his time in office, and Trump often depicts



# Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, Sept. 27, 2023 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 095 ~ 65 of 70

California as representing all he sees wrong in America. As president, he called the homeless crises in Los Angeles, San Francisco and other big cities disgraceful, and threatened to intercede — faulting the “liberal establishment” for what he described as a “terrible situation.”

He berated state Democrats who supported funding health care for some adults who entered the U.S. illegally, and challenged California’s authority to reduce car emissions. Then-state Attorney General Xavier Becerra filed more than 50 lawsuits against the Trump administration, targeting initiatives on immigration, health care and the environment.

Still, the Trump National Golf Club Los Angeles sits on the Pacific coast south of the city. And even in losing California in a landslide in 2020, Trump received over 6 million votes — more than any Republican presidential candidate before him — with his margins topping 70% in some rural counties that typically favor conservative candidates.

California probably will be an afterthought in November 2024 — the state’s lopsided electorate makes it a virtual lock for Democrats on Election Day. You’d have to go back to 2000 to find a Republican nominee pushing hard to win California, when George W. Bush invested millions in the state then lost to Democrat Al Gore by 12 points.

Under the rule change, a Republican presidential candidate who pulls in more than 50% of the primary vote would be awarded all 169 delegates. If no candidate hits that threshold, delegates will be awarded proportionally.

Such a winner-take-all rule didn’t exist in recent presidential elections in the state. Previously, the California GOP primary amounted to dozens of separate races on a single day — one in each congressional district across the sprawling state, and then one statewide. The winner in each district collected three delegates; the candidate who received the largest number of votes statewide claimed a bonus of about a dozen more.

That created a competitive environment where Democratic Rep. Nancy Pelosi’s district in San Francisco awarded the same number of GOP delegates as a rural, conservative heartland district.

When the change was adopted in late July, state party Chairwoman Jessica Millan Patterson predicted it would lure GOP presidential candidates to California to campaign, drive turnout and make the state relevant in picking the party’s 2024 nominee.

But others believe it has had the opposite effect, stifling competition in a state where buying media advertising across half a dozen markets comes at a huge, prohibitive cost. The vastness of the state, home to nearly 1-in-8 Americans, makes it hard to get to all the regions. The previous guidelines encouraged candidates to target specific districts — now, one candidate can collect them all.

“The effect of the change has been to effectively terminate the Republican primary in California,” said conservative activist Jon Fleishman, a former executive director of the state GOP.

The state party — strongly influenced by House Speaker Kevin McCarthy of Bakersfield, a Trump loyalist — “shifted everything to help Donald Trump,” Fleishman said.

In a sign of the fallout, a super PAC supporting Florida Gov. Ron DeSantis, Never Back Down, recently curtailed operations in California. The committee says it had knocked on over 100,000 doors over several months but has shifted its focus elsewhere.

“The Trump team came in to rig the rules in their favor,” Ken Cuccinelli, who was deputy secretary of Homeland Security during the Trump administration and founded the PAC, said in a statement.

Similar rule changes seen as benefiting the Trump campaign are playing out elsewhere, including in Michigan and Nevada, where some GOP leaders fear changing guidelines could confuse voters. The California rules are expected to be challenged at a state party convention next week, though reversing course is seen as unlikely.

“Nobody is seriously trying to repeal it,” said longtime conservative activist Steve Frank.

The home turf of Presidents Richard Nixon and Ronald Reagan, California was once reliably Republican in presidential elections. Pronounced demographic shifts, particularly a boom in the Hispanic population, and a shifting economy that included the collapse of the defense industry, changed everything.

The number of Hispanics, Blacks and Asian-Americans combined has outnumbered whites in California since 1998, and Latinos alone have outnumbered the white population for about a decade. Most new

# Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, Sept. 27, 2023 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 095 ~ 66 of 70

voters are Democrats or left-leaning independents. Democrats hold every statewide office and dominate the Legislature and the congressional delegation.

California's Republican Party has been in decline for years, and GOP voters account for just 23.8% of the statewide total, slightly ahead of independents. Infighting between conservatives and moderates persists, and dueling factions are expected to brawl at the state party convention over a proposed rewrite of the party platform, moving it toward the political center.

The last Republican to win a presidential contest in California was George H.W. Bush, in 1988. Since then, it's been a long string of Election Day misery: John McCain, the 2008 GOP nominee against Barack Obama, boasted about competing in California but lost by 24 points. Mitt Romney suffered a 23-point loss to Obama in 2012. Trump lost there to Hillary Clinton in 2016 by 30 points.

However, pockets of Republican strength remain, including in the vast Central Valley farm belt and the so-called Inland Empire running east and north of Los Angeles. Despite his penchant for California-bashing, Trump won 23 of the state's 58 counties in the state in 2020, mostly in the state's farm belt and rural interior.

Once the primary is over, California's relevance may lie in a string of competitive House seats, including several in Orange County southeast of Los Angeles, which are expected to play into control of the closely divided chamber next year.

## **China goes on charm offensive at Asian Games, but doesn't back down from regional confrontations**

By DAVID RISING Associated Press

HANGZHOU, China (AP) — A month before the Asian Games, China released a new national map, doubling down on its claims to almost the entire South China Sea and disputed border territories with India.

A few days before the event, it flew more than 100 warplanes toward Taiwan, stepping up its regular military harassment of the self-governing democratic island that Beijing claims for its own.

At the games themselves, however, outward aggression has taken a backseat to unctuous charm as China sought to win the hearts of more than 40 Asian nations and regions by dazzling them with technology and slathering them with praise.

In a personal appearance in the eastern city of Hangzhou, into which the government poured billions of dollars for the two-week games, Chinese President Xi Jinping welcomed leaders and officials at an opening banquet on Saturday.

"The Asian Games embodies the Asian people's shared desire for peace, unity and inclusiveness," Xi told them, according to his prepared remarks.

No mention was made of the status of Taiwan, the tense standoffs in the South China Sea over competing claims with Indonesia, Vietnam, Malaysia, Brunei and the Philippines - all competitors at the Hangzhou games - or the border disputes with India that resulted in a clash three years ago in which 20 Indian and four Chinese soldiers were killed.

Nor was anything said about a diplomatic spat China ignited with India the day before Saturday's opening ceremony as it refused to back down on its stance on visas for Indian athletes coming from a region that leaders maintain belongs to China, resulting in three women wushu athletes being unable to compete.

Taiwan's athletes even received one of the loudest rounds of applause at the opening ceremony, though have to compete under the name "Chinese Taipei" and without their flag due to China's claim on the island off of its east coast, which it has not ruled out taking by force.

Signs around Hangzhou billed the city as a "paradise on earth" while China adopted the motto "heart to heart" for the Asian Games, which feature some 12,000 competitors - more than the summer Olympics - from across Asia and the Middle East.

"This will undoubtedly open new prospects for cultural exchanges, cultural integration and people-to-people bonds in Asia," the Chinese Communist Party's official People's Daily wrote Monday in an effusive editorial about the Hangzhou games. "It will inject profound and lasting cultural strength into the building of a community with a shared future for mankind."

# Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, Sept. 27, 2023 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 095 ~ 67 of 70

The headlines the state-run China Daily's supplement edition for the games carried after the opening ceremony included "Xi extends hand of friendship," and "Wave of Glory" alongside a photo of the Chinese leader waving to the crowds.

Xi told the officials at Saturday's banquet that the region's recent economic growth had been an "Asian miracle" and that "we should make Asia an anchor of world peace."

But while offering a verbal carrot in Hangzhou, Beijing continued brandishing a physical stick elsewhere. Taiwan's military said Sunday it had detected the Chinese military initiating an exercise featuring warplanes, ships and ground troops in coastal Fujian Province, which faces Taiwan.

The Philippine coast guard reported over the weekend that it had detected a floating barrier placed by China's coast guard to prevent Filipino fishing boats from entering a lagoon in a disputed shoal in the South China Sea.

The Philippines removed the barrier on Monday. Chinese Foreign Ministry Spokesman Wang Wenbin told reporters Tuesday that China's "resolve to safeguard its sovereignty and maritime rights" was unwavering, and he warned "the Philippines not to make provocations or seek trouble."

Xi's banquet speech did not refer to any territorial claims or confrontations, nor to the mounting tensions with the U.S. and its allies as Beijing and Washington jockey for influence in the Asia-Pacific region.

Still, geopolitics were clearly not far from his Xi's mind as he outlined China's goals, thinly veiling his remarks with the language of sport.

"As a community with a shared future connected by mountains and rivers as well as cultural affinity, we should use sports to promote peace, pursue good neighborliness and mutual benefit, and reject Cold War mentality and bloc confrontation," he said, using language China commonly does when referring to the U.S.'s Asia-Pacific strategy.

"As humanity faces unprecedented global challenges, we should use sports to promote unity, seize the historic opportunity, and jointly stand up to the challenges," Xi said.

## More students gain eligibility for free school meals under expanded US program

By ANNIE MA Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Millions of additional students in schools serving low-income communities will be eligible to receive breakfast and lunch at no cost under a rule change announced Tuesday by the U.S. Department of Agriculture.

At schools where 25% of families participate in income-based public benefits, such as the Supplemental Nutritional Assistance Program, the federal government now will cover the cost of free meals for all enrolled students. Previously, the qualifying threshold was 40%.

Roughly 3,000 additional school districts serving more than 5 million students will now be eligible, officials said.

"While there is still more work ahead to ensure every K-12 student in the nation can access healthy school meals at no cost, this is a significant step on the pathway toward that goal," said Stacy Dean, USDA deputy under secretary for Food, Nutrition, and Consumer Services.

During the pandemic, Congress temporarily made universal meals free to all students, but that ended last year. Other federal programs that provided direct food assistance to families also scaled down amid soaring food prices, putting strains on family budgets and leaving some kids hungry.

Meantime, eight states — California, Colorado, Maine, Massachusetts, Michigan, Minnesota, New Mexico and Vermont — have made school meals free to all students regardless of income.

The new rule will expand access to universal meals through a program known as the Community Eligibility Provision, or CEP. Instead of requiring families to fill out individual applications for free or reduced-price meals, schools participating in the program receive federal funding based on income data, with local or state money filling in any gaps in the cost of offering meals to all students. Advocates say reducing administrative burdens like applications helps ensure children don't go hungry.

# Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, Sept. 27, 2023 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 095 ~ 68 of 70

Some have criticized the costs of the program. The Republican Study Committee has called for eliminating the CEP altogether, arguing it ignores the individual income eligibility of each student.

Nationally, expanding a community-based model of universal meals would alleviate burdens on many families, said Anna Korsen, policy and program director at Full Plates Full Potential, a nonprofit organization in Maine that works on maximizing access to school meals.

"The federal poverty guidelines that dictate who gets a free meal and who doesn't are really outdated," Korsen said. "There are so many families that on paper don't qualify for a free meal, and they can get lumped into this group of ... families that can afford to pay for lunch or breakfast at school. But really, those families are living paycheck to paycheck."

Agriculture secretary Tom Vilsack said the rule change is a step toward fulfilling the promise of healthy school meals for all.

"Increasing access to free, healthy school breakfast and lunch will decrease childhood hunger, improve child health and student readiness, and put our nation on the path to better nutrition and wellness," he said.

## South Korea parades troops and powerful weapons in its biggest Armed Forces Day ceremony in years

By HYUNG-JIN KIM Associated Press

SEOUL, South Korea (AP) — South Korea paraded thousands of troops and an array of weapons capable of striking North Korea through its capital as part of its biggest Armed Forces Day ceremony in 10 years on Tuesday, as its president vowed to build a stronger military to thwart any provocation by the North.

Concerns are growing that North Korea is seeking Russian help in expanding its nuclear arsenal in return for supplying Moscow with conventional arms exhausted by its war with Ukraine.

"After looking at your imposing march today, I believe our people would trust you and have faith in our national security," President Yoon Suk Yeol told cheering soldiers at the end of the ceremony in a central Seoul plaza. "I'll always support you together with our people."

Earlier, South Korea rolled tanks, artillery systems, drones and powerful ballistic missiles capable of hitting all of North Korea through the streets of Seoul, amid steady autumn rains. About 4,000 South Korean troops carrying rifles or flags followed them, accompanied by about 300 U.S. soldiers, in the first such military parade since 2013.

As the soldiers and their weapons went past, Yoon waved, clapped and flashed a thumbs-up.

Since taking office last year, he has been pushing hard to beef up South Korea's defense capability while expanding military drills with the United States in response to North Korea's advancing nuclear arsenal.

But a complication in Seoul and Washington's efforts to curb the North's nuclear ambitions is the latest North Korean push to deepen military cooperation with Russia. Earlier this month, North Korean leader Kim Jong Un traveled to Russia's far eastern region to meet with President Vladimir Putin and visit key military sites.

North Korea reportedly wants to receive Russian technologies to help its development of spy satellites, nuclear-propelled submarines and powerful long-range missiles. Such weapons would pose a major security threat to South Korea and the U.S.

In a formal Armed Forces Day ceremony at a military airport near Seoul earlier Tuesday, Yoon said he'll strive to build "a strong military that instills fear in the enemy."

"Based on battle-ready combat capabilities and a solid readiness posture, our military will immediately retaliate against any North Korean provocation," he said. "If North Korea uses nuclear weapons, its regime will be brought to an end by an overwhelming response" from the South Korean-U.S. alliance.

That ceremony drew about 6,700 soldiers and 200 weapons assets, the largest of its kind since 2013, according to South Korean officials.

Yoon didn't mention North Korean-Russian ties in either of his two speeches Tuesday. But in an address to the U.N. General Assembly last week, he said South Korea "will not sit idly by" if North Korea and Russia agree to such weapons deals in violation of U.N. Security Council resolutions that ban all weapons

trading with North Korea.

U.S. officials have also said that North Korea and Russia would face consequences if they go ahead with such deals.

Also Tuesday, senior diplomats from South Korea, Japan and China met in Seoul and agreed to hold the first summit of their leaders in four years "at the earliest convenient time," according to a statement from South Korea's Foreign Ministry. No date has been fixed, however, and the South Korean statement said the three countries agreed to hold a related foreign ministers' meeting in a couple of months.

Yoon said last week that Chinese Premier Li Qiang and Japanese Prime Minister Fumio Kishida had expressed their support for a trilateral summit in South Korea.

Yoon's moves to strengthen South Korea's military alliance with the U.S. and boost Seoul-Washington-Tokyo security cooperation have caused concerns that Seoul's relations with China, its biggest trading partner, will be undermined. But Yoon says Seoul-Washington-Tokyo cooperation won't marginalize any particular nation.

## Today in History: September 27 Taliban take power in Afghanistan

By The Associated Press undefined

Today in History

Today is Wednesday, Sept. 27, the 270th day of 2022. There are 95 days left in the year.

Today's Highlight in History:

On Sept. 27, 1996, in Afghanistan, the Taliban, a band of former seminary students, drove the government of President Burhanuddin Rabbani out of Kabul, captured the capital and executed former leader Najibullah.

On this date:

In 1779, John Adams was named by Congress to negotiate the Revolutionary War's peace terms with Britain.

In 1825, the first locomotive to haul a passenger train was operated by George Stephenson in England.

In 1854, the first great disaster involving an Atlantic Ocean passenger vessel occurred when the steamship SS Arctic sank off Newfoundland; of the more than 400 people on board, only 86 survived.

In 1928, the United States said it was recognizing the Nationalist Chinese government.

In 1939, Warsaw, Poland, surrendered after weeks of resistance to invading forces from Nazi Germany and the Soviet Union during World War II.

In 1956, Olympic track and field gold medalist and Hall of Fame golfer Babe Didrikson Zaharias died in Galveston, Texas, at age 45.

In 1964, the government publicly released the report of the Warren Commission, which concluded that Lee Harvey Oswald had acted alone in assassinating President John F. Kennedy.

In 1979, Congress gave its final approval to forming the U.S. Department of Education.

In 1991, President George H.W. Bush announced in a nationally broadcast address that he was eliminating all U.S. battlefield nuclear weapons, and called on the Soviet Union to match the gesture.

In 1994, more than 350 Republican congressional candidates gathered on the steps of the U.S. Capitol to sign the "Contract with America," a 10-point platform they pledged to enact if voters sent a GOP majority to the House.

In 1999, Sen. John McCain of Arizona officially opened his campaign for the 2000 Republican presidential nomination, the same day former Vice President Dan Quayle dropped his White House bid.

In 2012, NFL referees returned to the field after a tentative deal with the league ended a lockout.

In 2013, President Barack Obama and Iranian President Hassan Rouhani spoke by telephone, the first conversation between American and Iranian leaders in more than 30 years.

In 2017, Playboy magazine founder Hugh Hefner died at the age of 91.

In 2018, during a day-long hearing by the Senate Judiciary Committee, Christine Blasey Ford said she

# Groton Daily Independent

**Wednesday, Sept. 27, 2023 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 095 ~ 70 of 70**

was "100 percent" certain that she was sexually assaulted by Supreme Court nominee Brett Kavanaugh when they were teenagers, and Kavanaugh then told senators that he was "100 percent certain" he had done no such thing.

In 2021, R&B superstar R. Kelly was convicted in a sex trafficking trial in New York, after decades of avoiding criminal responsibility for numerous allegations of misconduct with young women and children.

Today's Birthdays: Actor Kathleen Nolan is 90. Actor Claude Jarman Jr. is 89. Author Barbara Howar is 89. Singer-musician Randy Bachman (Bachman-Turner Overdrive) is 80. Actor Liz Torres is 76. Actor A Martinez is 75. Baseball Hall of Famer Mike Schmidt is 74. Actor Cary-Hiroyuki Tagawa is 73. Actor/opera singer Anthony Laciura is 72. Singer and actor Shaun Cassidy is 65. Comedian Marc Maron is 60. Rock singer Stephan (STEE'-fan) Jenkins (Third Eye Blind) is 59. Congresswoman Debbie Wasserman Schultz is 57. Actor Patrick Muldoon is 55. Singer Mark Calderon is 53. Actor Amanda Detmer is 52. Actor Gwyneth Paltrow is 51. Actor Indira Varma is 50. Rock singer Brad Arnold (3 Doors Down) is 45. Christian rock musician Grant Brandell (Underoath) is 42. Actor Anna Camp is 41. Rapper Lil' Wayne is 41. Singer Avril Lavigne (AV'-rihl la-VEEN') is 39. Bluegrass singer/musician Sierra Hull is 32. Actor Sam Lerner is 31. Actor Ames McNamara is 15.