

Groton Daily Independent

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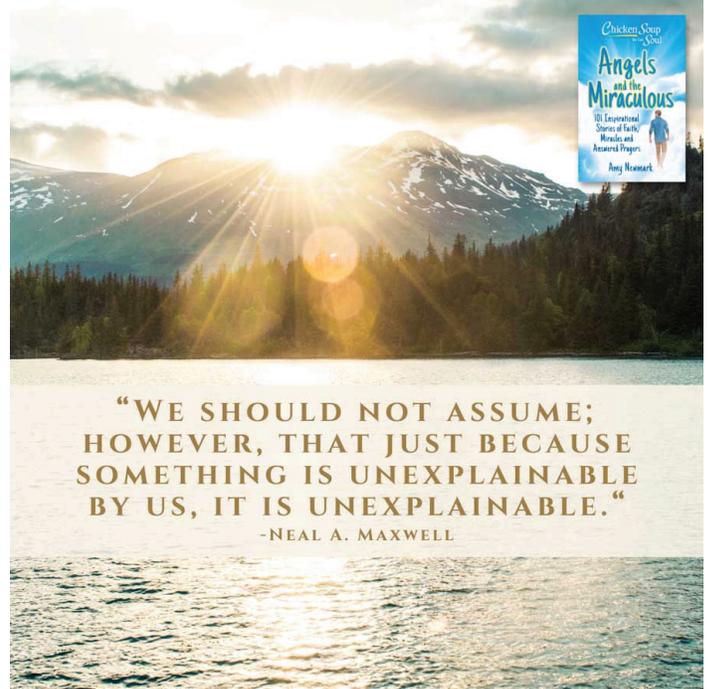
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Flags at Half-Staff in Honor of U.S. Senator Dianne Feinstein

PIERRE, S.D. – Governor Kristi Noem ordered that flags be flown at half-staff statewide effective immediately until sunset on the day of interment, in honor of U.S. Senator Dianne Feinstein.

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

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



"WE SHOULD NOT ASSUME;
HOWEVER, THAT JUST BECAUSE
SOMETHING IS UNEXPLAINABLE
BY US, IT IS UNEXPLAINABLE."

-NEAL A. MAXWELL

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

Schedule Changes

Junior High Football has added a game AT Milbank on Thursday, October 5th at 4pm!!

The girls basketball game with Aberdeen Christian scheduled for Tuesday, January 9th is now being played on Thursday, December 28th with JV beginning at 5pm.

The boys basketball game with Aberdeen Christian has been changed to be in GROTON on Friday, February 23rd. It was previously scheduled to be played in Aberdeen. JV will begin at 6 pm.

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The Bulletin by Newsweek

World in Brief

11 bankruptcy days before a new state law goes into effect that would allow victims to sue their abusers decades after the fact.

Proud Boys member Christopher Worrell, who disappeared days before he was supposed to be sentenced for his role in the U.S. Capitol riot was found unconscious by federal agents after he tried to return home, the FBI said on Friday.

Charles Edward Littlejohn, a former contractor for the Internal Revenue Service, was charged Friday with leaking tax information to news outlets about thousands of the country's wealthiest people between 2018 and 2020, according to the Justice Department.

MyPillow CEO Mike Lindell, a former advisor to Donald Trump, has said that he has had to reassure vendors repeatedly that his company is not on the verge of collapsing because of pending lawsuits, financial issues and his credit line decreasing.

Ethan Crumbley, the teenager who killed four students at Michigan's Oxford High School in 2021, will be sentenced to life in prison with no chance of parole.

Utah and Arizona have announced that their national parks will remain open even if the federal government enters a shutdown. The state's governors—a Republican and a Democrat respectively—have invested state funds to keep the parks functioning.

In the ongoing war in Ukraine, Russia is set to hold nationwide exercises in preparation for "the danger of armed conflicts involving nuclear powers" on October 3. This will be the first time that Moscow has held such drills..

What to Watch in the Day Ahead

Donald Trump and Florida Gov. Ron DeSantis will be keynote speakers at the California GOP Fall 2023 Convention in Anaheim.

U.S. prosecutors face a deadline to obtain a return of an indictment by a grand jury President Joe Biden's son, Hunter, in his tax case under the Speedy Trial Act. Hunter was indicted earlier this month for allegedly purchasing a firearm while using illegal drugs.

The 2023 Ryder Cup matches begin at Marco Simone Golf and Country Club in Guidonia Montecelio, northeast of Rome, Italy. The 44th edition will run through Oct 1. The U.S. currently holds the cup following their 19-9 victory over Europe in 2021..

Talking Points

"Dianne made her mark on everything from national security to the environment to protecting civil liberties. She's made history in so many ways, and our country will benefit from her legacy for generations," President Joe Biden on the death of Sen. Dianne Feinstein.

"We don't take an oath to a king or a queen or to a tyrant or a dictator. And we don't take an oath to a wannabe dictator. We don't take an oath to an individual. We take an oath to the Constitution, and we take an oath to the idea that is America, and we're willing to die to protect it," said U.S. Army General Mark Milley, who is stepping down from his Trump-appointed role as the nation's highest ranking military officer on October 1.

Republican House Speaker Kevin McCarthy suffered a stinging defeat on Friday after 21 members of his own caucus voted against his latest attempt to pass a short-term spending bill aimed at keeping the government open beyond September.

Special Counsel Jack Smith has added to his gag order request against former President Donald Trump, including homing in on a recent incident in which the former president raised questions about whether he purchased a firearm.

The Archdiocese of Baltimore on Friday filed for Chapter

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Football: Webster Area 18, Groton Area 0

Groton Area Tigers

First Downs: 7

Rushing: 14 carries for 1 yard

Korbin Kucker: 10-35

Christian Ehresmann: 1-3

Lane Tietz: 3-(-37)

Passing:

Lane Tietz completed

13 of 27 for 126 yards, 1 interception

Korbin Kucker: 1 for 2 for 13 yards

Receivers:

Colby Dunker: 5-63

Keegen Tracy: 4-44

Taylor Diegel: 2-18

Korbin Kucker: 2-14

Christian Ehresmann: 1-0

Fumbles: Had 0, lost 0

Penalties: 5 for 35 yards

Defensive Leaders

Colby Dunker: 11 tackles

Christian Ehresmann: 9 tackles

Logan Ringgenberg: 9 tackles

Holden Sippel: 7 tackles

Korbin Kucker: 1 fumble recovery

Record: 4-3

Next Game: Bye week

Scoring:

Second Quarter

10:18: Webster Area: Brent Bearman, 1 yard run. (Kick failed)0-6

Third Quarter

4:52: Webster Area: Jacob Kellar, 57 yard punt return. (Pass failed) 0-12

Fourth Quarter

2:10: Webster Area: Brent Bearman, 1 yard run. (Kick failed) 0-18

Webster Area Redmen

First Downs: 13

Rushing: 43 carries for 134 yards

Carson Mount: 20-78

Brent Bearman: 16-38

Jacob Keller: 3-14

Gavin Witt: 2-9

Ian Lesnar: 2-(-5)

Passing:

Ian Lesnar completed 5 of 8 for 78 yards

Receivers:

Jacob Keller: 2-46

Brent Bearman: 2-15

Carson Mount: 1-7

Fumbles: Had 2, lost 1

Penalties: 5 for 23 yards

Defensive Leaders

Brent Bearman: 9 tackles

Jacob Keller: 6 tackles

Gavin Witt: 5 tackles

Martin Dorsett: 5 tackles

Tate Mamenga: 1 interception

Record: 4-3

Next Game: at Roncalli

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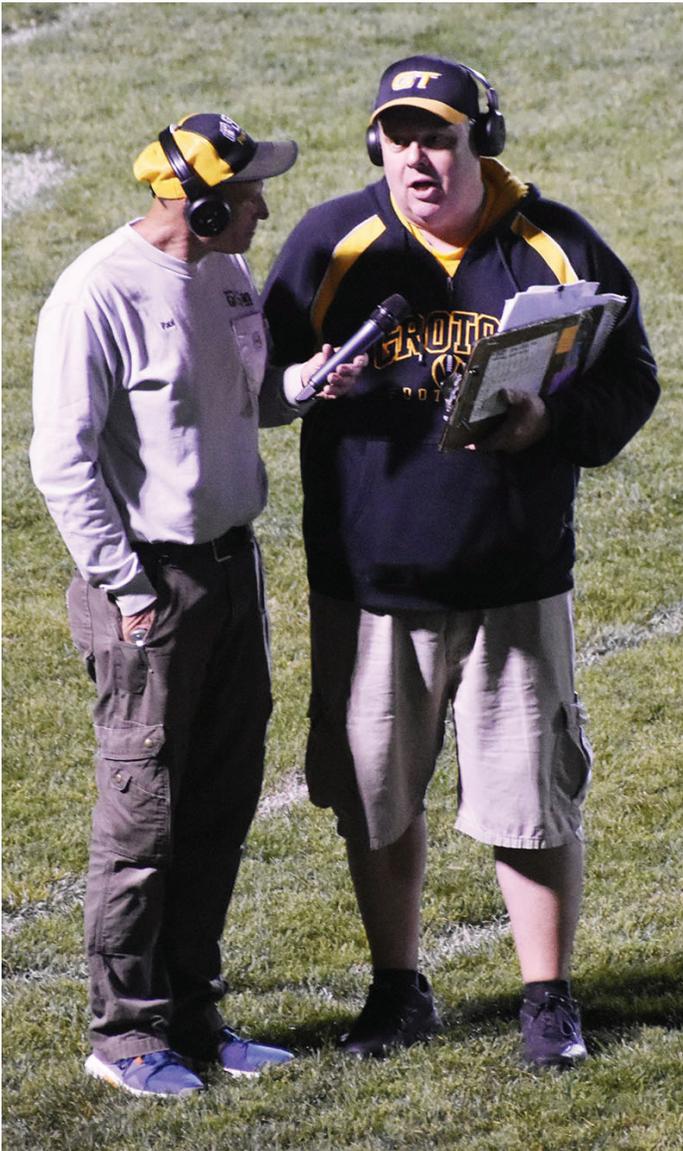
Webster Area beats Groton Area in football action

Groton Area's football team was held to one yard rushing and 139 yards passing as Webster Area posted an 18-0 win over the Tigers.

Korbin Kucker had 35 yards rushing, 13 yards passing, 14 yards receiving and had one fumble recovery. Colby Dunker had 63 yards receiving and 11 tackles. Keegen Tracy had 44 yards receiving.

Groton Area, now 4-3, will host Mobridge-Pollock on Oct. 13 for the final regular game of the season.

The game was broadcast live on GDILIVE.COM, sponsored by Bary Keith at Harr Motors, BK Custom Ts & More, Bierman Farm Service, Blocker Construction, Dacotah Bank, Full Circle Ag, Greg's Repair, Groton Ag Partners, Groton Chamber, Groton Ford, John Sieh Agency. Krueger Brothers, Locke Electric and Rix Farms/R&M Farms. Mike Nehls provide the play-by-play commentary and Jeslyn Kosel ran the camera.



Paul Kosel interviews Tom Woods at half-time of the football game. The interview is a regular feature of GDILIVE.COM as Woods provides stats and other insights to each game. (Photo by Jeslyn Kosel)



Mike Nehls has provided commentary of the football games for several years. (Photo by

Jeslyn Kosel)



Keegen Tracy tries to gain a few yards but is quickly brought down by the Webster Area player. (Photo by Jeslyn Kosel)

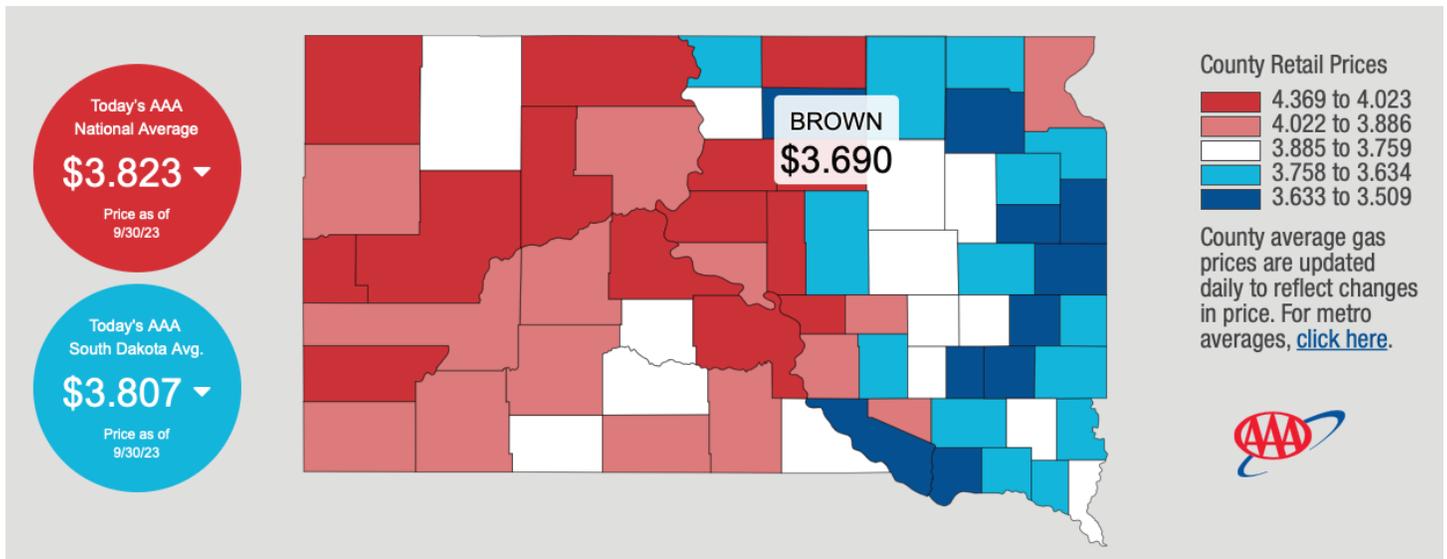
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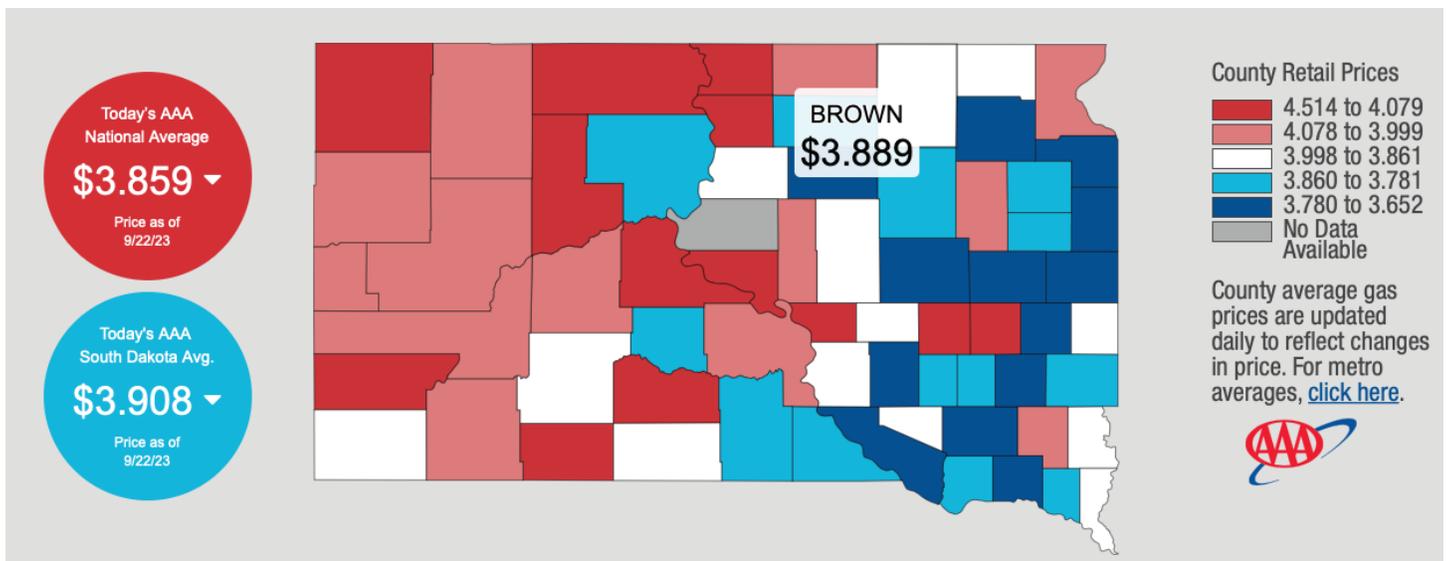
South Dakota Average Gas Prices

	Regular	Mid-Grade	Premium	Diesel
Current Avg.	\$3.807	\$3.956	\$4.454	\$4.397
Yesterday Avg.	\$3.812	\$3.969	\$4.458	\$4.403
Week Ago Avg.	\$3.884	\$4.057	\$4.518	\$4.401
Month Ago Avg.	\$3.752	\$3.913	\$4.384	\$4.233
Year Ago Avg.	\$3.689	\$3.821	\$4.291	\$4.637

This Week



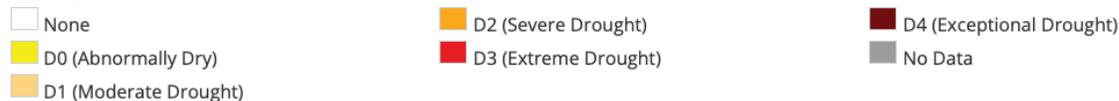
Two Weeks Ago



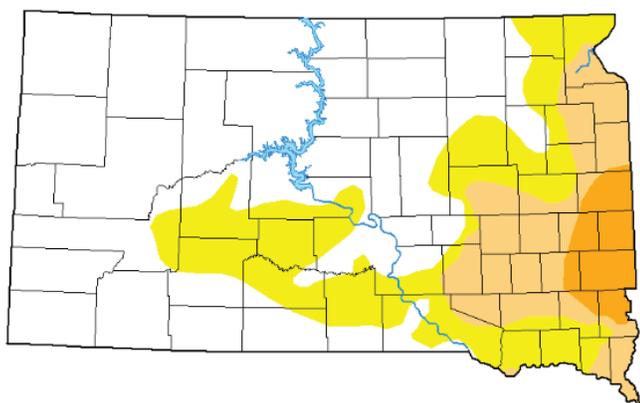
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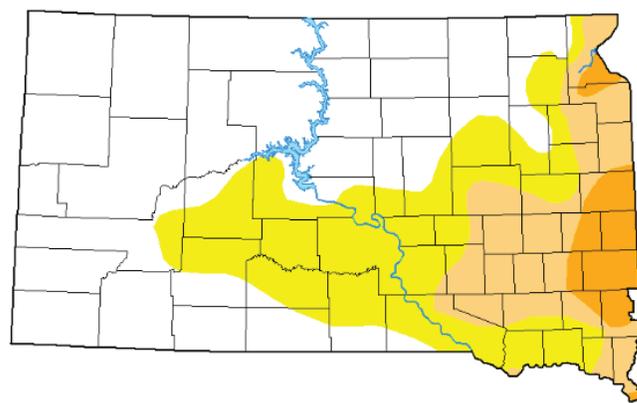
Drought Classification



Drought Monitor



September 26



September 19

Northern and eastern parts of the High Plains region received half an inch to over 2 inches of rain this week, while Colorado and parts of Wyoming and Kansas received little to no rain. D0-D4 contracted in Nebraska, D0-D3 were reduced in Kansas and North Dakota, and D0-D2 shrank in South Dakota. On the other hand, abnormal dryness returned to Wyoming and abnormal dryness and moderate drought expanded in Colorado. Two-thirds (67%) of the topsoil in Kansas was still short or very short of moisture, according to USDA statistics.

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Wolves Remain Unbeaten from Wachs, Downing Warriors

Aberdeen, S.D. – The Northern State University volleyball team tallied an NSIC sweep Friday evening with a 3-0 win over Winona State University. The Wolves held the Warriors under 20 points in the first two sets en route to their fourth league win.

THE QUICK DETAILS

Final Score: NSU 3, WSU 0

Records: NSU 11-2 (4-1 NSIC), WSU 10-3 (3-2 NSIC)

Attendance: 732

HOW IT HAPPENED

Northern secured the match victory with set scores of 25-16, 25-11, and 25-22

The Wolves hit a match high .195 and held the Warriors to a .018 attack percentage

NSU added a match leading 43 kills, 40 assists, 58 digs, and seven aces

They forced 21 Winona State hitting errors as the Warriors recorded just 23 kills, and recorded eight blocks

Abby Brooks led three Wolves in double figures with 11 kills and a .529 attack percentage

Abby Meister and Reese Johnson held down the defense with 20 and 15 digs respectively, while Keri Walker tallied 38 assists and a team leading four aces

NORTHERN STATE STATISTICAL STANDOUTS

Abby Brooks: 11 kills, .529 attack%, 3 blocks

Natalia Szybinska: 10 kills, 3 blocks

Corbyn Menz: 10 kills, 2 blocks

Keri Walker: 38 assists, 5 digs, 4 aces, 3 blocks, 2 kills

Abby Meister: 20 digs, 1 ace

Reese Johnson: 15 digs, 2 assists

UP NEXT

Northern State will face No. 2 Concordia-St. Paul today from the Barnett Center. First serve is set for 2 p.m. against the Golden Bears.



Getting ready for Pumpkin Fest

Brooklyn Heinrich has been busy putting together grab bags for the eighth annual Pumpkin Fest. The event will be held October 14. (Courtesy Photo Doug Heinrich)

BBB Scam Alert: "Grandma, help!" Emergency scams take advantage of loved ones, heightened by AI

Emergency scams, sometimes called "grandparent scams," prey on the willingness of an unsuspecting, worried individual to help friends and family in need. With Artificial Intelligence (AI) now allowing scammers to clone the voice of a loved one, all someone needs is a short audio clip to make themselves sound exactly like your loved one.

Often, scammers will impersonate their targets' loved ones, make up an urgent situation, and plead for help... and money. Social media sites allow scammers to look up information and offer plausible stories. They may even incorporate nicknames and real travel plans into the con to convince their targets.

How the scam works:

Emergency scams are about a family member or friend in a dire situation. You get a call, email, or social media message from someone claiming to be a distressed family member. They may say they've been arrested while traveling overseas, or there was an accident, medical emergency, or other calamity. They provide convincing details, such as family names and school details.

A common version is the "grandparent scam," where the con artist contacts a grandparent claiming to be their grandchild and asking for money. The plea is so persuasive that the grandparent wires money to the scammer, only to find out their family member was safe and sound later. This scam can also work in reverse, where the "grandparent" calls their grandchild pleading for help.

Recently, the FTC has warned that scammers are using voice cloning techniques to imitate the voices of loved ones. The technology enables con artists to copy the voices of persons close to you from videos they may find on social media or other sources. They can then use tools to imitate the voice of your loved one and have it appear to say whatever they wish in a call. Some voice cloning efforts may be crude, and others very sophisticated - either way, this adds to this scam's confusing and frightening aspect.

Tips to spot this scam:

Resist the urge to act immediately, no matter how dramatic the story is. Check out the story with other family and friends, but hang up or close the message and call your loved one directly. Don't call the phone number provided by the caller or caller ID. Ask questions that would be hard for an impostor to answer correctly.

Know what your family members are sharing online. You may not have control over your family's social media accounts, but familiarize yourself with what they share online.

Don't wire any money if there is any doubt about the call. If a person wires money and later realizes it is a fraud, the police must be alerted.

For more information:

To report a scam, go to [BBB Scam Tracker](#). Learn more about all types of impostor scams.

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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

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

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Groton Community Transit

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

Dear Groton family,

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

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

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

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

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

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

Sincerely,

Dam Hansen & Eugenia Strom

Groton Transit

Steve Smith, Sherry Koehler, Topper Tostad, Dick Kolker

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West Nile Update – South Dakota, September 29, 2023

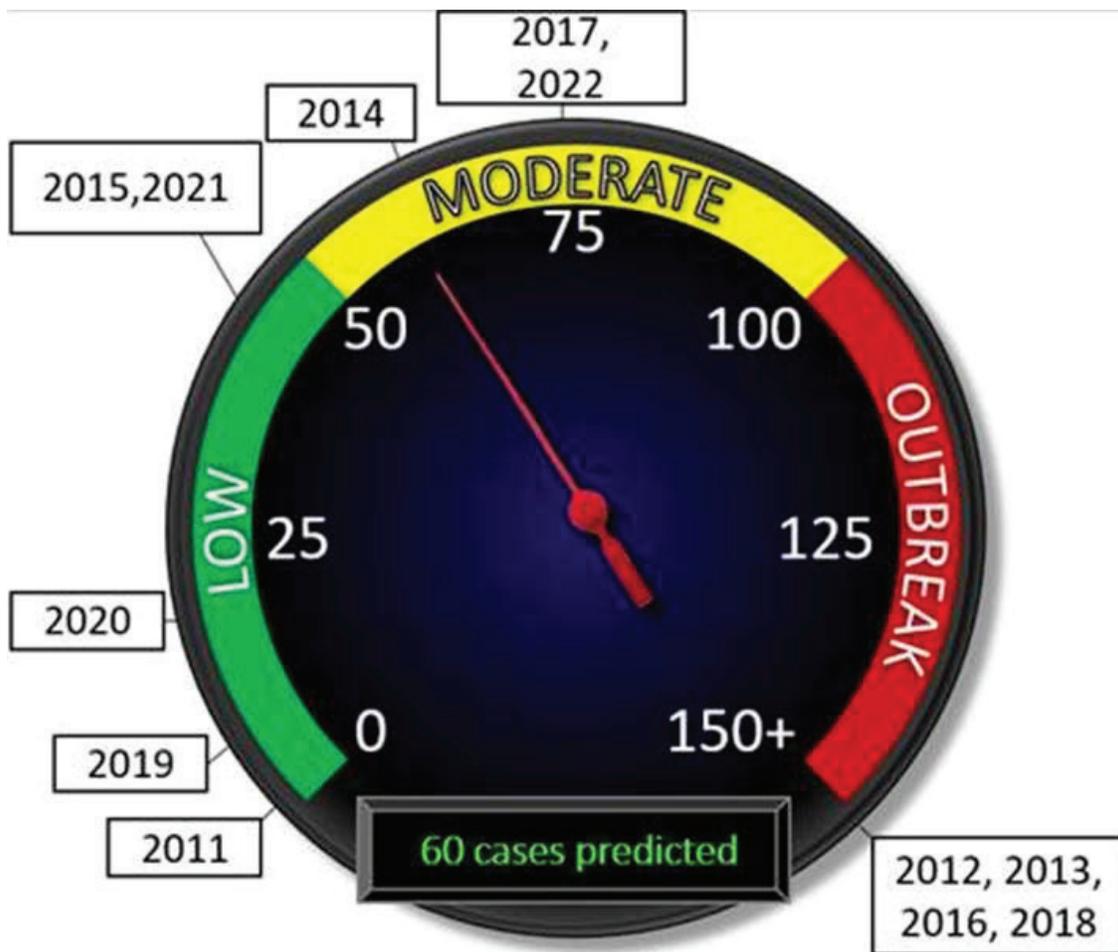
81 human cases reported (Beadle, Bon Homme, Buffalo, Brown, Campbell, Clark, Codington, Corson, Davison, Day, Deuel, Dewey, Edmunds, Fall River, Faulk, Hamlin, Hand, Hughes, Hutchinson, Jerauld, Kingsbury, Lake, Lincoln, Lyman, Marshall, McCook, Mead, Minnehaha, Moody, Oglala Lakota, Pennington, Perkins, Sanborn, Spink, Union, Walworth, Yankton) and 3 deaths

11 human viremic blood donors (Brown, Custer, Codington, Charles Mix, Faulk, Minnehaha, Pennington, Yankton)

8 counties with positive mosquito pools (Beadle, Brown, Brookings, Codington, Hand, Hughes, Lincoln, Minnehaha)

US WNV (as of September 26): 1419 cases (Al, AR, AZ, CA, CO, CT, DC, DE, FL, GA, IA, ID, IL, IN, KS, KY, LA, MA, MD, MI, MN, MO, MS, MT, NC, ND, NE, NJ, NM, NY, OH, OK, OR, PA, SC, SD, TN, TX, UT, VA, WA, WI, WV, WY)

WNV Prediction Model – Total Number of Cases Projected for 2023, South Dakota (as of September 28)



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BROWN COUNTY
BROWN COUNTY COMMISSION AGENDA
REGULAR MEETING TUESDAY
OCTOBER 3, 2023, 8:45 A.M.

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

1. Call To Order - Pledge of Allegiance
2. Approval of Agenda
3. Opportunity for Public Comment
4. Second Reading & Possible Adoption: Ordinance #256 – Amend Portions of Title 4 Zoning & Addition for Solar Energy Systems
5. Review Quotes to replace Heat/Cool System for 24/7 Building
 - a. Approve & Authorize Chairman to sign awarded quote
6. Kylie Lange, Summit Carbon Solutions & Gevo Inc
 - a. Project Update
7. Dirk Rogers, Highway Superintendent
 - a. Northern Valley R-O-W – Co Hwy 14; Co Hwy 5; Co Hwy 15
 - b. Department Update
8. Rachel Kippley, Fair/Fairgrounds/Parks Manager
 - a. Forklift Purchase
 - b. Rental House
9. Approve & Authorize Chairman to Sign Solid Waste Management Program Grant Agreement for New Loader
10. Consent Calendar
 - a. Approval of General Meeting Minutes from September 26, 2023
 - b. Claims
 - c. HR Report
 - d. Claim Assignments
 - e. Travel Requests
 - f. Lease Agreement
 - g. Hay Land Lease Renewal Addendums
11. Other Business
12. Executive Session (if requested per SDCL 1-25-2)
13. Adjourn

Brown County Commission Meeting

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

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

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

Access Code: 601-168-909 #

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

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

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

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

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

Hail storm hits Groton Area Thursday morning



An early morning hail storm went through Groton, leaving piles of hail, more so on the north end of Groton. Bruce Babcock holds a hand full of hail in the left photo. The hail severely damaged the leaves of the pumpkin vine grown by Paul Kosel in the right photo.



SOUTH DAKOTA SEARCHLIGHT

<https://southdakotasearchlight.com>

Making meat local: \$32 million flows to South Dakota processors since '21

Over 100 projects have received state and federal grants

BY: JOSHUA HAIAR - SEPTEMBER 29, 2023 5:44 PM

CLARK — Drive any direction in South Dakota, and it won't take long to find cattle. The same can't always be said for South Dakota-raised beef products, but that's changing.

After the COVID-19 pandemic exposed problems with large meatpacking monopolies, entrepreneurs are capitalizing on government grants to put more local links in South Dakota's meat supply chain.

Randy Gruenwald, owner of Dakota Butcher, is one of the people leading the charge.

Founded in 2009 in Clark, Dakota Butcher has expanded to five additional locations in Madison, Pierre, Rapid City and two in Watertown.

"We are hoping to get a location in Sioux Falls next," said Gruenwald, South Dakota's 2020 Small Business Person of the Year.

He slaughters and processes cattle at his Clark location, but he doesn't have enough capacity there to supply all of his store shelves. So he buys meat from regional processors to supply the other locations.

Gruenwald hopes that will soon change. He was approved for a \$200,000 federal grant to expand the Clark location, which would allow him to process meat that can be sold across his network.

Dakota Butcher's success as a small- to mid-sized meat processor is a rarity in an industry dominated by global conglomerates. The U.S. Department of Agriculture reports that four companies – Tyson, JBS, Cargill and Marfrig – control 85% of beef processing.

During the height of the pandemic, production slowed at some major meatpacking plants when workers got sick. Grocery stores ran low on beef, and prices shot up. When consumers went looking for local lockers and processors to fill the gap, there weren't enough to meet the need.

Gruenwald is happy to be filling part of that void.

"Ranchers love it," he said. "They like seeing more options out there."

State and federal grants

In 2021, Gov. Kristi Noem announced \$5 million in federal COVID-19 relief funds would be allocated to South Dakota meat processing. The state has paid \$4.98 million in grants to 95 projects since the announcement. Grants ranged from about \$9,500 to \$200,000.



Workers at Dakota Butcher in Clark process beef on Aug. 15, 2023. (Joshua Haiar/South Dakota Searchlight)

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About \$1.64 million went to 12 new facilities spread across the state.

The remaining \$3.34 million went to 83 existing facilities, like Dakota Butcher, which received about \$39,000 for a freezer expansion in Clark and about \$43,000 for trucks and equipment in Watertown.

The federal government has also issued grants.

The American Rescue Plan Act of 2021 allocated \$1 billion to help expand the capacity of small and mid-sized meat and poultry processors around the nation, through several programs. About \$27 million has been awarded to South Dakota so far.

The bipartisan Butcher Block Act – which Rep. Dusty Johnson, R-South Dakota, sponsored – was implemented as part of the American Rescue Plan Act's \$1 billion allocation. The act proposed grants for new and expanding operations.

"With the Butcher Block Act, we had a bipartisan, very popular concept that the administration liked," Johnson said. "Congress is not the most efficient creature that's ever existed, and so there are times when the administration likes where we are headed, and they will implement a program administratively."

Johnson said the spending is designed to create a freer market in the highly consolidated, global beef industry. He said the alternative is forcibly breaking up the biggest packers and processors, but "it's hard to know how to do that when these are global enterprises."

Troy Hadrick is a Faulkton-area rancher who wants to open a small processing plant by 2025. He was awarded \$2.2 million from the federal program.

Hadrick has found demand for his beef among the restaurant community in Sioux Falls and is already supplying some meat to Vanguard Hospitality.

"They were looking for a quality, local product," Hadrick said.

His ranch paid for a feasibility study, which found that a \$13.5 million, 25-cattle-per-day facility would be ideal. Then came the federal grant application process – which he said was over 400 pages.

"About 200 of which were to ensure minimal impact on the environment," Hadrick said.

Wall Meat Processing received a \$3.3 million grant for a new facility in New Underwood capable of processing 4,000 livestock per year, including cows, pigs, sheep and bison.

A sub-program for product inspection awarded grants including another \$185,430 to Wall Meat Processing, \$197,209 to a Pine Ridge Reservation bison startup, and \$200,000 to Bad River Jerky in Chamberlain.

Another sub-program awarded grants for revolving loan funds to serve processors who want to start up or expand their processing capacity. The Farmers Union Foundation, which represents South Dakota and other neighboring states, received \$834,000. And in South Dakota specifically, GROW South Dakota received \$8.13 million, Planning & Development District III received \$4.48 million, and the West River Foundation received \$6.99 million.

Up to \$50 million is allocated to tribal nations for projects related to meat from animals traditionally harvested by Native Americans, such as bison, reindeer or salmon. The USDA has not yet announced which tribal nations have been awarded grants.

Ranchers are excited

While more small and mid-sized processors "don't have much of an effect on the overall supply chain," more of them are great news for the state's ranchers, according to Eric Jennings, a Spearfish rancher and president of the South Dakota Cattlemen's Association.

"Because it's an opportunity to utilize these plants for direct sales, which can add value to their product," Jennings said. He said that cuts out middlemen.

Historically, South Dakota ranchers have faced challenges in getting a fair price for their livestock, often needing to work through large processors and retailers that dominate the industry, he explained.

In 1977, the largest four beef-packing firms controlled just 25% of the market, compared to about 85% today. And as recently as 1997, Americans bought 21% of their groceries from the then-four largest retailers. In 2019, the top four chains sold 43% of all groceries, with Walmart alone commanding a quarter of the market.

Such consolidation tends to hurt ranchers at the bottom of the supply chain. In 1990, ranchers received

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59 cents of each dollar spent on beef while retailers received 33 cents; today those figures are 38 cents and 51 cents, respectively.

In addition to helping ranchers financially, localizing the meat supply chain has ancillary benefits – like shorter distances to transport cattle, resulting in reduced greenhouse gas emissions; new facilities creating local jobs; and higher quality meat for South Dakotans.

“The South Dakota cattle that end up going through those large processing facilities, the high-quality meat goes to the coast or to the hotel and restaurant trade,” Jennings said. “And so, buying locally, you’re able to capture that high quality, local beef before it leaves the state.”

Ensuring feasibility

As funding flows to processors, the Governor’s Office of Economic Development is pursuing a feasibility study to assess the viability of small meatpacking projects.

The department will hire an independent consultant for the study, focusing on areas such as available cattle supply, sales and marketing, the economics of processing, and workforce availability.

“Since meatpacking projects have become increasingly common in recent years, and feasibility concerns should be addressed in a fair and honest way, GOED wants to determine (1) how many of these projects the regional economy can sustain and (2) what the impact will be on established companies,” said department spokesperson Missy Sinner in an emailed statement.

Sinner said the state needs to know whether, for example, one or two new projects getting started will end up putting three or more existing companies out of business.

“It can be a fine line between promoting healthy industry competition and hurting an industry, and GOED wants to find where that line is so that South Dakota, farmers, ranchers, and consumers benefit,” Sinner said.

The state’s U.S. senators are also involved in efforts to strengthen the meat supply chain.

Mike Rounds is sponsoring and John Thune is co-sponsoring a bill that would allow meat and poultry products inspected by state programs to be sold across state lines.

Rounds said in a press release that while South Dakota producers raise some of the highest-quality meat and poultry in the world, state-inspected products are limited to markets within the state “even though they are required to go through inspection at a state facility that meets or exceeds federal inspection standards.”

“This is a disadvantage to producers and consumers alike,” Rounds said. “Our bipartisan bill would allow these high-quality products that pass federally-equivalent state inspection standards to be sold across state lines, which would open up new markets for our producers and give consumers more choices at the grocery store.”

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.

Price tag for post-election audits could be larger than lawmaker expectations

Secretary of State's Office says accurate estimate is 'indeterminable'

BY: JOHN HULT - SEPTEMBER 29, 2023 5:37 PM

The cost to conduct post-election audits in South Dakota could vastly exceed an estimate calculated for lawmakers earlier this year, according to a survey of county auditors.

Or it won't; neither the Secretary of State's Office nor county auditors are sure.

South Dakota's Board of Elections signed off this week on most of the rules counties will use to spot-check results in primary and general elections for accuracy.

The rules are an outgrowth of a campaign pledge from Secretary of State Monae Johnson to remove South Dakota from the short list of states lacking post-election audits, and of lawmakers' near-unanimous support of a 2023 bill to create them.

The rules are now set for a November appearance before the Legislature's Rules Review Committee.

At least one significant question remains, however: What will it cost the state to perform the now-mandatory audits?

The Board of Elections upped the reimbursement amounts for the audit-related expenses incurred by counties on Wednesday, but the actual price tag for the work is unclear. Counties will be expected to submit their expenses for things like making copies or buying postage, hourly wages for the post-election auditors, mileage and meals. Auditors made clear before and during Wednesday's meeting that they'd like to see all costs recouped.

The possible tally of those costs across the state is wide open. The secretary of state's efforts to calculate them came out too muddy to be reliable.

The Legislature's fiscal impact statement on the 2023 bill that led to the creation of a post-election audit system based its estimate of \$15,950 on costs from Idaho.

A fiscal note update signed by Deputy Secretary of State Tom Deadrick filed in advance of Wednesday's rules hearing, however, noted that the Idaho dollars paid for a general election, not a general and a primary. Idaho's price tag was also tied to audits in 44 counties. South Dakota has 66 counties.

Based on the Idaho figures, South Dakota's county tally and its expectation of post-election audits for both primaries and general elections, Deadrick wrote, the fiscal impact would be about \$47,850.



Brown County Auditor Lynn Heupel explains how the tabulator machine works to count election ballots in November 2022. (Makenzie

Huber/South Dakota Searchlight)

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To get a better sense of how the audits might play out in South Dakota, though, the Secretary of State's Office surveyed counties on potential costs and came up with a different figure.

Forty-one percent of auditors said they couldn't provide a number, as such audits have never occurred before in the state. Based on the costs submitted by the 34 auditors who did venture a guess – ranging from \$500 to \$20,000 and averaging \$4,389 per county – the Secretary of State's Office estimated the combined costs to audit next year's primary and general election would be \$579,348.

"Due to the significant range between Idaho's cost data and the auditor survey, we believe the fiscal impact is indeterminable at this time," Deadrick's fiscal note reads.

Lincoln County Auditor Sheri Lund told South Dakota Searchlight that she was among the auditors to send a figure, but she admitted hers was a squishy number.

As no county has performed a post-election audit, Lund said, auditors don't have a clear comparison.

Recounts can be spendy affairs, Lund said, but they're also considerably different than audits. Recounts focus on one election contest, rather than 5% of the ballots in two races across two precincts, which is what Lincoln County would be required to do in a post-election audit. Tabulation machines can be used as part of the recount, she said, with a sample of ballots hand counted. Questionable ballots are scrutinized to divine voter intent.

But voter intent isn't part of the post-election audit, and the tabulators are meant to stay dormant throughout the process while the hand-counting of every audited ballot takes place.

"I budgeted \$15,000 for it, because I have no way of measuring what it's going to cost," Lund said. "That's two elections and 40-some thousand possible voters. So it's hard for me to say how long it's going to take us to do it."

At Wednesday's Board of Elections meeting, member and former lawmaker John Lake, of Gettysburg, said he's concerned about the costs.

Regardless of the rules passed on Wednesday, he said, the board will likely need to revisit the issue after next year's primary and general elections.

"The discrepancy in the cost of this program is huge. I mean, you have one site where I think we got \$16,000, in some places it was \$116,000, we saw another one that was a half a million plus, and we don't know," Lake said.

The day after the meeting, board member Scott McGregor of Rapid City said he expects that the Secretary of State's Office will need to ask lawmakers for more money.

"That's going to become a question next session as to whether the legislature, when looking now at the cost of what they've done by requesting these audits, will go along with that, McGregor said.

Rep. Jean Hunhoff, R-Yankton, chairs the Legislature's Joint Appropriations Committee. If the secretary of state needs to ask for additional funding, Hunhoff said, the committee will expect to hear details.

"I think that there has to be some kind of justification," Hunhoff said. "What exactly are we looking at? Is it just paying for the audits? Is it for the workers? Is this for time? Is it for machines? Right now, I don't know."

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.

Government shutdown nears: U.S. House GOP fails to pass one-month spending plan

Thune remains 'hopeful' of an agreement;

SD officials hope to keep Rushmore, Badlands open

BY: JENNIFER SHUTT, JACOB FISCHLER, ARIANA FIGUEROA AND ASHLEY MURRAY -
SEPTEMBER 29, 2023 3:25 PM

WASHINGTON — A sweeping government shutdown appeared inevitable on Friday, with the U.S. Senate stuck in a procedural holding pattern on its bipartisan stopgap bill and divided U.S. House Republicans unable to pass their short-term spending bill.

Both chambers of Congress must approve and President Joe Biden must sign government funding legislation before midnight on Saturday, otherwise a funding lapse would begin on Oct. 1.

But mid-afternoon Friday, a month-long funding bill packed with steep spending cuts drafted by some of the more conservative members of the House GOP failed to pass, 198-232. Twenty-one Republican members opposed it (South Dakota Republican Dusty Johnson supported it). The measure would have had no future in the Democratic-controlled Senate.

House leaders following that vote announced they will be in session and voting on Saturday, though on what was not immediately clear ahead of a GOP conference meeting in the late afternoon.

The mood lagged in the U.S. Capitol on Friday, where workers and law enforcement chatted in the hallways and cafeterias about the prospect of working without pay.

More than 3.5 million federal employees would either work without pay or be furloughed if the government shuts down. Federal employees would receive back pay after the shutdown ends, though that provision has not extended to federal contractors in the past.

U.S. troops, roughly 1.3 million people, would be required to work without pay until the shutdown ended.

A partial government shutdown wouldn't have broad impacts on so-called mandatory spending programs like Social Security, Medicare and Medicaid, because those accounts are not predominantly funded through the annual appropriations process.

A shutdown would have varying effects on the dozens of departments and agencies that do rely on Congress to approve new spending bills each year.

Those include the departments of Agriculture, Commerce, Defense, Education, Energy, Health and Human Services, Homeland Security, Housing and Urban Development, Interior, Justice, Labor, State, Transporta-



U.S. House Speaker Kevin McCarthy takes questions from reporters on Friday, Sept. 29, 2023 at the U.S. Capitol. (Jennifer

Shutt/States Newsroom)

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tion, Treasury and Veterans Affairs. Almost all services for veterans would continue, however.

Other activities were affected as well by the looming shutdown — former President Jimmy Carter's 99th birthday party at the Carter Center in Atlanta was moved up to Saturday instead of Sunday.

Border security and spending cuts

During debate on the failed GOP bill, Ohio Republican Rep. Jim Jordan said the legislation would fund the government, cut spending and "secure the border." GOP lawmakers attached a border security bill they passed earlier this year to the short-term funding bill.

"Three simple, common sense things, but the most important of those three is ... the border situation," Jordan said.

Florida Democratic Rep. Debbie Wasserman Schultz said the stopgap spending bill would be a "gift basket to far-right extremists" that will "slingshot" the federal government into a shutdown.

"The gutting cuts in this bill do not continue current funding like we've historically done in continuing resolutions," she said. "Instead, this so-called CR slashes cancer and Alzheimer's research, defunds the police, undercuts allies like Israel and Ukraine."

House Republicans' stopgap spending bill would have cut funding below current levels, resulting in billions less available for federal departments and agencies. The departments of Defense, Homeland Security and Veterans Affairs would have been exempted from those cuts.

White House budget director Shalanda Young argued during a Friday briefing that Speaker Kevin McCarthy should stick to the spending deal he and the president brokered in May.

"The speaker wanted to set toplines, we set them," Young said.

Young criticized House Republicans for not agreeing to the Senate stopgap bill that would last through Nov. 17 to give lawmakers more time to come to an agreement to pass the 12 appropriations bill into law.

"This is not hard," Young said. "It is not meant to come back and negotiate and redo things we just agreed to do three months ago. It is to keep the government open to give congressional negotiators more time on long-term bills."

McCarthy, a California Republican, said during a press conference before the House vote that he would likely keep trying to pass a short-term funding bill ahead of the Oct. 1 deadline.

"You have watched me time and again — have you ever known me to quit after one time if it doesn't succeed?" McCarthy said. "I don't stop."

Senate, Thune working on stopgap

The Senate released a broadly bipartisan stopgap spending bill earlier this week and has since taken two procedural votes to advance the measure.

But that chamber's rules don't allow the Senate to vote on final passage before the Saturday midnight deadline without the consent of all 100 lawmakers.

Kentucky's GOP Sen. Rand Paul has said he won't allow a vote as long as the \$6.1 billion in additional aid for Ukraine is in the legislation. But party leaders in the Senate aren't seriously considering removing the Ukraine money.

And Senate Minority Leader Mitch McConnell, the senior GOP senator from Kentucky, warned against forcing a government shutdown Thursday, saying it would be "an actively harmful proposition."

"Instead of producing any meaningful policy outcomes, it would actually take the important progress being made on a number of key issues and drag it backward," McConnell said.

Republican senators are trying to draft an amendment to the stopgap bill that would increase spending on border security and make policy changes, a move they hope would encourage House GOP leaders to put the bill on the floor.

Senate Minority Whip John Thune, a South Dakota Republican, said Friday that everything was still "up in the air," but that he was "hopeful" senators would work out an agreement before the deadline.

"I still think there's something that can get through here before the deadline tomorrow night," Thune said. "What exactly it looks like, I think, is still not totally resolved."

Indiana Republican Sen. Mike Braun said following a closed-door meeting Friday afternoon that "nothing's

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really coming together" because there are "too many moving parts at this stage."

It wasn't clear if there would be enough GOP support for the bipartisan Senate CR to move past a procedural hurdle Saturday that requires at least 60 votes, Braun said.

"It looks like probably what's going to have to happen is something with clarity is going to have to come out of the House," Braun said. "And I don't know what that would be, because there was a vote that just didn't work."

The stalemate, he said, is at the "worst point" since he's been a senator.

Alabama Republican Sen. Katie Britt said senators want to make sure whatever they vote on is "compatible" with their House Republican colleagues.

"So we'll see what they come up with in the morning. In the meantime, we're going to continue to work on these measures," Britt said. "We want to be prepared."

Veterans health, WIC, SNAP, parks

Among agencies, the Department of Veterans Affairs would be largely exempt from the impacts since the VA is funded in advance, a rare exception to how Congress typically handles federal funding for so-called discretionary programs, which make up about one-third of annual federal spending.

The VA says that about 15,620 of its 450,000 employees would be furloughed during a shutdown and several of its programs would be put on hold, including the education call center or GI Bill hotline, career outreach and permanent headstone installations at veterans' cemeteries.

Veterans would continue receiving health care as well as education and pension benefits.

Almost 7 million people within the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children, also called WIC, could lose access to the program during a partial government shutdown.

U.S. Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack said Monday that the "vast majority of WIC participants would see an immediate reduction and elimination of those benefits, which means the nutrition assistance that's provided would not be available."

Vilsack, a former Iowa governor, said that USDA has a contingency fund for WIC, but that it would only last a day or two.

He added that another nutrition program, the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, formerly known as food stamps, has enough funding to last the month of October in the event of a government shutdown. There are about 40 million low-income people who rely on SNAP.

"Now, if the shutdown were to extend longer than that, there would be some serious consequences to SNAP," Vilsack also said on Monday.

Vilsack added that amid a partial government shutdown, it will be nearly impossible for Congress to pass a new farm bill. Every five years, lawmakers must write a sweeping farm bill to set policy and funding levels for farm, food, nutrition and conservation programs.

This year's farm bill is set to expire Sept. 30, but lawmakers typically finish it by the end of the year. The 2018 farm bill was signed into law in December of that year.

National Park officials would need to close off access to most of the country's 425 parks, recreation areas and national historic sites during a shutdown.

The IRS would continue processing certain payments, maintaining its computer networks and printing and designing tax forms for the upcoming year. However, some taxpayer services will cease during the non-filing season. Call sites that respond to taxpayer questions will be closed during a funding lapse.

Several sources of federal aid to states will also be affected, Tim Storey, the CEO of the National Conference of State Legislatures, said in a written statement Friday.

"A shutdown creates uncertainty for states and impedes access to vital federal programs," Storey said. "While states may not feel the immediate effects, critical state services that receive federal funding such as (Temporary Assistance for Needy Families), disaster relief efforts, cybersecurity and child nutrition may be put in jeopardy if Congress does not come to an agreement quickly."

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Road projects on track

Most federal funding for highways and transit, including the daily reimbursements to state departments of transportation and transit agencies, will continue without interruption.

Those programs are funded through the Highway Trust Fund, not annual appropriations. The trust fund was reauthorized in the 2021 bipartisan infrastructure law. The law also provided five years of advanced appropriations for highway and transit spending, meaning that the workers at the U.S. Department of Transportation who process those payments can remain at work with pay through a partial shutdown.

That means federal money for construction of roads, bridges and transit would continue to flow to state coffers.

"If it's a highway or mass transit project everybody should be at work and fully funded and able to do all of the things on Oct. 2 that they were able to do on Sept. 29," Jeff Davis, a senior fellow at the national transportation think tank Eno Center for Transportation, said on a Friday webinar.

Air turbulence ahead

Air travel, meanwhile, could see disruptions.

Air traffic controllers, considered essential to protect life and safety, would be required to work without pay.

Federal employees were scheduled to receive a regular paycheck Friday, before a potential partial shutdown. The first paycheck they miss would be Oct. 13, if the partial shutdown is still ongoing then.

If a funding lapse persists that long, the air traffic controllers could begin work slowdowns, leading to air travel delays and cancellations.

Air traffic controllers are forbidden by law from striking, but the last partial shutdown saw several call in sick rather than work without pay.

"Imagine the pressure that a controller is already under every time they take their position at work," Transportation Secretary Pete Buttigieg said at a Sept. 27 news conference. "And then imagine the added stress of coming to that job from a household with a family that can no longer count on that paycheck."

In addition to hurting morale in the short-term, a shutdown would ruin training programs for air traffic controllers, Buttigieg said.

"We would immediately have to stop training new air traffic controllers and furlough another 1,000 controllers who are already in the training pipeline," he said. "The complexity of the hiring and training process means even a shutdown lasting a few days could mean we will not hit our staffing and hiring targets next year."

Other employees that would be required to work during the partial government shutdown include those in the Transportation Security Administration under the U.S. Department of Homeland Security.

Of the nearly 61,000 TSA employees, the agency expects nearly 58,000 to continue security checks across the nation's airports.

In addition to funding lapses for most federal programs, the authorization for the Federal Aviation Administration expires at midnight Saturday, meaning that the trust funds that operate outside the normal appropriations process could not fund operations as they do for highways.

Even a short-term funding bill without an FAA extension is in practice the same as not having a short-term bill, Davis said.

"The budget authority is not available because the underlying trust fund from which it's drawn doesn't exist at the moment," he said.

Parks to shutter; Rushmore, Badlands could be open

Almost all National Park Service sites that they are physically able to block access to would close.

"At NPS sites across the country, gates will be locked, visitor centers will be closed, and thousands of park rangers will be furloughed," the Interior Department, which oversees the NPS, said Friday.

States and nonprofit groups can work with the federal government to fund park operations. The governors of Arizona and Utah have said they will seek such agreements this year; on Friday at the Custer State Park Buffalo Roundup, South Dakota Tourism Secretary Jim Hagen said his state would work to keep Mount

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Rushmore National Memorial and Badlands National Park open. But even those sites may see a disruption in access as agreements are finalized and funding is secured.

Mount Rushmore, for example, was closed for the first three days of the 16-day shutdown in 2013. After a blizzard, the park reopened for the last three days of the shutdown with the help of nonprofit donations and an agreement with South Dakota's state government, Cheryl Schreier, the former Mount Rushmore superintendent, said in a Friday interview.

Park sites stayed open with a minimal workforce during the 2018-2019 shutdown. U.S. Senate Energy and Natural Resources ranking Republican John Barrasso of Wyoming called for the Interior Department to do the same this year and criticized the decision to close parks.

"The Biden administration has the ability to keep our nation's parks open and accessible," he said in a statement. "Instead, they're deliberately trying to make a government shutdown as painful as possible for American families and visitors alike."

But the Government Accountability Office said the decision to keep parks open during the shutdown was illegal. And park advocates have said remaining open without enough workers created problems.

Visitors to Mount Rushmore during the 2018-2019 shutdown "were very confused," Schreier said. Trash and even human waste piled up as visitors couldn't find open bathrooms.

Law enforcement officials, not visitor services employees, comprised most of the workforce.

"It makes it difficult when you don't have, obviously, the adequate staff," Schreier said.

Historic, cultural sites to close

Public tours of the U.S. Capitol will cease, as the Congressional Visitor Center would close down during a funding lapse. This includes tours of the complex's storied dome.

U.S. Capitol Police will continue to report to work to secure the complex, but they will do so without pay.

"I've sent my membership updates to prepare for a shutdown if it happens, which it looks like it will," said Gus Papathanasiou, chairman of the USCP Labor Committee. "I'm hoping a shutdown doesn't happen because with the cost of living higher than ever, this shutdown will create an enormous hardship."

Workers with the Architect of the Capitol, the office charged with maintaining the Capitol buildings and grounds, will continue to work in a limited capacity without pay.

USCP officers and Capitol maintenance staff will receive back pay upon the end of a shutdown.

The Smithsonian museums and the National Zoo will remain open until at least Oct. 7, even if a partial government shutdown is triggered this weekend, according to the institution's contingency plan released Thursday.

The institution, which employs nearly 4,000 across its several locations, will continue to use fund balances from prior years until they are exhausted.

Just over 1,100 Smithsonian workers will remain on the job during the shutdown to care for animals, continue lab experiments, maintain library archives and secure the facilities.

Student loan repayments

Federal student loan repayment officially begins Oct. 1, and regardless of a shutdown, those payments are still due.

"Even if extreme House Republicans needlessly shut down the government, loan payments will continue to be due starting this month," a spokesperson from the Department of Education said in a statement to States Newsroom.

The Biden administration did launch a one-year on-ramp program where borrowers with federal student loans won't be faulted for not repaying their loans. However, interest will still accrue.

Education Secretary Miguel Cardona, in a contingency plan, said the department would furlough 90% of its staff. There are about 4,000 full-time and part-time employees.

Programs that would still run because they are mandatory include Pell Grants and Federal Direct Student Loans.

Some programs that would lapse include the development and awarding of grants. The Office for Civil Rights would pause its reviews and investigations and guidance and regulatory actions.

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

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.

Ariana covers the nation's capital for States Newsroom. Her areas of coverage include politics and policy, lobbying, elections and campaign finance.

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

After SD rejection, Navigator asks Iowa regulators to pause pipeline permit request

BY: JARED STRONG - SEPTEMBER 29, 2023 7:25 PM

Navigator CO2 wants to suspend its pipeline permit process in Iowa until utility regulators in Illinois approve the project, according to a motion it filed in Iowa.

The company wants to build a carbon dioxide pipeline system that would transport the captured greenhouse gas from ethanol plants and other facilities to Illinois, where it will be sequestered underground or used for other commercial purposes.

About 810 miles of the initially proposed system lies in Iowa, but the company said it is adjusting its plans after a setback in South Dakota.

The South Dakota Public Utilities Commission denied Navigator a permit to construct its pipeline in early September. Since then, the company has indicated that it is not negotiating for new land easements in that state and in part of Iowa.

Navigator filed a motion with the Iowa Utilities Board on Friday to cancel a scheduling conference that was set for Oct. 9, withdraw its motion to establish a procedural schedule and to pause its permit proceedings.

"Navigator is currently reviewing its Iowa route and technical specifications in light of decisions from regulatory authorities in neighboring states and individual landowner requests, which may lead to necessary revisions in Iowa," Navigator said in a prepared statement. "Being conscious of the time and resources of all parties to this proceeding, Navigator has withdrawn the proposed procedural schedule with the Iowa Utilities Board."

The company plans to file an update on its project with the board by the end of March. Illinois regulators are expected to make a final decision on the project by the end of February.

The Friday motion is a substantial shift from the company's plans two months ago, when it was pining for the IUB to finalize a schedule. At the time, it sought to start its final evidentiary hearing in June 2024.



Navigator CO2 Ventures Vice President of Government and Public Affairs Elizabeth Burns-Thompson, left, speaks with opponents of carbon pipelines following a meeting of the Minnehaha County Commission on June 6, 2023, in Sioux Falls (John Hult/South Dakota Searchlight)

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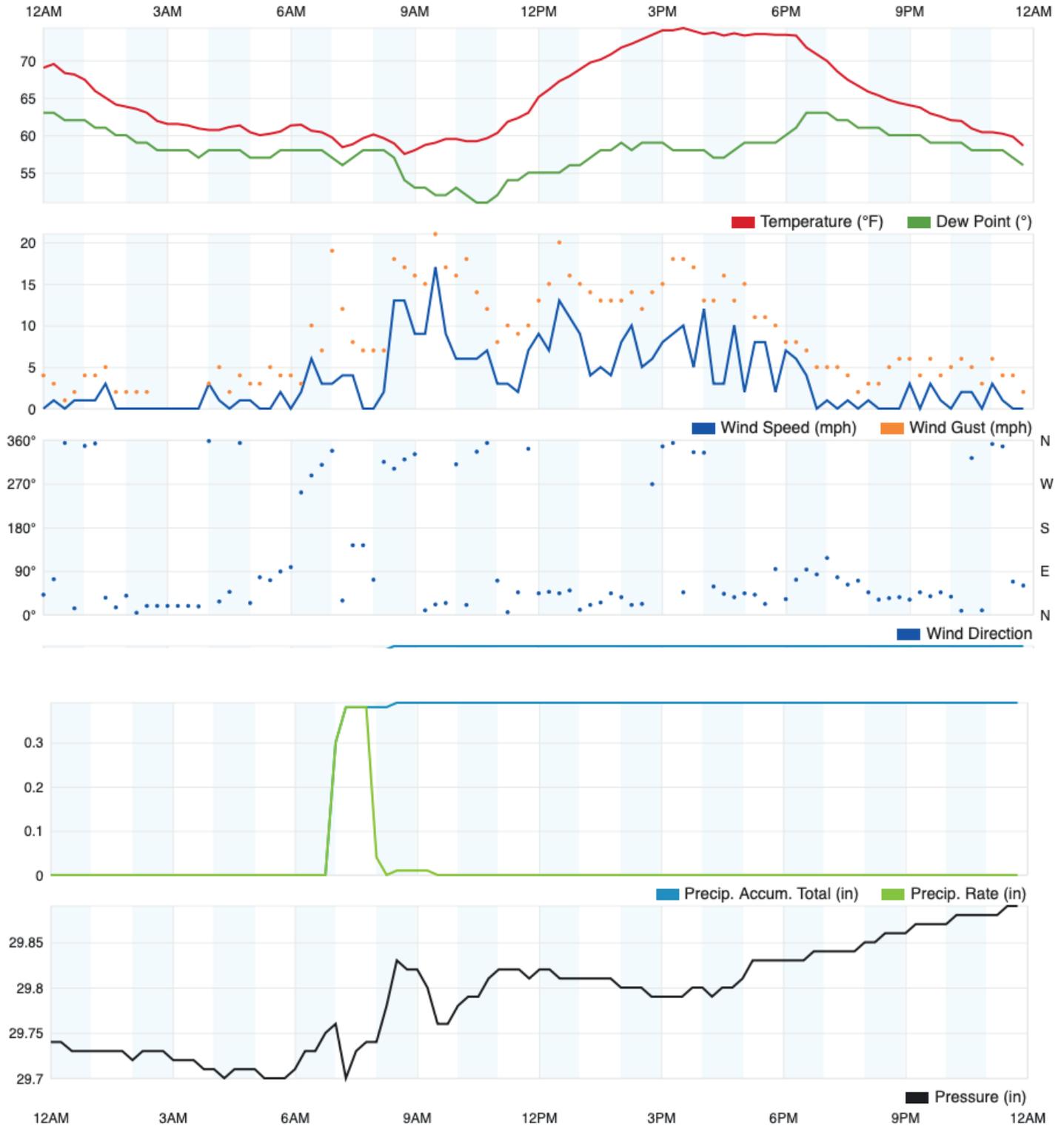
The company is one of three that have proposed carbon dioxide pipeline projects in Iowa. Summit Carbon Solutions (which also recently had its permit rejected in South Dakota) recently concluded its sixth week of testimony for its evidentiary hearing and has said it wants a decision by the end of the year. Wolf Carbon Solutions petitioned for a permit in February, but its process has had little progress since, according to IUB filings.

Jared Strong is the senior reporter for the Iowa Capital Dispatch. He has written about Iowans and the important issues that affect them for more than 15 years, previously for the Carroll Times Herald and the Des Moines Register. His investigative work exposing police misconduct has notched several state and national awards. He is a longtime trustee of the Iowa Freedom of Information Council, which fights for open records and open government. He is a lifelong Iowan and has lived mostly in rural western parts of the state.

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Yesterday's Groton Weather Graphs



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Sat Sep 30  77°F 67°F NE 15 MPH	Sun Oct 1  86°F 68°F S 25 MPH	Mon Oct 2  83°F 60°F S 25 MPH	Tue Oct 3  70°F 48°F S 19 MPH 50%	Wed Oct 4  60°F 44°F NW 18 MPH 60%	Thu Oct 5  61°F 42°F WNW 15 MPH 10%	Fri Oct 6  55°F 37°F WNW 18 MPH
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Weekend Forecast

Saturday



Highs: 72-84 °F
Lows: 60-68 °F

Morning Fog, Dense along the Coteau

Sunday



Highs: 83-90 °F
Lows: 57-67 °F

Increasing Southerly Winds with Gusts to 40 mph



National Weather Service Aberdeen, SD

Above normal temperatures will continue this weekend. Southerly winds will increase late today into Sunday with gusts up to 40 mph. High fire danger expected south of Pierre on Sunday as temperatures approach 90 degrees.

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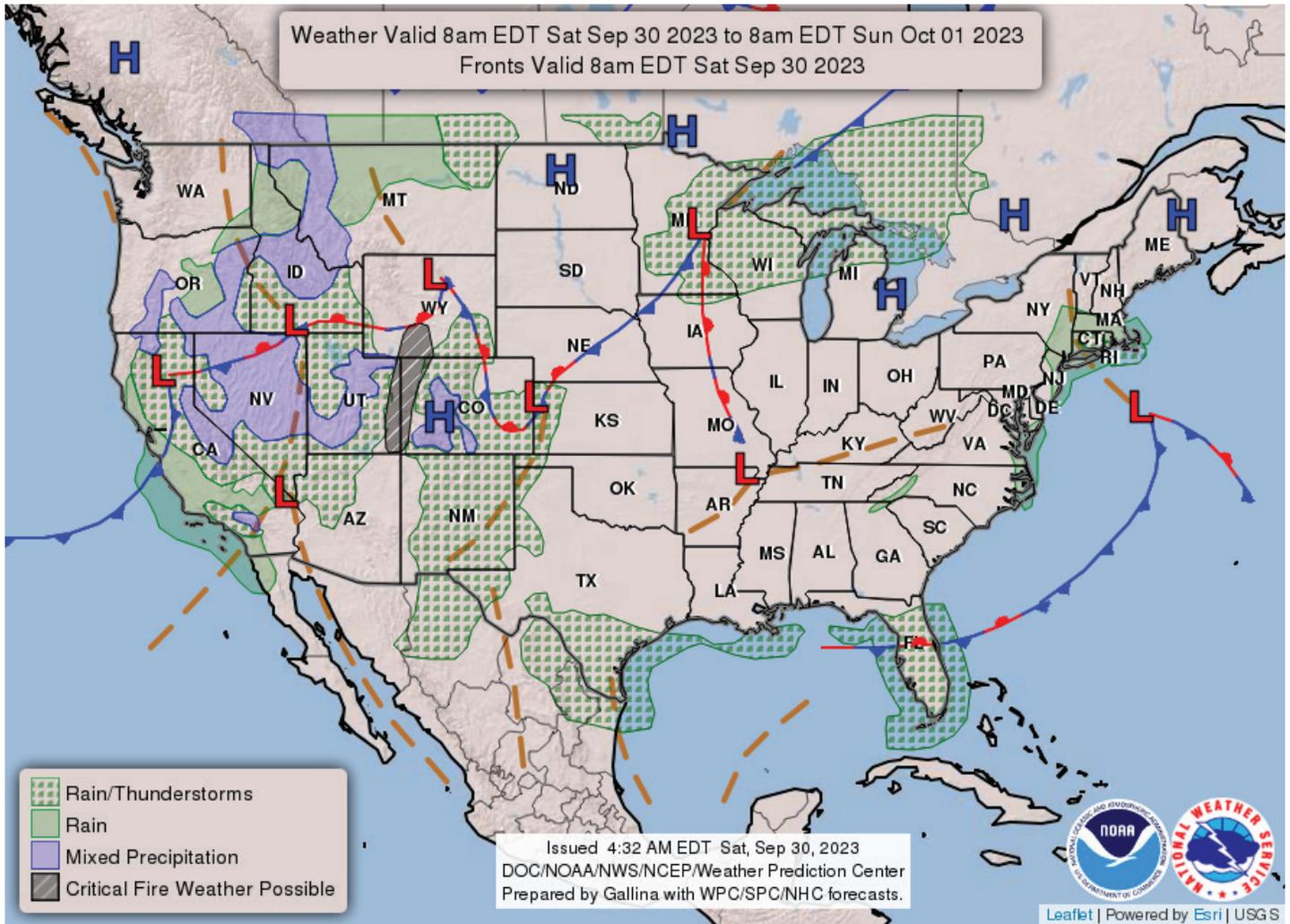
Yesterday's Groton Weather

High Temp: 75 °F at 3:24 PM
Low Temp: 58 °F at 8:40 AM
Wind: 24 mph at 8:31 AM
Precip: : 0.39

Day length: 11 hours, 48 minutes

Today's Info

Record High: 92 in 1989
Record Low: 15 in 1939
Average High: 69
Average Low: 41
Average Precip in Sept.: 1.99
Precip to date in Sept.: 3.18
Average Precip to date: 18.33
Precip Year to Date: 21.77
Sunset Tonight: 7:16:47 PM
Sunrise Tomorrow: 7:29:12 AM



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Today in Weather History

September 30, 2006: Severe to exceptional drought conditions improved dramatically by the end of the month across central and north central South Dakota as above normal rainfall was recorded for the month of September.

1896: A hurricane formed on September 22 and lasted until September 30. It formed directly over the Lesser Antilles and hit Cuba, Florida, Georgia, South and North Carolina, Virginia, Washington D.C., and Pennsylvania. Its maximum sustained winds were at 130 mph. The heaviest rainfall deposited in association with the storm was 19.96 inches at Glennville, Georgia. This hurricane was responsible for an estimated 130 deaths and \$1.5 million in damage (1896 dollars).

1959 - Three tornadoes spawned by the remnants of Hurricane Gracie killed 12 persons at Ivy VA. (The Weather Channel)

1970 - A nineteen month drought in southern California came to a climax. The drought, which made brush and buildings tinder dry, set up the worst fire conditions in California history as hot Santa Anna winds sent the temperature soaring to 105 degrees at Los Angeles, and to 97 degrees at San Diego. During that last week of September whole communities of interior San Diego County were consumed by fire. Half a million acres were burned, and the fires caused fifty million dollars damage. (David Ludlum)

1977 - The temperature at Wichita Falls, TX, soared to 108 degrees to establish a record for September. (The Weather Channel)

1986 - Thunderstorms, which had inundated northern sections of Oklahoma with heavy rain, temporarily shifted southward producing 4 to 8 inches rains from Shawnee to Stilwell. Baseball size hail and 80 mph winds ripped through parts of southeast Oklahoma City, and thunderstorm winds caused more than half a million dollars damage at Shawnee. (Storm Data)

1987 - Afternoon thunderstorms in Michigan produced hail an inch in diameter at Pinckney, and wind gusts to 68 mph at Wyandotte. A thunderstorm in northern Indiana produced wet snow at South Bend. Seven cities in the northwestern U.S. reported record high temperatures for the date, including readings of 98 degrees at Medford OR and 101 degrees at downtown Sacramento CA. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1988 - Unseasonably warm weather prevailed over Florida, and in the western U.S. The afternoon high of 94 degrees at Fort Myers FL was their tenth record high for the month. Highs of 98 degrees at Medford OR and 99 degrees at Fresno CA were records for the date, and the temperature at Borrego Springs CA soared to 108 degrees. (The National Weather Summary)

1989 - Thirteen cities reported record high temperatures for the date, as readings soared into the upper 80s and 90s from the Northern and Central High Plains Region to Minnesota. Bismarck ND reported a record high of 95 degrees, and the temperature reached 97 degrees at Broadus MT. Afternoon thunderstorms developing along a cold front produced wind gusts to 60 mph at Wendover UT. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1992: The past month was the coldest September ever recorded in interior Alaska. Fairbanks averaged a frigid 31.7° which was 13.2° below normal and the first below freezing September ever. Beginning on the 9th and on every day for the rest of the month, a new record low was set for either low minimums or low maximums, or both. On this date, the city plunged to 3° to set a new all-time record low for September. Snowfall for the month totaled 24.4 inches which was more than three times the previous record for September.

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Daily Devotionals

Seeds of Hope

THE GAMBLERS

In the Middle Ages, there was a group of men who called themselves The Gamblers. Wherever there was sickness or suffering, plagues or pestilence, they would take their lives into their own hands - gamble against all odds - to help others. They willingly gambled with their lives for the good of others.

But they were not the first to do this. The Apostle Paul talks about one of his co-workers: Epaphroditus. In speaking of him, he wrote, "he risked his life for the work of Christ and he was at the point of death while trying to do for me the things you couldn't do because you were far away."

We do not know very much about Epaphroditus. We do know that he delivered money to Paul while he was in prison. We do know that he helped Paul during a time of great physical and financial need. We do know that he became sick while he was staying with Paul. And we do know that Paul trusted him to deliver a most important "thank-you" letter to the church at Philippi.

The world honors those who are recognized for being rich, athletic, wealthy, entertaining, and intelligent. But here we see God recognizing and honoring a servant. And Paul also said, "Welcome him with Christian love, great joy, and be sure to honor people like him." A simple servant, honored eternally, for taking a risk for God. What are you doing for the Lord?

Prayer: We think, Lord, of those who do for You what few are willing to do - risk their lives. Thank You for the missionaries who serve You quietly. Honor them greatly. In Jesus' Name, Amen.

Scripture For Today: Welcome him in the Lord's love and with great joy, and give him the honor that people like him deserve. For he risked his life for the work of Christ, and he was at the point of death while doing for me what you couldn't do from far away. Philippians 2:25-30



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

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2023 Community Events

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

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The Groton Independent Printed & Mailed Weekly Edition

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WINNING NUMBERS

MEGA MILLIONS

WINNING NUMBERS:
09.29.23

18 40 47 55 64 11

MegaPlier: 4x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:
\$300,000,000

NEXT DRAW:

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

LOTTO AMERICA

WINNING NUMBERS:
09.27.23

21 22 25 46 50 1

All Star Bonus: 2x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:
\$2,400,000

NEXT DRAW: 15 Hrs 6 Mins 31 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

LUCKY FOR LIFE

WINNING NUMBERS:
09.29.23

12 20 21 33 38 11

TOP PRIZE:

\$7,000/week

NEXT DRAW: 15 Hrs 21 Mins 31 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

DAKOTA CASH

WINNING NUMBERS:
09.27.23

21 23 30 31 35

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:
\$20,000

NEXT DRAW: 15 Hrs 21 Mins 31 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

POWERBALL

DOUBLE PLAY

WINNING NUMBERS:
09.27.23

10 25 51 52 63 1

TOP PRIZE:
\$10,000,000

NEXT DRAW: 15 Hrs 50 Mins 30 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

POWERBALL

WINNING NUMBERS:
09.27.23

1 7 46 47 63 7

Power Play: 3x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:
\$960,000,000

NEXT DRAW: 15 Hrs 50 Mins 30 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

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News from the Associated Press

Friday's Scores

The Associated Press

PREP VOLLEYBALL

Belle Fourche def. Aberdeen Roncalli, 25-27, 25-18, 25-22, 25-14

Lakota Nation Invitational=

Pool A=

Cheyenne-Eagle Butte def. Crazy Horse, 25-4, 25-15

Cheyenne-Eagle Butte def. Wakpala, 25-14, 25-16

Lakota Tech def. Crazy Horse, 25-6, 25-11

Lakota Tech def. Lower Brule, 25-18, 25-12

Lakota Tech def. Tiospaye Topa, 25-13, 26-24

Lower Brule def. Cheyenne-Eagle Butte, 25-12, 19-25, 25-18

Lower Brule def. Tiospaye Topa, 25-17, 25-20

Tiospaye Topa def. Crazy Horse, 25-18, 19-25, 25-10

Wakpala def. Crazy Horse, 25-6, 25-13

Wakpala def. Lower Brule, 21-25, 25-18, 25-18

Pool B=

Pine Ridge def. St. Francis Indian, 25-9, 25-19

Pine Ridge def. Takini, 25-11, 25-7

Santee, Neb. def. St. Francis Indian, 25-23, 23-25, 25-23

St. Francis Indian def. Takini, 25-10, 25-18

White River def. Pine Ridge, 25-18, 25-18

White River def. Santee, Neb., 27-25, 25-14

White River def. Takini, 25-9, 25-16

Pool C=

Crow Creek Tribal School def. Marty Indian, 25-15, 25-12

Oelrichs def. Marty Indian, 25-13, 26-24

Red Cloud def. Crow Creek Tribal School, 27-25, 27-11

Red Cloud def. Oelrichs, 25-10, 20-25, 25-14

Wyoming Indian, Wyo. def. Crow Creek Tribal School, 25-14, 15-25, 25-23

Wyoming Indian, Wyo. def. Oelrichs, 12-25, 25-23, 25-18

Wyoming Indian, Wyo. def. Red Cloud, 15-25, 25-22, 25-15

Pool D=

Custer def. Todd County, 25-13, 25-13

Little Wound def. Todd County, 25-20, 25-19

McLaughlin def. Little Wound, 25-23, 25-16

Tiospa Zina Tribal def. Little Wound, 25-23, 25-13

Tiospa Zina Tribal def. McLaughlin, 25-21, 25-20

Tiospa Zina Tribal def. Todd County, 25-12, 18-25, 25-17

Twin Cities Tournament=

Blue Pool=

St. Thomas More def. Alliance, Neb., 25-16, 25-22, 25-19

Red Pool=

Scottsbluff, Neb. def. Rapid City Stevens, 25-12, 25-23

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PREP FOOTBALL

Alcester-Hudson 48, Avon 26
Belle Fourche 28, Lakota Tech 6
Bon Homme 34, Chester 22
Brandon Valley 35, Pierre T F Riggs High School 14
Britton-Hecla 48, Ipswich 30
Burke 77, Irene-Wakonda 22
Canistota 28, Deubrook 20
Canton 30, Madison 14
Castlewood 50, Oldham-Ramona/Rutland 0
Chamberlain 21, Vermillion 18
Clark/Willow Lake 48, Dakota Hills 0
Colman-Egan 40, Iroquois/ Lake Preston Co-op 14
Colome 46, Sunshine Bible Academy 16
Custer 29, Lead-Deadwood 19
DeSmet 56, Arlington 6
Dell Rapids 38, Beresford 14
Deuel 15, Tripp-Delmont/Armour/Andes Central/Dakota Christian 0
Dupree def. Newell, forfeit
Elk Point-Jefferson 55, Miller/Highmore-Harrold 3
Estelline/Hendricks 54, Waverly-South Shore 12
Faulkton 54, Faith 0
Flandreau 26, Scotland/Menno 0
Freeman/ Marion/ Freeman Academy Co-op 50, Gayville-Volin High School 6
Great Plains Lutheran 57, Florence/Henry 14
Hanson 73, Garretson 23
Harrisburg 27, Sioux Falls Washington 24
Herreid/Selby Area 53, Northwestern 0
Howard 47, Viborg-Hurley 14
Huron 48, Douglas 7
Jones County 24, New Underwood 22
Kimball/White Lake 48, Dell Rapids St. Mary 6
Lennox 38, Dakota Valley 6
Leola-Frederick High School 66, Potter County 25
Lyman 44, Bennett County 20
Mitchell 35, Spearfish 28
Parker 28, Redfield 6
Parkston 50, Gregory 0
Philip 56, Kadoka Area 6
Platte-Geddes 27, Wolsey-Wessington 8
Rapid City Christian 37, Hill City 0
Sioux Falls Christian 60, Milbank 14
Sioux Falls Lincoln 65, Rapid City Stevens 6
Sioux Falls O'Gorman 14, Sioux Falls Jefferson 7
Sioux Falls Roosevelt 40, Rapid City Central 6
Sioux Valley 62, Baltic 8
Stanley County 44, Timber Lake 7
Tea Area 26, Sturgis Brown 7
Wagner 40, Mt. Vernon/Plankinton 6
Wall 41, Harding County/Bison Co-op 12

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Warner 22, Hamlin 13
Watertown 16, Aberdeen Central 14
Webster 18, Groton Area 0
West Central 20, Tri-Valley 6
Winnebago, Neb. 54, Cheyenne-Eagle Butte 0
Winner 32, Bridgewater-Emery/Ethan 12
Woonsocket/Wessington Springs/Sanborn Central 18, Mobridge-Pollock 8
Yankton 48, Brookings 0

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

US' only bison roundup rustles up hundreds to maintain health of the species

By SUMMER BALLENTINE Associated Press

South Dakota cowboys and cowgirls rounded up a herd of more than 1,500 bison Friday as part of an annual effort to maintain the health of the species, which has rebounded from near-extinction.

Visitors from across the world cheered from behind wire fencing as whooping horseback riders chased the thundering, wooly giants across hills and grasslands in Custer State Park. Bison and their calves stopped occasionally to graze on blond grass and roll on the ground, their sharp hooves stirring up dust clouds.

"How many times can you get this close to a buffalo herd?" said South Dakota Game, Fish and Parks Secretary Kevin Robling, who was among 50 riders herding the animals. "You hear the grunts and the moans and (see) the calves coming and running alongside mamas."

Custer State Park holds the nation's only Buffalo Roundup once a year to check the health of the bison and vaccinate calves, park Superintendent Matt Snyder said.

As many as 60 million bison, sometimes called buffalo in the U.S., once roamed North America, moving in vast herds that were central to the culture and survival of numerous Native American groups.

They were driven to the brink of extinction more than a century ago when hunters, U.S. troops and tourists shot them by the thousands to feed a growing commercial market that used bison parts in machinery, fertilizer and clothing. By 1889, only a few hundred remained.

"Now, after more than a century of conservation efforts, there are more than 500,000 bison in the United States," said South Dakota Gov. Kristi Noem, a horseback rider who took part in the roundup. "The Custer State Park bison herd has contributed greatly to those efforts."

The park's herd began with 36 animals bought in 1914. A state ecologist estimated the park can currently sustain about 1,000 bison based on how snow and rain conditions affected the grasslands this past year, according to Snyder.

The other 500 or so will be auctioned off, and over the next week, officials will decide which bison will remain and which will go. About 400 calves are born in the park each year.

"Each year we sell some of these bison to intersperse their genetics with those of other herds to improve the health of the species' population across the nation," Noem said.

Gates will be locked and thousands of rangers furloughed at national parks if government shuts down

By ANITA SNOW Associated Press

PHOENIX (AP) — Entrances to national parks will be blocked and thousands of park rangers will be furloughed if Congress doesn't reach a budget agreement this weekend, the Department of Interior said Friday.

The stance is a reversal from five years ago, when the Trump administration kept some parks open in a move that was lambasted as illegal by the Government Accountability Office, the congressional watchdog.

This time around, the majority of more than 420 national park units will be off-limits to the public start-

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ing Monday, Interior officials said. The governors of Arizona and Utah vowed to keep some of the most iconic parks, including Grand Canyon and Zion, open with state funding.

Whether tourists can access other national parks will depend on size, location and other factors. Generally, if a site is closed or locked during non-business hours, it will remain that way, Interior officials said. Places like the National Mall will stay open, but there are no guarantees that restrooms or trash will be maintained.

About 13,000 of the 19,000 National Park Service workers are expected to be furloughed, the agency said in a contingency plan posted online Friday.

"The public will be encouraged not to visit sites during the period of lapse in appropriations out of consideration for protection of natural and cultural resources, as well as visitor safety," the Interior Department said in a statement.

The director of the National Park Service can enter into non-reimbursable arrangements with state, tribal or local governments, or third parties for donations to fund park operations, the department said.

The nonprofit National Parks Conservation Association doesn't oppose such agreements but noted that keeping sites open during a shutdown without sufficient staff and other resources can be disastrous.

For example, trash cans and portable toilets overflowed at Joshua Tree National Park during a shutdown in late 2018 and early 2019 that lasted 35 days. Some tourists driving off-road damaged the fragile ecosystem.

Sen. John Barrasso, a Wyoming Republican, urged Interior Secretary Deb Haaland on Thursday to keep the parks open with previously collected fees. The Trump administration did so in 2018 and 2019 in violation of appropriations laws, the congressional watchdog said.

Democratic Arizona Gov. Katie Hobbs and Republican Utah Gov. Spencer Cox said they will tap state funds to ensure visitors can still enjoy the dramatic depths of the Grand Canyon and the soaring red cliffs of Zion, among other parks.

They cited the economic benefits to their states and the small communities that depend on tourism.

National parks collectively could lose nearly a million visitors daily during a shutdown, and gateway communities could lose as much as \$70 million, the conservation association said.

Arizona Lottery funds would help keep the Grand Canyon park open at a basic level, Hobbs has said.

Arizona paid about \$64,000 a week during the 35-day shutdown to cover restroom cleaning, trash removal and snow plowing at Grand Canyon. People with permits to hike in the backcountry or raft on the Colorado River could still go, but no new permits were issued.

Hotels and restaurants remained open.

Those who will work in another potential shutdown include emergency services workers at Grand Canyon who protect visitors and the roughly 2,500 people who live within the national park, Grand Canyon spokesperson Joëlle Baird said.

Utah paid some \$7,500 daily during the last part of December 2018 to keep Zion, Bryce Canyon and Arches running during the shutdown. The nonprofit Zion Forever Project put up \$16,000 to pay a skeleton crew and keep bathrooms and the visitor center open at Zion, which continued drawing several thousand visitors daily.

This year, Colorado Gov. Jared Polis directed the state's Department of Natural Resources to develop a plan to operate and protect resources at Rocky Mountain National Park and three others.

In South Dakota, Mount Rushmore and Badlands National Park will remain open if there's a shutdown, state Tourism Secretary Jim Hagen said Friday. He said there likely would be skeleton staffing and limited access to restrooms.

Republican Montana Gov. Greg Gianforte confirmed Friday that his state wouldn't pay to keep sites open. Montana is home to Glacier National Park, and while most of Yellowstone is in Wyoming, three of its five entrances are in Montana.

"National parks are the responsibility of the federal government, and Montana taxpayers shouldn't have to pick up the tab because Congress can't get its job done," Gianforte wrote on the social network X, formerly known as Twitter.

"Until Congress gets its act together, the Department of the Interior should use every available tool at its disposal to keep the parks open to the public," he said in a separate post.

Republican Wyoming Gov. Mark Gordon is awaiting more information from Interior and the White House to better understand the state's options, spokesperson Michael Pearlman said.

In Washington, home to Mount Rainier and Olympic parks, Democratic Gov. Jay Inslee has no plans to provide more funding or staff to parks if there's a shutdown. Democratic California Gov. Gavin Newsom's administration said it won't pay to keep parks open.

UAE's president-designate for UN COP28 offers full-throated defense of nation hosting climate talks

By JON GAMBRELL Associated Press

DUBAI, United Arab Emirates (AP) — The Emirati president-designate for the upcoming United Nations COP28 climate conference offered a full-throated defense Saturday of his nation hosting the talks, dismissing those who "just go on the attack without knowing anything, without knowing who we are."

Climate activists roundly criticized Sultan al-Jaber's appointment as the president-designate of the talks because he serves as the CEO of the Abu Dhabi National Oil Co., which is seeking to boost its production of carbon-emitting crude oil and natural gas.

Back before a quiet, hometown crowd and an amenable moderator after attending the U.N. General Assembly, al-Jaber pointed to his 20 years of work on renewable energy as a sign that he and the Emirates represent the best chance to reach a consensus to address climate change worldwide.

"The world only, for whatever reason, views us as an oil-and-gas nation," he said. "We have moved beyond oil and gas 20 years ago. We embraced the energy transition 20 years ago."

He added: "We don't become passionate or ideological or so emotional. We're business-oriented. We're results-driven."

Al-Jaber, a 50-year-old longtime climate envoy, is a trusted confidant of UAE leader Sheikh Mohammed bin Zayed Al Nahyan. He's been behind tens of billions of dollars spent or pledged toward renewable energy in the federation of seven sheikhdoms on the Arabian Peninsula — but also leads an oil company that pumps some 4 million barrels of crude a day and hopes to expand to 5 million daily.

Addressing the world's reliance on crude oil, al-Jaber issued a challenge to the audience listening to him at Dubai's visually striking Museum of the Future: Tell him how to immediately stop the use of all fossil fuels.

"Some are promoting the fact that we can just unplug the world from the current energy system and with a flick of a switch, we can just initiate a new energy system," he said. "That doesn't work. It won't work. ... So we need to sober up and be more realistic and more practical."

But the fact that al-Jaber repeatedly defended himself and the country from activists' criticism is incredibly telling in the Emirates, an autocratic nation that while a key U.S. business and military ally still tightly controls speech, bans political parties and criminalizes labor strikes.

As the profile of the UAE and Dubai in particular has grown in recent decades, so too have its ambitions abroad, drawing increasing scrutiny of its involvement in the Saudi-led war in Yemen and actions backing fellow autocrats in the wake of the 2011 Arab Spring.

Al-Jaber described his nation as having the "political will" under its leadership to push forward.

His colleague on stage, the UAE's U.N. Climate Change High-Level Champion Razan al-Mubarak, also sought to call climate change denial "dead." But a recent Republican presidential debate in the U.S. saw candidates roundly rejecting the notion that humans are causing climate change, with other right-wing politicians worldwide similarly dismissive.

One important target of the COP will be making sure that a global pledge to try to limit global warming to 1.5 degrees Celsius (2.7 Fahrenheit) compared with pre-industrial times becomes a reality, al-Jaber said. Scientists say that in order to achieve that goal, emissions need to be halved by 2030 and reach net zero by mid-century, meaning all emissions are either slashed or canceled out somehow — setting an incredible

challenge ahead of the talks for the UAE officials like al-Jaber shepherding the negotiations.

"Time has come for us to take on this responsibility, but we do need the world to understand," he said. "We want all of those likeminded partners to step up, to up their game, to engage, to be more forthcoming, more forward leaning, rather than just sitting back, pointing fingers and shooting."

Each year, the country hosting the U.N. negotiations known as the Conference of the Parties — where COP gets its name — nominates a person to chair the talks. Hosts typically pick a veteran diplomat as the talks can be difficult to steer between competing nations and their interests.

The nominee's position as "COP president" is confirmed by delegates at the start of the talks, usually without objections. However, activists' ire over al-Jaber's selection could see a turbulent start to the negotiations.

Al-Jaber described the efforts at reaching out to nations, activists and industry ahead of COP28 as "unprecedented." However, his remarks underscored what is likely a growing irritation of the criticism.

"We simply engaged, listened and we did not leave any stone unturned," he said, before adding that some choose "very early on to just go on the attack without knowing anything, without knowing who we are, without knowing who am I, without knowing what we bring to the table."

COP28 will be held at Dubai's Expo City from Nov. 30 through Dec. 12.

Putin marks anniversary of annexation of Ukrainian regions as drones attack overnight

By SUSIE BLANN Associated Press

KYIV, Ukraine (AP) — Russian President Vladimir Putin on Saturday insisted that the residents of four Ukrainian regions that Moscow illegally annexed a year ago "made their choice — to be with their Fatherland."

In an address released in the early hours to mark the first anniversary of the annexation, Putin insisted that it was carried out "in full accordance with international norms." He also claimed that residents of the Donetsk, Luhansk, Zaporizhzhia and Kherson regions had again expressed their desire to be part of Russia in local elections earlier this month, in which Russia's Central Election Commission said that the country's ruling party won the most votes.

The West has denounced both the referendum votes carried out last year and the recent ballots as a sham. The votes were held as Russian authorities attempted to tighten their grip on territories Moscow illegally annexed a year ago and still does not fully control.

A concert was held in Red Square on Friday to mark the anniversary, but Putin did not participate.

The address came after Russia's Defense Ministry said Friday it would enlist 130,000 men for compulsory military service this fall, beginning Oct. 1 in most regions of the country. It announced it would for the first time begin enlisting residents of the annexed territories as part of its twice-yearly military conscription campaign.

Russia says conscripts are not deployed to what it calls its "special military operation" in Ukraine, or to serve in the annexed territories. However, after their service, conscripts automatically become reservists, and Russia has previously deployed reservists to Ukraine.

Meanwhile, in Ukraine, the governor of Ukraine's partly occupied southern Zaporizhzhia region, Yuri Malashko, said five people were wounded on Saturday in two missile strikes on the village of Matviivka, located on the northeastern outskirts of the regional capital, also called Zaporizhzhia.

Air defenses shot down 30 out of 40 Iranian-made kamikaze drones aimed at the Odesa, Mykolaiv and Vinnytsia provinces overnight, the Ukrainian air force said Saturday.

Vinnytsia regional Gov. Serhii Borzov said that air defenses shot down 20 drones over his central Ukrainian region, but that a "powerful fire" broke out in the town of Kalynivka when a drone struck an unspecified infrastructure facility.

Romania's Ministry of National Defense said on Saturday that a possible unauthorized entry into its national airspace occurred overnight amid the bombardment.

It said the radar surveillance system of the Romanian Army detected "a possible unauthorized entry" into

the national airspace of NATO member Romania, with a signal detected toward the city of Galati, which is close to the border with Ukraine.

"At this moment, no objects have been identified that fell from the airspace onto the national territory," the statement read, adding that NATO allies were informed in real time and that searches will continue through Saturday.

Emergency authorities issued text message alerts overnight to residents living in the counties of Galati and Tulcea, after detecting what the defense ministry said was "groups of drones heading toward Ukrainian territory" near the border.

In recent weeks, Romania has found drone fragments on its soil from the war next door at least three times as Russian forces carry out sustained attacks on Ukraine's Danube ports.

Russia's Defense Ministry said Saturday that it had shot down nine Ukrainian rockets fired at its southern Belgorod region, which borders Ukraine. Belgorod Gov. Vyacheslav Gladkov said that an artillery shell created a crater and shrapnel damaged a house, a store and a gas pipeline in an attack on the regional capital, also called Belgorod. Local officials in Russia's Bryansk region, also bordering Ukraine, reported disruptions to the power supply following an unspecified attack on the town of Pogar. Drone strikes and shelling in the Russian border regions are a regular occurrence.

Pope Francis creates 21 new cardinals who will help him to reform the church and cement his legacy

By NICOLE WINFIELD Associated Press

VATICAN CITY (AP) — Pope Francis created 21 new cardinals at a ritual-filled ceremony Saturday, including key figures at the Vatican and in the field who will help enact his reforms and cement his legacy as he enters a crucial new phase in running the Catholic Church.

On a crisp sunny day filled with cheers from St. Peter's Square, Francis further expanded his influence on the College of Cardinals who will one day elect his successor: With Saturday's additions, nearly three-quarters of the voting-age "princes of the church" owe their red hats to the Argentine Jesuit.

In his instructions to the new cardinals at the start of the service, Francis said their variety and geographic diversity would serve the church like musicians in an orchestra, where sometimes they play solos, sometimes as an ensemble.

"Diversity is necessary; it is indispensable. However, each sound must contribute to the common design," Francis told them. "This is why mutual listening is essential: each musician must listen to the others."

Among the new cardinals were the controversial new head of the Vatican's doctrine office, Victor Manuel Fernandez, and the Chicago-born missionary now responsible for vetting bishop candidates around the globe, Robert Prevost.

Also entering the exclusive club were the Vatican's ambassadors to the United States and Italy, two important diplomatic posts where the Holy See has a keen interest in reforming the church hierarchy. Leaders of the church in geopolitical hotspots like Hong Kong and Jerusalem, fragile communities like Juba, South Sudan, and sentimental favorites like Cordoba, Argentina, filled out the roster.

The ceremony took place days before Francis opens a big meeting of bishops and lay Catholics on charting the church's future, where hot-button issues such as women's roles in the church, LGBTQ+ Catholics and priestly celibacy are up for discussion.

The Oct. 4-29 synod is the first of two sessions — the second one comes next year -- that in many ways could cement Francis' legacy as he seeks to make the church a place where all are welcomed, where pastors listen to their flocks and accompany them rather than judge them.

In his comments to the new cardinals, Francis referred to the synod and the task awaiting the church. Speaking of himself, Francis said the orchestra's conductor "has to listen more than anyone else."

At the same time, he added, the conductor must "help each person and the whole orchestra develop the greatest creative fidelity: fidelity to the work being performed, but also creative, able to give a soul to the score, to make it resonate in the here and now in a unique way."

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Several of the new cardinals are voting members of the synod and have made clear they share Francis' vision of a church that is more about the people in the pews than the hierarchy, and that creative change is necessary. Among them is Fernandez, known as the "pope's theologian" and perhaps Francis' most consequential Vatican appointment in his 10-year pontificate.

In his letter naming Fernandez as prefect of the Dicastery for the Doctrine of the Faith, Francis made clear he wanted his fellow Argentine to oversee a radical break from the past, saying the former Holy Office often resorted to "immoral methods" to enforce its will.

Rather than condemn and judge, Francis said he wanted a doctrine office that guards the faith and gives people hope. He also made clear Fernandez wouldn't have to deal with sex abuse cases, saying the office's discipline section could handle that dossier.

It was a much-debated decision given Fernandez himself has admitted he made mistakes handling a case while he was bishop in La Plata, Argentina, and that the scale of the problem globally has long cried out for authoritative, high-ranking leadership.

On the eve of the consistory to make Fernandez a cardinal, clergy abuse survivors including a La Plata victim rallied near the Vatican, calling on Francis to rescind the nomination.

"No bishop who has covered up child sex crimes and ignored and dismissed victims of clergy abuse in his diocese should be running the office that oversees, investigates, and prosecutes clergy sex offenders from around the world, or be made a cardinal," said Julieta Añazco, the La Plata survivor, according to a statement from the End Clergy Abuse.

With Saturday's ceremony, Francis will have named 99 of the 137 cardinals who are under age 80 and thus eligible to vote in a future conclave to elect his successor. While not all are cookie-cutter proteges of the 86-year-old reigning pontiff, many share Francis' pastoral emphasis as opposed to the doctrinaire-minded cardinals often selected by Popes John Paul II and Benedict XVI.

Such a huge proportion of Francis-nominated cardinals almost ensures that a future pope will either be one of his own cardinals or one who managed to secured their votes to lead the church after Francis is gone, suggesting a certain continuity in priorities.

Europe still has the most voting-age cardinals with 52, followed by the Americas with 39 and Asia with 24.

The ceremony officially installing them followed a ritual in which each man takes an oath to obey the pope, remain faithful to Christ and serve the church. Francis reminded them that they were wearing red as a sign that they must be strong "even to the shedding of blood" to spread the faith.

One of the 21 new cardinals couldn't make the ceremony because of poor health: Cardinal Luis Pascual Dri, a Franciscan from the pope's native Buenos Aires, who is one of the churchmen over age 80 who cannot vote in a conclave but was elevated as a sign of gratitude for his service to the church.

Several of the new cardinals are running the church in delicate spots, including the archbishop of Hong Kong, Cardinal Stephen Chow. He is a key figure as the Vatican tries to work with the ruling Communist Party in Beijing over thorny issues concerning the life of the Catholic Church in China amid the government's ongoing crackdown on religion.

Chow told The Associated Press he understands the Chinese mentality, and hopes to help the Vatican understand it with empathy. "It is very important to cultivate empathy if you want to have good dialogue," he said.

The archbishop of Juba, Cardinal Stephen Ameyu Martin Mulla, recently hosted Francis during his February visit to South Sudan and said the issue of the region's conflict was a constant concern for the church.

"This country has been divided by war and ongoing war since 50 years ago," he said. "Now we are trying our best to bring people together."

Borrowers are reassessing their budgets as student loan payments resume after pandemic pause

By CORA LEWIS Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — Millions of Americans must start repaying their federal student loans again in October, with monthly payments averaging hundreds of dollars a month. To get ready, borrowers are cutting expenses, taking on additional work, and looking for options to reduce their monthly payments.

Megan McClelland, 38, said she has started asking for October shifts with a catering company and a winery to help supplement her income.

McClelland's main job is as a counselor at Petaluma High School in California. During the more than three years payments were suspended because of the pandemic, she paid off her car loan and was able to save for the first time. She'll put the \$235 she was spending on her car payment toward her student loan, but that still leaves another \$270 or so she'll have to reallocate or earn.

"It had been a huge relief the past few years to not have that financial burden," she said. "In the next months, I'm looking to see where I can scale back in my budget. Probably less going out to eat, and more picking up side gigs."

Justin Cole, 35, of Little Rock, Arkansas, said he doesn't know how he's going to come up with the \$166 a month he'll owe starting in October. That's the estimated payment on his roughly \$19,000 of loans from paying for college more than 10 years ago.

"I'm already in a mountain of debt, and while I just got a raise at work, it doesn't go into effect until we're full staffed at my family practice clinic," he said.

Cole works the front office at a medical practice, checking in patients, handling records and managing payment collection. Some of his other debt comes from medical expenses after a car accident early in the pandemic.

"If those loans were forgiven, I could finally work on getting my credit up and actually saving money for once," he said. "If they were forgiven out of the blue, I'd be ecstatic."

The Supreme Court in July rejected a plan by President Joe Biden's administration to wipe away \$400 billion in student loan debt.

For now, Cole has applied for adjustments to his payments based on both the new SAVE plan and prior income-driven repayment options, which are listed as processing and "in review" on his account. The SAVE, or "Saving on a Valuable Education," plan allows borrowers to make lower payments based on a percentage of their discretionary income.

His major household expenses are "rent, car payments, groceries, and utilities — the same as everybody else," he said.

Not yet clear is how millions of people suddenly having less discretionary income might affect the economy.

On an earnings call last month, the chief financial officer of Target said that student loan payments restarting will "put additional pressure on the already-strained budgets of tens of millions of households," a sentiment echoed by the financial chiefs of Best Buy and other retailers.

In the Federal Reserve's latest survey of economic conditions, one restaurant-industry observer in Boston said workers are taking on more hours, and, for the first time, credit card debt has topped \$1 trillion. According to credit bureau TransUnion, more than half of student loan holders added credit card debt during the pandemic. Meanwhile, consumer savings, which peaked in 2021, are on the decline.

McClelland qualifies for Public Service Loan Forgiveness as a public school teacher who will have worked in the field for 10 years next March. She's putting her loans in order to hopefully receive that cancellation next year. The program erases remaining debts for federal student loan holders who work in public service while making 10 years of payments.

"I only have six payments to go, but it's still stressful," she said. "I have to find about \$500 a month starting next month towards this payment that I haven't had in so long."

The Public Service Loan Forgiveness program is one of several avenues for relief still available to many

with student debt. After Biden's original plan for forgiveness was struck down by the Supreme Court in July, the White House has said it will use the Higher Education Act to bring cancellation to more borrowers. It's currently undergoing a process known as "negotiated rule-making" to determine the details of that plan.

Other sources for relief for borrowers include: false certification, borrower defense, closed school, total/permanent disability discharges, and alternate repayment programs like income-driven repayment.

McClelland, for her part, said she now spends a lot of time counseling high school students on how to avoid taking on burdensome loans.

"I had no financial guidance when I was younger, from my own parents or from school," she said. "I didn't ever understand the long term impact."

Despite working while in school and since — moonlighting at Starbucks, wineries and restaurants as well as counseling — McClelland still has a balance of about \$38,000 in debt, from original loans of \$10,000 towards her undergraduate studies and \$40,000 for her masters in counseling at Sonoma State.

"I knew I wanted to go to college, and my parents didn't have any money," McClelland said. "I tell kids all the time, openly, 'As someone who was once in your shoes, I highly recommend finding a way to avoid taking out loans.' When you're 17 or 18 years old, you think, 'Oh, sure, I'll figure this out.' Then it's frustrating to still be in this financial situation."

Slovakia election pits a pro-Russia former prime minister against a liberal pro-West newcomer

BRATISLAVA, Slovakia (AP) — Voters in Slovakia cast ballots Saturday in an early parliamentary election that pits a populist former prime minister who campaigned on a pro-Russia and anti-American message against a liberal, pro-West newcomer.

Depending on which of them prevails, the election could reverse the small eastern European country's support for neighboring Ukraine in the war with Russia, threatening to break a fragile unity in the European Union and NATO.

Former Prime Minister Robert Fico, 59, and his leftist Smer, or Direction, party have vowed to withdraw Slovakia's military support for Ukraine in Russia's war, if his attempt to return to power is successful.

Smer's main challenger is Progressive Slovakia, a liberal party formed in 2017 and led by Michal Simecka, 39, a member of the European Parliament.

Referring to his rival, Fico said Saturday he wished his country would not be run by "amateurs" without experience in politics.

Fico, who served as prime minister from 2006 to 2010 and again from 2012 to 2018, opposes EU sanctions on Russia, questions whether Ukraine can force out the invading Russian troops and wants to block Ukraine from joining NATO.

He proposes that instead of sending arms to Kyiv, the EU and the U.S. should use their influence to force Russia and Ukraine to strike a compromise peace deal. He has repeated Russian President Vladimir Putin's unsupported claim that the Ukrainian government runs a Nazi state.

Fico also campaigned against immigration and LGBTQ+ rights and threatened to dismiss investigators from the National Criminal Agency and the special prosecutor who deal with corruption and other serious crimes.

Progressive Slovakia sees the country's future as firmly tied to its existing membership in the EU and NATO.

The party vowed to continue Slovakia's support for Ukraine. It also favors LGBTQ+ rights, a rarity among the major parties in a country that is a stronghold of conservative Roman Catholicism.

"Every single vote matters," the party's head, Michal Simecka, said on Saturday.

Popular among young people, the party won the 2019 European Parliament election in Slovakia in coalition with the Together party, gaining more than 20% of the vote. But it narrowly failed to win seats in the national parliament in 2020.

No party is expected to win a majority of seats Saturday, meaning a coalition government will need to be

formed. The party that secures the most votes typically gets the first chance to put together a government. Polls indicate that seven or eight other political groups and parties might surpass a 5% threshold needed for representation in the 150-seat National Council.

Among them is the left-wing Hlas (Voice), led by Fico's former deputy in Smer, Peter Pellegrini. They parted ways after Smer lost the previous election in 2020 but their possible reunion would boost Fico's chances to rule.

"It's important for me that the new coalition would be formed by such parties that can agree on the priorities for Slovakia and ensure stability and calm," Pellegrini said after voting in Bratislava.

The others include the Republic, a far-right group led by former members of the openly neo-Nazi People's Party Our Slovakia whose members use Nazi salutes and want Slovakia out of the EU and NATO.

Ukraine hosts a defense industry forum seeking to ramp up weapons production for the war

By HANNA ARHIROVA Associated Press

KYIV, Ukraine (AP) — Ukraine hosted an international defense industry conference as part of a government effort to ramp up weapons production within the country to repel Russia's full-scale invasion and reduce foreign dependence on arms deliveries.

The event marked a new development in support of Ukraine, with the previous focus being on the delivery of weapons, repair of damaged equipment and military training of Ukrainian soldiers.

President Volodymyr Zelenskyy, speaking at the opening of the International Defense Industries Forum, said that around 250 defense companies from more than 30 countries had gathered Friday in Kyiv. Defense ministers and representatives of several countries also attended the event.

"Heroism alone cannot intercept missiles. Ukraine needs capabilities, high quality, high quantity, and quickly. There is no defense without industry," said NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg, who spoke by video link during the forum on the day after his visit to Kyiv.

Stoltenberg said that Wendy Gilmour, who is NATO's assistant secretary general for defense investments, was representing the trans-Atlantic alliance at the event.

Stoltenberg acknowledged that many allies have significantly depleted their stocks in order to support Ukraine. "This was the right thing to do, but now we need to ramp up production, both to meet Ukraine's needs and to ensure our own deterrence in events," he said.

Zelenskyy disclosed the details of his recent trip to Washington, where he agreed with U.S. President Joe Biden on "the establishment of a new industrial ecosystem that will strengthen both Ukraine and all the partners." Zelenskyy described it as "one of the key outcomes" of his negotiations with Biden in Washington.

Zelenskyy's chief of staff, Andriy Yermak, said that there will be meetings soon with representatives from the U.S. "to determine the road map of cooperation with the partners about localization of production, specifically in Ukraine."

During the forum, Zelenskyy announced the creation of the Defense Industries Alliance and added that 13 defense companies have already signed the corresponding declaration.

To support the cooperation and develop an industry complex, Ukraine plans to establish a special fund, which will be paid into through dividends from state defense resources and profits from the sale of confiscated Russian assets, Zelenskyy said.

Foreign Minister Dmytro Kuleba said the first talks about joint production with allies began last fall. "At first, we were talking about repairs within Ukraine, and then about joint production. And now, this topic is prevalent everywhere," said Kuleba.

According to Kuleba, in discussions with the partners, there is also a tremendous interest in the experience and production capabilities of Ukrainian businesses.

"Just as we have benefited from Western weapons, Western arms manufacturers also gain unique advantages in the market to improve their models and create even more powerful weapons," Kuleba said.

Ukraine's recently appointed Defense Minister, Rustem Umerov, said the country must do everything pos-

sible to produce all the necessary military services and products in Ukraine for the needs of its army. The other priority is the development of defense technologies that now play an important role on the battlefield. "Our vision is to develop world-class military products," Umerov said.

Polish opposition leader Donald Tusk seeks to boost his election chances with a rally in Warsaw

By MONIKA SCISLOWSKA Associated Press

WARSAW, Poland (AP) — Polish opposition leader Donald Tusk is facing an uphill battle to win new hearts in his efforts to unseat the nationalist conservative government in Poland's upcoming parliamentary election. The ex-prime minister and former European Union leader returned to Polish politics several years ago, seeking to breathe new life into his languishing party and win back power — and reverse what many view as a degradation of fundamental rights and ties with European partners under the governing populist Law and Justice party.

Tusk, 66, is hoping a major rally that he organized for Sunday will energize his supporters.

But he faces many obstacles, including divisions among his opposition ranks and, even more importantly, powerful government forces that depict him as disloyal to the nation.

Shaping the campaign is a long and bitter personal rivalry between Tusk and Law and Justice chief Jaroslaw Kaczynski, who is the country's 74-year-old de facto leader. Kaczynski, other government figures and state media repeatedly allege that Tusk's time as prime minister from 2007 to 2014 was harmful to Poland.

They point to the good terms he was on with then-German Chancellor Angela Merkel to make unproven allegations that he represented the interests of Germany, a neighboring country that brutally occupied Poland during World War II. They also accuse him of abandoning Poland when he went to Brussels in 2014 to become European Council president, a top EU post.

"Herr Donald, you left Poland to serve German interests in Brussels, for big money. ... I gave up a high salary in order to serve Poland," Prime Minister Mateusz Morawiecki, a former banker, recently tweeted after Tusk questioned whether he was hiding his wealth.

Tusk has denied being partisan to Germany and laughs off the allegations.

Tusk's "March of a Million Hearts" on Sunday comes two weeks before the Oct. 15 vote. His electoral alliance, the Civic Coalition, trails a few percentage points behind Law and Justice in opinion polls.

The march, the coalition's biggest campaign event, was inspired by the huge success of a similar march on June 4 that drew hundreds of thousands of opposition supporters from across Poland.

One of Tusk's greatest challenges is convincing supporters that the incumbent party can be defeated despite having consolidated huge power.

"On June 4, you gave Poland hope, so I am asking you now: On Oct. 1, let's give not just hope, but the full belief in victory, in our success in removing these evil people from power," Tusk said when announcing Sunday's march.

Tusk has been pushing back against the populist government's attempts to cast him as unpatriotic. His campaign symbol is a heart in the national colors of white and red to show that "we all have Poland in our hearts."

The June 4 march saw a huge outpouring of solidarity because it was held after Law and Justice passed contentious legislation establishing a state commission for investigating Russian influence in Poland. The law was seen as the governing party's way of targeting Tusk and removing him from public life. Instead, it rallied support for Tusk and boosted his electoral chances.

Opposition groups put aside their differences and marched with Tusk then. But this time, an opposition alliance called the Third Way — a coalition of the centrist Poland 2050 party and agrarian Polish People's Party (PSL) — won't take part.

The Third Way participated then because the Russian influence commission "made it very clear that the ruling team, using uncivilized methods, wants to get at the leader of the biggest opposition party," Sen. Jan Filip Libicki, of PSL, told The Associated Press. "There was a reason for this extraordinary mobilization."

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Libicki says there is no such pressing matter now.

These divisions complicate Tusk's attempts to return to power. His electoral alliance includes his Civic Platform party and three other small parties. However, apart from the Third Way, there is also the Left party in the opposition camp and it's competing for younger voters against the far-right Confederation party. 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.

Rafal Chwedoruk, a political scientist with the University of Warsaw, says Tusk's coalition, the Left and the Third Way together seem poised to get a majority of the votes, judging by opinion polls. But they haven't worked out a joint electoral strategy.

Some analysts see the disunity in the opposition as partly Tusk's fault.

Tusk is a charismatic leader with long political experience at home and internationally. But he also has a reputation for being domineering toward others in his party, and that has led some to leave and join other groups, like Libicki did in 2018.

Tusk recently moved his centrist alliance to the left, courting women and younger voters. Civic Platform has traditionally taken a fairly conservative position on abortion. But after a near-total ban was imposed under Law and Justice, Tusk vowed to liberalize the abortion law and has threatened to ban party members who criticize his plan from running in the election.

Lawmaker Boguslaw Sonik quit Tusk's party this year amid disagreements on abortion and the general drift to the left, and is now unaffiliated.

"A party cannot be run in a military style," he said on commercial radio station RMF FM. "These are matters of conscience."

New York stunned and swamped by record-breaking rainfall as more downpours are expected

By JAKE OFFENHARTZ, BOBBY CAINA CALVAN and JENNIFER PELTZ Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — One of New York's wettest days in decades left the metropolitan area stunned and swamped Friday after heavy rainfall knocked out several subway and commuter rail lines, stranded drivers on highways, flooded basements and shuttered a terminal at LaGuardia Airport for hours.

Some 8.65 inches (21.97 centimeters) of rain had fallen at John F. Kennedy Airport by nightfall Friday, surpassing the record for any September day set during Hurricane Donna in 1960, the National Weather Service said.

Parts of Brooklyn saw more than 7.25 inches (18.41 centimeters), with at least one spot recording 2.5 inches (6 centimeters) in a single hour, according to weather and city officials.

More downpours were expected Saturday.

The deluge came two years after the remnants of Hurricane Ida dumped record-breaking rain on the Northeast and killed at least 13 people in New York City, mostly in flooded basement apartments. Although no deaths or severe injuries have been reported, Friday's storm stirred frightening memories.

Ida killed three of Joy Wong's neighbors, including a toddler. And on Friday, water began lapping against the front door of her building in Woodside, Queens.

"I was so worried," she said, explaining it became too dangerous to leave. "Outside was like a lake, like an ocean."

Within minutes, water filled the building's basement nearly to the ceiling. After the family's deaths in 2021, the basement was turned into a recreation room. It is now destroyed.

City officials said they received reports of six flooded basement apartments Friday, but all occupants got out safely.

Gov. Kathy Hochul and Mayor Eric Adams declared states of emergency and urged people to stay put if possible. But schools were open, students went to class and many adults went to work, only to wonder how they would get home.

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Virtually every subway line was at least partly suspended, rerouted or running with delays. Metro-North commuter rail service from Manhattan was suspended for much of the day but began resuming by evening. The Long Island Rail Road was snarled, 44 of the city's 3,500 buses became stranded and bus service was disrupted citywide, transit officials said.

"When it stops the buses, you know it's bad," Brooklyn high school student Malachi Clark said after trying to get home by bus, then subway. School buses were running, but they transport only a fraction of public school students, many of them disabled.

A long line of people snaked from the ticket counter in the afternoon at Grand Central Terminal, where Mike Tags was among those whose trains had been canceled. Railroad employees had suggested possible workarounds, but he wondered whether they would work out.

"So I'm going to sit here, ride it out, until they open up," he said.

Traffic hit a standstill earlier in the day on a stretch of the FDR Drive, a major artery along Manhattan's east side. With water above car tires, some drivers abandoned their vehicles.

Around 11 a.m., Priscilla Fontallio said she had spent three hours in her car, which was on a piece of the highway that wasn't flooded but wasn't moving.

"Never seen anything like this in my life," she said.

On a street in Brooklyn's South Williamsburg neighborhood, workers were up to their knees in water as they tried to unclog a storm drain while cardboard and other debris floated by. Some people arranged milk crates and wooden boards to cross flooded sidewalks.

Flights into LaGuardia were briefly halted in the morning, and then delayed, because of water in the refueling area. Flooding also forced the closure of one of the airport's three terminals for several hours. Terminal A resumed normal operations around 8 p.m.

A Brooklyn school was evacuated because its boiler was smoking, possibly because water got into it, Schools Chancellor David Banks said. Another Brooklyn school was mopping up ground-floor classrooms, City Councilwoman Crystal Hudson said in an email seeking volunteers to help.

The New York Rangers and New York Islanders postponed a preseason hockey game on Long Island. And at the waterlogged Central Park Zoo, a sea lion swam out of her swollen pool. With the zoo closed because of the weather, she looked around for a bit before returning to the pool, zoo officials said in a statement.

In Brooklyn's Crown Heights, Jessie Lawrence awoke to the sound of rain dripping from the ceiling of her fourth-floor apartment and heard strange sounds outside her front door.

She opened the door to find "the water was coming in thicker and louder," pouring into the hallway and flowing down the stairs, she said. Rain had pooled on the roof and was leaking through a skylight.

Hoboken, New Jersey, and other cities and towns near New York City also experienced flooding. New Jersey Gov. Phil Murphy called for state offices to close at 3 p.m., except for essential personnel.

Why so much rain? The remnants of Tropical Storm Ophelia over the Atlantic Ocean combined with a mid-latitude system arriving from the west, at a time of year when conditions coming off the ocean are particularly juicy for storms, National Weather Service meteorologist Ross Dickman said. This combination storm parked itself over New York for 12 hours.

The weather service had warned of 3 to 5 inches (7.5 to 13 centimeters) of rain and told emergency managers to expect more than 6 inches (15 centimeters) in some places, Dickman said.

The deluge came less than three months after a storm caused deadly floods in New York's Hudson Valley and swamped Vermont's capital, Montpelier.

As the planet warms, storms are forming in a hotter atmosphere that can hold more moisture, making extreme rainfall more frequent, according to atmospheric scientists.

In the case of Friday's storm, nearby ocean temperatures were below normal and air temperatures weren't too hot. Still, it became the third time in two years that rain fell at rates near 2 inches (5 centimeters) per hour in Central Park, which is unusual, Columbia University climate scientist Adam Sobel said.

The park recorded 5.8 inches (14.73 centimeters) of rain by nightfall Friday.

Video provides first clear views of WWII aircraft carriers lost in the pivotal Battle of Midway

By MARK THIESSEN Associated Press

Footage from deep in the Pacific Ocean has given the first detailed look at three World War II aircraft carriers that sank in the pivotal Battle of Midway and could help solve mysteries about the days-long barrage that marked a shift in control of the Pacific theater from Japanese to U.S. forces.

Remote submersibles operating 3 miles (4.8 kilometers) below the surface conducted extensive archeological surveys in September of the Akagi and the Kaga, two of the four Imperial Japanese Navy aircraft carriers destroyed during the June 1942 battle, as well as the U.S.S. Yorktown.

The high-quality video includes the official identification of the Akagi, while also providing new clues about the final hours of the aircraft carriers.

The footage shows how the island, or the tall structure that rose above the Yorktown's wooden deck, was damaged by extremely high heat and how the crew went to great lengths to keep the American ship from sinking.

Julian Hodges, one of the last living veterans who served on the Yorktown, and who swam six hours with a dislocated shoulder to a rescue ship, teared up as he watched.

"Boy, she took a beating," Hodges said, just weeks shy of his 101st birthday. "I just hated to see my ship torn up like that."

All three aircraft carriers were found previously, the Yorktown in 1998 and the Japanese ships four years ago. The Akagi was only preliminarily identified, however, and limited images were recorded of the other two.

That changed when Ocean Exploration Trust — founded by Bob Ballard, who led teams that discovered the Yorktown and the Titanic — conducted extensive video surveys of the three ships during a month-long exploration of the Papahānaumokuākea Marine National Monument in the Northwestern Hawaiian Islands, about 1,300 miles (2,092 kilometers) northwest of Honolulu.

"We were able to spend over basically three full days on these sites, including two full days on the seafloor, really methodically and thoroughly documenting the entire wrecks," Daniel Wagner, the chief scientist for Ocean Exploration Trust, told The Associated Press via videoconference from the exploration vessel Nautilus.

The surveys were streamed online, allowing more than 100 scientists, historians and other experts from across the world to participate in a live forum alongside about two dozen scientists aboard the Nautilus.

The Battle of Midway took place six months after the Japanese attacked Pearl Harbor on Dec. 7, 1941. The Japanese navy aimed to take control of the U.S. patrol plane base in a surprise attack at Midway Atoll, a tiny group of islands roughly halfway between the U.S. mainland and Asia. The country also wanted to destroy what was left of the U.S. Pacific Fleet.

But U.S. forces intercepted communications about the attack and were ready.

The five-day battle was fought about 200 miles (322 kilometers) off the group of islands. Besides sinking the Akagi, the Kaga and two other Japanese aircraft carriers, U.S. forces shot down more than 250 Japanese airplanes. More than 3,000 Japanese servicemen died.

U.S. losses included more than 300 servicemen, about 150 airplanes and the Yorktown, which was damaged in the battle and then sunk by a Japanese submarine about 100 miles (161 kilometers) away while being towed for repairs.

Of the 4,600 or so men who served on the Yorktown from 1937 to 1942, it's believed there are only two still alive, said Michael Leggins, president of the U.S.S. Yorktown CV-5 Club, a group dedicated to providing information about the ship.

One of them, Hodges, is a retired Baptist minister in Johnson City, Tennessee. He joined the Navy the day after Pearl Harbor and worked in the Yorktown's boiler room during the battle.

He recalled in a videoconference interview with the AP that after two torpedoes exploded, he found himself stuck between two pipes, his left arm so tightly pinned he couldn't pull it out. His shoulder was

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also dislocated, an injury that still troubles him 81 years later.

Once freed with the help of a fellow sailor, a life jacket was taped over his injured shoulder and he held on to another to swim more than 3 miles (4.8 kilometers) to a waiting ship. He said the journey took about six hours.

The other surviving Yorktown veteran, Robert Taylor, needed parental permission to join the Navy on Sept. 12, 1941, at the age of 17. Taylor, now 99, manned an anti-aircraft gun during the battle.

Historians knew the crew tried to keep the ship afloat by jettisoning some smaller anti-aircraft guns on the port side. But among the discoveries from the new video was that the sailors also cut away the larger guns, said Hans Van Tilburg, the maritime archeologist and historian for the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration's Office of National Marine Sanctuaries.

The action "speaks to the dedication of the crew to save their vessel in the last and final moments of that ship's service," he said.

When ordered to abandon ship, Taylor jumped overboard and tried to swim to a nearby destroyer, U.S.S. Balch, giving his life jacket to a fellow sailor who didn't know how to swim.

But as he neared the Balch, the ship started moving off to pick up more men in the water. A crewman on board tossed a line, which Taylor said he grabbed with his foot. He got alongside the destroyer and was pulled aboard but doesn't remember much afterward.

"They tell me I was screaming," he told the AP from his home in Auburndale, Florida. The ordeal left him with post-traumatic stress disorder.

The carriers will remain in their current location in U.S. protected waters, which should prevent them from being looted or becoming tourist destinations like the Titanic.

The only things to be taken from the wrecks, Wagner said, will be the images and video they are sharing. Hodges said he appreciated that. "Nobody's going to get anything out of it," he said.

He hopes the video spurs a new generation to consider the toll of conflict: "Whatever it takes to put wars out of business."

Taylor quipped that he would like the ship raised, if only to retrieve the \$28 he left in his locker when the ship went down, about \$530 in today's money.

Joking aside, the destruction of the Yorktown haunts him. "I was really upset because I loved that ship," Taylor said. "It took a lot to sink it."

Things to know about the Nobel Prizes

By KARL RITTER Associated Press

STOCKHOLM (AP) — Fall has arrived in Scandinavia, which means Nobel Prize season is here.

The start of October is when the Nobel committees get together in Stockholm and Oslo to announce the winners of the yearly awards.

First up, as usual, is the Nobel Prize in medicine or physiology, which will be announced Monday by a panel of judges at the Karolinska Institute in the Swedish capital. The prizes in physics, chemistry, literature, peace and economics will follow, with one announcement every weekday until Oct. 9.

Here are some things to know about the Nobel Prizes:

AN IDEA MORE POWERFUL THAN DYNAMITE

The Nobel Prizes were created by Alfred Nobel, a 19th-century businessman and chemist from Sweden. He held more than 300 patents but his claim to fame before the Nobel Prizes was having invented dynamite by mixing nitroglycerine with a compound that made the explosive more stable.

Dynamite soon became popular in construction and mining as well as in the weapons industry. It made Nobel a very rich man. Perhaps it also made him think about his legacy, because toward the end of his life he decided to use his vast fortune to fund annual prizes "to those who, during the preceding year, have conferred the greatest benefit to humankind."

The first Nobel Prizes were presented in 1901, five years after his death. In 1968, a sixth prize was created, for economics, by Sweden's central bank. Though Nobel purists stress that the economics prize is

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technically not a Nobel Prize, it's always presented together with the others.

PEACE IN NORWAY

For reasons that are not entirely clear, Nobel decided that the peace prize should be awarded in Norway and the other prizes in Sweden. Nobel historians suspect Sweden's history of militarism may have been a factor.

During Nobel's lifetime, Sweden and Norway were in a union, which the Norwegians reluctantly joined after the Swedes invaded their country in 1814. It's possible that Nobel thought Norway would be a more suitable location for a prize meant to encourage "fellowship among nations."

To this day, the Nobel Peace Prize is a completely Norwegian affair, with the winners selected and announced by a Norwegian committee. The peace prize even has its own ceremony in the Norwegian capital of Oslo on Dec. 10 — the anniversary of Nobel's death — while the other prizes are presented in Stockholm.

WHAT'S POLITICS GOT TO DO WITH IT?

The Nobel Prizes project an aura of being above the political fray, focused solely on the benefit of humanity. But the peace and literature awards, in particular, are sometimes accused of being politicized. Critics question whether winners are selected because their work is truly outstanding or because it aligns with the political preferences of the judges.

The scrutiny can get intense for high-profile awards, such as in 2009, when President Barack Obama won the peace prize less than a year after taking office.

The Norwegian Nobel Committee is an independent body that insists its only mission is to carry out the will of Alfred Nobel. However, it does have links to Norway's political system. The five members are appointed by the Norwegian Parliament, so the panel's composition reflects the power balance in the legislature.

To avoid the perception that the prizes are influenced by Norway's political leaders, sitting members of the Norwegian government or Parliament are barred from serving on the committee. Even so, the panel isn't always viewed as independent by foreign countries. When imprisoned Chinese dissident Liu Xiaobo won the peace prize in 2010, Beijing responded by freezing trade talks with Norway. It took years for Norway-China relations to be restored.

GOLD AND GLORY

One reason the prizes are so famous is they come with a generous amount of cash. The Nobel Foundation, which administers the awards, raised the prize money by 10% this year to 11 million kronor (about \$1 million). In addition to the money, the winners receive an 18-carat gold medal and diploma when they collect their Nobel Prizes at the award ceremonies in December.

Most winners are proud and humbled by joining the pantheon of Nobel laureates, from Albert Einstein to Mother Teresa. But two winners refused their Nobel Prizes: French writer Jean-Paul Sartre, who turned down the literature prize in 1964, and Vietnamese politician Le Duc Tho, who declined the peace prize that he was meant to share with U.S. diplomat Henry Kissinger in 1973.

Several others were not able to receive their awards because they were imprisoned, such as Belarusian pro-democracy activist Ales Bialiatski, who shared last year's peace prize with human rights groups in Ukraine and Russia.

LACK OF DIVERSITY

Historically, the vast majority of Nobel Prize winners have been white men. Though that's started to change, there is still little diversity among Nobel winners, particularly in the science categories.

To date, 60 women have won Nobel Prizes, including 25 in the scientific categories. Only four women have won the Nobel Prize in physics and just two have won the economics prize.

In the early days of the Nobel Prizes, the lack of diversity among winners could be explained by the lack of diversity among scientists in general. But today critics say the judges need to do a better job at highlighting discoveries made by women and scientists outside Europe and North America.

The prize committees say their decisions are based on scientific merit, not gender, nationality or race. However, they are not deaf to the criticism. Five years ago, the head of the Royal Swedish Academy of Sciences said it had started to ask nominating bodies to make sure they don't overlook "women or people

of other ethnicities or nationalities in their nominations.”

Transgender minors in Nebraska, their families and doctors brace for a new law limiting treatment

By MARGERY A. BECK Associated Press

LINCOLN, Neb. (AP) — As Nebraska’s new law restricting gender-affirming care for minors goes into effect this weekend, families with transgender children and the doctors who treat them are steeling themselves for change. But exactly what and how much change is anyone’s guess.

A key aspect of the law is a set of treatment guidelines that has yet to be created. Affected families, doctors and even lawmakers say they have largely gotten no response from health officials on when they can expect the new rules, which should lay out how and when transgender minors can be treated with puberty blockers and hormones.

Many of them fear Republican officials and their appointees in charge of administering the rules are slow-walking the regulations as a way to block treatment for new transgender patients under 19, the age of adulthood under Nebraska law.

“There has been no communication,” said 42-year-old Lincoln resident Heather Rhea, who has a 17-year-old transgender daughter. “There’s been no press release. There’s nothing on the website about where they are in the process or a timeline for when we’ll know when kids can get gender-affirming care.”

“I know several, several people who’ve reached out for information and gotten zero response,” she said.

The new law, which goes into effect Sunday, bans gender-affirming surgery for anyone under 19 and restricts who in that age group can receive nonsurgical treatment. Minors who already receive puberty blockers or hormones are allowed to continue the treatment, but new patients who are minors are largely banned from starting.

The American Academy of Pediatrics recommends gender-affirming care for people under 18, citing an increased risk of suicide for transgender teens.

Only those minors who have shown “a long-lasting and intense pattern of gender nonconformity or gender dysphoria” would be allowed to start puberty blocking or hormone treatment, and only under a set of guidelines to be drafted by the state’s newly appointed chief medical officer, Dr. Timothy Tesmer.

Tesmer is an ear, nose and throat surgeon and political appointee of Republican Gov. Jim Pillen. The governor has leaned hard into a swell of anti-transgender legislation in Republican-led statehouses across the country.

During the signing ceremony for the new law, Pillen suggested children and their parents who seek gender-affirming treatment are being “duped,” adding, “that is absolutely Lucifer at its finest.”

Last month, Pillen issued an executive order strictly defining a person’s sex and ordering state agencies to define “female” and “male” as a person’s sex assigned at birth.

Omaha state Sen. John Cavanaugh is among those who said he is been unable to get answers from the Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services, even as his office fields multiple calls daily from the public seeking answers.

“There’s a huge amount of concern about what’s going to happen to trans folks,” Cavanaugh said. “They feel like the governor has put a target on their back for political gain. And they’re frightened about what happens next.”

Some are not waiting to find out.

Heather Rhea’s daughter, 17-year-old Nola Rhea, is a high school senior in Lincoln. Once she graduates in May, the National Merit Scholarship finalist plans to leave Nebraska for college in Minnesota, which enacted protections for gender-affirming care earlier this year. At the time, Nebraska lawmakers were locked in a contentious battle over the proposed transgender health care ban, which touched off an epic filibuster that slowed the session to a crawl.

The passage of the bill, which survived the filibuster attempt by a single vote, altered Rhea’s longtime assumption she would attend the University of Nebraska.

"It makes you feel like you're not wanted here," she said of the new law.

Rhea recounted she had contemplated suicide years earlier as her body began to change during puberty. When she came out to her family at age 14, their acceptance and the medical treatment she received, including puberty blockers and later hormones, "saved my life."

She has since enjoyed the support of her school, teachers and peers. She entered high school thinking society had turned a corner on acceptance of the transgender community.

"And then this year happened," she said.

She's concerned for those teens in the future who won't be able to get gender-affirming care.

"I worry especially because I don't think it's going to get better; I think things are going to get worse," she said. As for the law's supporters, "I think they're going to push harder. I think they're going to push to try to make it illegal to be trans. Period."

Dr. Alex Dworak, an Omaha family physician who has treated transgender patients for more than 10 years at OneWorld Community Health Centers, said he has heard the same concerns Rhea has from dozens of people since debate on the Nebraska law began.

Five of his trans patients have already left the state, he said.

"They don't feel safe here," Dworak said. "Which, again, seems like that's precisely the point, or at least that it lines up nicely with the stated goals of the people advocating for this legislation."

Dworak said he has spoken about developing the regulations with Tesmer, whom he described as collegial and respected in his field. Tesmer was hopeful earlier this week about launching a set of emergency regulations by Oct. 1 until the permanent set could be adopted, Dworak said.

As of Friday, no such emergency rules had been announced.

Tesmer did not respond to several interview requests from The Associated Press about where he is in the process of drafting the regulations, for whom he has consulted, or when they are likely to be made public.

A Department of Health and Human Services spokesperson also declined to answer those questions, referring the AP to a document addressing frequently asked questions about the new law.

That document says the health agency hopes to hold a public hearing on the regulations before the end of the year. A public notice of such a hearing, which is required by law to be published at least 30 days before such a hearing, has not yet been published.

The department "will attempt to minimize" the time between the law taking effect and enactment of interim emergency regulations, according to the document.

At least 22 states have enacted laws restricting or banning gender-affirming medical care for transgender minors, and most of those states face lawsuits. An Arkansas ban mirroring Nebraska's was struck down by a federal judge in June as unconstitutional and will be appealed to the 8th U.S. Circuit Court, which also oversees Nebraska cases.

On the brink of a government shutdown, the Senate tries to approve funding but it's almost too late

By LISA MASCARO, KEVIN FREKING and STEPHEN GROVES Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — The U.S. is on the brink of a federal government shutdown after hard-right Republicans in Congress rejected a longshot effort to keep offices open as they fight for steep spending cuts and strict border security measures that Democrats and the White House say are too extreme.

Come midnight Saturday with no deal in place, federal workers will face furloughs, more than 2 million active duty and reserve military troops will work without pay and programs and services that Americans rely on from coast to coast will begin to face shutdown disruptions.

The Senate will be in for a rare Saturday session to advance its own bipartisan package that is supported by Democrats and Republicans and would fund the government for the short-term, through Nov. 17.

But even if the Senate can rush to wrap up its work this weekend to pass the bill, which also includes money for Ukraine aid and U.S. disaster assistance, it won't prevent an almost certain shutdown amid the chaos in the House. On Friday, a massive hard-right revolt left Speaker Kevin McCarthy's latest plan

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to collapse.

"Congress has only one option to avoid a shutdown — bipartisanship," said Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer.

Senate Republican leader Mitch McConnell echoed the sentiment, warning his own hard-right colleagues there is nothing to gain by shutting down the federal government.

"It heaps unnecessary hardships on the American people, as well as the brave men and women who keep us safe," McConnell said.

The federal government is heading straight into a shutdown that poses grave uncertainty for federal workers in states all across America and the people who depend on them — from troops to border control agents to office workers, scientists and others.

Families that rely on Head Start for children, food benefits and countless other programs large and small are confronting potential interruptions or outright closures. At the airports, Transportation Security Administration officers and air traffic controllers are expected to work without pay, but travelers could face delays in updating their U.S. passports or other travel documents.

Congress has been unable to fund the federal agencies or pass a temporary bill in time to keep offices open for the start of the new fiscal year Sunday in large part because McCarthy has faced unsurmountable resistance from right-flank Republicans who are refusing to run government as usual.

McCarthy's last-ditch plan to keep the federal government temporarily open collapsed in dramatic fashion Friday as a robust faction of 21 hard-right holdouts opposed the package, despite steep spending cuts of nearly 30% to many agencies and severe border security provisions, calling it insufficient.

The White House and Democrats rejected the Republican approach as too extreme. The Democrats voted against it.

The House bill's failure a day before Saturday's deadline to fund the government leaves few options to prevent a shutdown.

"It's not the end yet; I've got other ideas," a clearly agitated McCarthy told reporters as he exited the chamber.

Later Friday, after a heated closed-door meeting of House Republicans that pushed into the evening, McCarthy said he was considering options — among them, a two-week stopgap funding measure similar to the effort from hard-right senators that would be certain to exclude any help for Ukraine in the war against Russia.

Even though the House bill already axed routine Ukraine aid, an intensifying Republican resistance to the war effort means the Senate's plan to attach \$6 billion President Volodymyr Zelenskyy is seeking from the U.S. may have bipartisan support from Democrats but not from most of McCarthy's Republicans.

Republican Sen. Rand Paul of Kentucky is working to stop the Ukraine funds in the Senate package.

"We continue to work through trying to find out of this," McCarthy told reporters. "There are no winners in a government shutdown and I think that's the best way forward, make sure the government does not shut down."

The White House has brushed aside McCarthy's overtures to meet with President Joe Biden after the speaker walked away from the debt deal they brokered earlier this year that set budget levels.

On Friday, White House press secretary Karine Jean-Pierre said, "The path forward to fund the government has been laid out by the Senate with bipartisan support — House Republicans just need to take it."

Catering to his hard-right flank, McCarthy had returned to the spending limits the conservatives demanded back in January as part of the deal-making to help him become the House speaker.

The House package would not have cut the Defense, Veterans or Homeland Security departments but would have slashed almost all other agencies by up to 30% — steep hits to a vast array of programs, services and departments Americans routinely depend on.

It also added strict new border security provisions that would kickstart building the wall at the southern border with Mexico, among other measures. Additionally, the package would have set up a bipartisan debt commission to address the nation's mounting debt load.

As soon as the floor debate began, McCarthy's chief Republican critic, Rep. Matt Gaetz of Florida, announced he would vote against the package, urging his colleagues to "not surrender."

Gaetz said afterward that the speaker's bill "went down in flames as I've told you all week it would."

He and others rejecting the temporary measure want the House to keep pushing through the 12 individual spending bills needed to fund the government, typically a weeks-long process, as they pursue their conservative priorities.

Republicans leaders announced later Friday that the House would stay in session next week, rather than return home, to keep working on some of the 12 spending bills.

Some of the Republican holdouts, including Gaetz, are allies of Donald Trump, who is Biden's chief rival in 2024. The former president has been encouraging the Republicans to fight hard for their priorities and even to "shut it down."

The hard right, led by Gaetz, has been threatening McCarthy's ouster, with a looming vote to try to remove him from the speaker's office unless he meets the conservative demands. Still, it's unclear if any other Republican would have support from the House majority to lead the party.

Late Friday, Trump turned his ire to McConnell on social media, complaining the Republican leader and other GOP senators are "weak and ineffective" and making compromises with Democrats. He urged them, "Don't do it!"

Arrest in Tupac Shakur killing stemmed from Biggie Smalls death investigation

By RIO YAMAT and KEN RITTER Associated Press

LAS VEGAS (AP) — The first arrest in the 1996 slaying of Tupac Shakur had its roots in the investigation of the killing of Biggie Smalls.

The shooting deaths of the two hip-hop luminaries and rivals — Shakur in Las Vegas and Smalls in Los Angeles six months later — have always been culturally inseparable, and one man, Duane Keffe D. Davis, found himself involved in both investigations.

On Friday, Davis was arrested and charged with murder, with prosecutors saying he ordered and masterminded the Shakur killing.

Now retired Los Angeles police detective Greg Kading was assigned to investigate the slaying of Smalls — whose legal name was Christopher Wallace — and in 2009 interviewed Davis as a person of interest in the case. Davis had had been at the party at the Peterson Automotive Museum that Wallace had just left when he was shot.

Kading had helped build a federal drug case against Davis to get leverage to compel him to talk to Los Angeles police, who to date have made no arrests in the Wallace case.

"He confesses to his involvement in the Tupac Shakur case, he gives all the details of how he and his co-conspirators killed Tupac," Kading recalled in an interview Friday with The Associated Press.

Davis, who had immunity for what he said in his police interview but not what he said outside it, went on to divulge many of the same details in documentaries, on podcasts and in a tell-all 2019 memoir that would give new life to the Las Vegas police probe and help lead to his grand jury indictment.

"He has essentially talked himself right into jail," Kading said.

Davis had long been known to investigators as one of four suspects identified early in the investigation. He isn't the accused gunman but was described as the group's ringleader by authorities at a news conference and in court. In Nevada a defendant can be charged with a crime, including murder, if you help someone commit the crime.

Davis, now 60, said in his memoir, "Compton Street Legend," that he provided the gun used in the drive-by shooting.

Davis was arrested early Friday while on a walk near his home on the outskirts of Las Vegas, hours before prosecutors announced in court that a Nevada grand jury had indicted the self-described "gangster" on one count of murder with a deadly weapon. He is due in court next week.

The grand jury also voted to add a sentencing enhancement to the murder charge for gang activity that could add up to 20 additional years if he's convicted.

Hundreds of pages of transcripts released Friday provide a view into the first month of grand jury proceedings, which began in late July with testimony from former associates of Davis, friends of Shakur and a slate of retired police officers involved in the case early on. Their testimony painted a picture for the jurors of a deep, escalating rift between Shakur's music label Death Row Records and Bad Boy Records, which had ties to Davis and represented Wallace.

"It started the whole West Coast/East Coast" rivalry that primarily defined the hip-hop scene during the mid-1990s, one of Davis' former associates testified.

Davis denied an interview request Friday from jail, and court records don't list an attorney who can comment on his behalf. Phone and text messages to Davis and his wife on Friday and in the months raided their home in the nearby city of Henderson on July 17 were not returned.

In a statement Friday, Sekyiwa "Set" Shakur, the rapper's sister, described the arrest as a victory, but in a measured tone.

"This is no doubt a pivotal moment. The silence of the past 27 years surrounding this case has spoken loudly in our community," she said. "It's important to me that the world, the country, the justice system, and our people acknowledge the gravity of the passing of this man, my brother, my mother's son, my father's son."

She gave no praise to the authorities who have worked the case.

"I know there's been many people who did not believe that the murder of Tupac Shakur was important to this police department," Sheriff Kevin McMahill said at a news conference Friday. "I'm here to tell you, that was simply not the case. It was not the case back then, and it is not the case today."

He added, "every single victim, every life that is lost is important and remains a priority to this police department."

On the night of Sept. 7, 1996, Tupac Shakur and Death Row Records founder Marion "Suge" Knight were in Las Vegas to watch a Mike Tyson heavyweight title match. Outside the fight just after it ended, the men were involved in a brawl with Davis and his nephew, Orlando "Baby Lane" Anderson, with whom Shakur had feuded previously.

Later that night, Shakur was sitting in a BMW that Knight was driving when a Cadillac pulled up next to them and gunfire erupted.

Shakur was shot multiple times and died a week later at the age of 25.

Davis, in his memoir, said he was in the front passenger seat of the Cadillac and had slipped a gun into the back seat, from where he said the shots were fired.

He implicated Anderson, saying he was one of two people in the backseat.

Anderson died two years later. He denied any involvement in Shakur's death.

The rapper's death came as his fourth solo album, "All Eyez on Me," remained on the charts, with some 5 million copies sold. Nominated six times for a Grammy Award, Shakur is still largely considered one of the most influential and versatile rappers of all time.

The Feinstein they knew: Women of the Senate remember a fighter and friend

By MARY CLARE JALONICK Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — When Washington Sen. Patty Murray received a call early Friday morning that Sen. Dianne Feinstein had died, she immediately started calling her fellow female senators.

The Democrat's first call was to Republican Sen. Susan Collins, who had worked with Feinstein almost as long as she had. Murray and Feinstein were elected in 1992 — "the year of the woman" — and Collins was elected just four years later. Murray then called several other female Senate colleagues, hastily arranging a tribute.

"My immediate response was my women Senate colleagues that have been her friends and her family

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for so long, and that we needed to be together on the floor." Murray said in an interview in her Capitol office Friday afternoon.

They were all there when the Senate opened at 10 a.m., just hours after Feinstein had died at her home in Washington after serving more than three decades in the Senate. Standing near Feinstein's Senate desk, now draped in black cloth, the senators — along with some of their male colleagues — talked about her indomitable, fierce intelligence and how she had paved the way for so many women as the first female mayor of San Francisco, one of California's first two female senators and the first female chairwoman of the Senate Intelligence Committee.

But the women also talked about their private times with Feinstein that were at odds with her tough public persona -- how she would invite them out to dinners, how she would sometimes give them the clothes off her back, and how she brought them together for bipartisan gatherings as their ranks in the Senate grew from just a handful to a quarter of the chamber. Several of them teared up as they spoke.

It was a peek into Feinstein's friendships and also the private, collegial side of the Senate that the public rarely sees — and that has faded in recent years as Congress has become more partisan and divided. Feinstein often received criticism from the left flank for her bipartisanship.

"I think it's important that people understand that here in the United States Senate, a place that can be so divisive at times, that true friendships actually exist," said Alaska Sen. Lisa Murkowski, a Republican.

Murkowski spoke about sharing dinners with Feinstein when the Senate would stay in town over a weekend and they weren't able to fly home to their faraway states. She joked that Feinstein, always impeccably dressed, probably wouldn't have approved of the shoes she was wearing.

As the senators spoke, Feinstein's daughter Katherine watched from the gallery, sitting close to former House Speaker Nancy Pelosi. Members of California's House delegation lined the back wall.

Collins said Feinstein held an engagement party for her before she was married more than a decade ago. She displayed a painting that Feinstein had painted for her, that now hangs in her office "and will have a place of honor there always," Collins said.

Democratic Sen. Amy Klobuchar of Minnesota said that when attending an event in San Francisco around 15 years ago, Feinstein invited her to stay the night at her mansion in the city. When Klobuchar woke up early the next morning, Feinstein summoned her to her room, where she was wearing fuzzy slippers -- and reading a 200-page bill. She proceeded to quiz Klobuchar on the details.

"That was Dianne," Klobuchar said, noting that the California Democrat had to work harder than everyone else as she rose up through politics at a time when there were so few women.

Sen. Kirsten Gillibrand, D-N.Y., brought a drawing Feinstein had given her and wore red lipstick in her honor. Murray told a story about admiring one of Feinstein's purses, and then receiving one in the mail from the California senator a few days later. Sen. Maggie Hassan, D-N.H., said she was wearing shoes she said Feinstein had once admired.

Sen. Mazie Hirono, D-Hawaii, was wearing a scarf Feinstein had given her on the spot when she had told her she liked it.

"She just took it off and gave it to me," Hirono said. "We had to be careful about admiring anything Dianne had, because she would likely take it off and give it to us."

Wyoming Sen. Cynthia Lummis, a Republican, said Feinstein was "particularly kind to other women senators. She was the first to invite other women senators to dinner, to lead our gatherings and to focus our attention on things that are good for all Americans without regard to political ideology."

Feinstein was one of the leaders and hosts of regular bipartisan dinners with all the women of the Senate, even as the group got a bit too large for them all to sit around one table and as the gatherings became a bit less frequent.

When eating at her house, said Democratic Sen. Catherine Cortez Masto of Nevada, Feinstein "would have a little parting gift for you, a little coin purse or something to show you just truly who she was."

Speaking at an event Friday, former New York Sen. Hillary Clinton told her own story about a gathering at Feinstein's home.

After she lost the Democratic presidential primary to Barack Obama in 2008, Clinton said, she called Feinstein when the two former opponents — and then-senators — wanted to talk privately and weren't sure where to go. Clinton said they ended up talking about what she would do to support Obama in Feinstein's living room, while Feinstein would occasionally pop in, asking if they wanted more Chardonnay.

"I had total trust in her," Clinton said at The Atlantic Festival in Washington.

One of the female senators Murray contacted Friday morning was Alabama Sen. Katie Britt, a Republican and former Senate Appropriations Committee staffer. Britt texted back that Feinstein had blazed a trail for her, and asked to sit with the other women senators on the floor during the tribute. "My heart is so sad," Britt texted her.

Murray said the text brought her to tears.

"There was a side of Dianne that most people probably never saw, which all of us who are so lucky to be her friends here saw," Murray said.

On the Senate floor, Murray teared up again as she recalled seeing Feinstein there just Thursday, casting her last vote.

"I'm so sorry I didn't hug her when she went back out that door yesterday," Murray said.

Biden says shutdown isn't his fault. Will Americans agree?

By JOSH BOAK and CHRIS MEGERIAN Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Staring down a likely government shutdown, the White House wants to make sure any blame falls at the other end of Pennsylvania Avenue — specifically on House Republicans.

After all, it's House Republicans who have been paralyzed by their inability to pass a funding package, and Republicans who don't want to uphold a bipartisan spending agreement from earlier this year.

President Joe Biden is hoping the rest of the country will see things the same way. It's a murky proposition at a time of extreme political polarization, with many Americans dug into their partisan corners regardless of the facts of the matter.

A shutdown would arrive at a tenuous moment for Biden, who already faces low poll numbers and concerns about the economy as he seeks a second term in office, partially on the pitch that he offers steady stewardship in Washington.

If no spending bill passes Congress by the end of Saturday, federal workers stop getting paid, air travel could be ensnared by staffing shortages and food benefits will pause for some of the country's most vulnerable families.

Asked on Friday if Biden should bear any responsibility for the shutdown, White House budget director Shalanda Young said "absolutely not" and accused Republicans of being cavalier with people's lives.

"The guy who picks up the trash in my office won't get a paycheck," she said. "That's real. And that's what makes me angry."

Anita Dunn, Biden's senior adviser, blamed the looming shutdown on "the most extreme fringe" of House Republicans in a presentation to allies on Thursday. She said "we have to hold them accountable" and "make sure they pay the political price."

Speaking from the White House, she criticized adherents of former President Donald Trump's Make America Great Again coalition — but she stopped just short of using the MAGA acronym.

"We're not allowed to actually use the M-word here in the White House right now," said Dunn, referring to legal guidance intended to ensure compliance with the Hatch Act, which prevents political activity while administration officials are on the job. "But everyone here knows what I mean. It's a four-letter word. It begins with M. It ends with A. It's got an AG in the middle."

Dunn added, "So those people are the ones who are refusing to do their job and shutting the government down for no reason."

The current crisis is a sequel to the standoff over raising the debt limit earlier this year. House Speaker Kevin McCarthy, R-Calif., refused to authorize the federal government to issue debt unless Biden negotiated over spending cuts.

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After resisting, Biden agreed to budget talks, reaching a bipartisan deal that averted a first-ever default. But now a group of House Republicans want even deeper spending cuts and they've threatened to oust McCarthy from the speaker's job if they don't get what they want.

So far, the White House has refused to negotiate, stressing that an agreement was already in place and House Republicans are refusing to honor its terms. Press secretary Karine Jean-Pierre said Friday that Republicans were "solely to blame" for any shutdown, calling that "a basic fact."

Administration officials have also been highlighting that a shutdown would cause lapses in paychecks for military service members and delays in assistance for victims of natural disasters.

The White House messaging effort has received no shortage of unintended help from Republicans themselves, with moderates criticizing their hard-right colleagues.

Rep. Mike Lawler, R-New York, said "just throwing a temper tantrum and stomping your feet — frankly, not only is it wrong — it's just pathetic."

Even McCarthy acknowledged recently that some members of his caucus "just want to burn the whole place down."

At a Wednesday fundraiser outside San Francisco, Biden said McCarthy cares more about protecting his job as speaker than keeping the government open.

"The fact is that I think that the speaker is making a choice between his speakership and American interests," Biden said.

While Washington endured partial shutdowns as long as 35 days during Trump's presidency, Biden warned his donors that Republicans could shutter the government for weeks, if not months.

"It would be disastrous for us, especially if it became long-term," he said.

Romina Boccia, a veteran of Washington fiscal debates and the director of budget and entitlement policy at the Cato Institute, said this situation is much different than the government shutdown in 2013.

At that time, Republicans were united around trying to block implementation of the Affordable Care Act. And even then, it didn't work. Once the shutdown happened, Boccia recalled, "it didn't provide any more leverage," and "Republicans caved and reopened the government when they learned the hard way that they weren't going to get their way."

This time, she said, "it's not clear what they're trying to get out of a government shutdown. It just seems dysfunctional all around."

Some polls conducted ahead of the expected shutdown suggest Biden and Democrats in Congress could bear a substantial portion of the blame if a closure occurs. But U.S. adults generally have two conflicting priorities regarding the federal budget.

About 60% of them say the government spends too much money, but majorities also back more money for Social Security, health care and infrastructure, according to a survey by the Associated Press and NORC Center for Public Affairs Research. This enables some Republicans to say the public backs them on cuts, but it also justifies spending on programs that are projected to contribute to higher deficits in the years to come.

The likely shutdown overlaps with Biden ramping up next year's reelection campaign. For the past few months, the president has taken full ownership of the economy's performance as inflation has dropped while unemployment has stayed low.

But an emerging set of risks are on the horizon and most U.S. adults still feel pessimistic about the country's direction.

Mortgage rates are at a 22-year high. Oil prices are nearly \$91 a barrel, pushing up the cost of gasoline. Unionized autoworkers are likely entering a third week of strikes. Student loan repayments are restarting. Pandemic-related money for child care centers is set to end, potentially triggering a set of closures that could hit working parents.

A government shutdown would be another dose of chaos that could cause pain for millions of households. White House officials who are ready to blame Republicans say they'd rather see a shutdown avoided.

"I'm still hoping," Young said Friday. "I'm still remaining an optimist."

Iowa's two campaigns: Donald Trump's rivals search for paths to stop him as he blazes his own trail

By THOMAS BEAUMONT Associated Press

DES MOINES, Iowa (AP) — Having stood out in two presidential debates, Nikki Haley has booked her largest venue in Iowa since launching her campaign. She's hoping to fill a 600-person hall in a western Des Moines suburb on Saturday.

That would be a huge number for most of her rivals. It's also less than the smallest crowds usually drawn by Donald Trump, who is dominating the Republican field for the 2024 Iowa caucuses less than four months away.

The former president will be in rural southeast Iowa the following day to headline an organizing event. Aides were expecting at least 1,000 to attend.

In essence, there are two Iowa campaigns underway: Trump is holding fewer, bigger events that demonstrate the strength of his organization and grip on GOP base voters, while his rivals attend the state's traditional candidate forums and meet-and-greets, searching for ways to cut into his lead or consolidate second place.

While things could change before the Jan. 15 caucuses, some campaigns are trying to shift expectations. They're hoping a close runner-up to Trump in Iowa — or even someone who falls well short of Trump but pulls away from other rivals — could begin consolidating support and force others out.

"What's crystal clear to me is that until there is a winnowing event, you're never going to get to the head-to-head that it would require to have somebody other than Trump win the nomination," said Gentry Collins, who managed Mitt Romney's campaign for the 2008 caucuses. "That winnowing starts in Iowa and it changes the dynamics of the race."

Here's a look at the campaigns working hardest in Iowa to catch Trump.

RON DESANTIS

Campaign overspending and donor jitters prompted the Florida governor to shake up his organization and narrow a broad, national approach to one increasingly focused on Iowa. His national support has slipped substantially from its high point earlier this year.

DeSantis hired David Polyansky as a senior deputy campaign manager in August. Polyansky is a top strategist with Iowa chops from past presidential campaigns. He was working for Never Back Down, the super PAC supporting DeSantis.

Never Back Down has taken on a huge share of work normally done by candidates directly. It has put on almost 50 of DeSantis' Iowa appearances, hired 22 paid staff in Iowa — more than on any campaign team in the state — and purchased almost \$8 million of television and digital ads this year, the most of any single political group, according to analysis from the tracking firm AdImpact.

Speaking on condition of anonymity to discuss internal strategy, two DeSantis advisers suggest he could survive three second-place finishes — in Iowa, New Hampshire and South Carolina — and try to force a head-to-head matchup with Trump ahead of March's Super Tuesday slate of primaries.

DeSantis has already visited two-thirds of Iowa's counties, Polyansky said in an interview. The candidate pledged earlier this year to visit all 99, a goal that could net extra support and allow him to shore up more populous counties down the stretch.

"Knocking out a majority of our 99-county swing this early, before the caucus campaigning heats up even further, gives us the freedom down the stretch to travel where we want to go and when we want to go" in Iowa, New Hampshire and beyond, Polyansky said.

NIKKI HALEY

Haley's team pumped up expectations going into Wednesday's second debate and hopes her energetic performance — including several tussles with rivals — translates to a rise in polls.

She impressed Iowa fundraiser Nicole Schlinger, who has not committed to a 2024 candidate.

"Nikki's showing she can be strong and assertive and put these guys back on their heels," said Schlinger, who is not committed in the 2024 race.

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Toiling before smaller crowds throughout the spring and summer, Haley, the former United Nations ambassador and governor of South Carolina, drew a noticeably more robust 400 to stops in rural eastern Iowa this month. She took the wheel of a combine among amber rows of corn.

She has recently signed noteworthy Iowa GOP talent, including Troy Bishop, who was Iowa Sen. Chuck Grassley's organizational director. And she's lured some donors away from DeSantis, including billionaire former Illinois Gov. Bruce Rauner. Now, the super PAC supporting her is spending more on ads in Iowa.

TIM SCOTT

Scott was striding toward the midway at the Iowa State Fair this summer when a man approached from behind to tell him, "I've seen your ads."

He wasn't alone. Scott's campaign and the super PAC supporting him have combined to spend roughly \$10 million in advertising this year introducing Scott to Iowans, about a quarter of all GOP caucus campaign and super PAC ad spending, according to AdImpact.

The South Carolina senator's team argues Iowans are more familiar with him through advertising and ready to see him emerge in the up-close settings that are traditionally critical here.

He has started criticizing his rivals more, going after Trump, DeSantis and Haley for refusing to push for a federal abortion ban. His more aggressive posture was on display during the Wednesday debate in California, when he criticized a proposal by Haley to increase the gas tax.

"I think I come across as a nice guy. I will say, though, that I am not an angry guy," Scott told one Iowa audience after being asked if he was tough enough to confront Russia. "I think we sometimes confuse anger with strength."

VIVEK RAMASWAMY

Long before he grabbed attention at the first debate, Ramaswamy was working hard in Iowa.

The 38-year-old entrepreneur has traveled the state more than any candidate, holding nearly 70 campaign events. He's gotten buzz for his youth and charisma, his lack of political background, and a brashness that reminds some people of Trump. Some Iowans have also voiced unfavorable impressions sparked by what some see as foreign policy naivete and lack of experience.

Ramaswamy's Iowa team is small and led by outspoken social conservative former state Sen. Jake Chapman and former Iowa Secretary of State Matt Schultz.

Ramaswamy, who is Hindu and the son of Indian immigrants, always cites what he calls his lists of truths, the first of which is "God is real." Evangelical Christians are critical in Iowa.

While few will say out loud that Ramaswamy's faith is an obstacle, one voter raised it at a Tim Scott event last week.

"He talks about God all the time, but it's a pagan god," said Liz Kuennen of Fort Dodge.

Hindus worship several gods, who they believe to be manifestations of the one formless supreme being.

MIKE PENCE

For a former vice president so closely identified with evangelical Christians, it would seem Pence would have a leg up.

Yet Pence faces distinct challenges.

Among the most stubborn is the lingering — and false — perception that Pence could have refused to certify the 2020 election. A man in the state fair crowd this summer confronted Pence and asked him, "Why did you commit treason?"

Pence patiently walked through the constitutional requirements of the vice president during the certification process.

"Even though my former running mate and his outside lawyers told me that authority was there, I knew it never was," Pence told the crowd. "I'll always believe, by God's grace, I did my duty that day."

Though the now well-rehearsed answer sparks respectful applause, Pence faces stubbornly high unfavorable ratings in Iowa among likely GOP caucusgoers.

Still, Pence, who had seven events planned in Iowa over the coming days, was on track to top 60 campaign stops by the end of next week, second only to Ramaswamy.

Trump animates California Republicans with calls to shoot people who rob stores

By MICHAEL R. BLOOD and JONATHAN J. COOPER Associated Press

ANAHEIM, Calif. (AP) — In an occasionally dark and profane speech, Donald Trump on Friday sought to win over Republicans in California by complaining that rich people in Beverly Hills smell bad because they're denied water, reiterating lies about widespread election fraud and calling on police to shoot people robbing stores.

While many of his remarks at the California Republican Party convention in Anaheim were familiar retreads of Trump's attacks and grievances, his encouragement of violent retribution against criminals marked an escalation of his longstanding tough-on-crime message.

"We will immediately stop all of the pillaging and theft. Very simply: If you rob a store, you can fully expect to be shot as you are leaving that store," he said, drawing loud applause. "Shot!" he added for emphasis.

Trump was one of several Republican presidential contenders appearing at the event in this Democratic stronghold. While there's little hope for any of them to defeat President Joe Biden here in a general election, California will play a critical role in the slate of states voting on March 5 in the so-called Super Tuesday primaries.

With 169 delegates at stake, a win in California would move a Republican presidential candidate much closer to the nomination. And a recent rule change could give Trump, who is so far dominating the primary, an advantage. If he wins more than 50% of the vote, he would be awarded each of the state's delegates.

A Public Policy Institute of California voter survey released Wednesday, but conducted in late August and early September, found Trump with support from nearly half of the likely Republican primary voters. DeSantis was far back, at 14%, with the rest of the field lagging in single digits.

Trump's comments on Friday underscored a central question surrounding Trump's effort to return to the presidency. While his focus on red meat issues plays well with the GOP base, it's unclear that it will hold much appeal with the broader set of voters needed to win a general election.

His remarks about crime, for instance, were especially pointed. In the past, Trump has proposed shooting migrants to prevent them from crossing the border. In his book and in interviews, former Defense Secretary Mark Esper alleged Trump inquired about shooting protesters during the George Floyd demonstrations. He has also proposed the death penalty for drug dealers, human traffickers and anyone convicted of killing a police officer.

During his first year in office, Trump advised police to be rougher in their handling of suspects being apprehended, telling recruits, "please don't be too nice."

"The word that they shoot you will get out within minutes and our nation, in one day, will be an entirely different place," Trump said Friday. "There must be retribution for theft and destruction and the ruination of our country."

Homicides and other violent crimes have risen in California, where residents have also been deluged with headlines from rampant car break-ins and drug use in San Francisco's troubled Tenderloin district to street racing and illegal takeovers across a new \$588-million bridge in Los Angeles.

Republicans see crime as a salient issue that can help them win back some of the suburban voters who have turned away from the party since Trump emerged as its leader and the Supreme Court overturned the constitutional right to an abortion. Several GOP presidential candidates and others in the party have pointed in particular to events this week in Philadelphia, where dozens of people face criminal charges after a night of social media-fueled mayhem in which groups of thieves, apparently working together, smashed their way into stores in several areas of the city.

Trump tapped into California Republicans' exhaustion with their state's Democratic leaders, who he said brought the state homelessness, open borders, high taxes, inequality, "woke tech tyrants" and rising crime.

California was once a symbol of American prosperity and creativity but is "becoming a symbol of our nation's decline," Trump said.

"We will reverse the decline of America and we will end the desecration of your once great state, Califor-

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nia," Trump said. "This is not a great state anymore. This is a dumping ground. You're a dumping ground. The world is being dumped into California. Prisoners. Terrorists. Mental patients."

Trump told his supporters "help is on the way," falsely claimed his 30-point defeats here were the result of fraud and said, improbably, that he would win California in next year's general election. He railed against using mail ballots on the same day the Republican National Committee launched its "Bank your Vote" initiative in New York, which urges Republicans to vote before Election Day. RNC Chairwoman Ronna McDaniel brushed off Trump's continued skepticism.

"I think we have to take those fights on, but also understand that once it gets to game day, the rules that are on the field are what we need to play by and President Trump is all in on that," she said.

Trump was in California just two days after he bypassed the second GOP debate held at Ronald Reagan's presidential library northwest of Los Angeles, signaling again that he sees no need to appear side-by-side with lesser-known contenders.

Crowds at state party conventions tend to be thick with conservative grassroots activists, an ideal setting for the former president, even as he faces felony charges in four criminal cases.

Florida Gov. Ron DeSantis, Sen. Tim Scott of South Carolina and entrepreneur Vivek Ramaswamy were also scheduled to speak at the two-day convention being held at a hotel near Disneyland.

Scott said police should get more respect and more money but stopped far short of Trump's call for violence.

"We should respect the police, re-fund the police and thank God Almighty they're willing to run in when everybody else is running out," Scott said to a significantly smaller crowd than Trump's in remarks that appeared to be cut short after the frontrunner's speech ran late.

DeSantis said people are "voting with their feet" and moving in large numbers to Florida in search of freedom from mask and vaccine mandates, low taxes and school choice. He warned that a second Biden term would bring California's policies to the nation.

"The California model represents more American decline," DeSantis said. "The Florida model represents a way for us to reverse American decline and represents a way for us to have an American revival, and that's ultimately the choice that people are going to have to make."

Waiting in line to enter the ballroom for Trump's speech, Dan Cox, a real estate agent from Orange County and registered Republican, was sporting a "Keep America Great" cap and red tie, telegraphing his support for Trump. He lamented rising prices that have put homeownership out of the reach of many families in the state.

"I'm voting for someone who can get the job done," he said, adding that he doesn't trust Biden.

Not surprisingly, a smattering of Democrats protested near the convention site.

"When the leading candidate of a major political party is under indictment for attempting to overthrow free and fair elections, every voter needs to stop and think about where our country is headed," San Bernardino County Democratic Party Chair Kristin Washington said in a statement. "The last thing any American needs is to relive that madness."

New York City area gets one of its wettest days in decades, as rain swamps subways and streets

By JAKE OFFENHARTZ, BOBBY CAINA CALVAN and JENNIFER PELTZ Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — Rain walloped the New York metropolitan area with a startling punch Friday, knocking out several subway and commuter rail lines, stranding drivers on highways, flooding basements and shuttering a terminal at LaGuardia Airport for hours in one of the city's wettest days in decades.

More than 7.25 inches (18.41 centimeters) of rain had fallen in parts of Brooklyn by nightfall, with at least one spot seeing 2.5 inches (6 centimeters) in a single hour, according to weather and city officials. The 8.65 inches (21.97 centimeters) at John F. Kennedy Airport surpassed its record for any September day, a bar set during Hurricane Donna in 1960, the National Weather Service said.

And more downpours were expected.

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The deluge came two years after the remnants of Hurricane Ida dumped record-breaking rain on the Northeast and killed at least 13 people in New York City, mostly in flooded basement apartments. Although no deaths or severe injuries have been reported so far from Friday's storm, it stirred frightening memories.

Ida killed three of Joy Wong's neighbors, including a toddler. And on Friday, water began lapping against the front door of her building in Woodside, Queens.

"I was so worried," she said. It became too dangerous to leave: "Outside was like a lake, like an ocean."

Within minutes, water filled the building's basement nearly to the ceiling. After the family's deaths in 2021, the basement was turned into a recreation room. It is now destroyed.

City officials said they got reports of six flooded basement apartments Friday, but all occupants got out safely.

Gov. Kathy Hochul and Mayor Eric Adams declared states of emergency and urged people to stay put if possible. But schools were open, students went to class and many adults went to work, only to wonder how they would get home.

Virtually every subway line was at least partly suspended, rerouted or running with delays. Metro-North commuter rail service from Manhattan was suspended for much of the day but began resuming by evening. The Long Island Rail Road was snarled, 44 of the city's 3,500 buses got stranded and bus service was disrupted citywide, transit officials said.

"When it stops the buses, you know it's bad," Brooklyn high school student Malachi Clark said after trying to get home by bus, then subway. School buses were running, but they transport only a fraction of public school students, many of them disabled.

A long line of people snaked from the ticket counter in the afternoon at Grand Central Terminal, where Mike Tags was among those whose trains had been canceled. Railroad employees had suggested possible workarounds, but he wondered whether they would work out.

"So I'm going to sit here, ride it out, until they open up," he said.

Traffic hit a standstill earlier in the day on a stretch of the FDR Drive, a major artery along Manhattan's east side. With water above cars' tires, some drivers abandoned their vehicles.

At around 11 a.m., Priscilla Fontallio said she had spent three hours in her car, which was on a piece of the highway that wasn't flooded but wasn't moving.

"Never seen anything like this in my life," she said.

On a street in Brooklyn's South Williamsburg neighborhood, workers were up to their knees in water as they tried to unclog a storm drain while cardboard and other debris floated by. Some people arranged milk crates and wooden boards to cross flooded sidewalks.

Flights into LaGuardia were briefly halted in the morning, and then delayed, because of water in the refueling area. Flooding also forced the closure of one of the airport's three terminals for several hours. Terminal A resumed normal operations around 8 p.m.

A Brooklyn school was evacuated because its boiler was smoking, possibly because water got into it, Schools Chancellor David Banks said at a news briefing. Another Brooklyn school was mopping up ground-floor classrooms, City Councilwoman Crystal Hudson said in an email seeking volunteers to help.

The New York Rangers and New York Islanders postponed a preseason game on Long Island. And at the waterlogged Central Park Zoo, a sea lion swam out of her swollen pool. With the zoo closed because of the weather, she looked around for a bit before returning to the pool, zoo officials said in a statement.

In Brooklyn's Crown Heights, Jessie Lawrence awoke to the sound of rain dripping from the ceiling of her fourth-floor apartment and heard strange sounds outside her front door.

She opened it to find "the water was coming in thicker and louder," pouring into the hallway and flowing down the stairs, she said. Rain had pooled on the roof and was leaking through a skylight.

Hoboken, New Jersey, and other cities and towns around New York City also experienced flooding. New Jersey Gov. Phil Murphy called for state offices to close at 3 p.m., except for essential personnel.

Why so much rain? The remnants of Tropical Storm Ophelia over the Atlantic Ocean combined with a mid-latitude system arriving from the west, at a time of year when conditions coming off the ocean are particularly juicy for storms, National Weather Service meteorologist Ross Dickman said. And this combi-

nation storm parked itself over New York for 12 hours.

The weather service had warned of 3 to 5 inches (7.5 to 13 centimeters) of rain and told emergency managers to expect over 6 inches (15 centimeters) in some places, Dickman said.

The deluge came less than three months after a storm caused deadly floods in New York's Hudson Valley and swamped Vermont's capital, Montpelier.

As the planet warms, storms are forming in a hotter atmosphere that can hold more moisture, making extreme rainfall more frequent, according to atmospheric scientists.

But in the case of Friday's storm, nearby ocean temperatures were below normal, and air temperatures weren't too hot. Still, it became the third time in two years that rain fell at rates near 2 inches (5 centimeters) an hour in Central Park, which is unusual, Columbia University climate scientist Adam Sobel said.

The park recorded 5.8 inches (14.73 centimeters) of rain by nightfall Friday.

Last living suspect in 1996 drive-by shooting of Tupac Shakur indicted in Las Vegas on murder charge

By RIO YAMAT and KEN RITTER Associated Press

LAS VEGAS (AP) — A man who prosecutors say ordered the 1996 killing of rapper Tupac Shakur was arrested and charged with murder Friday in a long-awaited breakthrough in one of hip-hop's most enduring mysteries.

Duane "Keffe D" Davis has long been known to investigators as one of four suspects identified early in the investigation. He isn't the accused gunman but was described as the group's ringleader by authorities Friday at a news conference and in court. In Nevada you can be charged with a crime, including murder, if you help someone commit the crime.

"Duane Davis was the shot caller for this group of individuals that committed this crime," said Las Vegas police homicide Lt. Jason Johansson, "and he orchestrated the plan that was carried out."

Davis himself has admitted in interviews and in his 2019 tell-all memoir, "Compton Street Legend," that he provided the gun used in the drive-by shooting.

Authorities said Friday that Davis' own public comments revived the investigation.

Davis, now 60, was arrested early Friday while on a walk near his home on the outskirts of Las Vegas, hours before prosecutors announced in court that a Nevada grand jury had indicted the self-described "gangster" on one count of murder with a deadly weapon. He is due in court next week.

The grand jury also voted to add a sentencing enhancement to the murder charge for gang activity that could add up to 20 additional years if he's convicted.

Hundreds of pages of transcripts released Friday provide a view into the first month of grand jury proceedings, which began in late July with testimony from former associates of Davis, friends of Shakur and a slate of retired police officers involved in the case early on. Their testimony painted a picture for the jurors of a deep, escalating rift between Shakur's music label Death Row Records and Bad Boy Records, which had ties to Davis and represented Shakur's rap rival, Biggie Smalls.

"It started the whole West Coast/East Coast" rivalry that primarily defined the hip-hop scene during the mid-1990s, one of Davis' former associates testified.

The first-ever arrest in the case came after Las Vegas police in mid-July raided Davis' home in the nearby city of Henderson for items they described at the time as "concerning the murder of Tupac Shakur."

Davis denied an interview request Friday from jail, and court records don't list an attorney who can comment on his behalf. Phone and text messages to Davis and his wife on Friday and in the months since the July 17 search weren't returned.

In a statement Friday, Sekyiwa "Set" Shakur, the rapper's sister, described the arrest as a victory.

"This is no doubt a pivotal moment. The silence of the past 27 years surrounding this case has spoken loudly in our community," she said. "It's important to me that the world, the country, the justice system, and our people acknowledge the gravity of the passing of this man, my brother, my mother's son, my father's son."

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On the night of Sept. 7, 1996, Shakur was in a BMW driven by Death Row Records founder Marion "Suge" Knight. They were waiting at a red light near the Las Vegas Strip when a white Cadillac pulled up next to them and gunfire erupted.

Shakur was shot multiple times and died a week later at the age of 25.

Davis, in his memoir, said he was in the front passenger seat of the Cadillac and had slipped a gun into the back seat, from where he said the shots were fired.

He implicated his nephew, Orlando "Baby Lane" Anderson, saying he was one of two people in the backseat. Anderson, a known rival of Shakur, had been involved in a casino brawl with the rapper shortly before the shooting.

"Little did anyone know that this incident right here would ultimately lead to the retaliatory shooting and death of Tupac Shakur," said Johansson, the police lieutenant.

Anderson died two years later. He denied any involvement in Shakur's death.

Emails seeking comment from two lawyers who have previously represented Knight were not immediately returned. Knight was grazed by a bullet fragment in the shooting but had only minor injuries. He is serving a 28-year prison sentence in California for an unrelated voluntary manslaughter charge.

On the night of July 17, Las Vegas police quietly surrounded the home where Davis lives with his wife, Paula Clemons. Police lapel video obtained by The Associated Press showed SWAT officers detaining a man and his wife outside the home lit up by a swirl of red and blue lights after announcing their presence on a bullhorn. The couple's faces are blurred in the videos.

Police reported collecting multiple computers, a cellphone and hard drive, a Vibe magazine that featured Shakur, several .40-caliber bullets, two "tubs containing photographs" and a copy of Davis' memoir.

Greg Kading, a retired Los Angeles police detective who spent years investigating the Shakur killing and wrote a book about it, said he's not surprised by Davis' arrest.

"He put himself squarely in the middle of the conspiracy," Kading said, adding that Davis himself gave Las Vegas police "the ammunition and leverage to move forward."

Kading said he had also anticipated the murder charge, because Davis' public comments showed the crime was premeditated.

"All the other direct conspirators or participants are all dead," Kading said. "Keefe D is the last man standing among the individuals that conspired to kill Tupac."

The rapper's death came as his fourth solo album, "All Eyez on Me," remained on the charts, with some 5 million copies sold. Nominated six times for a Grammy Award, Shakur is still largely considered one of the most influential and versatile rappers of all time.

United Auto Workers strikes spread as 7,000 more workers at two plants join the picket line

By TOM KRISHER and DAVID KOENIG AP Business Writers

DETROIT (AP) — The United Auto Workers union expanded strikes against Detroit automakers Friday, ordering 7,000 more workers to walk off the job in Illinois and Michigan to put more pressure on the companies to improve their offers.

It was the second time the union has widened the walkouts, which started two weeks ago at three assembly plants before the most recent addition of a Ford plant in Chicago and a General Motors factory near Lansing.

Union President Shawn Fain told workers in a video appearance that the strikes were escalated because Ford and GM refused "to make meaningful progress" in contract talks. Jeep maker Stellantis was spared from the third round of strikes.

Ford and GM shot back as a war of words with the union also intensified. Ford accused the UAW of holding up a deal mainly over union representation at electric vehicle battery plants, most of which are joint ventures with a Korean manufacturer.

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"We still have time to reach an agreement and avert a real disaster," Ford CEO Jim Farley said. The company said the work stoppages are starting to affect fragile companies that make parts for the factories on strike.

General Motors CEO Mary Barra blamed union leaders for the impasse.

"UAW leadership continues to expand the strike while upping the rhetoric and the theatrics. It's clear that there is no real intent to get to an agreement," Barra said in a statement.

The GM plant in Delta Township, near Lansing, makes large crossover SUVs such as the Chevrolet Traverse and Buick Enclave. A nearby metal parts stamping plant will remain open, Fain said.

The Chicago Ford plant makes the Ford Explorer and Explorer Police Interceptors, as well as the Lincoln Aviator SUV.

Fain said union bargainers are still talking to the companies, and he was hopeful they could reach deals.

Stellantis, he said, made significant progress Friday by agreeing to unspecified cost-of-living raises, the right not to cross a picket line and the right to strike over plant closures.

Raneal Edwards, a longtime GM employee who works at the Lansing-area factory, said she was "shocked but happy" to hear that her plant would join the strike.

"I feel like they don't understand that this is about more than wages," Edwards said. "It's about having security at our jobs."

Edwards said the UAW's strategy of slowly adding more plants will work. "I love it because it keeps us on our toes. No one knows what's next," she said.

But in a note to workers Friday, Edwards' boss, GM manufacturing chief Gerald Johnson, said the company has yet to receive a counteroffer from union leaders to a Sept. 21 economic proposal.

Automakers have long said they are willing to give raises, but they fear that a costly contract will make their vehicles more expensive than those built at nonunion U.S. plants run by foreign corporations.

Ford's Farley accused the union of holding an agreement hostage over union representation of battery plant workers. On a conference call with industry analysts, he said high wages at battery plants would raise the price of Ford's electric vehicles above those from Tesla and other competitors.

"Record contract? No problem. Mortgaging our future? That's a big problem. We will never do it," Farley said.

Ford's battery plants, Farley said, have not been built. "They have not been organized by the UAW yet because the workers haven't been hired and won't be for many years to come," he said.

Fain later accused Farley of lying and said the union gave Ford a counteroffer Monday but has not heard back. He stressed that there is no impasse, although they're far apart on economic issues such as defined-benefit pensions for all workers and health insurance for retirees.

"We've had good discussions. There's times we think we're getting somewhere, and then things just stop," he said. Fain also said "job security in the EV transition" remains an issue.

The union insists that labor expenses are only 4% to 5% of the cost of a vehicle, and that the companies are making billions in profits and can afford big raises.

Wedbush analyst Dan Ives said the expanded strikes show both sides are digging in for a potentially long battle.

Ives wrote in a note to investors that President Joe Biden's administration is watching union demands collide with his push for cleaner electric vehicles. Biden, who has billed himself as the most union-friendly president in history, traveled Tuesday to the Detroit area to walk picket lines with workers at a GM parts warehouse.

Republican front-runner Donald Trump also traveled to the Detroit area this week for a rally at a non-union parts maker.

Offers on the table from the companies will add \$3,000 to \$5,000 to the cost of an average electric vehicle that would be passed on to consumers, Ives wrote.

The electric vehicle battery plants are a huge issue for the union's future. Some industry executives, including Farley, say building EVs will take up to 40% fewer workers because they have fewer parts. So

the union is looking to organize battery plants and win top wages so displaced workers have somewhere to go, especially those making combustion engines.

Other industry officials, including GM CEO Mary Barra, say there will be enough jobs for all as the industry moves away from gasoline vehicles.

The automakers' last known wage offers were around 20% over the life of a four-year contract, a little more than half of what the union has demanded. Other contract improvements, such as cost of living increases, restoration of defined-benefit pensions for newly hired workers and an end to wage tiers within the union are also on the table.

The union went on strike Sept. 15, initially targeting one assembly plant from each company. Then last week it added 38 parts-distribution centers run by GM and Stellantis. Ford was spared from that expansion because talks with the union were progressing then.

The union has structured its walkouts so the companies can keep making big pickup trucks and SUVs, their top-selling and most profitable vehicles. Previously it shut down assembly plants in Missouri, Ohio and Michigan that make midsize pickup, commercial vans and midsize SUVs, which aren't as profitable as larger vehicles.

The new strikes against GM and Ford target crossover SUVs that are big money makers for both companies.

In the past, the union picked one company as a potential strike target and reached a contract agreement with that company to be the pattern for the others.

But this year, Fain introduced a novel strategy of targeting a limited number of facilities at all three automakers.

About 25,000, or about 17%, of the union's 146,000 workers at the three automakers are now on strike.

McCarthy's last-ditch plan to keep the government open collapses, making a shutdown almost certain

By LISA MASCARO, KEVIN FREKING and STEPHEN GROVES Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — House Speaker Kevin McCarthy's last-ditch plan to keep the federal government temporarily open collapsed in dramatic fashion Friday as a robust faction of hard-right holdouts rejected the package, making a shutdown almost certain.

McCarthy's right-flank Republicans refused to support the bill despite its steep spending cuts of nearly 30% to many agencies and severe border security provisions, calling it insufficient.

The White House and Democrats rejected the Republican approach as too extreme. The vote was 198-232, with 21 hard-right Republicans voting to sink the package. The Democrats voted against it.

The bill's complete failure a day before Saturday's deadline to fund the government leaves few options to prevent a shutdown that will furlough federal workers, keep the military working without pay and disrupt programs and services for millions of Americans.

A clearly agitated McCarthy left the House chamber. "It's not the end yet; I've got other ideas," he told reporters.

The outcome puts McCarthy's speakership in serious jeopardy with almost no political leverage to lead the House at a critical moment that has pushed the government into crisis. Even the failed plan, an extraordinary concession to immediately slash spending by one-third for many agencies, was not enough to satisfy the hard-right flank that has upturned his speakership.

The Senate pushed ahead Friday with its own plan favored by Republicans and Democrats to keep the government open while also bolstering Ukraine aid and U.S. disaster accounts. But that won't matter with the House in political chaos.

The White House has brushed aside McCarthy's overtures to meet with President Joe Biden after the speaker walked away from the debt deal they brokered earlier this year that set budget levels.

"Extreme House Republicans are now tripling down on their demands to eviscerate programs millions of hardworking families count on," White House press secretary Karine Jean-Pierre said.

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Jean-Pierre said, "The path forward to fund the government has been laid out by the Senate with bipartisan support — House Republicans just need to take it."

Catering to his hard-right flank, McCarthy had returned to the spending limits the conservatives demanded back in January as part of the deal-making to help him become the House speaker.

His package would not have cut the Defense, Veterans or Homeland Security departments but would have slashed almost all other agencies by up to 30% — steep hits to a vast array of programs, services and departments Americans routinely depend on.

It also added strict new border security provisions that would kickstart building the wall at the southern border with Mexico, among other measures. Additionally, the package would have set up a bipartisan debt commission to address the nation's mounting debt load.

Ahead of voting, the Republican speaker all but dared his holdout colleagues to oppose the package a day before Saturday's almost certain shutdown. The House bill would have kept operations open through Oct. 31.

"Every member will have to go on record where they stand," McCarthy said.

Asked if he had the votes, McCarthy said, "We'll see."

But as soon as the floor debate began, McCarthy's chief Republican critic, Rep. Matt Gaetz of Florida, announced he would be voting against the package, urging his colleagues to "not surrender."

The hard right, led by Gaetz, has been threatening McCarthy's ouster, with a looming vote to try to remove him from the speaker's office unless he meets the conservative demands. Still, it's unclear if any other Republican would have support from the House majority to lead the party.

Gaetz said afterward that the speaker's bill "went down in flames as I've told you all week it would."

He and others rejecting the temporary measure want the House to instead keep pushing through the 12 individual spending bills needed to fund the government, typically a weeks-long process, as they pursue their conservative priorities.

Some of the Republican holdouts, including Gaetz, are allies of Donald Trump, who is Biden's chief rival in 2024. The former president has been encouraging the Republicans to fight hard for their priorities and even to "shut it down."

The margin of defeat shocked even Republican members.

Rep. Mike Garcia, R-Calif., said: "I think what this does, if anything, I think it's going to rally people around the speaker and go: 'Hey, the dysfunction here is not coming from leadership in this case. The dysfunction is coming from individuals that don't understand the implications of what we're doing here.'"

Garcia said, "For the people that claim this isn't good enough, I want to hear what good enough looks like."

Another Republican, Rep. Ralph Norman of South Carolina, a member of the Freedom Caucus who supported the package, suggested the House was losing its leverage with the failed vote: "We control the purse strings. We just ceded them to the Senate."

Republicans convened for a closed-door meeting later Friday afternoon that grew heated, lawmakers said, but failed to produce a new plan. Leaders announced the House would stay in session next week, rather than return home, to keep working on some of the 12 spending bills.

Rep. Rosa DeLauro of Connecticut, the top Democrat on the Appropriations Committee, criticized the proposed Republican cuts as hurting law enforcement and education and taking food out of the mouths of millions. She said 275,000 children would lose access to Head Start, making it harder for parents to work.

"This is a pointless charade with grave consequences for the American people," DeLauro said.

Sen. Dianne Feinstein of California, trailblazer and champion of liberal priorities, dies at age 90

By MARY CLARE JALONICK and MICHAEL R. BLOOD Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — U.S. Sen. Dianne Feinstein of California, a centrist Democrat and champion of liberal causes who was elected to the Senate in 1992 and broke gender barriers throughout her long career in local and national politics, has died. She was 90.

Feinstein died on Thursday night at her home in Washington, D.C., her office said on Friday. Tributes poured in all day. Opening the Senate floor, Majority Leader Chuck Schumer announced that “we lost a giant in the Senate.”

“As the nation mourns this tremendous loss, we know how many lives she impacted and how many glass ceilings she shattered along the way,” Schumer said, his voice cracking.

President Joe Biden, who served with Feinstein for years in the Senate, called her “a pioneering American,” a “true trailblazer” and a “cherished friend.”

California Gov. Gavin Newsom will appoint a temporary replacement, and there is sure to be a spirited battle to succeed her.

Feinstein, the oldest sitting U.S. senator, was a passionate advocate for liberal priorities important to her state -- including environmental protection, reproductive rights and gun control -- but was also known as a pragmatic lawmaker who reached out to Republicans and sought middle ground.

Her death came after a bout of shingles sidelined her for more than two months earlier this year — an absence that drew frustration from her most liberal critics and launched an unsuccessful attempt by Democrats to temporarily replace her on the Senate Judiciary Committee. When she returned to the Senate in May, she was frail and using a wheelchair, voting only occasionally.

On Friday, her Senate desk was draped in black and topped with a vase of white roses. Senators gave tearful tributes as members of the California House delegation stood in the back of the chamber and former House Speaker Nancy Pelosi sat in the gallery with Feinstein’s daughter, Katherine.

Senate Republican Leader Mitch McConnell was one of several Republicans who gave tributes to the Democratic icon, calling her his friend. “Dianne was a trailblazer, and her beloved home state of California and our entire nation are better for her dogged advocacy and diligent service,” McConnell said.

Biden said in a statement, “Dianne made her mark on everything from national security to the environment to protecting civil liberties. “Our country will benefit from her legacy for generations.”

Former president Barack Obama also saluted her as “a trailblazer,” and former President Bill Clinton called her a champion “of civil rights and civil liberties, environmental protection and strong national security.”

She was elected to the San Francisco Board of Supervisors in 1969 and became its first female board president in 1978, the year Mayor George Moscone was gunned down alongside Supervisor Harvey Milk at City Hall by Dan White, a disgruntled former supervisor. Feinstein found Milk’s body.

After Moscone’s death, Feinstein became San Francisco’s first female mayor. In the Senate, she was one of California’s first two female senators, the first woman to head the Senate Intelligence Committee and the first woman to serve as the Judiciary Committee’s top Democrat.

Although Feinstein was not always embraced by the feminist movement, her experiences colored her outlook through her five decades in politics.

“I recognize that women have had to fight for everything they have gotten, every right,” she told The Associated Press in 2005, as the Judiciary Committee prepared to hold hearings on President George W. Bush’s nomination of John Roberts to replace Sandra Day O’Connor on the Supreme Court.

“So I must tell you, I try to look out for women’s rights. I also try to solve problems as I perceive them, with legislation, and reaching out where I can, and working across the aisle,” she said.

Feinstein’s bipartisan efforts helped her notch legislative wins throughout her career. But it also proved to be a liability in her later years in Congress, as her state became more liberal and as the Senate and the electorate became increasingly polarized.

A fierce debater who did not suffer fools, the California senator was long known for her verbal zingers

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and sharp comebacks when challenged on the issues about which she was most fervent. But she lost that edge in her later years in the Senate, as her health visibly declined and she sometimes became confused when answering questions or speaking publicly. In February 2023, she said she would not run for a sixth term the next year. And within weeks of that announcement, she was absent for the Senate for more than two months as she recovered from a bout of shingles.

Amid the concerns about her health, Feinstein stepped down as the top Democrat on the Judiciary panel after the 2020 elections, just as her party was about to take the majority. In 2023, she said she would not serve as the Senate president pro tempore, or the most senior member of the majority party, even though she was in line to do so. The president pro tempore opens the Senate every day and holds other ceremonial duties.

One of Feinstein's most significant legislative accomplishments was early in her career, when the Senate approved her amendment to ban manufacturing and sales of certain types of assault weapons as part of a crime bill that President Bill Clinton signed into law in 1994. Though the assault weapons ban expired 10 years later and was never renewed or replaced, it was a poignant win after her career had been significantly shaped by gun violence.

Feinstein remembered finding Milk's body, her finger slipping into a bullet hole as she felt for a pulse. It was a story she would retell often in the years ahead as she pushed for stricter gun control measures.

She had little patience for Republicans and others who opposed her on that issue, though she was often challenged. In 1993, during debate on the assault weapons ban, Sen. Larry Craig, R-Idaho, accused her of having an insufficient knowledge of guns and the gun control issue.

Feinstein spoke fiercely of the violence she'd lived through in San Francisco and retorted: "Senator, I know something about what firearms can do."

Two decades later, after 20 children and six educators were killed in a horrific school shooting in Newtown, Connecticut, first-term Republican Sen. Ted Cruz of Texas similarly challenged Feinstein during debate on legislation that would have permanently banned the weapons.

"I'm not a sixth grader," Feinstein snapped back at the much younger Cruz — a moment that later went viral. She added: "It's fine you want to lecture me on the Constitution. I appreciate it. Just know I've been here a long time."

Feinstein became mayor of San Francisco after the 1978 slayings of Moscone and Milk, leading the city during one of the most turbulent periods in its history. Even her critics credited Feinstein with a calming influence, and she won reelection on her own to two four-year terms.

With her success and growing recognition statewide came visibility on the national political stage.

In 1984, Feinstein was viewed as a vice presidential possibility for Walter Mondale but faced questions about the business dealings of her husband, Richard Blum. In 1990, she used news footage of her announcement of the assassinations of Moscone and Milk in a television ad that helped her win the Democratic nomination for California governor, making her the first female major-party gubernatorial nominee in the state's history.

Although she narrowly lost the general election to Republican Pete Wilson, the stage was set for her election to the Senate two years later to fill the Senate seat Wilson had vacated to run for governor.

Feinstein campaigned jointly with Barbara Boxer, who was running for the state's other U.S. Senate seat, and both won, benefiting from positive news coverage and excitement over their historic race. California had never had a female U.S. senator, and female candidates and voters had been galvanized by the Supreme Court hearings in which the all-male Senate Judiciary Committee questioned Anita Hill about her sexual harassment allegations against nominee Clarence Thomas.

Feinstein was appointed to the Judiciary panel and eventually the Senate Intelligence Committee, becoming the chairperson in 2009. She was the first woman to lead the intelligence panel, a high-profile perch that gave her a central oversight role over U.S. intelligence controversies, setbacks and triumphs, from the killing of Osama bin Laden to leaks about National Security Agency surveillance.

Under Feinstein's leadership, the intelligence committee conducted a wide-ranging, five-year investigation into CIA interrogation techniques during President George W. Bush's administration, including waterboard-

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ing of terrorism suspects at secret overseas prisons. The resulting 6,300-page "torture report" concluded among other things that waterboarding and other "enhanced interrogation techniques" did not provide key evidence in the hunt for bin Laden. A 525-page executive summary was released in late 2014, but the rest of the report has remained classified.

The Senate investigation was full of intrigue at the time, including documents that mysteriously disappeared and accusations traded between the Senate and the CIA that the other was stealing information. The drama was captured in a 2019 movie about the investigation called "The Report," and actor Annette Bening was nominated for a Golden Globe for her portrayal of Feinstein.

In the years since, Feinstein has continued to push aggressively for eventual declassification of the report. "It's my very strong belief that one day this report should be declassified," Feinstein said. "This must be a lesson learned: that torture doesn't work."

Feinstein sometimes frustrated liberals by adopting moderate or hawkish positions that put her at odds with the left wing of the Democratic Party, as well as with the more liberal Boxer, who retired from the Senate in 2017. Feinstein defended the Obama administration's expansive collection of Americans' phone and email records as necessary for protecting the country, for example, even as other Democratic senators voiced protests. "It's called protecting America," Feinstein said then.

That tension escalated during Donald Trump's presidency, when many Democrats had little appetite for compromise. Feinstein became the top Democrat on the Judiciary panel in 2016 and led her party's messaging through three Supreme Court nominations -- a role that angered liberal advocacy groups that wanted to see a more aggressive partisan in charge.

Feinstein closed out confirmation hearings for Justice Amy Coney Barrett with an embrace of Senate Judiciary Committee Chair Lindsey Graham, R-S.C., and a public thanks to him for a job well done. "This has been one of the best set of hearings that I've participated in," Feinstein said at the end of the hearing.

Liberal advocacy groups that had fiercely opposed Barrett's nomination to replace the late liberal icon Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg were furious and called for her to step down from the committee leadership.

A month later, Feinstein announced she would remain on the committee but step down as the top Democrat. The senator, then 87 years old, did not say why. In a statement, she said she would "continue to do my utmost to bring about positive change in the coming years."

Feinstein was born on June 22, 1933. Her father, Leon Goldman, was a prominent surgeon and medical school professor in San Francisco, but her mother was an abusive woman with a violent temper that was often directed at Feinstein and her two younger sisters.

Feinstein graduated from Stanford University in 1955, with a bachelor's degree in history. She married young and was a divorced single mother of her daughter, Katherine, in 1960, at a time when such a status was still unusual.

In 1961, Feinstein was appointed by then-Gov. Pat Brown to the women's parole board, on which she served before running for the San Francisco Board of Supervisors. Typical of the era, much of the early coverage of her entrance into public life focused on her appearance rather than her experience and education.

Feinstein's second husband, Bert Feinstein, was 19 years older than she, but she described the marriage as "a 10" and kept his name even after his death from cancer in 1978. In 1980, she married investment banker Richard Blum, and thanks to his wealth, she was one of the richest members of the Senate. He died in February 2022.

In addition to her daughter, Feinstein has a granddaughter, Eileen, and three stepchildren.

Baltimore Archdiocese files for bankruptcy before new law on abuse lawsuits takes effect

By LEA SKENE Associated Press

BALTIMORE (AP) — The Archdiocese of Baltimore on Friday filed for Chapter 11 bankruptcy reorganization days before a new state law goes into effect removing the statute of limitations on child sex abuse claims and allowing victims to sue their abusers decades after the fact.

The step will allow the oldest diocese in the United States “to equitably compensate victim-survivors of child sexual abuse” while the local Catholic church continues its mission and ministries, Archbishop William E. Lori said in a statement posted on the archdiocese website.

But attorneys and advocates said the church is simply trying to protect its assets and silence abuse victims by halting all civil claims against the archdiocese and shifting the process to bankruptcy court, a less transparent forum.

Michael McDonnell, interim executive director of the national group Survivors Network of those Abused by Priests, said the Baltimore archdiocese is following in the footsteps of other jurisdictions across the country that have similarly sought bankruptcy protection to offset settlement costs and avoid further scrutiny.

“Catholic bishops are employing the same deception from coast to coast,” he said. “Cover up child sex offenses while maintaining the ministry of the abusers. Next, oppose any modifications to the statute of limitations that might make those offenses more visible. Finally, go to federal bankruptcy courts and act as though you have run out of money when secular laws offer a window to justice. When will church officials make true amends?”

While the archdiocese itself can’t be sued now, other entities such as Catholic schools and individual parishes still can under the new state law, which goes into effect Sunday.

Maryland lawmakers passed the law in April, weeks after the state attorney general released a nearly 500-page investigative report detailing the scope of child sexual abuse and cover-up within the nation’s oldest Catholic diocese. The report lists more than 150 clergy who were credibly accused of abusing over 600 victims dating back several decades. It paints a damning picture of the archdiocese.

Rob Jenner, a Baltimore attorney representing abuse victims, said the bankruptcy decision deals them yet another blow. The fact that church leaders waited until the last minute adds insult to injury because victims spent months getting their hopes up, meeting with lawyers and reliving the abuse, he said.

“It’s just a further locking of the file cabinet doors to keep victims from seeing the full weight and scope of wrongdoing,” he told The Associated Press. “It’s so defeating.”

Jenner held a press conference earlier Friday to preview some of the lawsuits he plans to file.

One of the plaintiffs, Kimberly Mills-Bonham, will see her case relegated to bankruptcy court because the school where her alleged abuse occurred has since closed. Mills-Bonham alleges abuse at the hands of Father Joseph Maskell, one of the most notorious abusers named in the attorney general’s report, starting when she was 9. Maskell is featured in the Netflix docuseries “The Keepers” about child sexual abuse and coverup in the Baltimore archdiocese.

Mills-Bonham was crushed when she received the bankruptcy news, Jenner said.

“She saw it as yet another form of abuse,” he said. “She does not understand how they can get away with this.”

David Lorenz, Maryland state director of the Survivors Network of those Abused by Priests, said the Chapter 11 filing effectively waters down the rights afforded to victims under the new law. He said once the bankruptcy proceeding ends, the judge will divide a settlement among people who file claims, closing the window for victims to continue coming forward.

“There are a bunch of things about this that are really wrong,” Lorenz said. “It shows a level of moral bankruptcy.”

But Lori argued the move is the best way to compensate survivors since the archdiocese’s resources would have otherwise been exhausted on litigation, perhaps after only a small number of cases had been decided.

"Staggering legal fees and large settlements or jury awards for a few victim-survivors would have depleted our financial resources, leaving the vast majority of victim-survivors without compensation, while ending ministries that families across Maryland rely on for material and spiritual support," he said.

The Chapter 11 petition filed in U.S. Bankruptcy Court, which is signed by Lori in several places, says the archdiocese estimates that it has between 1,000 and 5,000 creditors. The archdiocese lists its estimated assets at between just over \$100 million and \$500 million, and its estimated liabilities at between a little over \$500 million and \$1 billion. A list of creditors includes 685 survivors.

On Sunday, Maryland will end the state's statute of limitations for when civil lawsuits for child sexual abuse can be filed against institutions, though the archdiocese will now be exempt during the bankruptcy proceedings.

Many victims are already poised to file lawsuits. Lawmakers included a provision in the law that would put claims on hold until the Supreme Court of Maryland can decide on the law's constitutionality, if it's challenged on legal grounds. So the cases will likely be delayed.

Earlier in the week, Maryland's attorney general released some previously redacted names in its investigative report, but the names of five Catholic Church leaders remained redacted amid ongoing appeals, prompting criticism of the church by victims' advocates.

Joanne Suder, another Baltimore attorney who represents victims, said she expected the archdiocese's bankruptcy filing.

"I'm not surprised," she told The Associated Press. "I think part of that is to continue trying to keep facts from coming forward in the public."

Lori said the financial reorganization is expected to take two to three years and involve several steps. He said the bankruptcy court will begin accepting claims from victims who wish to enter into negotiations "with the hope of agreeing to a plan that includes a trust fund to provide compensation." He said he hopes the process will bring victims solace.

Their attorneys, meanwhile, pledged to continue fighting the archdiocese in court.

"Little does the Archdiocese of Baltimore know the strength and resilience of the survivors who have come forward," said Jeff Anderson, an attorney specializing in child sex abuse cases whose firm has offices across the country. "We will continue to stand by them and vigorously advocate for them in the bankruptcy process."

Michigan teen shooter eligible for life prison sentence for killing 4 students, judge rules

By ED WHITE Associated Press

DETROIT (AP) — A teenager who killed four fellow students at Michigan's Oxford High School is eligible for life in prison with no chance for parole, a judge ruled Friday, finding only a "slim" chance for rehabilitation after the 2021 attack.

Judge Kwamé Rowe announced the decision over video conference, weeks after hearing from experts who clashed over Ethan Crumbley's mental health and witnesses who described the terror of the day in sharp detail.

He will be sentenced in Oakland County court on Dec. 8, a day when survivors and families can tell the judge about how the shooting affected their lives.

First-degree murder carries an automatic life sentence for adults in Michigan. But the shooter was 15 at the time, which now gives the judge options: life in prison or a shorter term — somewhere from 25 years to 40 years at a minimum — and an eventual opportunity for freedom.

The hearing was the result of a series of major decisions from the U.S. Supreme Court and Michigan Supreme Court about how to treat teenagers who are convicted of murder. The burden was on prosecutors to show that a life sentence in the Oxford tragedy would not be an excessive punishment.

Rowe, who read his opinion aloud for nearly an hour, said they had cleared that hurdle.

"This crime is not the result of impetuosity or recklessness," Rowe said. "Nor does the crime reflect the

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hallmarks of youth. Defendant carefully and meticulously planned and carried out the shooting.”

The judge said the teen had downloaded a school map, figured out the likely police response time to a shooting and also researched where Michigan teens are placed in prison.

Prosecutor Karen McDonald, who is seeking a life sentence, said she hopes the judge’s ruling brings “some comfort” to the Oxford community ahead of the final hearing in December.

Crumbley, now 17, and his defense team listened to the decision while in the county jail. The lawyers later declined to comment.

“The judge still has the option of a term of years,” said Detroit-area defense attorney Margaret Raben, who is not involved in the case.

The shooter pleaded guilty to murder, terrorism and other crimes. The teen and his parents met with school staff on the day of the shooting after a teacher noticed violent drawings. But no one checked his backpack for a gun and he was allowed to stay.

The shooter kept a journal and wrote about his desire to watch students suffer and the likelihood that he would spend his life in prison. He made a video with his phone on the eve of shooting, declaring what he would do the next day.

Defense lawyers had argued that he was in a devastating spiral by fall 2021 after being deeply neglected by his parents, who bought a gun and took him to a shooting range to try it. A psychologist, Colin King, described him as a “feral child,” though the judge disagreed.

“His general home life, while not ideal, was also not terrible,” Rowe said. “Despite his parents’ shortcomings, defendant appeared to have a loving and supportive family. ... In the defendant’s own words, his childhood was good.”

Defense attorney Paulette Michel Loftin argued in August that Crumbley deserves an opportunity for parole some day after his “sick brain” is fixed through counseling and rehabilitation.

Rowe, however, is not convinced so far, saying the possibility for rehabilitation “is slim.”

The shooter “continues to be obsessed with violence and could not stop his obsession even while incarcerated at the jail,” the judge said, noting he accessed violent content on an electronic device even while in custody, violating jail rules.

“As defendant’s own expert stated, the defendant has to be the one who wants to change if he is to be rehabilitated,” Rowe said. “Evidence does not demonstrate to the court that he wants to change.”

The shooter killed Madisyn Baldwin, Tate Myre, Hana St. Juliana and Justin Shilling at Oxford High, about 40 miles (60 kilometers) north of Detroit. Six students and a teacher were also wounded.

In the adult wing of the jail, segregated from their son, James and Jennifer Crumbley are charged with involuntary manslaughter. They are accused of making a gun accessible at home and ignoring their son’s mental health.

The Supreme Court will decide if state laws limiting social media platforms violate the Constitution

By MARK SHERMAN Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — The Supreme Court agreed Friday to decide whether state laws that seek to regulate Facebook, TikTok, X and other social media platforms violate the Constitution.

The justices will review laws enacted by Republican-dominated legislatures and signed by Republican governors in Florida and Texas. While the details vary, both laws aim to prevent the social media companies from censoring users based on their viewpoints.

The court’s announcement, three days before the start of its new term, comes as the justices continue to grapple with how laws written at the dawn of the digital age, or earlier, apply to the online world.

The justices had already agreed to decide whether public officials can block critics from commenting on their social media accounts, an issue that previously came up in a case involving then-President Donald Trump. The court dismissed the Trump case when his presidential term ended in January 2021.

Separately, the high court also could consider a lower-court order limiting executive branch officials’

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communications with social media companies about controversial online posts.

In all, the justices added 12 cases Friday that will be argued during the winter. They include:

— A dispute over the FBI's no-fly list. The appeal came from the Biden administration in a case involving an Oregon man who once was on the list, but had been removed years ago. A federal appeals court said he could continue his lawsuit because the FBI never disavowed his initial inclusion.

— A copyright case that involves a hit for the hip-hop artist Flo Rida in which he made use of someone else's song from the 1980s. Music publishing companies that were sued for copyright infringement over the 2008 song "In the Ayer" are challenging a lower court ruling against them.

— A plea by landowners in southeast Texas who want the state to compensate them for effectively taking their property. Their lawsuit claims that a successful project to renovate Interstate 10 and ensure it remains passable in bad weather results in serious flooding on their properties in heavy rainfall.

The new social media cases follow conflicting rulings by two appeals courts, one of which upheld the Texas law, while the other struck down Florida's statute. By a 5-4 vote, the justices kept the Texas law on hold while litigation over it continues.

But the alignment was unusual. Chief Justice John Roberts and Justices Stephen Breyer, Sonia Sotomayor, Brett Kavanaugh and Amy Coney Barrett voted to grant the emergency request from two technology industry groups that challenged the law in federal court.

Justices Clarence Thomas, Samuel Alito, Elena Kagan and Neil Gorsuch would have allowed the law to remain in effect. In dissent, Alito wrote, "Social media platforms have transformed the way people communicate with each other and obtain news."

Proponents of the laws, including Republican elected officials in several states that have similar measures, have sought to portray social media companies as generally liberal in outlook and hostile to ideas outside of that viewpoint, especially from the political right.

The tech sector warned that the laws would prevent platforms from removing extremism and hate speech.

"Online services have a well-established First Amendment right to host, curate and share content as they see fit," Chris Marchese, the litigation director for the industry group NetChoice, said in a statement. "The internet is a vital platform for free expression, and it must remain free from government censorship. We are confident the Court will agree."

Without offering any explanation, the justices had put off consideration of the case even though both sides agreed the high court should step in.

The justices had other social media issues before them last year, including a plea the court did not embrace to soften legal protections tech companies have for posts by their users.

A green card processing change means US could lose thousands of faith leaders from abroad

GIOVANNA DELL'ORTO Associated Press

COLUMBIA HEIGHTS, Minn. (AP) — For more than two hours on a Sunday afternoon, the Rev. Gustavo Castillo led the Pentecostal congregation he's been growing in this Minneapolis suburb through prayer, Scriptures, rousing music and sometimes tearful testimonials.

But it all may end soon. A sudden procedural change in how the federal government processes green cards for foreign-born religious workers, together with historic highs in numbers of illegal border crossers, means that thousands of clergy like him are losing the ability to remain in this country.

"We were right on the edge of becoming permanent residents, and boom, this changed," Colombia-born Castillo said as his wife rocked their 7-month-old boy, a U.S. citizen by birth. "We have done everything correctly, from here onward we believe that God will work a miracle. We don't have any other option."

To become permanent U.S. residents, which can eventually lead to citizenship, immigrants apply for green cards, generally through U.S. family members or employers. A limited number of green cards are available annually, set by Congress and separated into categories depending on the closeness of the family relationship or the skills needed in a job.

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Citizens of countries with disproportionately high numbers of migrants are put in separate, often longer green card queues. Currently, the most backlogged category is for the married Mexican children of U.S. citizens – only applications filed before March 1998 are being processed.

For faith leaders, the line historically has been short enough to get a green card before their temporary work visas expired, attorneys say.

That changed in March. The State Department announced that for nearly seven years it had been placing in the wrong line tens of thousands of applications for neglected or abused minors from Guatemala, Honduras and El Salvador, and would now start adding those to the general queue with the clergy. Since the mid-2010s, a surging number of youth from these countries have sought humanitarian green cards or asylum after illegally crossing into the U.S.

This change means that only applications filed before January 2019 are currently being processed, moving forward the Central American minors by a few months but giving clergy with expiring visas, like Castillo, no option but to leave their U.S. congregations behind.

"They're doing everything they're supposed to be doing and all of a sudden, they're totally steamrolled," said Matthew Curtis, an immigration attorney in New York City whose clients, like an Israeli rabbi and a South African music minister, are running out of time. "It's like a bombshell on the system."

Attorneys estimate so many people are now in the queue that the wait is at least a decade long, because only 10,000 of these green cards can be granted annually.

Curtis' firm advises potential clergy applicants that "there is no indication when you can receive a green card."

That's likely to dissuade religious organizations from hiring foreign workers precisely when they're most needed because of the growing demand for leaders of immigrant congregations who can speak languages other than English and understand other cultures.

"There's a comfort to practice your religion in your native tongue, in someone close to your culture celebrating Mass," said Olga Rojas, the Archdiocese of Chicago's senior counsel for immigration. The U.S. Catholic Church has also turned to foreign priests to ease a shortage of local vocations.

At one Chicago-area parish that's been helping with this year's surge of new arrivals from the border, two Mexican religious sisters have started ministries for women in the shelters as well as English classes, Rojas said.

"These two sisters know they won't get green cards," she added, and they expect to lose other religious sisters and brothers who are teachers, principals and serve in other key roles. "That's catastrophic."

Those from religious orders with vows of poverty, like Catholic nuns and Buddhist monks, are especially hard hit, because most other employment visa categories require employers to show they're paying foreign workers prevailing wages. Since they're getting no wages, they don't qualify.

Across all faith traditions, there are few options for these workers to continue their U.S.-based ministry, attorneys say. At a minimum, they would need to go abroad for a year before being eligible for another temporary religious worker visa, and repeat that process, paying thousands in fees, throughout the decade – or for however long their green card application stays pending.

"A big concern is that leaving is not really viable. The church will replace the pastor or shut down, it's too much instability," said Calleigh McRaith, Castillo's attorney in Minnesota.

Being in limbo is challenging for the affected religious workers, including Stephanie Reimer, a Canadian serving a nondenominational Christian youth missionary organization in Kansas City. Her visa expires in January.

"I've done a lot of praying," she said. "There are days when it feels overwhelming."

Martin Valko, an immigration attorney in Dallas whose clients include imams and Methodist pastors, said many rely on their faith to stay hopeful.

But realistic options are so few that the American Immigration Lawyers Association and faith leaders, like Chicago's Catholic cardinal and coalitions of evangelical pastors, have lobbied the Biden administration and Congress to fix the problem.

Administrative solutions could include allowing religious workers to at least file for their green cards,

so they can get temporary work authorization like those in other queues awaiting permanent residence. The most effective and immediate fix would be for Congress to remove from this category the vulnerable minors' applications, attorneys say. Despite being humanitarian, they make up the vast majority of the queue they share with religious workers, said Lance Conklin, a Maryland attorney who co-chairs the lawyer association's religious workers group.

"They shouldn't be pitted against each other in competition for visas," said Matthew Soerens, who leads the Evangelical Immigration Table, a national immigrant advocacy organization.

Back at the Iglesia Pentecostal Unida Latinoamericana, Castillo said he has ministered to a family with two young children who survived the Darien Gap, a jungle in Central America favored by smugglers that's among the most dangerous parts of migrants' journeys, and a mother and daughter who said they came "through the hole" in the border wall.

"Some of them are in a better migration situation" than himself and his wife Yarleny, Castillo said. But he added that his call to minister to them is undaunted. "I serve God. He will take charge of these affairs while I lead those he has entrusted to me."

That's why, even as they face having to leave the country when their visas expire in February, the Castillos are fundraising to buy the building where they now rent worship space. They also regularly drive 10 hours to South Dakota, where they're establishing another church.

"In this work, one is constantly helping destroyed migrant families," Yarleny Castillo said. "And they need a space like this."

Looming shutdown rattles families who rely on Head Start program for disadvantaged children

By HEATHER HOLLINGSWORTH Associated Press

KANSAS CITY, Mo. (AP) — As Monette Ferguson braces for the looming government shutdown to strip funding from her Head Start program for disadvantaged children in Connecticut, she harkens back to a decade ago when another congressional budget fight forced her to close preschools.

This time around she is more prepared, with money in reserve to keep serving around 550 children at 14 Head Start sites operating in three different towns. But only for about 30 days.

"It's like a gut punch to our system," said Ferguson, who is the executive director of the Alliance for Community Empowerment.

If the shutdown isn't averted, Head Start programs serving more than 10,000 children would immediately lose federal funding, including Ferguson's program. Lawmakers have until Saturday to reach a deal, but that is looking less and less likely.

The programs set to lose money serve just a fraction of the 820,000 children enrolled nationally at any given time. Located in Florida, Alabama, Connecticut, Georgia, Massachusetts and South Carolina, they are in trouble because their grants start on Sunday, just as the shutdown would begin, said Tommy Sheridan, the deputy director for the National Head Start Association.

They wouldn't necessarily close their doors immediately. Various entities run the programs, including school districts, YMCAs and other nonprofits. Depending on how deep their pockets are, some of these operators, like Ferguson's program, could readjust their finances to keep the programs going, at least short term.

"But from the ones that I've spoken to, there are some that really don't have extensive possibilities," Sheridan said.

Many are located in poor communities, close to the families they seek to lift out of poverty with programs that include preschool as well as services to infants and toddlers that include home visits. Over the course of a year, as children come and go, the number served tops 1 million.

Programs whose grants don't start on Sunday will continue getting money, said Bobby Kogan, the senior director of federal budget policy at the Center for American Progress, a liberal think tank. But, he said, if the shutdown drags on, the number of affected programs will grow as more grants come up for renewal.

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"This will get worse and worse and worse," he said.

That's what worries Lori Milam, executive director of the West Virginia Head Start. One of its grants is up for renewal in November, so she's been making back-up plans and reassuring worried staff and parents.

"It's consuming an enormous amount of our time," she said.

Complicating the situation further, one budget proposal would cut \$750 million from the nearly \$12 billion program, which would eliminate tens of thousands of spots. All the uncertainty has spooked some workers into considering looking for what "they believe is a more stable job," said Philip Shelly, a spokesperson for Democratic U.S. Rep. Nikki Budzinski, of Illinois.

This is a particular concern with nearly 20% of Head Start staff positions vacant nationwide, according to the National Head Start Association.

The timing couldn't be worse. Child care programs were propped up during the pandemic with \$24 billion in federal relief, but the last of the money has to be spent by Saturday. Another pot of COVID-19 relief funds that helped Head Start ran out in the spring.

Some states, like Minnesota, New York and Maine, have chipped in extra money to fill in the gaps as the federal funding dries up, but those efforts are not universal, said Maureen Coffey, a policy analyst on the early childhood policy team at the Center for American Progress.

"It's going to be a really messy time for child care," she said.

Child care already was strained before the pandemic closed some centers, said Lynn Karoly, a senior economist at the Rand Corp., a nonprofit global policy think tank.

"We haven't addressed really, in most cases, the fundamental problem of an underfunded system overall," she said. "But now you have the potential of a shutdown on top of it."

The 16-day October 2013 shutdown was the last to hit Head Start hard, affecting 19,000 children and shuttering programs in several states.

About half as many programs are affected now because many moved away from having their grant start date coincide with the beginning of the federal fiscal year. One reason, Sheridan said, is that the Oct. 1 date makes them more vulnerable when Congress deadlocks over the budget.

It was so bad a decade ago that Connecticut chipped in emergency funds, which allowed Ferguson's program to reopen.

Meanwhile, John and Laura Arnold, a wealthy Houston couple, pledged up to \$10 million to the National Head Start Association to help other programs. Among the programs the donation helped reopen was one in Florida.

Tim Center, the chief executive officer at the Capital Area Community Action Agency, lived through that mess. This time around he has a backup plan that will allow him to keep serving more than 370 kids and families at six centers in three counties in northern Florida for several weeks. But it means tapping into savings and a line of credit.

Families still are spooked. Laketia Washington, a mother of eight whose 3- and 5-year-olds attend Head Start programs in Tallahassee, Florida, lamented the turmoil as she rang up customers at a discount store.

"The nerve wracking thing," she said, "is not knowing what's next."

The Navy will start randomly testing SEALs and special warfare troops for steroids

By LOLITA C. BALDOR Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — The Navy will begin randomly testing its special operations forces for steroids and other performance-enhancing drugs beginning in November, taking a groundbreaking step that military leaders have long resisted.

Rear Adm. Keith Davids, commander of Naval Special Warfare Command, announced the new program Friday in a message to his force, calling it necessary to protect their health and military readiness. The Navy will be the first to begin random testing, but Army Special Operations Command said it will soon

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follow suit, although no start date has been set.

The Army and Navy have the largest and most well known special operations forces, including the Navy SEALs and Army's Delta Force, Green Berets and Ranger Regiment. They are often called on to do the military's most sensitive and dangerous missions. The physical and mental challenges of getting through their selection and training programs and the pressures of the risky missions can lead to some to use performance-enhancing drugs, although officials say the numbers are small.

The use of these drugs has been a somewhat limited but persistent problem across the military, but leaders have balked at increased testing because it is highly specialized, costly and requires contracting with the few labs that do such work. The military services have done occasional tests when they perceive a problem with an individual service member, but they must get special permission from the Pentagon to do routine, random testing.

The Air Force and the Marine Corps special operations commands said they have not yet requested a similar policy change.

According to the Navy command, four units will be randomly selected each month, and 15% of each will be tested. That will amount to as many as 200 sailors monthly, and those testing positive face discipline or removal.

A driving factor in the announcement, which has been in the works for months, was the death of a Navy SEAL candidate early last year.

Kyle Mullen, 24, collapsed and died of acute pneumonia just hours after completing the SEALs' grueling Hell Week test. A report concluded that Mullen, from Manalapan, New Jersey, died "in the line of duty, not due to his own misconduct." Although tests found no evidence of performance-enhancing drugs in his system, a report by the Naval Education and Training Command said he was not screened for some steroids because the needed blood and urine samples were not available, and that multiple vials of drugs and syringes were later found in his car.

The NETC's broader investigation into SEAL training flagged the use of performance-enhancing drugs as a significant problem among those seeking to become elite commandos and recommended far more robust testing.

Investigations in 2011, 2013 and 2018 into suspected steroid use by SEAL candidates led to discipline and requests for enhanced testing. The use of hair follicle testing was denied at least twice by Navy leaders over that time, and random testing for steroids wasn't authorized by the Defense Department.

Dauids requested the policy change to allow the screening, and in January, the Pentagon undersecretary for personnel approved an exemption authorizing random testing within the Naval Special Warfare force. The testing only affects the roughly 9,000 active-duty military personnel and reservists on active-duty orders in the command. Civilians are not included.

The, random force-wide testing initiative, Davids said, is a commitment to the long-term health of every member of the Naval Special Warfare community.

Lt. Col. Mike Burns, spokesman for Army Special Operations Command, said it also has been approved for random testing and is working on developing a program.

The Navy has provided \$225,000 to fund the testing contract through the end of this month, and it's expected to cost about \$4.5 million per year for the next two years.

Noting that the drugs are illegal, Davids has told his force that any number above zero is unacceptable, whether during training or downrange when sailors are deployed. He has urged sailors to talk to their teammates and commanders about the drugs and their risks.

"My intent is to ensure every NSW teammate operates at their innate best while preserving the distinguished standards of excellence that define NSW," he said in his message to the force.

According to the command, personnel will still be allowed to get prescription medication to treat legitimate medical conditions.

Command leaders also stress that there is only anecdotal evidence of performance-enhancing drug use within the ranks.

Between February 2022 and March 2023, the Naval Special Warfare Center conducted more than 2,500 screening tests and detected 74 SEAL or Special Warfare Combat Crewmen with elevated testosterone levels, the command said. It said three candidates ultimately tested positive for performance-enhancing drugs. The testosterone tests are more common but less precise, and additional screening is needed to identify steroid use.

The new random testing will require that sailors provide two urine samples. One will be sent to the Sports Medicine Research and Testing Laboratory, a cutting-edge lab used by international sports to test for doping, and one will go to the Navy Drug Screening Laboratory Great Lakes to check for standard drugs.

If the test result is positive, the sailor will be notified, there will be a preliminary inquiry and if there is no legal reason for the drugs, the sailor will be subject to discipline and removal from the force. A SEAL or SWCC candidate will be removed from training.

Under Navy procedures, all SEALs and SWCC are informed of the substance ban and sign an acknowledgement of the prohibition.

The NETC report released earlier this year suggested that SEAL candidates may have gotten conflicting messages about the use of performance-enhancing drugs. In one case, it noted that during a discussion about the policy with Mullen's class, an instructor, who was not identified, told sailors that all types of people make it through the course, including "steroid monkeys and skinny strong guys. Don't use PEDS, it's cheating, and you don't need them. And whatever you do, don't get caught with them in your barracks room."

The report said that after an "awkward silence" the instructor added, "that was a joke." It said some candidates interpreted it as an implicit endorsement of using the drugs. And it noted that routine barracks inspections have found the drugs or sailors have admitted their use.

Many questions but few answers in congressional hearing on Maui's wildfire and electric provider

By REBECCA BOONE Associated Press

Lawmakers probing the cause of last month's deadly Maui wildfire did not get many answers during Thursday's congressional hearing on the role the electrical grid played in the disaster.

The president of Hawaiian Electric, Shelee Kimura, said she didn't know specific details about when the power stopped flowing through downed power lines in Lahaina or when the decision was made to trigger a procedure designed to ensure broken lines were not re-energized. But she said she would get that information to the committee later. Hawaiian Electric is Maui's sole electricity provider.

The fire in the historic town of Lahaina killed at least 97 people and destroyed more than 2,000 buildings, mostly homes. It first erupted at 6:30 a.m. when strong winds appeared to cause a Hawaiian Electric power line to fall, igniting dry brush and grass near a large subdivision. The fire was initially declared contained, but it flared up again around 3 p.m. and spread through the town.

The Associated Press reported Wednesday that aerial and satellite imagery shows the gully where the fire reignited that afternoon has long been choked with plants 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 (three meters) high, and a resident who lives next to the gully said it had not been mowed in the 20 years he's lived there.

Asked about the issue Thursday during the U.S. House Energy and Commerce subcommittee hearing, Kimura reiterated Hawaiian Electric's position that it is only responsible for trimming trees that are high enough to contact electric lines.

"Our vegetation management is around our lines. It is not a stated right to take care of the grass under our lines on private property," Kimura said, adding that it is an issue that the state should consider in the aftermath of the fire.

Lawmakers questioned Kimura and other utility officials about how the deadliest U.S. wildfire in more

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than a century began — and whether the electrical grid in Lahaina was safe and properly maintained.

There is still much to sort out about the fire, Rep. Morgan Griffith, R-Virginia, said at the hearing's start. Among questions that need to be answered are how the fires spread and what efforts to reduce fire risk have been made in recent years.

"It is extremely important that we ... ask the hard questions," he said.

Those testifying at the hearing were Kimura, Hawaii Public Utilities Commission Chair Leodoloff Asuncion Jr. and Hawaii Chief Energy Officer Mark Glick.

Asked to address whether the electrical grid in Lahaina was safe and properly maintained, Kimura told the committee that 2,000 of the company's wooden power poles had not been tested for possible termites, rot or other problems since 2013. The other 29,000 poles on the island had been assessed under Hawaiian Electric's "test and treat" program, she said.

Kimura said she didn't know exactly where those 2,000 remaining untested poles were located. But at least one near where the fire started was tested and treated in 2022, she said.

The factors that led to the fire are complex and involve several organizations, Kimura said.

"There's a system here that was in play for all of these conditions to happen all at one time that resulted in the devastation in Lahaina," she said.

Both Kimura and Asuncion addressed the possibility of burying power lines to reduce wildfire risk, especially in high-wind conditions. About 50% of power lines on Maui are underground, Kimura said. However, Asuncion said burying can be cost-prohibitive and has a big impact on rate-payers.

"I get that," Rep. Michael Burgess, R-Texas, responded. "But sometimes the cost of doing nothing gets to be prohibitive too."

Andrea Pekelo, one of eight fire victims who attended the hearing, said afterward that she appreciated the "pointed questions" asked by the lawmakers but she was frustrated by the responses and hopes the committee keeps pushing for answers.

"There was a lot of non-answers and deflection, and a lot of 'I don't know' or 'I have to check with people within my company,'" she said.

Pekelo and others were trapped in their subdivision by flames and gridlocked traffic and escaped only after a neighbor used a grinder to dismantle a fence and another used a hose to spray cars as they drove through the fence and the flames beyond.

"I really hope to get real facts about what these people in positions of power knew the day of the fire," she said.

Downed power lines hindered some residents' efforts to flee Lahaina during the fires, and several survivors told The Associated Press that they were turned away from exit routes by closed roads, utility crews and police who were trying to keep people from driving over potentially live wires.

Some of the fire victims submitted written testimony for the hearing.

Kathleen Hennricks wrote that her family spent 10 days searching for her 57-year-old sister Rebecca Ann Rans, only to learn that she had died in the arms of her longtime partner, Doug Gleoge, just a few blocks from their home.

"The biggest tragedy is that my sister's death and the losses to our family were completely preventable," Hennricks wrote. "My sister's death was unnecessary, but please do not let it be meaningless. Steps must be taken now to prevent yet another fire on Maui."

The FBI agents who informed her of Rans' death said the only items that remained of her sister were a bracelet with the word "Kuuipo," which means "sweetheart" in Hawaiian, and one burnt slipper.

Gleoge's son and daughter, Jon Gleoge and Andrea Wheeler, also submitted testimony, saying details of their father and Rans' attempt to flee the fire "remain shrouded in uncertainty."

"Perhaps the most excruciating aspect of this ordeal has been the condition of our dad's remains," the two wrote. "The fire's ferocity left his body unrecognizable, rendering viewing impossible. The weight of this reality is one that we both continue to grapple with daily."

Griffith, Energy and Commerce Committee chair Rep. Cathy McMorris Rodgers and Energy, Climate and

Grid Security Subcommittee chair Rep. Jeff Duncan — all Republicans — also questioned Kimura, Asuncion and Glick about the cause of the fire in a letter sent Aug. 30.

The letter asked about the sequence of events on the day of the fire, efforts to mitigate risks posed by the electrical grid, the investigation and other matters.

Kimura acknowledged Hawaiian Electric's downed lines caused the initial fire but said the lines had been de-energized for more than six hours when it flared up in the same area again. She called the 3 p.m. blaze the "Afternoon Fire," implying it was separate from the morning blaze — and emphasized that its cause has not been determined.

Whether the lines were fully de-energized might still be in question. At least one Lahaina resident told AP their power came back on around 2 p.m., and Maui Police Chief John Pelletier has said his officers were trying to keep people from driving over live power lines later that afternoon as they fled.

Rep. Frank Pallone, a Democrat from New Jersey, warned that if Congress does not act before a looming federal government shutdown, residents could be left without the financial assistance needed to cope with the crisis. Scores of people were have lost homes and jobs.

A "reckless government shutdown, which we know is imminent," would dramatically slow Maui's recovery effort, Pallone said.

What to know as fall vaccinations against COVID, flu and RSV get underway

By LAURAN NEERGAARD AP Medical Writer

WASHINGTON (AP) — Updated COVID-19 vaccines may be getting a little easier for adults to find but they're still frustratingly scarce for young children. Health officials said Thursday the kid shots have started shipping — and reminded most everyone to get a fall flu shot too.

About 2 million Americans have gotten the new COVID-19 shot in the two weeks since its approval despite early barriers from insurance companies and other glitches, according to the Department of Health and Human Services.

For the first time, the U.S. has vaccines to fight a trio of viruses that cause fall and winter misery. But health officials worry that shot fatigue and hassles in getting them will leave too many people needlessly unprotected.

"We need to use them," Dr. Mandy Cohen, director of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, said Thursday. "Right now is the right time."

A flu vaccination and that updated COVID-19 shot are urged for just about everyone, starting with babies as young as 6 months.

Also this year, a vaccine against another scary virus called RSV is recommended for people 60 and older and for certain pregnant women. And for babies, a vaccinelike medicine to guard against that respiratory syncytial virus is expected to arrive next month.

"These vaccines may not be perfect in being able to prevent absolutely every infection with these illnesses, but they turn a wild infection into a milder one," said Dr. William Schaffner of Vanderbilt University and the National Foundation for Infectious Diseases.

Some things to know:

WHY DO I NEED ANOTHER COVID-19 SHOT?

This year's vaccine is updated to protect against newer versions of the constantly evolving coronavirus. Already there's been a late summer jump in infections, hospitalizations and deaths. And so far the new vaccine recipe appears to be a good match to the variants currently circulating.

Protection against COVID-19, whether from vaccination or from an earlier infection, wanes over time — and most Americans haven't had a vaccine dose in about a year. Everyone 5 and older will need just one shot this fall even if they've never had a prior vaccination, while younger children may need additional doses depending on their vaccination and infection history.

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HOW HARD IS IT TO FIND COVID-19 SHOTS?

The rollout's start has been messy. This time the government isn't buying and distributing shots for free. Now drugstores, doctors' offices and other providers had to place their own orders, and sometimes canceled appointments if supplies didn't arrive in time. Some people had to wait for their insurance companies to update the billing codes needed to cover them or risk paying out of pocket.

Manufacturers Pfizer and Moderna have shipped millions of doses, and say there's plenty of supply — and in recent days, more appointments have started opening, at least for people 12 and older. In a Wednesday meeting, insurance companies told HHS Secretary Xavier Becerra they've largely resolved the paperwork issues blocking some patients' vaccinations.

The shots are supposed to be provided free in-network to the insured. For the uninsured or underinsured, CDC has opened what it's calling a "bridge" program to provide free shots at certain sites.

WHY CAN'T PARENTS FIND COVID-19 SHOTS FOR YOUNGER KIDS?

Adult doses got shipped first, CDC's Cohen said. Doses for the under-12 set have begun shipping, and "the supply is filling out," she said.

Drugstore chain CVS said its doses for ages 5 and older began arriving last week, although supplies vary by location, while its MinuteClinic locations anticipate opening appointments for tots as young as 18 months in the coming days.

As for pediatricians, they've had to guess how many doses to buy up-front while waiting to learn how much insurance companies would reimburse them for each shot, said Dr. Jesse Hackell of the American Academy of Pediatrics. He said early parent demand is heartening but that pediatricians expect to spend lots of time this fall explaining to hesitant families how important COVID-19 vaccination is even for healthy children.

On Friday, Pfizer said it was making some changes in hopes of motivating pediatricians to buy more shots for children under 5 — including offering a refund for doses that go unused, even partially used vials.

In Redmond, Washington, Ania Mitros got herself, her husband and her 13-year-old vaccinated pretty easily but despite calls to multiple pharmacies and clinics can't find anyone to tell her when shots for her 8- and 11-year-old will be available. "There need to be clear expectations," she said.

WHAT ABOUT FLU VACCINE?

Fewer Americans got a flu vaccine last year than before the coronavirus pandemic — a discouraging gap that CDC hopes to reverse.

People need a flu vaccine every fall because influenza also mutates each year. Like with COVID-19, flu is most dangerous to older adults, the very young and people with weak immune systems, lung, heart or other chronic health problems, or who are pregnant.

There are multiple kinds of flu vaccines, including a nasal spray version for certain younger people. More important, three kinds are specifically recommended for seniors because they do a better job revving up an older adult's immune system.

CAN I GET A FLU SHOT AND COVID-19 SHOT AT THE SAME TIME?

Yes, although one in each arm might be more comfortable.

WHO NEEDS THE NEW RSV VACCINE?

RSV is a cold-like nuisance for most people, and not as well-known as the flu. But RSV packs hospitals every winter and kills several hundred tots and thousands of seniors. The CDC says already, RSV cases are rising in the Southeast.

RSV vaccines from GSK and Pfizer are approved for adults 60 and older.

Drugstores have adequate supplies but some seniors are reporting hurdles such as requirements to get a prescription. That's because the CDC recommended that seniors talk with their doctors about the new vaccine. Cohen said it was meant just for education about a virus that people may not know much about.

"We want folks to ... get access to the vaccine as quickly as possible," she said.

WHAT ABOUT BABIES AND RSV?

The FDA also has approved Pfizer's RSV vaccine to be given late in pregnancy so moms-to-be pass

virus-fighting antibodies to their fetuses, offering some protection at birth. The CDC is recommending that pregnancy vaccinations be offered between September and January, when RSV tends to be most common.

There's no vaccine for children but babies whose mothers didn't get vaccinated in pregnancy may get an injection of lab-made antibodies to guard against RSV. Called Beyfortus, the one-dose shot from Sanofi and AstraZeneca is different than a vaccine, which teaches the body to make its own infection-fighting antibodies, but is similarly protective. Cohen said it should be available in October.

Putin orders former Wagner commander to take charge of 'volunteer units' in Ukraine

By YURAS KARMANAU Associated Press

Russian President Vladimir Putin has ordered one of the top commanders of the Wagner military contractor to take charge of "volunteer units" fighting in Ukraine, signaling the Kremlin's effort to keep using the mercenaries after the death of their chief, Yevgeny Prigozhin.

In remarks released Friday by the Kremlin, Putin told Andrei Troshev that his task is to "deal with forming volunteer units that could perform various combat tasks, primarily in the zone of the special military operation" — a term Moscow uses for its war in Ukraine.

Wagner fighters have had no significant battlefield role since the mercenary company captured the eastern Ukrainian city of Bakhmut in the war's longest and bloodiest battle and then withdrew to march toward Moscow in a brief insurrection.

After the aborted mutiny in late June, speculation has been rife about the future of the mercenary group that provided one of the most capable elements of Russian forces fighting in Ukraine. Many observers expected it to be folded into the Defense Ministry, and Putin's comments appeared to confirm that process was underway.

Since Prigozhin's death, Wagner troops in neighboring Belarus, where they had moved following their mutiny, have reportedly been packing up and dismantling their camps.

Troshev is a retired military officer who played a leading role in Wagner since its creation in 2014 and faced European Union sanctions over his role in Syria as the group's executive director.

Deputy Defense Minister Yunus-Bek Yevkurov was present late Thursday at Putin's meeting with Troshev, a sign that Wagner mercenaries will likely serve under the Defense Ministry's command. Speaking in a conference call with reporters Friday, Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov confirmed that Troshev now works for the Defense Ministry and referred questions about Wagner's possible return to Ukraine to the military.

The meeting appeared to reflect the Kremlin's plan to redeploy some Wagner mercenaries to the front line in Ukraine following their brief mutiny and the suspicious deaths of Prigozhin and the group's senior leadership in an Aug. 23 plane crash. The private army that once numbered tens of thousands of troops is a precious asset the Kremlin wants to exploit.

The June 23-24 rebellion aimed to oust the Russian Defense Ministry's leadership that Prigozhin blamed for mishandling the war in Ukraine and trying to place Wagner under its control. His mercenaries took over Russia's southern military headquarters in Rostov-on-Don and then rolled toward Moscow before abruptly turning back.

Putin denounced them as "traitors," but the Kremlin quickly negotiated a deal ending the uprising in exchange for amnesty from prosecution. The mercenaries were offered a choice to retire from the service, move to Belarus or sign new contracts with the Defense Ministry.

Putin said in July that five days after the mutiny he had a meeting with 35 Wagner commanders, including Prigozhin, and suggested they keep serving under Troshev, who goes by the call sign "Gray Hair," but Prigozhin refused the offer.

Wagner mercenaries have played a key role in Moscow's war in Ukraine, spearheading the capture of Bakhmut in May after months of fierce fighting. Kyiv's troops are now seeking to reclaim it as part of their summer counteroffensive that has slowly recaptured some land but now faces the prospect of wet and

cold weather that could further delay progress.

Ukrainian military spokesperson Illia Yevlash said that only an estimated 500 out of several thousand mercenaries who had moved to Belarus remained there. He told Ukrainian media that some Wagner mercenaries had redeployed to the front line in eastern Ukraine, where they joined the Russian military.

The U.K. Defense Ministry said Friday in its intelligence briefing that Wagner veterans reportedly were concentrated around Bakhmut, where the British said their experience would be in demand because they are familiar with the front line and Ukrainian tactics after fighting there last winter.

Belarusian Hajun, an activist group monitoring Russian troops in Belarus, said Friday that Wagner mercenaries continued to dismantle their field camp there and only about 100 of some 300 tents remained.

In other developments:

— The U.K. announced new sanctions aimed at officials behind Russia's illegal annexation of territories in Ukraine and elections held there earlier this month by Moscow to try to legitimize their hold on the occupied regions.

Western countries denounced the elections in the four Ukrainian regions that Moscow annexed in 2022 — Donetsk, Kherson, Luhansk and Zaporizhzhia — and on the Crimean Peninsula, which the Kremlin annexed in 2014, as a violation of international law.

The new sanctions come on the eve of the first anniversary of Russia laying claim to the territory and will freeze assets and ban travel for officials in those regions and those behind the vote.

"Russia's sham elections are a transparent, futile attempt to legitimize its illegal control of sovereign Ukrainian territory," British Foreign Secretary, James Cleverly said. "You can't hold 'elections' in someone else's country."

— Norway said it would join European Union nations in banning Russian-registered passenger cars from crossing its borders beginning next week. The Scandinavian county, which belongs to NATO but not the EU, has a 198-kilometer-long (123-mile-long) border in the Arctic with Russia.

— At least six civilians were killed between Thursday and Friday during heavy shelling by Russia in eastern Ukraine's Donetsk region and the Kherson region in the south, the presidential office said. Another 13 were wounded in attacks that struck more than a dozen villages, the office said.

Judge says she is ending conservatorship between former NFL player Michael Oher and Memphis couple

By ADRIAN SAINZ Associated Press

MEMPHIS, Tenn. (AP) — A Tennessee judge said Friday she is ending a conservatorship agreement between former NFL player Michael Oher and a Memphis couple who took him in when he was in high school, but the highly-publicized dispute over financial issues will continue.

Shelby County Probate Court Judge Kathleen Gomes said she is terminating the agreement reached in 2004 that allowed Sean and Leigh Anne Tuohy to control Oher's finances. Oher signed the agreement when he was 18 and living with the couple as he was being recruited by colleges as a star high school football player. Their story is the subject of the film "The Blind Side, which earned Sandra Bullock an Oscar.

Gomes said she was not dismissing the case. Oher has asked that the Tuohys provide a financial accounting of money that may have come to them as part of the agreement, claiming that they used his name, image and likeness to enrich themselves and lied to him that the agreement meant the Tuohys were adopting him.

In Tennessee, a conservatorship removes power from a person to make decisions for themselves, and it is often used in the case of a medical condition or disability.

But Oher's conservatorship was approved "despite the fact that he was over 18 years old and had no diagnosed physical or psychological disabilities," his petition said.

Gomes said she was disturbed that such an agreement was ever reached. She said she had never seen in her 43-year career a conservatorship agreement reached with someone who was not disabled.

"I cannot believe it got done," she said.

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Oher and Tuohys listened in by video conference call but did not speak. Lawyers for both parties had agreed that the agreement should end, but the case will continue to address Oher's claims. Gomes said it should have ended long ago.

In August, Oher, 37, filed a petition in probate court accusing the Tuohys of lying to him by having him sign papers making them his conservators rather than his adoptive parents nearly two decades ago. Oher wanted the conservatorship to be terminated, a full accounting of the money earned off his name and story and to be paid what he is due, with interest.

He accused the couple of falsely representing themselves as his adoptive parents, saying he discovered in February the conservatorship agreed to in 2004 was not the arrangement he thought it was — and that it provided him no familial relationship to them.

Oher claims the Tuohys have kept him in the dark about financial dealings related to his name, image and likeness during the 19-year life of the agreement.

The Tuohys have called the claims they enriched themselves at his expense outlandish, hurtful and absurd and part of a "shakedown" by Oher.

In a court filing, the affluent couple said they loved Oher like a son and provided him with food, shelter, clothing and cars while he lived with them, but denied saying they intended to legally adopt him.

The Tuohys' filing said Oher referred to them as "mom and dad," and they occasionally referred to Oher as a son. They acknowledged that websites show them referring to Oher as an adopted son, but the term was only used "in the colloquial sense and they have never intended that reference to be viewed with legal implication."

The Tuohys said the conservatorship was the tool chosen to comply with NCAA rules that would have kept Oher from attending the University of Mississippi, where Sean Tuohy had been a standout basketball player.

"When it became clear that the Petitioner could not consider going to the University of Mississippi ("Ole Miss") as a result of living with the Respondents, the NCAA made it clear that he could attend Ole Miss if he was part of the Tuohy family in some fashion," the Tuohys' Sept. 14 court filing said.

The Tuohys also said Oher lied about finding out that he was not adopted in February. They said Oher's 2011 book "I Beat the Odds" indicates that he was fully aware that the Tuohys were appointed as conservators.

Agents negotiated a small advance for the Tuohys from the production company for "The Blind Side," based on a book written by Sean Tuohy's friend, Michael Lewis, the couple's lawyers have said. That included "a tiny percentage of net profits" divided equally among a group that included Oher, they said.

The attorneys said they estimated each of the Tuohys and Oher received \$100,000 apiece, and the couple paid taxes on Oher's portion for him.

The Tuohys' filing said they never signed any pro football contracts for Oher, and he was happy with their financial arrangements from "The Blind Side."

Oher was the 23rd overall pick in the 2009 draft out of Mississippi, and he spent his first five seasons with the Baltimore Ravens, where he won a Super Bowl. He played 110 games over eight NFL seasons, including 2014 when he started 11 games for the Tennessee Titans. Oher finished his career with the Carolina Panthers.

Higher gas prices lift Fed's preferred inflation gauge but underlying price pressures remain mild

By CHRISTOPHER RUGABER AP Economics Writer

WASHINGTON (AP) — An inflation gauge closely tracked by the Federal Reserve rose in August, boosted mainly by higher gas prices. But measures of underlying inflation slowed in the latest sign that overall price pressures are still moderating.

Friday's report from the Commerce Department showed that prices rose 0.4% from July to August, up from just 0.2% the previous month. A 10% monthly spike in prices at the gas pump drove the increase.

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Excluding volatile food and energy prices, though, "core" inflation rose by the smallest amount in nearly three years, evidence that inflation pressures continue to ease. Fed officials pay particular attention to core prices, which are considered a better gauge of where inflation might be headed. Last month's modest rise in core inflation could raise the likelihood that the Fed will leave interest rates unchanged at its next meeting Oct. 31-Nov. 1.

Core prices edged up 0.1% from July to August, down from July's 0.2%. It was the smallest monthly increase since November 2020. Compared with a year ago, core prices were up 3.9%, below July's reading of 4.2%. That was the slowest such increase in two years.

In the meantime, while Americans kept spending in August, they did so at a much more modest pace. Friday's government report showed that consumer spending, adjusted for inflation, ticked up just 0.1% after having risen 0.6% in July.

"Overall, spending remains positive and inflation is slowing, which will be welcome news to policymakers," Rubeela Farooqi, chief U.S. economist at High Frequency Economics, said in a note to clients.

Compared with a year earlier, overall prices rose 3.5% in August, slightly higher than the 3.4% increase in July. It was the second straight rise in the year-over-year figure, which has tumbled from its 7% peak in June 2022 but still exceeds the Fed's 2% inflation target.

The spike in gasoline prices is eating away at Americans' incomes. After some solid gains last spring, inflation-adjusted incomes fell in August for a second straight month.

The burden of rising energy costs is hitting Europe as well, even as new data released Friday showed inflation there declined sharply in September to the lowest level in two years. A recent surge in oil prices, however, has cast a shadow over prospects for quickly beating inflation down in Europe to the central bank's target of 2%.

The combination of higher gas prices in the U.S. and sluggish income growth could weaken consumer spending in the months ahead. If so, it would mark a slowdown from last summer's healthy pace of spending, which is believed to have fueled solid economic growth in the July-September quarter.

The inflation gauge that was issued Thursday, called the personal consumption expenditures price index, is separate from the better-known consumer price index. Earlier this month, the government reported that the CPI rose 3.7% from a year earlier, down from a peak of 9.1% in June 2022, though its core measure also slowed.

The latest data will likely bolster hopes among Fed officials that they will be able to bring inflation back to their target without driving up unemployment or causing a deep recession as many economists have feared. When the Fed released its quarterly economic forecasts last week, it showed that the central bank's policymakers envision only a small rise in unemployment by the end of 2024: They expect joblessness to rise from its current 3.8% to a still-low 4.1%, along with a gradual drop in core inflation to just 2.6%.

Many economists now expect core inflation, as measured by the Fed's preferred gauge, to drop by the end of the year to below the central bank's estimate of 3.7%. That might show sufficient progress for the Fed to avoid any further rate increases this year.

Still, threats to a so-called "soft landing" — in which inflation would fall back to the Fed's 2% target without a deep recession — have been growing. Congress is on track to shut down parts of the government by this weekend because a group of hard-right House Republicans have blocked a spending agreement.

How much a shutdown would weaken the economy would depend on how long it lasts. A short closure probably won't have much impact on the economy. But it would likely have a more far-reaching impact than previous shutdowns did because a larger portion of the government will close.

In earlier shutdowns, for example, legislation had been approved to pay members of the military. That hasn't happened this time, which would leave upwards of a million service members without paychecks.

And in October, millions of people will have to restart student loan payments, reducing their ability to spend on other items. At the same time, long-term interest rates keep rising, which will likely further swell the cost of mortgages, auto loans and business borrowing. The interest rate on the 10-year Treasury note, a benchmark rate for mortgages, has reached nearly 4.6%, close to its highest level in 16 years.

Higher gas prices are also eating up a bigger share of Americans' paychecks, with the average national price for a gallon of gas hitting \$3.84 on Thursday, up seven cents from a year ago.

On Thursday, Austan Goolsbee, president of the Federal Reserve Bank of Chicago, expressed optimism that what he called the "golden path" — lower inflation without a recession — was still possible.

"The Fed," Goolsbee said, "has the chance to achieve something quite rare in the history of central banks — to defeat inflation without tanking the economy. If we succeed, the golden path will be studied for years. If we fail, it will also be studied for years. But let's aim to succeed."

Analysis: Thriving NFL benefits most from Taylor Swift-Travis Kelce relationship

By ROB MAADDI AP Pro Football Writer

On Football analyzes the biggest topics in the NFL from week to week. For more On Football analysis, head here.

The NFL didn't need a popularity boost before Travis Kelce became enchanted with Taylor Swift. They'll gladly welcome millions of Swifties to watch this love story unfold.

The biggest news that came out of Week 3 wasn't Tua Tagovailoa and the Miami Dolphins lighting up the scoreboard against Denver with only the fourth 70-point performance in NFL history.

It wasn't Arizona shocking Dallas, Houston upsetting Jacksonville or Matt Gay kicking four 50-yard field goals to help Indianapolis knock off Baltimore.

Instead, Swift stole the headlines by simply showing up at Arrowhead Stadium to watch Kelce and the defending Super Bowl champion Kansas City Chiefs destroy the woeful Chicago Bears. The pop star joined Donna Kelce in a suite and mesmerized the world with her high-fiving, glass-pounding, chest-bumping enthusiasm.

Swift then left the stadium with Kelce and accompanied the four-time All-Pro tight end to an after-party with his teammates.

Two-time Super Bowl MVP Patrick Mahomes was impressed.

"She was really cool. Good people," Mahomes said.

Andy Reid joked that he played matchmaker.

"I set them up. She's tremendous at everything she does. I haven't got to meet her, but if she ends up with Travis, I'll probably get to meet her," Reid said.

Even Bill Belichick shared his thoughts on America's newest power couple.

"Well, I would say that Travis Kelce's had a lot of big catches in his career. This would be the biggest," Belichick said in a radio interview on WEEI in Boston.

There's no shaking off the Swift-Kelce buzz if the NFL's grumpiest coach is dropping lines about their possible relationship.

Everything really has changed.

Kelce's No. 87 jersey sales skyrocketed this week, spiking 400%. Television ratings for the Bears-Chiefs game soared despite the lopsided score. A total of 24.3 million viewers tuned in, making it the second-most watched game this season.

Dallas Mavericks owner Mark Cuban took notice.

"Like literally, she impacts economies when she brings her tour to a city," Cuban said on ESPN's First Take. "She is literally the most popular artist on the planet right now, not even close. So what I'm going to tell ya, Taylor, if you are listening, sorry Travis, break up with him. I got a bunch of good looking, single guys that play for the Dallas Mavericks. I gotchu, I gotchu."

Kelce responded on X, formerly known as Twitter, telling Cuban to sign him to a 10-day contract.

Kelce, who joked about paparazzi staking out his house, has had plenty of fun in the spotlight but he plans to keep things quiet going forward.

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"What's real is that it is my personal life. I want to respect both of our lives," he told his brother, Eagles All-Pro center Jason Kelce, on the "New Heights with Jason and Travis Kelce" podcast.

But, two is better than one. So, Swift is reportedly heading to MetLife Stadium to see Kelce and the Chiefs take on the Aaron Rodgers-less New York Jets on Sunday Night Football.

That's another big win for the NFL since it'll be difficult for the Jets to keep up with the high-flying Chiefs if Zach Wilson is still their quarterback. He should be since the team only signed Trevor Siemian this week. If the score gets out of control, expect the Swifties to stick with the NBC broadcast to see when the television cameras pan to the 12-time Grammy Award winner.

Betting sites are offering odds on how much face time Swift gets during the game, what color she will wear, which broadcaster says her name first, who she'll sit with and much more.

Nobody reaps the benefit of this relationship more than the NFL, which already was doing just fine before Swift crashed the stadium and brought her 367 million followers on Instagram and X to the party.

The attention exceeds even the league's wildest dreams.

Today in History: September 30, James Dean dies at 24

By The Associated Press undefined

Today in History

Today is Saturday, Sept. 30, the 273rd day of 2023. There are 92 days left in the year.

Today's Highlight in History:

On Sept. 30, 1955, actor James Dean was killed at age 24 in a two-car collision near Cholame, California.

On this date:

In 1777, the Continental Congress — forced to flee in the face of advancing British forces — moved to York, Pennsylvania.

In 1791, Mozart's opera "The Magic Flute" premiered in Vienna, Austria.

In 1938, after co-signing the Munich Agreement allowing Nazi annexation of Czechoslovakia's Sudetenland, British Prime Minister Neville Chamberlain said, "I believe it is peace for our time."

In 1947, the World Series was broadcast on television for the first time; the New York Yankees defeated the Brooklyn Dodgers 5-3 in Game 1 (the Yankees went on to win the Series four games to three).

In 1949, the Berlin Airlift came to an end.

In 1954, the first nuclear-powered submarine, the USS Nautilus, was commissioned by the U.S. Navy.

In 1960, "The Flintstones," network television's first animated prime-time series, debuted on ABC.

In 1962, James Meredith, a Black student, was escorted by federal marshals to the campus of the University of Mississippi, where he enrolled for classes the next day; Meredith's presence sparked rioting that left two people dead.

In 1972, Pittsburgh Pirates star Roberto Clemente's had his 3,000th, and final, hit, a double against Jon Matlack of the New York Mets at Three Rivers Stadium.

In 1986, the U.S. released accused Soviet spy Gennadiy Zakharov, one day after the Soviets released American journalist Nicholas Daniloff.

In 1988, Soviet leader Mikhail S. Gorbachev retired President Andrei A. Gromyko from the Politburo and fired other old-guard leaders in a Kremlin shake-up.

In 2001, under threat of U.S. military strikes, Afghanistan's hardline Taliban rulers said explicitly for the first time that Osama bin Laden was still in the country and that they knew where his hideout was located.

In 2012, Mike Trout of the Los Angeles Angels became the first rookie in Major League history to hit 30 home runs and steal 40 bases in a season.

In 2013, Pope Francis announced during a meeting with cardinals that he would canonize two of his most influential predecessors, John Paul II and John XXIII.

In 2017, Monty Hall, the long-running host of TV's "Let's Make a Deal," died of heart failure at his home in Beverly Hills at the age of 96.

In 2021, with only hours to spare, Congress passed and President Joe Biden signed legislation to avoid

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a partial federal shutdown and keep the government funded through Dec. 3.

In 2022, Russian President Vladimir Putin signed treaties to illegally annex more occupied Ukrainian territory in a sharp escalation of his seven-month invasion.

Today's Birthdays: Actor Angie Dickinson is 92. Singer Cissy Houston is 90. Singer Johnny Mathis is 88. Actor Len Cariou is 84. Singer Marilyn McCoo is 80. Former Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Olmert is 78. Actor Vondie Curtis-Hall is 73. Actor Victoria Tennant is 73. Actor John Finn is 71. Rock musician John Lombardo is 71. Singer Deborah Allen is 70. Actor Calvin Levels is 69. Actor Barry Williams is 69. Singer Patrice Rushen is 69. Actor and union president Fran Drescher is 66. Country singer Marty Stuart is 65. Actor Debrah Farentino is 64. Former Sen. Blanche Lincoln, D-Ark., is 63. Actor Crystal Bernard is 62. Actor Eric Stoltz is 62. Rapper-producer Marley Marl is 61. Country singer Eddie Montgomery (Montgomery-Gentry) is 60. Rock singer Trey Anastasio is 59. Actor Monica Bellucci is 59. Rock musician Robby Takac (Goo Goo Dolls) is 59. Actor Lisa Thornhill is 57. Actor Andrea Roth is 56. Actor Amy Landecker is 54. Actor Silas Weir Mitchell is 54. Actor Tony Hale is 53. Actor Jenna Elfman is 52. Actor Ashley Hamilton is 49. Actor Marion Cotillard is 48. Actor Christopher Jackson is 48. Author and journalist Ta-Nehisi Coates is 48. Actor Stark Sands is 45. Actor Mike Damus is 44. Actor Toni Trucks is 43. Former tennis player Martina Hingis is 43. Olympic gold medal gymnast Dominique Moceanu is 42. Actor Lacey Chabert is 41. Actor Kieran Culkin is 41. Singer-rapper T-Pain is 39.