

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, Oct. 07, 2023 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 105 ~ 1 of 76

- [1- Upcoming Events](#)
- [2- Newsweek Bulletin](#)
- [3- Good Luck Girls Soccer Team](#)
- [4- Girls Soccer Pep Rally](#)
- [6- South Dakota Average Gas Prices](#)
- [7- Drought Monitor](#)
- [8- GFP Commission Holds October Meeting](#)
- [9- Lawrence County Fatal Crash](#)
- [10- Conde National League](#)
- [11- SD State Fair Starts Strong, Ends with Record Breaking Heat](#)
- [12- SD News Watch: \\$9 billion project aims to bridge east and west power grids, accelerate renewable energy](#)
- [13- SD SearchLight: State's selection of prison site upsets Lincoln County neighbors](#)
- [15- SD SearchLight: Farm bill stalled amid U.S. House speaker battle, delay of spending bills](#)
- [16- SD SearchLight: As consumers flock to organic foods, lawmakers urge more federal grants for farmers](#)
- [19- Weather Pages](#)
- [23- Daily Devotional](#)
- [24- 2023 Community Events](#)
- [25- Subscription Form](#)
- [26- Lottery Numbers](#)
- [27- News from the Associated Press](#)

Saturday, Oct. 7

Thrift Store open, 10 a.m. to 1 pm.
State Soccer Semifinal at Groton: Groton Area vs. Sioux Falls Christian at 3 p.m.

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



Sunday, Oct. 8

Emmanuel Lutheran: Worship, 9 a.m.; dedicate chapel area and youth room; No Sunday school; Potluck brunch, 10:30 a.m.; Choir, 7 p.m.

St. John's Lutheran: Worship 9 a.m.; worship at Zion, 11 a.m.

United Methodist: NO Sunday school; Conde worship, 8:30 a.m.; Coffee hour, 9:30 a.m.; Groton worship, 10:30 a.m.; Finance committee budget meeting, 11:30 a.m.

Groton CM&A: Sunday School at 9:15 a.m., Worship Service at 10:45 a.m.

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

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

Saturday, Oct. 07, 2023 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 105 ~ 2 of 76

The Bulletin by Newsweek

World in Brief

An appeals court has ordered a pause for the cancellation of Donald Trump's business certificates in response to a Friday filing from the former president's attorneys. Meanwhile, Trump's request to delay his New York civil fraud trial was denied.

Simone Biles has won a sixth gold medal in the individual all-around at the World Artistic Gymnastics Championships, a victory that makes her history's most decorated gymnast.

United Auto Workers will not expand its strike next week now that General Motors (GM) has made key concessions during negotiations. The union said battery plant workers can be included under its national contract through the new agreement with GM.

President Joe Biden told reporters "it is a possibility" that he will meet with Xi Jinping when China's president travels to California next month.

Former President Nicolas Sarkozy of France is facing preliminary charges over his alleged attempts to obstruct an investigation into his alleged use of Libyan funds for his 2007 presidential campaign.

Employers added 336,000 jobs to the U.S. labor market in September, well above the 227,000 net gain recorded in August and far higher than most forecasts predicted, according to data released Friday by the Bureau of Labor Statistics.

A Jewish-American man has been arrested in Israel after he destroyed a number of ancient artifacts, including second-century Roman statues, in a Jerusalem museum. The suspect claimed the statues were "idolatrous and contrary to the Torah."

In the ongoing war in Ukraine, Russia has reportedly downed one of its own fighter jets in Mariupol, the second such reported incident in less than two weeks. Meanwhile, a Kremlin spokesperson told journalists a final report has not yet been released on Yevgeny Prigozhin's cause of death after Russian President Vladimir Putin suggested grenade fragments were found on board the Wagner Group leader's crashed plane.

What to Watch in the Day Ahead

The Red River Rivalry returns Saturday as No. 3 Texas takes on No. 12 Oklahoma at the Cotton Bowl in Dallas, with a noon ET kickoff on ABC. Fans can stream the game on the ESPN app. Texas, led by quarterback Quinn Ewers, is a 6.5-point favorite, according to Wednesday's odds on BetMGM. Oklahoma's odds for an upset are sitting at +200.

The San Francisco 49ers host the Dallas Cowboys in Week 5 of a big Sunday Night Football NFC showdown at Levi's Stadium in Santa Clara, California, from 8:20 ET. The 49ers are a favorite, according to BetMGM NFL odds.

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, Oct. 07, 2023 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 105 ~ 3 of 76



Good Luck Groton Area Girls Soccer Team!

Back: Taryn Traphagen, Carly Gilbert, Gretchen Dinger, Emerlee Jones, Sydney Locke, Jaedyn Penning, Faith Traphagen, Elizabeth Flihs, Brooklynn Hansen, Brenna Imrie, Kennedy Hansen
Front: Kayla Lehr, Ryelle Gilbert, Laila Roberts, Addison Hoffman, Jerica Locke, McKenna Tietz, Avery Crank, Mia Crank (Courtesy Photo)

State Quarterfinals: Groton Area 4, St. Thomas More 0
State Semifinals: Saturday at the Groton Soccer Complex
3 p.m.: Groton Area vs. Sioux Falls Christian

Free viewing on GDILIVE.COM sponsored by these businesses who also wish the Lady Tigers Good Luck!

Avantara Groton
Bahr Spray Foam
Bary Keith at Harr Motors
BK Custom T's & More
Blocker Construction
Farmers Union Co-op Assoc.
Groton Daily Independent
Groton Dairy Queen

Groton Ford
Locke Electric
Lori's Pharmacy
Love to Travel by Becah Flihs
Milbrandt Enterprises Inc.
Northern State University
Rix Farms / F&M Farms
Weismantel Agency

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, Oct. 07, 2023 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 105 ~ 4 of 76



A pep rally was held Friday afternoon at the GHS Arena for the girls soccer team advance to the state semifinals.



The GHS Pep Band played during the pep rally. (Photo lifted from GDILIVE.COM video)

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, Oct. 07, 2023 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 105 ~ 5 of 76



Coach Chris Kucker tried to get the crowd fired up. (Photo lifted from GDILIVE.COM video)



The moms of the players were the cheerleaders. (Photo lifted from GDILIVE.COM video)

The dads were blind folded and were lead by their daughter and given instructions while playing a soccer game.

(Photo lifted from GDILIVE.COM video)

The event was recorded and is available for viewing at 397news.com. The link is on the left side of the horizontal black bar. (Photo lifted from GDILIVE.COM video)



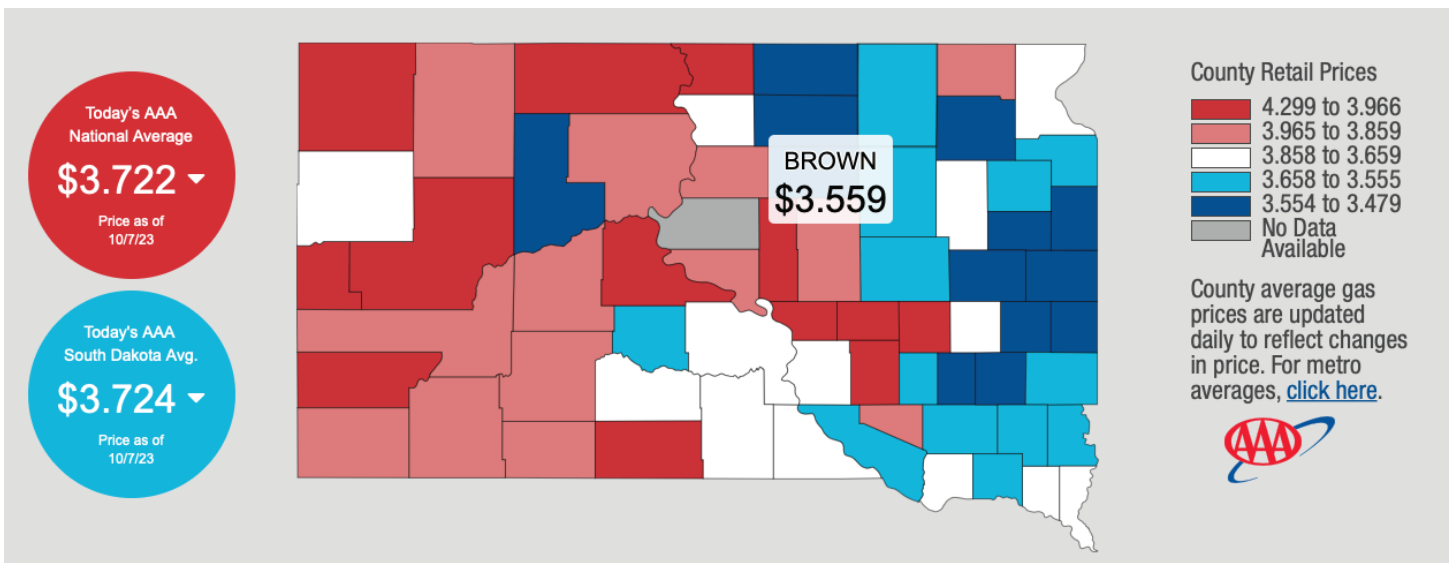
Broton Daily Independent

Saturday, Oct. 07, 2023 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 105 ~ 6 of 76

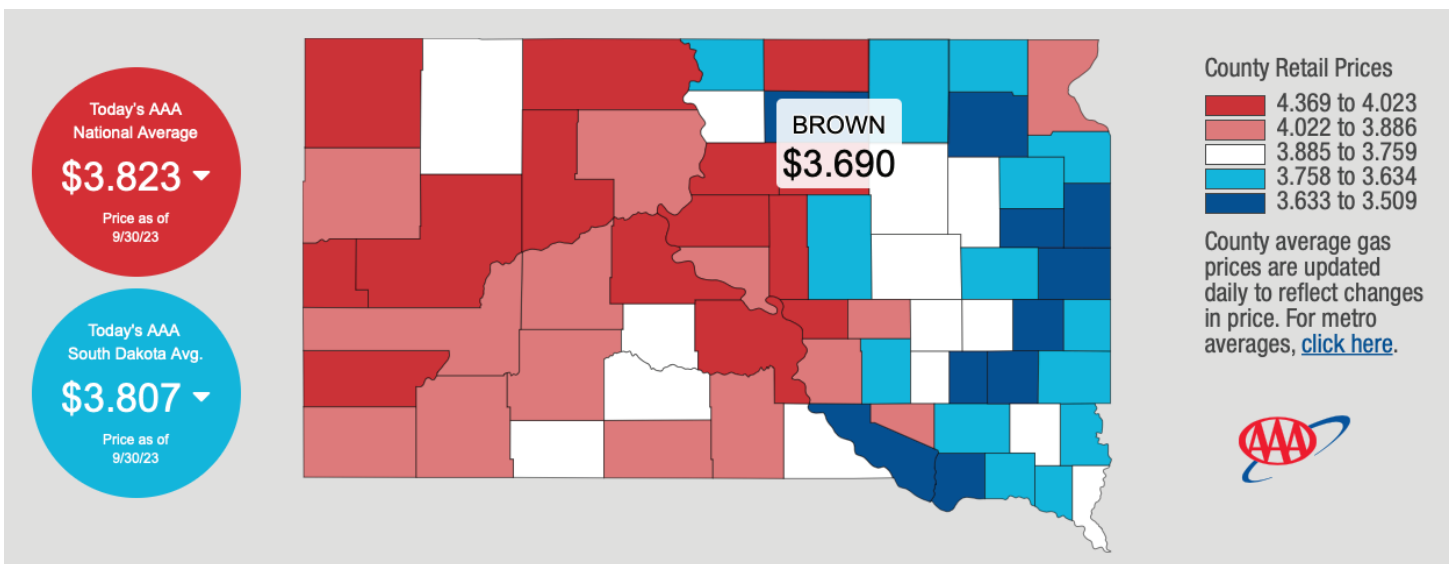
South Dakota Average Gas Prices

	Regular	Mid-Grade	Premium	Diesel
Current Avg.	\$3.724	\$3.925	\$4.384	\$4.405
Yesterday Avg.	\$3.746	\$3.926	\$4.401	\$4.402
Week Ago Avg.	\$3.807	\$3.956	\$4.454	\$4.397
Month Ago Avg.	\$3.722	\$3.899	\$4.362	\$4.256
Year Ago Avg.	\$3.775	\$3.912	\$4.389	\$4.702

This Week



Two Weeks Ago



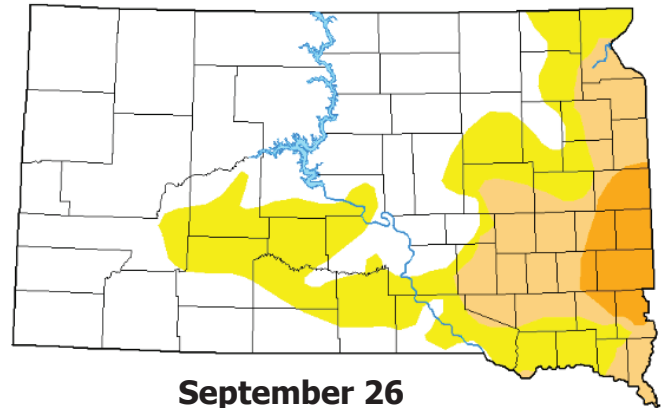
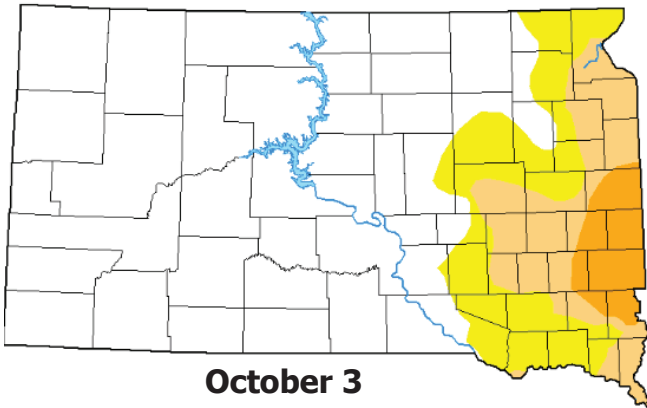
Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, Oct. 07, 2023 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 105 ~ 7 of 76

Drought Classification

- None
- D0 (Abnormally Dry)
- D1 (Moderate Drought)
- D2 (Severe Drought)
- D3 (Extreme Drought)
- D4 (Exceptional Drought)
- No Data

Drought Monitor



Increasing 30 to 60-day deficits along with support from SPIs at various time scales and the NDMC's short-term drought blend, a 1-category degradation was made to northeastern Kansas and southeastern Nebraska. Despite a mostly dry week across southern South Dakota, a reassessment of current indicators such as NDMC's drought blends supported a decrease in abnormal dryness (D0) and moderate drought (D1) in that area. A 1-category degradation was made to northwestern Colorado, based on SPEIs at multiple time scales along with support from soil moisture and vegetation indicators.

GFP Commission Holds October Meeting

PIERRE, S.D. – The South Dakota Game, Fish and Parks (GFP) Commission held their October Meeting at Cadillac Jack's Resort in Deadwood October 5-6.

FINALIZATIONS

Hunt for Habitat

The Commission modified the licenses offered through the Hunt for Habitat raffle package. Licenses available through the raffle include:

- (1) Custer State Park Trophy Bison
- (2) Any Deer
- (3) Any Deer and Any Elk Package

The any antelope licenses were removed from the previous three license packages, and two any deer licenses were added to provide an opportunity for two additional license options, with a total of nine licenses issued.

Free Park Entrance and Fishing

The Commission removed Mother's Day and Father's Day from the park entrance license and fishing license exemption. Usage on both of these days, by those seeking free entrance, was minimal. Mother's Day weather can be challenging, and many individuals have purchased their park entrance licenses and/or fishing licenses by Father's Day.

The traditional Open House Weekend, the weekend prior to Memorial Day, will remain open for both free park entrance and free fishing.

ADDITIONAL ACTION

Nonresident One-Day Fishing License

The Commission continued their conversation to remove the one-day nonresident fishing license option. Since 2020, there has been a spike in one-day nonresident fishing licenses. Assessments of these license sales indicate some individuals are taking advantage of the license structure to obtain multiple licenses while exempting themselves from purchasing the the Habitat Stamp. The three-day and annual fishing licenses would both remain available for nonresidents.

The Commission tabled action on this topic until the November meeting to allow for additional public comment opportunity.

Public Comments Being Accepted

To hear the discussion on these proposals, audio from the meeting is available through South Dakota Public Broadcasting and will soon be available on the GFP website as part of the meeting archive.

To see these proposals in their entirety, visit gfp.sd.gov/commission/information.

To be included in the public record and to be considered by the Commission, comments must include a full name and city of residence and be submitted by 11:59 p.m. CDT on October 29.

The next GFP Commission meeting will be held in Madison November 2-3.

Lawrence County Fatal Crash

What: Two vehicle fatal crash
Where: I-90, mile marker 16, 2 miles east of Spearfish, S.D.
When: 6:45 p.m., Thursday, October 5, 2023

Driver 1: Male, 20, No injuries
Vehicle 1: 2007 Dodge Ram

Driver 2: Male, 39, Fatal injuries
Vehicle 2: 2015 Nissan Altima

Lawrence County, S.D.- One person died Thursday evening in a two vehicle crash 2 miles east of Spearfish, S.D.

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

Preliminary crash information indicates a 2015 Nissan Altima was stopped in the Westbound driving lane of I-90. A 2007 Dodge Ram struck the rear of the Nissan. Both vehicles came to a final rest in the median of the interstate.

The 20-year-old male driver of the Dodge Ram was not injured.
He was wearing a seatbelt.

The 39-year-old male driver of the Nissan Altima sustained fatal injuries and was declared deceased at the scene.
He was not wearing a seatbelt.

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

The Highway Patrol is an agency of the South Dakota Department of Public Safety.

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, Oct. 07, 2023 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 105 ~ 10 of 76

Conde National League

October 2, 2023

Team Standings

Cubs	14
Giants	10 ½
Braves	9
Tigers	6
Pirates	5
Mets	3 ½

Men

High scores

Ryan Bethke	188
Russ Bethke	184
Austin Schulke	180

High series

Chad Furney	500
Austin Schulke	475
Russ Bethke	472

Women

High scores

Vickie Kramp	216
Joyce Walter	189
Nancy Radke	159

High series

Vickie Kramp	499
Joyce Walter	483
Michelle Johnson	384

Conde National League

September 25, 2023

Team Standings

Cubs	11
Giants	9 ½
Braves	6
Tigers	5
Pirates	3
Mets	1 ½

Men

High scores

Russ Bethke	214
Ryan Bethke	190
Butch Farmen	186

High series

Ryan Bethke	541
Russ Bethke	500
Austin Schulke	493

Women

High scores

Vickie Kramp	192
Suzi Easthouse	171
Sam Bahr	169

High series

Vickie Kramp	498
Sam Bahr	491
Suzi Easthouse	458

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, Oct. 07, 2023 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 105 ~ 11 of 76

SD State Fair Starts Strong, Ends with Record Breaking Heat

HURON, S.D. – The 2023 South Dakota State Fair, which ran from August 31 – September 4, got off to a strong start. Despite the heat, Fair participation remained strong through the weekend! The Fair offered family friendly attractions, six stages of entertainment, thrilling carnival rides, world class livestock shows, agricultural education, and endless shopping opportunities.

This year's State Fair experience was like no other, with temperatures soaring on Saturday, Sunday, and Monday, exceeding 100 degrees each day. Sunday's 103 temperature in Huron broke a 130-year record from 1893, and Monday's 102 temperature broke a record from 1913.

Youth Participation and Education

More than 1,400 exhibitors entered more than 8,500 exhibits in open class livestock and non-livestock competitions.

The Arts & Education Building hosted 5,800 education exhibits.

9,375 4-H display exhibits, livestock exhibits, and youth in action entries participated in the Fair.

369 FFA exhibitors showcased over 950 entries.

Over 675 students and teachers participated in South Dakota's Largest Classroom.

Nearly 50 schools and libraries participated in the Read and Win program sponsored by Ag Performance, handing out over 8,600 youth daily admission gate passes to young readers.

Attendance and Economic Impact

178,246 guests passed through the gates, and nearly 2,000 campers stayed at the fairground's campsites, helping set the pace for a successful State Fair.

322 commercial exhibitors filled 607 vendor locations.

More than \$2.6 million was spent by fairgoers on goods, beverage, specialty concessions, and carnival rides.

The Fair generated over \$217,000 in tax revenue.

Additional Highlights

The Open Class Sheep Show and Open Class Beef Show were held ahead of the Fair, kicking off fair week August 26 through 30.

The DEX: Dakota Events Complex ribbon cutting was held Thursday, August 31. In total, the DEX is a 150,000 square-foot open concept facility, capable of hosting two full-sized equestrian arenas and seating for 5,000+ people. Alternatively, it is equipped to host up to 1,700 cattle stalls, two show rings, and visitor seating, further solidifying its adaptability. During the 2023 State Fair, the DEX was set with 1,200 cattle stalls and one large show ring, giving exhibitors and spectators the best possible showing and viewing experience. Thank you to all who helped bring this vision to life!

The 2024 South Dakota State Fair dates will be Thursday, August 29 – Monday, September 2. For more information about the South Dakota State Fair, contact the Fair office at 800-529-0900, visit www.sdstate-fair.com or find them on Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter.



SOUTH DAKOTA SEARCHLIGHT

<https://southdakotasearchlight.com>

\$9 billion project aims to bridge east and west power grids, accelerate renewable energy

4,000-megawatt transmission line would run across southern South Dakota

BY: JOSHUA HAIAR - OCTOBER 6, 2023 5:16 PM

There are few wind turbines west of the Missouri River in South Dakota, and some experts say a lack of transmission lines is the main reason.

A group of energy consultants is raising money to study a potential project that could change that. The \$9 billion transmission line would unite the eastern and western power grids of the U.S. with a line traversing southern South Dakota.

The Power from the Prairie project would connect the two U.S. grids (which both have a footprint in South Dakota) with a 4,000-megawatt electric transmission line. That's enough electricity to power around 4 million homes, according to Robert Schulte, the project's president and principal at Schulte Associates, an energy consulting firm in North Carolina. He spoke with the South Dakota Wind Energy Association and South Dakota Renewable Energy Association about the project on Sept. 29 in Sioux Falls.

"We are creating a superhighway to export clean energy out of the Upper Midwest," Schulte said. He said some electric utilities, such as local cooperatives, rarely think outside of their own service territories, which means they don't plan inter-regionally.

"We're out to be productively disruptive to the old way of doing things," Schulte said.

The transmission line would run across South Dakota from eastern Colorado to central Iowa. It would connect to other projects that have already been permitted. The Colorado end would connect to lines that run all the way to California, and the Iowa end would connect to a line that extends to Illinois.

The project's leaders are recruiting utilities to help fund an 18-month, \$4.8 million proof-of-concept study. The \$9 billion project would largely be funded by those utilities, which would in turn receive an allocation of megawatts to transmit via the line.

"That's necessary because the project is too big for any one of them to accomplish," Schulte said.

If the study proves the project worthwhile, it would still have a long way to go before construction begins. That includes routing and siting permits from state regulators, electric rate-making decisions from the federal government, and zoning permits from counties. Plus, the project would require easements or eminent domain along the route.

South Dakota already produces twice as much electricity as it uses. The new infrastructure would turn the state into an even greater energy exporter and provide a boost to the renewable energy sector west of the Missouri River, where there is relatively little compared to the eastern part of the state.

The lack of adequate transmission lines in the West River region has hampered the development and integration of renewable sources. And while there are some smaller lines that already connect the nation's eastern and western grids in South Dakota, the existing lines only serve local or regional needs.

Rapid City is connected to the nation's western grid, and Sioux Falls is connected to the eastern grid. A handful of transmission lines connect to dams on either side of the Missouri River and run west and east, but none cross the river in South Dakota.

"Crossing the Missouri River is costly and there is relatively little demand for electricity out there," Schulte said of the region immediately west of the river. He said crossing the river is one of the project's biggest and most expensive hurdles.

The new project would include multiple "onramps and offramps" along the route, which would allow

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, Oct. 07, 2023 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 105 ~ 13 of 76

up to 3,000 megawatts of renewable energy development to be plugged into the transmission line, from East River as well as West. The other 1,000 megawatts would be reserved for electricity already traveling along the line.

The exact route has yet to be determined, but the intent is somewhere below Interstate 90 and above the state's southern border.

When the sun isn't shining enough in California, South Dakota could export wind energy to that region and vice versa, mitigating concerns about the excess energy that renewable sources sometimes produce and what happens when they don't produce enough.

"It makes renewable energy more reliable," Schulte said. "California has solar that's being overproduced and is worthless or worse, and wind, on average, operates more at night."

Schulte said the project not only promises enhanced energy resilience but also holds the potential to generate employment opportunities in the region.

"Energy jobs used to be in the coal mine," Schulte said. "Now, they are in renewables."

South Dakota's wind turbines can currently produce 3,219 megawatts of electricity. Another 454 megawatts worth of wind turbines are under construction.

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

State's selection of prison site upsets Lincoln County neighbors

Some landowners near future penitentiary also targeted for carbon pipeline

BY: JOHN HULT - OCTOBER 6, 2023 1:50 PM

The multimillion-dollar replacement for the South Dakota State Penitentiary is set to appear on farm ground south of Harrisburg in Lincoln County.

County commissioners have known that the site was under consideration for at least six weeks. Some state lawmakers who represent the area have known for longer.

Sarah Ulmer, who lives half a mile from the site with her husband and 16-month-old daughter, learned about her next potential neighbor about 24 hours before the state finalized the appraisal on the land Friday morning.

The cropland is already state-owned by the Office of School and Public Lands. The South Dakota Board of Appraisal set a value of \$7.9 million for the two tracts, clearing a path for transfer of the 320-acre site to the state Department of Corrections.

The land has been leased for farming, with the proceeds used to benefit public schools. The land swap will see the money transferred from the DOC into a state trust fund whose proceeds will continue to flow to K-12 schools.

DOC officials called the site selection a win for schools and corrections.

"This sale allows us to fulfill our constitutional duty to make money for education while providing a key public safety need for the future," Commissioner of Schools and Public Lands Brock Greenfield said in a prepared statement after the appraisal.

Neighbors react

Ulmer and her neighbors, however – who've spent the last year fighting a proposed carbon dioxide pipeline that would run through their land – are not pleased.

"I've lived here 10 years, and I've never feared for my safety when I've gone out at night," Ulmer said. "That would be 100% out the door, knowing that that is a mile away from my home. These are murderers, rapists. These aren't just somebody that smoked some pot or had a few traffic violations."

There's been no notice given from the state on the site's possible future, Ulmer said. She and her neighbors around the intersection of 477th Avenue and 277th Street's gravel roads are concerned about land

values, traffic and the safety of their children.

Ulmer recalls one fugitive alert in her time on the acreage, which she said carried a warning about old barns and outbuildings as potential hiding places.

"We're all just in absolute shock and fear, especially having just gone through all this pipeline stuff for the last year and a half," Ulmer said. "I'm exhausted by that, but I am horrified. I can't believe that they would think that this is far enough away from homes."

The pipeline project from Summit Carbon Solutions, which would run through the area, was denied a permit by the Public Utilities Commission last month. Shortly thereafter, Summit officials announced a cessation of all eminent domain lawsuits against landowners. The company also said this week that it plans to re-apply for a permit.

Michelle Jensen, a neighbor to Ulmer, was among the landowners who'd been targeted with an eminent domain condemnation by the pipeline company.

The withdrawal of the condemnation action was a relief for Jensen, who purchased 63 acres of land with her husband in early 2021 and made plans for its future. The relief was short-lived, though. A call from the neighbor living immediately across 477th Street from the possible prison site came about two days ago.

"My husband and I invested everything we've got into this place, and this is literally going to destroy it," Jensen said.

Lawmakers back prison project

Lawmakers set aside \$383 million for the construction of a new state penitentiary last winter. The current penitentiary was built in 1881, sits in the middle of the state's most populous city in Sioux Falls and has a linear design unfit for modern corrections.

DOC Secretary Kellie Wasko told lawmakers that "The Hill," as the prison is colloquially known, needs to be replaced for the safety of everyone who lives and works there.

"We have had staff that have said that they don't feel safe," Wasko said in January. "I'll be honest with you, I've been doing prisons for a long time, and on The Hill, I don't feel safe."

On Friday, Wasko said in a press release that the site in Lincoln County is the right choice.

"This site is the best choice for a modern correctional facility that supports our state's public safety needs, minimizes the impact on community growth, and keeps us close to available workforce," Wasko said.

The process of land selection for the new 1,500-bed facility has been largely secretive, though Sioux Falls Mayor Paul TenHaken has been vocal in his desire to move it out of city limits.

The DOC, however, has expressed concerns about the feasibility of a new site, given that most of the hundreds of current prison employees on the Hill live in and around Sioux Falls. The proposed new prison site is about 15 miles from the city.

Rep. Kevin Jensen, R-Canton, said the Lincoln County site is attractive for several reasons: its proximity to the city, access to water infrastructure and its status as state-owned land chief among them.

Jensen, who said he's been following the situation and has talked with the Governor's Office about it, knows that the DOC had hoped for a site closer to Interstate 29. But the best offer on a suitable site from a private landowner in that area came in north of \$70,000 per acre, Jensen said — roughly triple the appraised value set Friday morning.

Jensen said he's sympathetic to the concerns of neighbors, noting there are some acreages in the rural area with nearly new homes on them. Neighbors, Ulmer among them, expressed their concerns to him Friday. Some were surprised that the state would choose an area where young families and generational farms are present.

"It's a community of people over there who all know each other, and now we're going to plop a prison there," Jensen said.

The DOC's issue with a further-flung site, Jensen said, is that "out in the middle of nowhere in South Dakota, we don't have a workforce."

Lincoln County Commissioner Jim Schmidt told Sioux Falls Live this week that while he understands neighbor concerns, he sees the project as a valuable force for economic growth in the county.

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, Oct. 07, 2023 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 105 ~ 15 of 76

Next steps

Should the DOC choose to move forward with a land swap at the price point set Friday, the cash would be transferred into the School and Public Lands Trust Fund for the benefit of South Dakota schools, Greenfield said. The money from the DOC would be managed by the South Dakota Investment Council, with the returns used for schools.

The Board of Appraisal valuation, set by Greenfield and Auditor Rich Sattgast, was set at the request of the DOC, Greenfield said during Friday's meeting.

The DOC did not respond to a request for further comment on the prison site beyond its press release.

The agency has said that it doesn't have plans to demolish the penitentiary, and that two newer facilities on the prison complex grounds – the maximum security Jameson Annex and community work center – would remain on the grounds. Jameson is home to death row inmates, inmates in administrative segregation for disciplinary reasons, and a mental health unit. Inmates in the work release center can leave the prison grounds for jobs.

The hulking quartzite monolith of The Hill, built eight years before South Dakota statehood, would be decommissioned.

In addition to the new men's prison, the DOC is working to build a new women's prison in Rapid City, on land purchased in 2022.

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.

Farm bill stalled amid U.S. House speaker battle, delay of spending bills

BY: ASHLEY MURRAY - OCTOBER 6, 2023 3:28 PM

WASHINGTON — As Congress faces another pressing deadline to fund the government and the U.S. House grinds to a halt without a speaker, the reauthorization of the nation's agriculture and hunger programs has taken a back seat.

But lawmakers tasked with shepherding the new version maintain their progress is "in good shape."

The previous farm bill expired Sept. 30 and its renewal, a process that occurs every five years, remains "in the drafting stage," said Sen. John Boozman, the Arkansas GOP lawmaker and ranking member of the Senate Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition and Forestry.

"I know myself and Senator Stabenow, our teams are working together to try and get ideas in the text. And so we're moving forward," Boozman told reporters Wednesday.

Stabenow of Michigan chairs the committee.

"It's been difficult because the appropriations process has kind of sucked all the wind out. But we're in good shape. We don't need an extension until the first of the year. If we do need an extension, I think we'll be looking in the November time frame as we do the CR."

The CR, or continuing resolution, is the funding compromise Congress struck last weekend just hours before a partial government shutdown. The temporary spending measure expires Nov. 17.

The farm bill and long-term government funding are completely different processes, but GOP House majority infighting over appropriations has stalled other priorities.

And, with the ouster of former House Speaker and California Republican Kevin McCarthy by a handful of far-right party members and all House Democrats, the lower chamber is frozen.

"As with every Farm Bill, there are forces and circumstances out of our control. What is always a complicated process has become a little more complicated, but our work continues to produce an effective Farm Bill," Pennsylvania GOP Rep. Glenn "GT" Thompson, who chairs the House Committee on Agriculture, said in an emailed statement.

Worries over lack of progress

Thompson and fellow lawmakers have spent thousands of hours over the past two years collecting feedback from constituents on what they want to see in the multi-year bill that is forecast to cost \$1.5 trillion.

But some constituents say despite reassurance that the farm bill is progressing, they remain concerned about its delay, as well as funding for several of its programs, including the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, or SNAP, formerly known as food stamps.

As a mandatory program, SNAP will continue as long as Congress approves either temporary or long-term government funding.

"The delay in considering important legislation, such as agriculture appropriations and the farm bill, creates a great deal of uncertainty for farmers and ranchers. The 2018 farm bill already expired," Sam Kieffer, the American Farm Bureau Federation's vice president of public policy, said in a statement.

"All families, including those in rural America, face rising interest rates, high inflation and turbulence in the marketplace," he continued. "The farm bill provides certainty to those who grow this nation's food, fuel and fiber and is crucial to ensuring a safe and affordable food supply. Congress has always come through on a farm bill, and they must do it again. Every family in America is counting on it."

The 2018 farm bill was not signed into law until Dec. 20 of that year.

The expansive agricultural and food policy bill covers farmer safety net programs, conservation and sustainability incentives, international trade, rural area development, and food and nutrition programs for low-income earners — the last of which by far accounts for the largest portion of the bill. The legislation is one of Congress' omnibus packages, meaning it's made up of numerous provisions from many lawmakers.

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

As consumers flock to organic foods, lawmakers urge more federal grants for farmers

BY: SAMANTHA DIETEL - OCTOBER 6, 2023 1:17 PM

WASHINGTON — U.S. lawmakers are pushing a bill that would boost support for organic farmers amid rising demand for their products.

U.S. Sens. Tammy Baldwin of Wisconsin and Angus King of Maine in the Senate, alongside U.S. Reps. Chellie Pingree of Maine and Annie Kuster of New Hampshire in the House, introduced the Organic Market Development Act in late September. The bill would codify and increase funding for the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Organic Market Development Grant program, which allows organic farmers and producers to apply for grants to help support their businesses.

The lawmakers are working to include this legislation in the upcoming farm bill.

The bill is also co-sponsored by Sens. Peter Welch, a Vermont Democrat, and Kristen Gillibrand, a New York Democrat. Rep. Andrea Salinas, an Oregon Democrat, is also a co-sponsor.

Earlier this year, the OMDG program was provided a one-time \$75 million allotment through the Commodity Credit Corporation. The program is currently only funded for the 2023 fiscal year, a spokesperson from Pingree's office said in a written statement.

This bill would maintain that \$75 million each year while also investing an additional recurring \$25 million in appropriations beginning with the 2024 fiscal year.

"This bicameral bill would formally authorize the Organic Market Development Grant program by Congress to ensure it is a long-lasting, continued program versus a one-time round of funding," a spokesperson from Pingree's office said.

Demand for organic food

Organic agriculture sales reached \$60 billion last year and are continuing to rise, according to a Baldwin press release.

"We know the demand for organic foods is growing dramatically right now, and so we want to equip our organic farmers with the tools they need to meet that demand," Baldwin, a Democrat, told States Newsroom.

King, an independent, said the bill would help his state's growing organic food movement, which he said is "an important part of our agricultural economy."

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, Oct. 07, 2023 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 105 ~ 17 of 76

"Anything I can do to help support the growth of that business is something I'm very interested in," King said. "That's why I introduced the bill. It's a big deal."

Potential aid to organic farmers

According to the Baldwin release, the Organic Market Development Grant program "aims to support the development of new and expanded organic markets by building and expanding capacity" for many aspects of the organic agriculture industry, including:

Production

Aggregation

Processing

Manufacturing

Storing

Transporting

Wholesaling

Distribution

Development of consumer markets

Organic farmers and producers can use these funds to upgrade their equipment and facilities, according to the Baldwin release.

Baldwin said the legislation would "build on the success of the Organic Market Development Grant program and allow more producers to access these resources and tools to grow our agriculture economy and ensure Wisconsin remains a leader in the organic food industry."

Wisconsin had the second-highest number of certified organic farms in the U.S. in 2021 with 1,455, according to a USDA report.

"Wisconsin's organic farmers and businesses are stepping up to meet the growing demand for organic products, and I'm committed to delivering the support they need to grow their businesses and reach new markets," Baldwin said in a press release.

Organic food in Maine

King said Maine's organic farmers "face increasing challenges from changing global markets, climate change," so they should receive continued support and resources to "evolve with the times."

"The Organic Market Development Act would codify an existing, and highly in demand, grant program to ensure the continuance of grant funding to Maine's organic farmers so that they can respond to these challenges and pave the way for the future of the organic food industry," King said in a press release.

Pingree, a Maine Democrat who is a member of both the House Agriculture Committee and House Appropriations Agriculture Subcommittee, is also a longtime organic farmer.

"As more farmers consider making the transition from conventional to organic farming, we must strengthen organic processing and storage and enhance market opportunities," Pingree said in a press release.

Pingree is also a co-chair of the House Organic Caucus, and she worked on the previous farm bill.

"The bill also expands grants to cover cold storage, which there is a huge, unmet need for. In Maine, for example, a dairy farmer applied for an Organic Market Development Grant, but wasn't eligible because it was for cold storage," a spokesperson from Pingree's office said. "This bill would ensure the program grants cover cold storage, which is an important aspect of successful, organic farming."

The OMDG program received approximately 200 applications from across the U.S. While grants have not been awarded yet, Pingree's spokesperson said it is anticipated that "all the current funds allocated will be used."

Organic farmers and producers in Maine and across the country have been asking for these resources for years, Pingree's spokesperson said, and cited a 2020 study that ranked Maine second in the nation for the availability of organic food.

"There's a strong need in Maine and across the U.S. for more organic processing, storage and new marketing opportunities," Pingree's spokesperson said. "This bill would do just that."

The Maine Organic Farmers and Gardeners Association has shown support for the bill. MOFGA said the

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, Oct. 07, 2023 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 105 ~ 18 of 76

bill can help keep more money in Maine's rural farming communities if producers can add value to their products before they are sold, according to Pingree's spokesperson.

"MOFGA also noted this could especially benefit our organic dairy community by adding organic dairy processing and cold storage in the state, both of which are currently lacking," Pingree's spokesperson said.

Dairy Business Innovation model

Baldwin told States Newsroom that the model for this bill comes from the Dairy Business Innovation Act, which similarly seeks to increase funding for the Dairy Business Innovation Initiatives.

These initiatives "support dairy businesses in the development, production, marketing and distribution" of their products, according to the USDA.

Rep. Derrick Van Orden, a Wisconsin Republican, introduced the Dairy Business Innovation Act in the House in July. Baldwin, alongside Sen. Marsha Blackburn, a Tennessee Republican, introduced the Senate counterpart.

There is approximately \$23 million available for Dairy Business Innovation Initiatives. The Dairy Business Innovation Act would allocate an additional \$16 million each year to these projects.

"We kind of hope we can do the same in organics, and we're very excited about it," Baldwin said.

Will it be included in the farm bill?

King said the logical place for this legislation is in the next farm bill.

"That's our target," he said.

The previous farm bill expired at the end of September, and Congress is months away from passing a new one.

A spokesperson from Pingree's office said the Organic Market Development Act has "strong champions in the House and Senate and we will be pushing for its inclusion in the Farm Bill."

"Negotiations are ongoing," a spokesperson from Pingree's office said.

King said he spoke with Sens. Debbie Stabenow of Michigan and John Boozman of Arkansas, who are leading the creation of the next farm bill. He said "it's hard to tell at this point" whether this legislation will make it in.

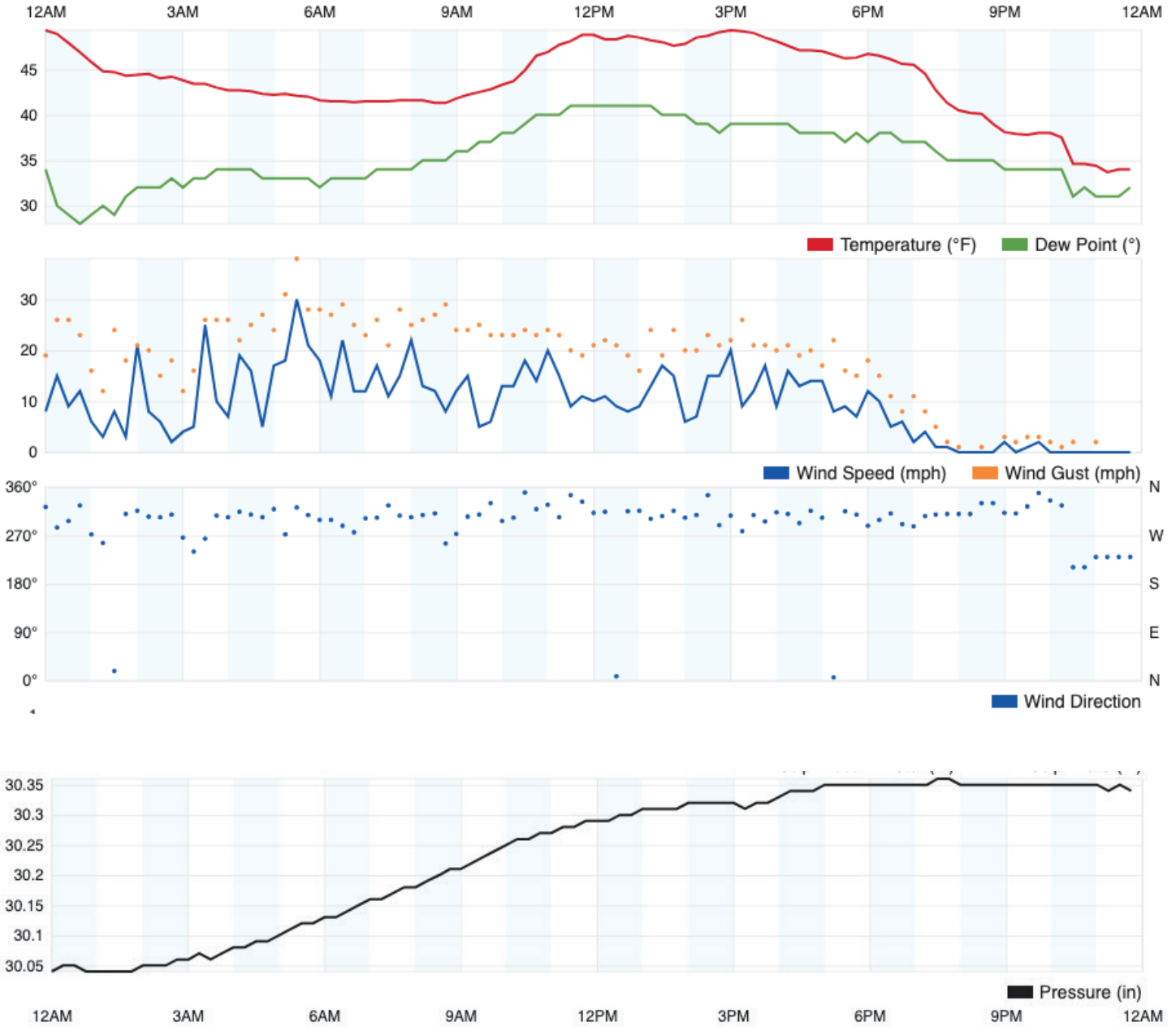
"We are hopeful this bicameral legislation can ultimately be realized in the next farm bill," said Adam Warthesen, the senior director of government and industry affairs for Organic Valley, according to the Baldwin press release. Organic Valley is a brand and cooperative of organic farmers headquartered in La Farge, Wisconsin.

Samantha Dietel is a reporter intern in Washington, D.C. She is pursuing a degree in journalism at the University of Missouri-Columbia. She has previously covered the Missouri legislature in Jefferson City as a reporter for the Columbia Missourian.

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, Oct. 07, 2023 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 105 ~ 19 of 76

Yesterday's Groton Weather Graphs



Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, Oct. 07, 2023 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 105 ~ 20 of 76

Sat Oct 7	Sun Oct 8	Mon Oct 9	Tue Oct 10	Wed Oct 11	Thu Oct 12	Fri Oct 13
60°F 38°F	60°F 34°F	54°F 31°F	57°F 36°F	58°F 39°F	53°F 37°F	51°F 40°F
S 13 MPH	NNW 17 MPH	NNE 7 MPH	E 9 MPH	E 13 MPH	NE 17 MPH	N 15 MPH
					20%	20%



Three-Day Outlook

October 7, 2023
8:17 AM



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

National Weather Service
Aberdeen, SD

After a frosty morning across the region, temperatures will rebound nicely this afternoon into the 60s along and west of the James River. Further east, highs will be in the 50s. Over the next couple days, 50s and 60s will be common temperatures, with dry conditions prevailing. Breezy north winds will develop on Sunday, generally from 15 to 25 mph.

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, Oct. 07, 2023 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 105 ~ 21 of 76

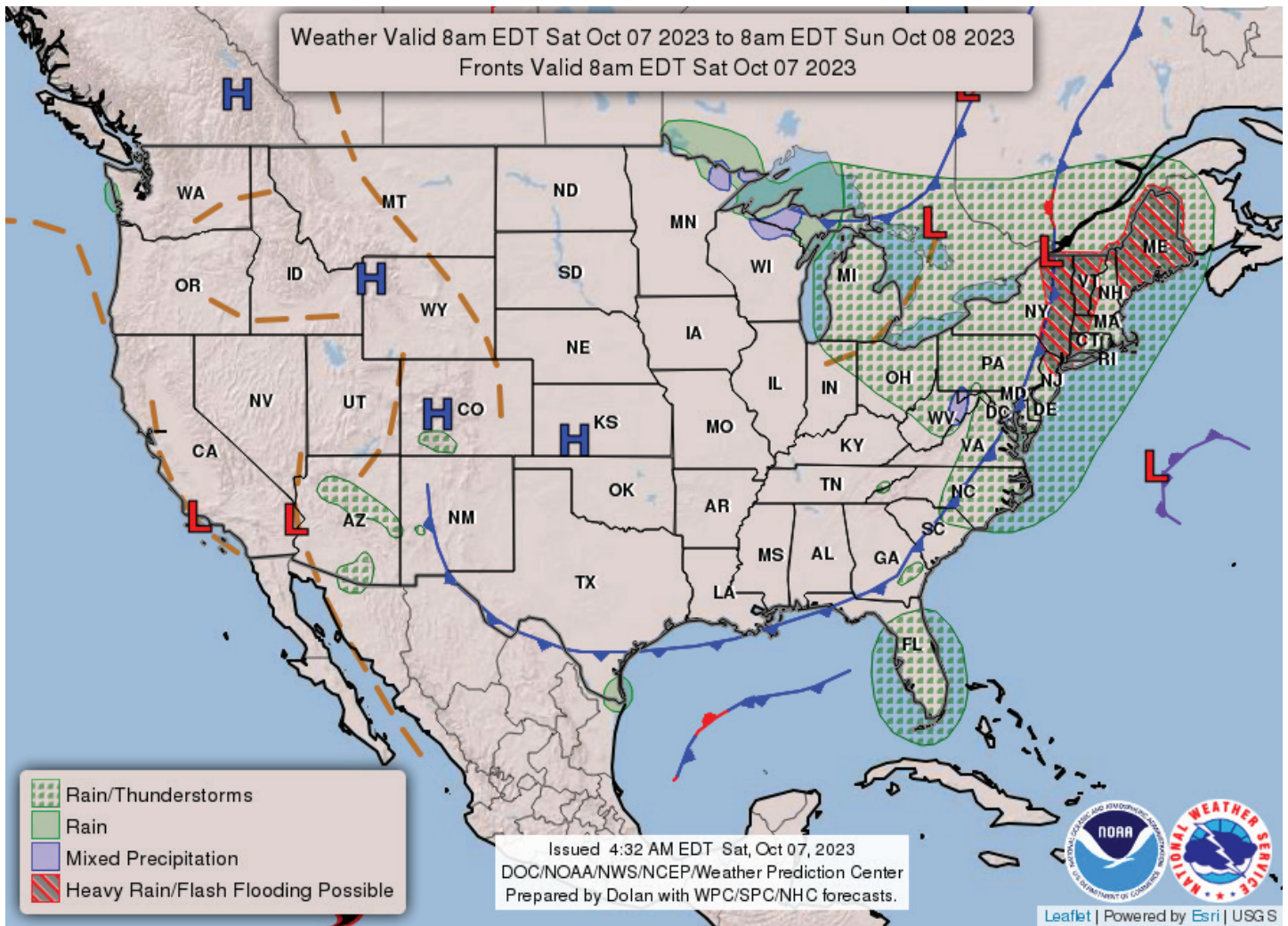
Yesterday's Groton Weather

High Temp: 50 °F at 3:05 PM
Low Temp: 34 °F at 11:13 PM
Wind: 38 mph at 5:27 AM
Precip: : 0.00

Today's Info

Record High: 91 in 1909
Record Low: 14 in 2012
Average High: 65
Average Low: 38
Average Precip in Oct.: 0.54
Precip to date in Oct.: 0.06
Average Precip to date: 18.87
Precip Year to Date: 21.83
Sunset Tonight: 7:03:36 PM
Sunrise Tomorrow: 7:38:05 AM

Day length: 11 hours, 26 minutes



Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, Oct. 07, 2023 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 105 ~ 22 of 76

Today in Weather History

October 7, 1970: On October 7th through the 10th, 1970, a record-breaking early season snowstorm hit parts of southern South Dakota. Snowfall of 5 to 9 inches was typical across the southwest and south-central on the 7th. Late on October 8th and into the 9th of 1970, the state's southeast portion was hit. The 5 inches that fell in Sioux Falls is the earliest significant snow on record for the area.

The heavy snows also affected portions of Kansas, Nebraska, western Iowa, and western Minnesota. Amounts of up to 7 inches were recorded in northwest Iowa. The heavy, wet snow snapped many tree branches and downed power lines. Sioux City recorded their heaviest snow for so early in the season. The snow was very wet and heavy but melted quickly over the next several days.

1825: Raging forest fires in the Miramichi region of New Brunswick, Canada, destroy over 3 million acres of forest. As many as 500 people were killed. The blaze has been partly attributed to unusually hot weather in the fall and summer of 1825, coupled with outdoor fires by settlers and loggers.

1849: High winds swept the passengers of the St. John out to sea. This resulted in a loss of 143 people.

1959: The Soviet spacecraft, Luna 3, captured the first images of the far side of the Moon. The first image was taken at 3:30 UTC on the 7th of October.

1970 - Widespread flooding took place across Puerto Rico. Rainfall amounts for the day ranged up to seventeen inches at Aibonito. A slow moving tropical depression was responsible for six days of torrential rains across the island. Totals in the Eastern Interior Division averaged thirty inches, with 38.4 inches at Jayuya. Flooding claimed eighteen lives, and resulted in 62 million dollars damage. (David Ludlum) (The Weather Channel)

1981 - Seattle, WA, received four inches of rain in 24 hours, a record for the city. (The Weather Channel)

1987 - It was another hot day in the southwestern U.S. Tucson, AZ, hit 101 degrees for the second day in a row to again equal their record for the month of October. Phoenix AZ reported a record high of 103 degrees, and Blythe CA and Yuma AZ tied for honors as the hot spot in the nation with afternoon highs of 108 degrees. (The National Weather Summary)

1988 - Morning fog in the central U.S. reduced the visibility to near zero at some locations. Morning lows of 28 degrees at Rockford IL and 24 degrees at Waterloo IA were records for the date. Afternoon highs of 92 degrees at Hollywood FL and Miami FL were records for the date. (The National Weather Summary)

1989 - Morning thunderstorms in central Texas drenched San Antonio with 3.10 inches of rain in six hours causing local flooding in northeastern sections of the city. Temperatures dipped below the freezing mark from the Northern Rockies to the Upper Mississippi Valley. (The National Weather Summary)

2016: Hurricane Matthew was off the northeast coast of Florida. Matthew brought intense rainfall to the Carolinas on the 8th and 9th.

2017: A tornado touched down near Jenner in Alberta, Canada

2018: Only 8 hours after becoming a depression, the National Hurricane Center upgraded the system to Tropical Storm Michael. Tropical storm force winds and torrential downpours were affecting portions of the coastal east-central Yucatan Peninsula.

Daily Devotionals

Seeds of Hope

WHO ARE YOU FOLLOWING?

It was the first time that Wayne and his Dad rode their bikes through the neighborhood. Wayne was excited as they rode down one street and then another, turned left, turned right, and finally arrived at home. Taking off his helmet, Wayne looked up at a smiling father and said, "Thanks, Dad, if it weren't for you, I wouldn't have known where to go and I'd be lost by now."

The Psalmist expressed the same idea and trust when he said to the Lord, "Who have I but you?"

But not all of us have that much faith in the Lord. John reports a story about Jesus and His disciples. They were having some problems with His teachings and Jesus said, "This is very hard to understand." As a result, we read that "many of His disciples turned away and deserted Him."

Have you ever wondered why those disciples turned away from Jesus? The Bible does not give any specific reason. No doubt, in my mind, they left Him then for the same reason people leave Him today: self-centered desires and an unwillingness to make Him the Lord of their life.

Many accept the Lord for what they think He will do for them - not what they can do for Him and with Him and through Him. Many have expectations that go in one direction only: From God to us and for us for anything we want, now and forever, Amen.

But this is not how God works. If we accept Him as Savior and follow Him as Lord, wherever He leads us, "All these things (that we need) will be added to us."

Prayer: Teach us, Lord, that You call us to Yourself for Your purpose, May we love You, honor You and bring glory to Your name. May You be first and foremost in our lives. In Jesus' Name, Amen.

Scripture For Today: Then he said, "That is why I said that people can't come to me unless the Father gives them to me." At this point many of his disciples turned away and deserted him. Then Jesus turned to the Twelve and asked, "Are you also going to leave?" John 6:64-67



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

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, Oct. 07, 2023 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 105 ~ 24 of 76

2023 Community Events

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

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, Oct. 07, 2023 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 105 ~ 25 of 76

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Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, Oct. 07, 2023 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 105 ~ 26 of 76



WINNING NUMBERS

MEGA MILLIONS

WINNING NUMBERS:
10.06.23

12 24 46 57 66 22

MegaPlier: 3x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:
\$20,000,000

NEXT DRAW:

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

LOTTO AMERICA

WINNING NUMBERS:
10.04.23

4 5 8 26 42 8

All Star Bonus: 3x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:
\$2,550,000

NEXT 12 Hrs 41 Mins 4
DRAW: Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

LUCKY FOR LIFE

WINNING NUMBERS:
10.06.23

7 28 33 37 38 10

TOP PRIZE:

\$7,000/week

NEXT 12 Hrs 56 Mins 5
DRAW: Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

DAKOTA CASH

WINNING NUMBERS:
10.04.23

9 17 18 19 35

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:
\$20,000

NEXT 12 Hrs 56 Mins 4
DRAW: Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

POWERBALL

DOUBLE PLAY

WINNING NUMBERS:
10.04.23

12 30 39 64 67 22

TOP PRIZE:
\$10,000,000

NEXT 13 Hrs 25 Mins 5
DRAW: Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

POWERBALL

WINNING NUMBERS:
10.04.23

9 35 54 63 64 1

Power Play: 2x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:
\$1,400,000,000

NEXT 13 Hrs 25 Mins 5
DRAW: Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, Oct. 07, 2023 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 105 ~ 27 of 76

News from the Associated Press

Friday's Scores The Associated Press **PREP FOOTBALL**

Aberdeen Central 13, Brookings 0
Bennett County 50, Jones County 34
Bridgewater-Emery/Ethan 50, McCook Central/Montrose 6
Canton 42, Vermillion 13
Castlewood 50, Waverly-South Shore 0
Corsica/Stickney 14, Freeman/ Marion/ Freeman Academy Co-op 12
Custer 60, Hill City 50
Dakota Valley 54, Lakota Tech 0
DeSmet 46, Hitchcock-Tulare 0
Dell Rapids 53, Chamberlain 7
Elk Point-Jefferson 24, Tri-Valley 14
Elkton-Lake Benton 54, Florence/Henry 0
Garretson 47, Irene-Wakonda 16
Gayville-Volin High School 58, Arlington 12
Gregory 46, Burke 6
Hanson 62, Viborg-Hurley 18
Harding County/Bison Co-op 48, Timber Lake 28
Harrisburg 75, Rapid City Central 7
Herreid/Selby Area 36, Potter County 30
Ipswich 49, Dupree 18
Kadoka Area 42, Faith 14
Lower Brule 67, Marty Indian 0
Madison 14, Lennox 8
New Underwood 36, White River 20
Parkston 50, Bon Homme 0
Philip 64, Newell 0
Pierre T F Riggs High School 35, Huron 0
Platte-Geddes 48, Colman-Egan 0
Redfield 37, Dakota Hills 3
Sioux Falls Christian 34, Beresford 7
Sioux Falls Jefferson 14, Rapid City Stevens 0
Sioux Falls Lincoln 55, Brandon Valley 13
Sisseton 6, Milbank 0
St. Thomas More 20, Douglas 6
Stanley County 48, Lemmon/McIntosh 16
Sturgis Brown 47, Belle Fourche 14
Sully Buttes 50, Lyman 20
Sunshine Bible Academy 40, Oldham-Ramona/Rutland 31
Tea Area 62, Spearfish 13
Tripp-Delmont/Armour/Andes Central/Dakota Christian 34, Scotland/Menno 0
Wall 37, Kimball/White Lake 8
Warner 46, Estelline/Hendricks 0
Watertown 42, Mitchell 7

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, Oct. 07, 2023 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 105 ~ 28 of 76

Winner 28, West Central 0
Wolsey-Wessington 48, Britton-Hecla 12
Woonsocket/Wessington Springs/Sanborn Central 42, Lead-Deadwood 20
Yankton 27, Sioux Falls Roosevelt 14

PREP VOLLEYBALL

Huron def. Rapid City Central, 25-11, 25-18, 25-16
Mitchell def. Rapid City Stevens, 25-23, 25-17, 25-20
Sioux Valley def. Deubrook, 21-25, 17-25, 25-17, 25-22, 15-12
Wakpala def. Takini, 25-7, 25-8, 25-19
Wakpala def. Tiospaye Topa, 25-18, 25-13, 25-14
Jimmy John's Tournament=
Watertown def. Lakeview, Minn., 25-11, 25-18
Watertown def. Pipestone, Minn., 25-20, 25-13
Scheels Invite=
Sioux Falls Washington def. Kindred, N.D., 25-10, 25-18
Sioux Falls Washington def. Sheyenne, N.D., 25-16, 25-21
Sioux Falls Washington def. Valley City, N.D., 25-16, 25-15

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

Students walk out of schools for missing and murdered Indigenous women in South Dakota

SIoux FALLS, S.D. (AP) — More than 100 students walked out of classes at a high school in Sioux Falls, South Dakota, calling attention to an epidemic of missing and murdered Indigenous women across the U.S.

The crowd of Washington High School students congregated Thursday morning at a nearby park to recognize thousands of missing and slain Indigenous women, the Sioux Falls Argus Leader reported.

"No one's going to care if we go missing," said Washington High School student Rosalia Szameit, who is Oglala Lakota, as tears welled in her eyes. "It's unacceptable, and we have to do something."

The Bureau of Indian Affairs' Missing and Murdered Unit's caseload covers a small fraction of an estimated 4,200 unsolved cases nationwide among American Indians and Alaska Natives, with the victims ranging in age from toddlers to the elderly. Indigenous people account for 3.5% of missing persons in the U.S. — more than three times the percentage in the overall population, according to federal data.

Despite some early success, most cases remain unsolved and federal officials have closed more than 300 potential cases due to jurisdictional conflicts — which prevent federal agents from working off-reservation without an invitation from local authorities — and other issues, The Associated Press reported in September.

U.S. officials have shared frustration over the unsolved cases, which critics say reflect racial injustice, particularly when compared to the response when a white woman goes missing.

The students who participated in the walkout "left school property to highlight their cause and did so respectfully and without disruption to others," school district community relations coordinator DeeAnn Konrad said in a statement, the Argus Leader reported.

"Students, like all people, have constitutional rights to do as they wish as long as no laws are violated," Konrad added. "Beyond those laws are school policy and attendance expectations. Skipping school for any reason is an unexcused absence."

Witnesses to FBI hunt for Civil War gold describe heavily loaded armored truck, signs of a night dig

By MICHAEL RUBINKAM Associated Press

PENFIELD, Pa. (AP) — In the heart of Pennsylvania elk country, Eric McCarthy and his client, Don Reichel, got up before sunrise to scour the forest floor for so-called “brown gold” — a rack of freshly shed antlers to add to Reichel’s collection back home.

One hill over, a team of FBI agents was also hunting for gold. The metallic yellow kind.

The FBI’s highly unusual search for buried Civil War-era treasure more than five years ago set in motion a dispute over what, if anything, the agency unearthed and an ongoing legal battle over key records. There’s so much intrigue that even a federal judge felt compelled to note in a ruling last week: “The FBI may have found the gold — or maybe not.”

Now, two witnesses have come forward to share with The Associated Press what they heard and saw in the woods that late-winter morning, raising questions about the FBI’s timeline and adding plot twists to a saga that blends elements of legend, fact and science — and a heavy dose of government secrecy.

The FBI insists nothing came of the March 2018 excavation in Dents Run, a remote wooded valley about 110 miles (177 kilometers) northeast of Pittsburgh. But a treasure hunter who led FBI agents to the hillside where an 1863 gold shipment might have been buried is challenging the government’s denials. How could the dig have come up empty, he asks, when the FBI’s own scans showed the likelihood of a buried metal mass equaling hundreds of millions of dollars in gold?

McCarthy, a 45-year-old elk guide, had never met treasure hunter Dennis Parada. But he watched from afar as Parada took the FBI to court and told his story in the media. McCarthy recently decided to share his own story because he thought Parada, who spent years looking for the gold before approaching the FBI with his findings, has been treated unfairly.

“I just felt like I needed to say what I saw, you know?” McCarthy explained. “I have no ties to anybody here. It’s just I felt like they were wronged.”

In an interview at a remote hunting camp about 25 miles (40 km) from Dents Run, McCarthy recalls hearing the unexpected clang of heavy equipment as he worked his way up the mountain in near-darkness, a dusting of snow on the ground from a recent squall.

Later that day, while breaking for lunch, McCarthy and Reichel watched a trio of armored trucks rumble past. One of the vehicles rode low, as if it was carrying a full load.

“They took something out of Dents Run,” McCarthy insists now. “Something heavy.”

Reached by phone, Reichel, McCarthy’s 73-year-old shed hunting client, corroborated his account of hearing early-morning clatter and seeing a loaded truck on March 14, 2018. Their recollections echo earlier statements from residents who told the AP of hearing a backhoe and jackhammer overnight and seeing a convoy of FBI vehicles, including armored trucks.

Parada, co-founder of the treasure-hunting outfit Finders Keepers, views the eyewitness accounts as important because they could bolster one of his main contentions — that the FBI conducted a secret overnight dig for the gold and spirited it away. The FBI’s warrant to excavate the site limited work to 6 a.m. to 10 p.m. each day.

The agency strenuously denies it dug after hours, saying FBI police merely conducted nighttime ATV patrols to secure the site.

“No gold or other items of evidence were located or collected. The FBI continues to unequivocally reject any claims or speculation to the contrary,” said spokesperson Carrie Adamowski.

Indeed, there’s little historical evidence to substantiate apocryphal accounts that an Army detachment lost a gold shipment in the Pennsylvania wilderness, possibly after an ambush by Confederate sympathizers. But the legend has inspired generations of treasure hunters, Parada among them.

Scientific testing suggested he was on to something.

The FBI said in a 2018 court document that its own geophysical consultant identified an underground metallic mass weighing up to 9 tons, with the density of gold, at the site identified by Finders Keepers.

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, Oct. 07, 2023 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 105 ~ 30 of 76

A federal judge approved a search and seizure warrant, and the FBI set up camp in Dents Run, later describing it as a possible "cultural heritage site containing gold belonging to the United States government." Parada hoped to earn a finder's fee from the potential recovery.

On the second day of the FBI dig, McCarthy and Reichel awoke at 4 a.m. and were on a mountain that parallels the narrow Dents Run valley sometime between 5 and 5:30.

By then, the FBI's presence had become the talk of the backcountry, with speculation running rampant that agents were hunting for gold. The FBI had shooed McCarthy away from a different part of Dents Run a day earlier. But he was determined to help his client find an elk shed. Splitting up to increase their odds, McCarthy dropped Reichel off then parked more than a mile away.

He said he could hear the distant hum of a running engine as soon as he got out of his truck. The noise grew louder as he made his way up the hill and he heard metal on stone, or metal on metal — what sounded to him like heavy equipment meeting earth.

McCarthy said he got to the top of the ridge and started back down the other side. That's when he laid eyes on the FBI operation, on the opposite slope, about 400 yards (meters) away. He saw lights powered by a generator. A parked excavator. A smaller piece of equipment, perhaps a skid-steer or quad, moving up and down the hill. A brown-black gash in the earth surrounded by snow. People huddling under a makeshift canopy.

"It looked to me like they were wrapping up a dig," he said.

Reichel, who was farther away from the dig site, said he heard machinery when he crested the ridge.

"I can hear some machines, or something, clanging and banging and roaring and all that stuff," said Reichel, a retired manufacturing worker. He said he was too far away to be able to see anything.

An FBI timeline says the search team didn't arrive at the dig site until 8 a.m. that morning, and an excavator operator arrived even later. That's well after the time that McCarthy and Reichel say they detected signs of activity.

The pair reconvened for lunch several hours later. It was then, they said, that a convoy of unmarked black SUVs and armored trucks drove by them on Pennsylvania Route 555, heading out of Dents Run. McCarthy and Reichel said one of the three armored trucks seemed to be weighed down — more squat than the other two and lagging behind.

"Eric and I both made the comment that one must be loaded." Reichel said.

"It was loaded to the gills," said McCarthy, adding he's driven overloaded dump trucks and "I know what it looks like."

Not so, the FBI says. While "appropriate vehicles and equipment" were brought to Dents Run, armored trucks were not among them, according to Adamowski, the FBI spokesperson.

Warren Getler, a consultant who has worked closely with Finders Keepers, argued the eyewitness accounts add up to one thing — a clandestine night dig.

"And why would you do a night dig," he said, "unless you wanted to remove the gold under cover of darkness?"

Getler, co-author of "Rebel Gold," a book exploring the possibility of buried Civil War-era caches of gold and silver, joined Parada in Dents Run for the 2018 dig. But the FBI mostly kept them confined to their cars at the bottom of the hill, showing them an empty hole when the work was done.

The agency subsequently stonewalled Parada's Freedom of Information Act request for records on the dig, prompting him to file a lawsuit. In 2022, a judge forced the FBI to release a trove of photos and documents.

But the agency refuses to turn over its operational plan for the gold dig — which Parada and Getler believe might include information about an overnight excavation — and other records the government says are exempt from disclosure. U.S. District Judge Amit Mehta told the FBI on Sept. 27 it needed to come up with a better justification for keeping the disputed records under wraps.

While Parada pursues the FBI in court, he hasn't given up his search in the Dents Run area. He recently hired a New Jersey geophysical company that identified several underground anomalies near the site of

the original FBI dig, one of which measures 25 feet (7.62 meters) by 8 feet (2.44 m).

Finders Keepers' own equipment detected metal objects in the same location, perhaps 15 feet down, presumably in a tunnel or cave, said Parada, playing a video that shows a detector emitting a high-pitched squeal as it is swept across the ground.

He's now seeking to partner with the Pennsylvania Department of Conservation and Natural Resources, which owns the land, on a new excavation in Dents Run. Parada, his lawyer and top officials from the conservation agency plan to meet later this month.

"It's a part of our history that's hidden away," Parada said, "and I think it's time that should be told."

How \$6 billion in Ukraine aid collapsed in a government funding bill despite big support in Congress

By LISA MASCARO AP Congressional Correspondent

WASHINGTON (AP) — The collapse of Ukraine aid in Congress was months in the making, and exactly what Senate Republican leader Mitch McConnell had feared.

McConnell had warned that political support for Ukraine was in danger as a small but vocal contingent of fellow Republican lawmakers intensified their efforts against sending U.S. money overseas for the fight against Russia.

First in a series of high-profile speeches this summer then in direct overtures to the White House, the Republican leader who had visited Kyiv and put a priority on U.S. support for Ukraine tried to steer the hard-right flank of his party.

But in the end, neither McConnell nor the White House nor Democrats in Congress could muscle a scaled-back \$6 billion military and civilian aid package for Ukraine to passage in last week's deal to avoid a U.S. government shutdown.

Despite overwhelming bipartisan support in Washington for stopping Russian President Vladimir Putin's invasion, the failure to approve Ukraine aid was a sizable setback for an administration seeking to lead a Western alliance to protect the young democracy as the fighting grinds on.

It also shows the perils ahead in Washington as a hardened band of Republican lawmakers who are just a minority in Congress — many allied with Donald Trump, the party's 2024 presidential front-runner — flex their power to overcome the will of the majority. The next steps are highly uncertain.

"It does worry me," President Joe Biden acknowledged last week. "But I know there are a majority of members in the House and Senate — both parties — who have said that they support funding Ukraine."

Biden said he is preparing to deliver a major speech on U.S. aid to Ukraine and has a plan in the works to ensure the flow of assistance after the upheaval on Capitol Hill, which was punctuated by the ouster of the Republican House Speaker Kevin McCarthy.

As Washington regroups, the sudden shift has unleashed political blame over the inability of the White House and Congress to work around the small but intensifying minority of lawmakers who are putting aid in jeopardy.

"Not another penny for Ukraine!" wrote Rep. Marjorie Taylor Greene, R-Greene, a top Trump ally, arguing money should be spent on securing the U.S. border with Mexico instead.

McConnell, R-Ky., had been trying to build support Ukraine for months, ever since he met with President Volodymyr Zelenskyy in Kyiv in May.

The senator gave repeated floor speeches, talked with allies overseas and made the case his priority among colleagues on Capitol Hill, where Zelenskyy received a hero's welcome last year and visited with a follow-up appeal weeks before the funding showdown.

But after the White House announced Biden's \$24 billion request for Ukraine aid in August, McConnell knew it would not have the support needed to pass, according to a person familiar with the situation and granted anonymity to discuss it.

McConnell had met with a group of Republican defense hawks in the Senate before the end of September

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, Oct. 07, 2023 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 105 ~ 32 of 76

deadline to fund the government or risk a shutdown, which would typically be the time to also pass the White House's spending request for Ukraine.

But the GOP senators left McConnell with the understanding the support for Ukraine funding overall would be lacking.

A week before the deadline, McConnell told the Biden's national security adviser, Jake Sullivan, on a Friday call that it "would be impossible" for Congress to pass the full \$24 billion request, said the person familiar with the situation.

Instead, McConnell encouraged the White House to look "strongly" at whether it could rely on sending Ukraine aid through existing ways for transferring or reprogramming money in the short term, the person said.

The White House, in a series of conversations with McConnell's team over the weekend, considered smaller amounts of funding and insisted that the Ukraine aid was vital.

McConnell agreed to do what he could. Days later the Senate advanced its package to keep government open for the short term, until Nov 17, with \$6 billion for Ukraine. It passed the Senate on an overwhelmingly bipartisan vote.

The problem was, however, that the Democratic leaders on Capitol Hill had never fully articulated Ukraine as a top priority as they fought off House Republican demands for steep budget cuts to keep the government open.

And McCarthy, R-Calif., was having his own problems in the Republican-led House.

Greene and other hard-liners in the House had essentially forced McCarthy to strip a much smaller amount of Ukraine security assistance funds, \$300 million, from an annual defense funding bill.

It was a stark example of how a growing flank of the party — some 100 Republicans — was wresting control from the majority who widely supported the bill.

It was a sign of the trouble to come.

Staring down a potentially devastating government shutdown, the embattled McCarthy then stripped the \$6 billion Ukraine aid from the federal funding package before the House vote to keep the U.S. government open.

As the House was preparing last Saturday to avert a shutdown, McConnell convened his Republican senators behind closed doors for a lunch meeting.

McConnell spoke of the need to retain the Ukraine aid in the final package, but it was clear the room was not with him.

South Dakota Sen. John Thune, the Republicans' second in command, had been in talks with McCarthy, including that morning, and understood from the speaker that the package could not pass with the Ukraine aid attached.

Thune told the Republican senators he thought they should move forward with the House version, without the Ukraine money, as the best way to avoid a shutdown, according to Republican familiar with the private meeting and granted anonymity to discuss it.

The third-ranking Republican senator, John Barrasso of Wyoming, swiftly agreed, according to another Republican granted anonymity to discuss the conversation.

Listening to his colleagues, McConnell then shifted course.

McConnell came out after lunch and said the Republicans would vote against advancing the Senate bill as they waited to see what their House colleague would do.

That afternoon, the House approved the package hours before the midnight deadline to keeping government open. The Ukraine aid was dropped.

Gone from the final bill was not only the \$6 billion in Ukraine assistance, but also pages of text outlining the ability to transfer funds to Ukraine.

It was just what McConnell had been trying to avoid.

In the aftermath, the White House made it clear that McCarthy had made a commitment on Ukraine beyond what was in the package.

But when reporters asked McCarthy about it, the speaker said there's no "secret deal" with Biden on

Ukraine.

What there was, McCarthy explained, was an assurance that the ability to transfer funds for Ukraine would remain intact. If there was any confusion about that, he said, "We'll fix it."

The next day, McCarthy was ousted from the office over long-simmering complaints about his leadership, leaving any fix for Ukraine funding uncertain.

Biden's speech about Ukraine aid is coming. The White House is waiting for the House to elect a new speaker. And it's working with Congress to ensure the transferability of funds and to provide new support for Ukraine.

Deaths rise to 47 after an icy flood swept through India's Himalayan northeast

By WASBIR HUSSAIN and ANUPAM NATH Associated Press
GANGTOK, India (AP) —

Rescuers found more bodies overnight as they dug through slushy debris and ice-cold water in a hunt for survivors after a glacial lake burst through a dam in India's Himalayan northeast, washing away houses and bridges and forcing thousands to flee.

Officials said the hundreds of rescuers recovered six more bodies early Saturday, bringing the death toll to 47. At least 150 people are still missing.

The flood began shortly after midnight Wednesday, when the waters of a glacial lake overflowed, cracking open the biggest hydroelectric dam in Sikkim state. The icy waters then cascaded through towns in the valley below, where it killed scores of people and carried some bodies kilometers (miles) away downstream, where they were found in the neighboring state of West Bengal and Bangladesh, police said.

Disasters caused by landslides and floods are common in India's Himalayan region during the June-September monsoon season. Scientists say they are becoming more frequent as global warming contributes to the melting of glaciers there.

Police said nearly 4,000 tourists were stranded in two locations, Lachung and Lachen in the northern part of the state, where access was severely restricted as the floods had washed away roads. But the bad weather has made rescue efforts more challenging, with authorities unable to deploy helicopters to assist those stuck in vulnerable areas.

Some 3,900 people were currently in 26 relief camps set up by the state, Chief Minister Prem Singh Tamang said on Saturday. Out of the 23 Indian army soldiers who were earlier reported missing, one had been rescued and eight had died, Defense Minister Rajnath Singh said, adding that search operations were carrying on.

It wasn't clear what triggered the deadly flood in the mountainous Sikkim state, the latest to hit north-east India in a year of unusually heavy monsoon rains. Nearly 50 people died in flash floods and landslides in August in nearby Himachal Pradesh state. In July, record rains killed more than 100 people over two weeks in northern India.

Experts pointed to intense rain and a 6.2 magnitude earthquake that struck nearby Nepal on Tuesday afternoon as possible contributors.

But the disaster also underscores a climate dilemma that pits local environmental activists who say dams in the Himalayas are too dangerous against authorities pursuing a national green energy agenda.

The design and placement of the 6-year-old Teesta 3 dam, the largest in Sikkim state, were controversial from the time it was built. A 2019 report compiled by the Sikkim State Disaster Management Authority identified Lhonak Lake as "highly vulnerable" to flooding that could breach dams and cause extensive damage to life and property.

Despite risks to dams due to the increasing frequency of extreme weather, the Indian federal government aims to increase India's hydroelectric dam output by half, to 70,000 megawatts, by 2030.

Prakash Chetri, an employee of the Teesta 3 dam operator, was working at the site when he and others were told that water levels were increasing and they should evacuate. Nearly an hour later, "we saw

a lot of water - the whole dam was filled with water," he said, adding that while he was lucky to escape, 14 others who worked with him were still missing. "I was running to save my life ... in those moments, I thought this was the last day of my life," Chetri said.

Eleven bridges in the Lachen Valley were washed away by the floodwaters, which also hit pipelines and damaged or destroyed more than 270 houses in four districts, officials said on Friday.

Several towns, including Dikchu and Rangpo in the Teesta basin, were flooded, and schools in four districts were ordered shut until Sunday, the state's education department said. The floods also hit several army camps, burying vehicles in feet of mud, according to images released by the Indian military.

Himalayan glaciers could lose 80% of their volume if global warming isn't controlled, according to a report from the International Center for Integrated Mountain Development.

Last month, dam breaches caused by Storm Daniel caused devastating damage to the city of Derna in Libya.

In February 2021, flash floods killed nearly 200 people and washed away houses in Uttarakhand state in northern India.

Hamas kills 40 in unprecedented, wide-ranging incursion into Israel. Netanyahu says 'we are at war'

By JOSEF FEDERMAN and ISSAM ADWAN Associated Press

JERUSALEM (AP) — The ruling Hamas militant group in the Gaza Strip carried out an unprecedented attack on Israel at daybreak Saturday, firing thousands of rockets as dozens of fighters infiltrated the heavily fortified border in several locations by air, land and sea, catching the country off guard on a major holiday.

Several hours after the invasion began, Hamas militants were still fighting gunbattles inside several Israeli communities in a surprising show of strength that shook the country. Israel's national rescue service said at least 40 people have been killed and hundreds wounded, making it the deadliest attack in Israel in years.

At least 561 wounded people were being treated in Israeli hospitals, including at least 77 who were in critical condition, according to an Associated Press count based on public statements and calls to hospitals.

There was no official comment on casualties in Gaza, but AP reporters witnessed the funerals of 15 people who were killed and saw another eight bodies arrive at a local hospital. It was not immediately clear if they were fighters or civilians.

Social media was replete with videos of Hamas fighters parading what appeared to be stolen Israeli military vehicles through the streets and at least one dead Israeli soldier within Gaza being dragged and trampled by an angry crowd of Palestinians shouting "God is Greatest."

Videos released by Hamas appeared to show at least three Israelis captured alive. The military declined to give details about casualties or kidnappings as it continued to battle the infiltrators.

"We are at war," Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said in a televised address, declaring a mass army mobilization. "Not an 'operation,' not a 'round,' but at war."

"The enemy will pay an unprecedented price," he added, promising that Israel would "return fire of a magnitude that the enemy has not known."

At a meeting of top security officials later on Saturday, Netanyahu said the first priority was to "cleanse the area" of enemy infiltrators, then to "exact a huge price from the enemy," and to fortify other areas so that no other militant groups join the war.

The serious invasion on Simchat Torah, a normally joyous day when Jews complete the annual cycle of reading the Torah scroll, revived painful memories of the 1973 Mideast war practically 50 years to the day, in which Israel's enemies launched a surprise attack on Yom Kippur, the holiest day of the Jewish calendar.

Comparisons to one of the most traumatic moments in Israeli history sharpened criticism of Netanyahu and his far-right allies, who had campaigned on more aggressive action against threats from Gaza. Political commentators lambasted the government over its failure to anticipate what appeared to be a Hamas attack unseen in its level of planning and coordination.

The Israeli military struck targets in Gaza in response for some 2,500 rockets that sent air raid sirens

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, Oct. 07, 2023 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 105 ~ 35 of 76

wailing constantly as far north as Tel Aviv and Jerusalem, some 80 kilometers (50 miles) away. It said its forces were engaged in gunfights with Hamas militants who had infiltrated Israel in at least seven locations. The fighters had sneaked across the separation fence and even invaded Israel through the air with paragliders, the army said.

Israeli TV broadcast footage of explosions tearing through the Gaza-Israel border fence, followed by what appeared to be Palestinian gunmen riding into Israel on motorcycles. Gunmen also reportedly entered on pickup trucks.

It was not immediately clear what prompted Hamas to launch the attacks, which would have likely required months of planning.

But over the past year Israel's far-right government has ramped up settlement construction in the occupied West Bank, Israeli settler violence has displaced hundreds of Palestinians there, and tensions have flared around a flashpoint Jerusalem holy site.

The shadowy leader of Hamas' military wing, Mohammed Deif, announced the start of what he called "Operation Al-Aqsa Storm." The Al-Aqsa mosque compound in Jerusalem is the third holiest site in Islam, and is located on the holiest site for Jews, who refer to it as the Temple Mount.

"Enough is enough," Deif, who does not appear in public, said in the recorded message, as he called on Palestinians from east Jerusalem to northern Israel to join the fight. "Today the people are regaining their revolution."

In a televised address, Israeli Defense Minister Yoav Gallant warned that Hamas had made "a grave mistake" and promised that "the state of Israel will win this war."

Western nations condemned the incursion and reiterated their support for Israel, while others called for restraint on both sides.

"The U.S. unequivocally condemns the unprovoked attacks by Hamas terrorists against Israeli civilians," said Adrienne Watson, spokeswoman for the U.S. National Security Council. "We stand firmly with the government and people of Israel and extend our condolences for the Israeli lives lost in these attacks."

Watson said Jake Sullivan, the national security adviser, has spoken with his Israeli counterpart, Tzachi Hanegbi.

Saudi Arabia, which has been in talks with the U.S. about normalizing relations with Israel, released a statement calling on both sides to exercise restraint. The kingdom said it had repeatedly warned about "the dangers of the situation exploding as a result of the continued occupation (and) the Palestinian people being deprived of their legitimate rights."

The attack comes at a time of historic division within Israel over Netanyahu's proposal to overhaul the judiciary. Mass protests over the plan have sent hundreds thousands of Israeli demonstrators into the streets and prompted hundreds of military reservists to avoid volunteer duty — turmoil that has raised fears over the military's battlefield readiness and raised concerns about its deterrence over its enemies.

The infiltration of fighters into southern Israel marked a major escalation by Hamas that forced millions of Israelis to hunker down in safe rooms. Cities and towns emptied as the military closed roads near Gaza. Israel's rescue service and the Palestinian Health Ministry in Gaza appealed to the public to donate blood.

"We understand that this is something big," Lt. Col. Richard Hecht, an Israeli army spokesman, told reporters. He said the Israeli military had called up the army reserves.

Hecht declined to comment on how Hamas had managed to catch the army off guard. "That's a good question," he said.

Ismail Haniyeh, the exiled leader of Hamas, said that Palestinian fighters were "engaged in these historic moments in a heroic operation" to defend the Al-Aqsa Mosque in Jerusalem and the thousands of Palestinian prisoners held by Israel.

In the kibbutz of Nahal Oz, just 4 kilometers (2.5 miles) from the Gaza Strip, terrified residents who were huddled indoors said they could hear constant gunfire echoing off the buildings as firefights continued even hours after the initial attack.

"With rockets we somehow feel safer, knowing that we have the Iron Dome (missile defense system) and

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, Oct. 07, 2023 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 105 ~ 36 of 76

our safe rooms. But knowing that terrorists are walking around communities is a different kind of fear," said Mirjam Reijnen, a 42-year-old volunteer firefighter and mother of three in Nahal Oz.

Israel has built a massive fence along the Gaza border meant to prevent infiltrations. It goes deep underground and is equipped with cameras, high-tech sensors and sensitive listening technology.

The escalation comes after weeks of heightened tensions along Israel's volatile border with Gaza, and heavy fighting in the Israeli-occupied West Bank.

Saturday's wide-ranging assault threatened to undermine Netanyahu's reputation as a security expert who would do anything to protect Israel. It also raised questions about the cohesion of a security apparatus crucial to the stability of a country locked in low-intensity conflicts on multiple fronts and facing threats from Lebanon's Hezbollah militant group.

Hezbollah congratulated Hamas on Friday, praising the attack as a response to "Israeli crimes" and saying the militants had "divine backing." The group said its command in Lebanon was in contact with Hamas about the operation.

Israel has maintained a blockade over Gaza since Hamas seized control of the territory in 2007. The bitter enemies have fought four wars since then. There have also been numerous rounds of smaller fighting between Israel and Hamas and other smaller militant groups based in Gaza.

The blockade, which restricts the movement of people and goods in and out of Gaza, has devastated the territory's economy. Israel says the blockade is needed to keep militant groups from building up their arsenals. The Palestinians say the closure amounts to collective punishment.

The rocket fire comes during a period of heavy fighting in the West Bank, where nearly 200 Palestinians have been killed in Israeli military raids this year. In the volatile northern West Bank, scores of militants and residents poured into the streets in celebration at the news of the rocket barrages.

Israel says the raids are aimed at militants, but stone-throwing protesters and people uninvolved in the violence have also been killed. Palestinian attacks on Israeli targets have killed over 30 people.

The tensions have also spread to Gaza, where Hamas-linked activists held violent demonstrations along the Israeli border in recent weeks. Those demonstrations were halted in late September after international mediation.

US Senate leader raises trade and fentanyl at start of 1st congressional visit to China since 2019

SHANGHAI (AP) — A senior American lawmaker, leading the first congressional trip to China in four years, said Saturday that the U.S. does not want to cut economic ties with the world's second-largest economy but seeks a level playing field so that American companies can compete freely.

Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer and five other senators arrived in Shanghai earlier in the day on a three-country tour that will also take them to South Korea and Japan. The trip comes amid a sharp deterioration in relations between the U.S. and China and as officials try to lay the groundwork for a possible meeting between Presidents Joe Biden and Xi Jinping in November.

"We are prepared to compete but we do not seek to conflict," Schumer told Shanghai's Communist Party chief shortly after the delegation's arrival.

The party head, Chen Jining, avoided specific issues in his public remarks, saying that a healthy and stable China-U.S. relationship would benefit the entire world. He noted the presence of 5,640 American companies in Shanghai, and said he is happy to have the opportunity to discuss how to promote trade at the local level.

The U.S. has placed tariff and other trade restrictions on China over national security, human rights and other concerns and blocked access to advanced semiconductors and other key technologies. China has accused the U.S. of seeking to contain its economic development as it emerges as a global power and potential threat to the U.S.-led international order.

Schumer said the U.S. wants the Chinese people to have increased economic opportunity but that many Americans feel China does not treat U.S. companies fairly.

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, Oct. 07, 2023 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 105 ~ 37 of 76

"We believe we need reciprocity allowing American companies to compete as freely in China as Chinese companies are able to compete here," he said.

A series of high-ranking Biden administration officials have met their Chinese counterparts in Beijing in recent months, but Schumer and his colleagues are the first American lawmakers to make the trip since China lifted its COVID-19 restrictions in December of last year.

The delegation of three Democrats and three Republicans landed on a U.S. government jet on an overcast and windy afternoon. The Republicans were led by Idaho Sen. Mike Crapo, the senior member of his party on the Senate Finance Committee. Schumer is a New York Democrat.

China, in a statement earlier this week, said it hoped the visit would "contribute to a more objective understanding of China in the U.S. Congress."

Schumer also raised the issue of Chinese companies that have stopped making fentanyl but which the U.S. government says continue to supply the ingredients for production of the opioid in Mexico.

"They are fueling the fentanyl crisis that is poisoning communities across the United States," he said. "Every one of us knows families who have lost young men and women to fentanyl."

China has said that it maintains strict control of the chemicals to ensure they are not exported for illegal purposes and that the U.S. should stop shifting the blame for its failure to curb drug abuse.

In a reminder of the tensions between the two countries, China's commerce ministry said on Saturday that new U.S. restrictions placed on 42 Chinese companies were "a typical act of economic coercion and unilateral bullying."

The U.S. Commerce Department added the Chinese companies and seven others to its entity list on Friday. It said the companies supplied "U.S.-origin" semiconductors that Russia uses for missile guidance systems and drones in the war against Ukraine. American companies cannot export to organizations on the entity list without obtaining a special license.

A Chinese international relations expert said that Schumer's visit is a sign of improvement in China-U.S. relations. The senators hope to meet Xi in Beijing during their visit.

"If the talks proceed well, there is the possibility that President Xi will meet Schumer," said Wang Yiwei, director of the Institute of International Affairs at Renmin University of China. "If their meeting is realized, the chances for a Xi-Biden meeting will become greater."

The White House has been in touch with Schumer and supports the delegation's visit to the region, White House Press Secretary Karine Jean-Pierre said after the trip was announced.

Two 6.3 magnitude earthquakes kill at least 15 and injure nearly 40 others in western Afghanistan

ISLAMABAD (AP) — Two 6.3 magnitude earthquakes killed at least 15 and injured nearly 40 others in western Afghanistan on Saturday, said a spokesperson for the country's national disaster authority.

Mohammad Abdullah Jan said four villages in the Zenda Jan district in Herat bore the brunt of the quakes and aftershocks. Dozens of houses have been damaged.

The United States Geological Survey reported the 6.3 magnitude tremblors. It said the epicenter was 40 kilometers (24.8 miles) northwest of Herat city. There was an aftershock with a 5.5 magnitude.

A map on the USGS website indicates seven earthquakes in the area. At least five powerful earthquakes struck the city around noon, Herat city resident Abdul Shakor Samadi said.

"All people are out of their homes," Samadi said. "Houses, offices and shops are all empty and there are fears of more earthquakes. My family and I were inside our home, I felt the quake." His family began shouting and ran outside, afraid to return indoors.

Telephone connections went down, making it hard to get details from affected areas. Videos on social media showed hundreds of people in the streets outside their homes and offices in Herat city. Herat province borders Iran. The quake also was felt in the nearby provinces of Farah and Badghis, according to local media reports.

Abdul Ghani Baradar, the Taliban-appointed deputy prime minister for economic affairs, expressed his condolences to the dead and injured in Herat and Badghis.

In June 2022, a powerful earthquake struck a rugged, mountainous region of eastern Afghanistan, flattening stone and mud-brick homes. The quake was Afghanistan's deadliest in two decades, killing at least 1,000 people and injuring about 1,500.

Biden faces more criticism about the US-Mexico border, one of his biggest problems heading into 2024

By WILL WEISSERT and ADRIANA GOMEZ LICON Associated Press

MIAMI (AP) — The ad sounds like something out of the GOP 2024 playbook, trumpeting a senator's work with Republicans to crack down on the flow of fentanyl and other illegal drugs into the U.S., getting tough on Chinese interests helping smugglers, and noting how he "wrote a bill signed by Donald Trump to increase funding for Border Patrol."

It's actually a commercial for Sen. Sherrod Brown, an Ohio Democrat facing a tough reelection fight that will help decide control of the Senate.

"Ohioans trust Sherrod Brown to keep us safe," says the narrator of the ad, sponsored by the Democrat-aligned Duty and Country PAC. His campaign declined to comment.

The message is one more indication of the political and security challenges the U.S.-Mexico border has presented for President Joe Biden. Some Democrats across the country are distancing themselves from the White House, and polls indicate widespread frustration with Biden's handling of immigration and the border, creating a major liability for the president's re-election next year.

The Biden administration this week took two actions seen by many as moving to the right on immigration.

The Department of Homeland Security waived environmental and other reviews to construct new portions of a border wall in South Texas after Biden pledged during the 2020 campaign that he would build "not another foot" of wall. And U.S. officials said they would resume deportations to Venezuela not long after the administration increased protected status for thousands of people from the country.

Both moves inflamed conservatives and liberals alike. Many Republicans accused Biden of being too late to adopt former President Donald Trump's ideas on a border wall, while liberals who oppose additional border restrictions accused the White House of betraying campaign pledges.

"My frustration has been that we are not addressing immigration in a holistic way as a country. We are depending on the president alone," said Rep. Veronica Escobar of Texas, a Democrat who represents the border city of El Paso and is a national co-chair of the Biden re-election campaign. "We are treating people from different nationalities in a different way. And the pathways that have been created are being challenged in court consistently."

Biden has said his administration moved forward with the border wall because it was required by Congress during the Trump administration, even though he considers it ineffective. His reelection campaign pointed to Trump's record at the border, including his administration's practice of separating immigrant families as a deterrence measure and the temporary detention of children in warehouses in chain-link cells.

"MAGA Republicans are running on the legacy of Donald Trump's playbook of family separation, caging kids, and shouting 'border!' without any serious solutions," said Kevin Munoz, a spokesman for Biden's reelection campaign, referring to supporters of Trump's "Make America Great Again" movement.

Border crossings hit two-decade highs under Trump but fell during the first months of the COVID-19 pandemic, with immigration authorities expelling most border crossers using public health authority known as Title 42.

Upon taking office, Biden paused border wall construction and canceled the Trump administration's "Remain in Mexico" program, but kept expelling many people under Title 42 until this past May.

Still, border crossings are now skyrocketing, which some observers blame on his administration for creating the perception that the border was open. The White House counters that migration has surged across the Western Hemisphere due to regional challenges out of the administration's control.

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, Oct. 07, 2023 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 105 ~ 39 of 76

Conservative media outlets often spotlight border crossings and blame Biden for creating what they say is a crisis. But Biden has taken criticism from many in his own party, including Democratic mayors and governors who want more help caring for newly arriving migrants.

Republican-led border states started busing thousands of immigrants to Democratic-led cities across the country, creating in many places a huge shortage of space that's led to makeshift shelters and camps.

In Chicago, O'Hare International Airport is now housing hundreds of migrants from babies to the elderly at a shuttle bus center. They sleep on cardboard pads on the floor and share airport bathrooms.

New York Mayor Eric Adams went to Mexico this week to implore would-be migrants not to come. He has accused the Biden administration of not providing enough money or resources for the city to process migrants, telling reporters this summer, "The president and the White House have failed New York City on this issue."

Polling suggests that Americans across the political spectrum — even some people sympathetic to immigration — are concerned.

A Marquette Law School poll of registered voters conducted in late September gave Trump, the front-runner for the 2024 GOP nomination, a 24-point advantage over Biden on handling immigration and border security issues — 52% to 28%.

The Republican focus on immigration and the border didn't stop Democrats from big victories in the 2018 midterms and Biden and Democrats beat expectations during last year's election as well, keeping the Senate and losing the House by a tiny margin to Republicans. But there were some troubling signs even then.

About six in 10 voters then said they disapproved of how Biden was handling the issue of border security, according to AP VoteCast, a sweeping national survey of the electorate. Some 27% of Democrats disapproved of how Biden was handling the border, with one-third of Democrats who identify as moderate or conservative saying this was an issue where they disapproved of Biden's performance, according to VoteCast.

Border security was also a weak spot for Biden among independents, with 66% saying they disapproved.

Sixty-one percent of Democrats said they wanted stronger law enforcement at the border, as did two-thirds of Latino or Hispanic voters (65%).

Escobar, who is a leading Hispanic voice for the Biden campaign, said she is concerned that immigration could hurt the president's re-election efforts.

"There is going to be a tendency to blame the White House when in fact this has been a failure on Congress," she said. The last major immigration reform approved by Congress was in 1990.

Auri Lugo, a 31-year-old Venezuelan who lives in Charlotte, North Carolina, said she thought resuming deportations was the right thing to do, adding that federal authorities should focus on expediting applications for family-based immigrant visas and the humanitarian parole program. That allows up to 30,000 people to enter the country from Cuba, Haiti, Nicaragua and Venezuela.

Lugo, who arrived in the U.S. six years ago and has legal residency, was able to bring her 9-year-old son from Venezuela last year through the humanitarian parole program. But she's been unable to bring her mother, who was the boy's caregiver since he was 2 years old.

"I think it's a good thing that they are taking action on the matter," she said. "There are a lot of Venezuelans who are in shelters, who are not working. They do not have a work permit. So they are on the streets."

Despite his 2020 promises on the border, Biden has long been more moderate on the issue than some in his party. As a senator, he voted for legislation to expand U.S.-Mexico border fencing and supported authorizing federal seizure for the construction of new barriers.

He was also vice president to Barack Obama, whose administration set records for the number of people in the country illegally who were deported, earning the president the nickname "deporter-in-chief" from some immigrants' rights activists.

The Biden administration has nonetheless taken a number of steps to try and reduce the increasing numbers of migrants arriving at the U.S. border, including setting up processing centers for migrants to

apply for U.S. asylum in Guatemala and Colombia, and creating more pathways for others to come legally. "Republicans have run on anti-immigrant sentiments, fearmongering and xenophobia for several cycles. It hasn't worked for them before and it won't work for them this cycle either," said Pili Tobar, a former senior Biden White House official and Democratic strategist. "Immigration is a complex issue and there are no easy answers. This administration is working hard with the limited resources it has, to put in place balanced solutions."

Trump is inserting himself into the messy race to become the next House speaker. Will it matter?

By STEPHEN GROVES and JILL COLVIN Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Donald Trump is again testing the power of his endorsement.

With an early morning social media post on Friday, Trump inserted himself into the chaotic race to replace Kevin McCarthy as House speaker by backing Ohio Rep. Jim Jordan for the post. The move was the latest example of Trump attempting to flex his influence within a Republican Party he has already fundamentally reshaped in the eight years since his first White House bid.

"I think he does well. I hope he does well," Trump, the front-runner for the 2024 GOP nomination, said of Jordan in a Friday interview with Real America's Voice. "He's got competition, as you understand. And they're friendly with me, too. Very nice people and good people. We'll see what happens."

With Trump's firm grip on the GOP base, his endorsement can effectively clear the field in many congressional primaries. But the speaker's race is more complex, an intraparty fight that will play out in secret at points and in a tense environment with many Republicans furious about McCarthy's ouster. Jordan is facing at least one other candidate — House Majority Leader Steve Scalise — who is also on good terms with Trump. It's unclear whether anyone has enough votes to win the gavel and if Jordan were to lose, another Trump ally could emerge.

Taken together, the dynamics mean that Trump's backing of Jordan may do little to sway the results. And that may not ultimately matter much.

Regardless of who becomes the next speaker, Trump has undeniable sway over House Republicans. It was his supporters — led by Florida Rep. Matt Gaetz — who orchestrated McCarthy's ouster and who have driven much of the House GOP's agenda. They have been unable or unwilling to pull themselves from his grip and now find themselves heading toward another presidential election with him at the top of the ticket, even as many in the party worry about his electability in November and his potential impact on down-ballot races.

But other factors are at play in the complicated deliberations. Speaker's elections are contests that can turn on personal relationships and deals between lawmakers that fall outside ideological lines.

It also remains unclear how much political capital Trump intends to use whipping votes on Jordan's behalf. While Trump was poised to support Jordan, he was angry that Texas Rep. Troy Nehls broke the news before he was ready, according to two Republicans familiar with his thinking who spoke on condition of anonymity.

A Trump spokesman did not respond to requests for comment Friday.

Trump's 11th-hour interventions helped McCarthy win the speakership after 15 rounds of voting back in January, but the holdouts in that case were Trump allies. This time most hardline conservatives were already lining up behind Jordan.

Instead, Jordan has been courting Republican moderates, trying to convince them that they will be heard if he is elected, despite his reputation as a hard-liner. Trump's endorsement ties Jordan even closer to the former president, potentially making it more difficult for moderate members to support him.

For his part, Jordan said the endorsement would aid his bid for the gavel.

"He's the leader of our party, and I think he's going to be the next president," Jordan told reporters Friday at the Capitol.

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, Oct. 07, 2023 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 105 ~ 41 of 76

Beyond the immediate dynamics on Capitol Hill, Trump's involvement in the speaker's race speaks to his outsized role in the party. More than three months before the first votes of the 2024 campaign, Republicans are increasingly open in referring to Trump as the party's leader. That's despite the fact that he faces four separate criminal indictments.

And as he appears once again in a strong position to capture the GOP nomination, Trump's penchant for the spotlight is on display.

After creating a media firestorm Monday when he showed up at his civil fraud trial in New York, Trump quickly jumped on the speakership news that threatened to shift attention from his direction. After several of his closest allies raised the fanciful notion that Trump himself could potentially serve as speaker — perhaps on an interim basis — Trump stoked and flirted with the notion of swooping in to save the leaderless caucus from the chaos he has helped to stoke.

"A lot of people have been calling me about speaker. All I can say is we'll do whatever's best for the country and for the Republican Party," Trump told reporters at the courthouse Wednesday.

He later told Fox News Digital that he would be open to serving 30 to 90 days in the role.

Trump was soon planning a trip to Capitol Hill where he planned to address Republicans at a closed-door candidate forum — a trip first reported by The Messenger — that would have marked his first visit to the building since the violence of Jan. 6, when a mob of his supporters stormed the building trying to overturn the election he lost to President Joe Biden.

That trip is no longer expected, according to Nehls and others familiar with the plans.

Jordan has long been one of Trump's biggest champions on the Hill. He has led investigations into prosecutors who have charged the former president with criminal conduct and has been helping lead efforts to impeach Biden.

Ahead of Jan. 6, he helped Trump strategize about how Congress could help Trump overturn his loss to Biden. In return, Trump awarded him the Presidential Medal of Freedom — the nation's highest civilian honor — five days after the attack on the Capitol.

Scalise, a veteran member of leadership who is also vying for the speaker's gavel, has support from a significant portion of the Republican Conference, while other GOP lawmakers are either looking elsewhere or waiting to make their choices known.

Trump's involvement in the House GOP's upheaval comes just as Republican leaders have been trying to tamp down the drama and soothe tempers. On Friday, a planned Fox News debate between the candidates was called off. Republicans are also trying to avoid the spectacle of a protracted speaker's contest by finding a consensus candidate in closed-door meetings next week.

However, many are bracing for a days-long contest. The last time they all gathered in the same room — shortly after McCarthy was removed as speaker — insults were hurled and some lawmakers even thought it could turn to blows.

So far, the contest for the speaker's gavel has been dominated by lawmakers seen as loyal to Trump. Jordan, Scalise and Rep. Kevin Hern, who is considering entering the race, all voted against certifying the results of the 2020 presidential election.

That could prove useful to Trump if he ascends to the White House again. Trump's agenda while in office was often thwarted by congressional leaders from his own party as he clashed with former House Speaker Paul Ryan and then-Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell.

In the years since leaving the White House, Trump has broken from past precedent and endorsed hundreds of like-minded candidates, hoping to fill the House and Senate with lawmakers who share his America First outlook should he become president again.

Trump made clear his ultimate goal earlier this week when he wrote on his Truth Social site that he would "do whatever is necessary to help with the Speaker of the House selection process, short term, until the final selection of a GREAT REPUBLICAN SPEAKER is made - A Speaker who will help a new, but highly experienced President, ME, MAKE AMERICA GREAT AGAIN!"

Pharmacist shortages and heavy workloads challenge drugstores heading into their busy season

By TOM MURPHY AP Health Writer

A dose of patience may come in handy at the pharmacy counter this fall.

Drug and staffing shortages haven't gone away. Stores are starting their busiest time of year as customers look for help with colds and the flu. And this fall, pharmacists are dealing with a new vaccine and the start of insurance coverage for COVID-19 shots.

Some drugstores have addressed their challenges by adding employees at busy hours. But experts say many pharmacies, particularly the big chains, still don't have enough workers behind the counter.

Chris Adkins said he left his job as a pharmacist with a major drugstore chain a couple years ago because of the stress. Aside from filling and checking prescriptions, Adkins routinely answered the phone, ran the register and stocked pharmacy shelves.

"I just didn't have time for the patients," he said. "I am OK working hard and working long hours, but I just felt like I was not doing a good job as a pharmacist."

In recent years, drugstores have struggled to fill open pharmacist and pharmacy technician positions, even as many have raised pay and dangled signing bonuses.

Larger drugstore chains often operate stores with only one pharmacist on duty per shift, said Richard Dang, an assistant professor of clinical pharmacy at the University of Southern California. That kind of thin staffing can make it hard to recruit employees.

"I think that many pharmacists in the profession are hesitant to work for a company where they don't feel supported," said Dang, a former president of the California Pharmacists Association.

Customers have noticed.

John Staed, of Pelham, Alabama, said a CVS pharmacist gave him the wrong prescription about a decade ago: the pills were a different color than usual. He worries the chances for another mistake could increase as pharmacists take on more work.

"These pharmacists always look stressed," he said.

A CVS spokeswoman said the company is focused on addressing concerns raised by its pharmacists and has taken several actions, including "providing additional pharmacy resources" in markets that need support. She declined to say how many pharmacists or technicians the company has hired.

Former Walgreens CEO Rosalind Brewer said in late June that the company had added more than 1,000 pharmacists in the second quarter, but was running into a shortage of job candidates. Walgreens is adding processing centers around the country to ease some of the prescription workload for its stores.

Brewer, who left in late August, also said the company was limiting hours at 1,100 pharmacies, or about 12% of its U.S. locations. That was down from 1,600 earlier this year, but a company executive has said it doesn't expect to return all pharmacies to normal operating hours by year's end.

Labor strife and staffing shortages in health care are not isolated to drugstores, as the recent Kaiser Permanente strike shows.

But drugstores have some additional challenges in the fall. Many customers come to them for vaccines for COVID-19, flu and pneumonia. Plus, federal officials have approved a new shot for people ages 60 and older for a virus called RSV.

All told, CVS touts in a pharmacy counter brochure that the company can offer more than 15 vaccines to customers.

Ongoing drug shortages also have kept pharmacy workers on the phone more.

Jonathan Marquess said one of his drugstores fielded 100 questions one day last fall about the antibiotic amoxicillin and the attention deficit-hyperactivity disorder treatment Adderall, two drugs in short supply.

Marquess runs several independent pharmacies in Georgia and serves on the National Community Pharmacists Association board. He has done a few things to help his stores adapt to the extra workload, he said, including training all employees to answer basic questions about vaccines.

Marquess also adds extra staff when he knows they will have an influx of customers, like when a nearby

company sends its employees over for vaccines.

"We learned from our experiences," he said. "Training your entire staff is very, very important."

Pharmacists say customers aren't powerless and can help things run smoothly.

People should bring all their insurance cards to vaccine appointments, especially since insurance coverage is new for the COVID-19 shots, Marquess said.

Dang said customers should avoid showing up right after pharmacies reopen from a lunch break or just before they close, times when pharmacists and technicians are especially busy.

Making appointments for vaccines gives pharmacy workers a better sense for their workload. Calling several days in advance for a prescription refill also helps, said Jen Cocohoba, a pharmacy professor at University of California San Francisco.

"That tiny piece of control can help, because there's so many things you cannot predict when you're inside the community pharmacy," Cocohoba said.

Precision missile strike on cafe hosting soldier's wake decimates Ukrainian village

By HANNA ARHIROVA and LORI HINNANT Associated Press

HROZA, Ukraine (AP) — The cafe had been closed throughout the war but reopened especially for a dead soldier's wake, and almost every household in the village sent someone to mourn the native son.

When the gathering to honor Andrii Kozyr was struck by a precision missile that Ukrainian officials said was fired by Russia, almost every household in Hroza in eastern Ukraine lost someone. The cafe was obliterated. Entire families perished in an instant. In all, 52 people died out of a population of 300. Many villagers now suspect that a local may have tipped off Russian forces.

On Friday, a day after the strike, an earth mover extended the graveyard to make room for them all. Among the dead were a couple who left behind four children, a community leader and three generations of the soldier's family, including his wife, mother and son, who also fought for Ukraine and had requested leave to attend the funeral held shortly before wake.

It could be months before DNA identifies most of the remains. For now, the names are scrawled on cardboard or white plastic squares, and string marks the boundaries of the fresh graves.

Only six people in the cafe survived, and the town is trying to fathom why and how the wake was targeted.

Like much of the region east of the regional capital of Kharkiv, Hroza was under Russian occupation for six months, until September 2022, when Ukrainian troops liberated the area.

Locals say it is strictly a civilian area. There has never been any military base, whether Russian or Ukrainian. They said only civilians or family came to the funeral and wake, and residents were the only people who would have known where and when it was taking place.

Ukrainian officials said the weapon was a precision Iskander-style missile, which is said to have an accuracy of 5 to 7 meters (yards).

Dmytro Chubenko, spokesman for the regional prosecutor, said investigators are looking into whether someone from the area transmitted the cafe's coordinates to the Russians — a betrayal to everyone now grieving in Hroza.

Many share that suspicion, describing a strike timed to kill the maximum number of people. The date of the funeral was set a few weeks ago, and the time was shared throughout the village late last week.

Valerii and Liubov Kozyr lost their daughter and son-in-law in the attack, along with their son-in-law's parents, who had been childhood friends of theirs. That makes them the sole guardians of three of their four grandchildren, ages 10 to 19. They said the 19-year-old had been taken to Russia during the occupation and was trapped there.

Their daughter, Olha, married Anatolii Panteleiev when she was just 16, and the two had been married for two decades and lived next door to her parents. Their son-in-law was friends with Andrii Kozyr, and though they shared a last name, he wasn't related to the dead soldier.

The couple's red Niva was still parked in the driveway Friday, but their home was empty. And the morning

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, Oct. 07, 2023 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 105 ~ 44 of 76

ritual of a cup of coffee shared among generations was shattered. In the hallway was a portrait of Olha, taken two years ago in the cafe where she would later die.

When Liubov heard the explosion, she ran outside and looked toward the source of the sound.

"The children are gone. That's all, they're gone," she told her husband. Valerii rode his bicycle to the cafe but refused to let his wife accompany him. What he saw was unbearable, he said.

That night, house after house along the village's main street was empty and unlit.

Not all bodies could be identified. Valerii went to the cemetery nonetheless to reserve a space, marking "Panteleiev family: 4 people" on a cardboard sign.

The pair gathered in a courtyard Friday with a friend who had lost two siblings in the missile strike, the men crying and cursing the war. Then, they recalled each person they knew who was killed in the strike. The list was long.

Further down the street, 15-year-old Ksiusha Mukhovata skipped class to go with her older brother to give a DNA sample. Their parents were at the wake, along with their paternal grandmother.

The desk where their father had been teaching online since the bombing of his school was still scattered with his papers. Ksiusha's grandmother, Tetiana Lukashova, said she still had the feeling that the darkened homes would spring to life, as though everything had just been frozen in time.

"I hardly even cried," Ksiusha said of her first night without her parents. "We looked at photos on the laptop. Tried to get some sleep."

She sat on the floor surrounded by photographs documenting decades of her family's history and of the village. From time to time, she took out a new photo and pointed to the smiling faces of people who were somehow related to her family: "This one died" or "She was there too."

When the explosion happened, Ksiusha was attending online class at school. She immediately messaged her best friend, Alina, because she was surprised that her parents hadn't called her, as she was home alone.

At first, her 23-year-old brother went to the site of the attack. She followed him with Alina, whose mother and sister died in the blast, and whose grandmother is in critical condition. Ksiusha walked among the crowd, trying to focus her attention on the faces of those who were alive.

When evening came, Ksiusha went to sleep in her brother's room. To reach her own, she would have to walk through the room where her parents slept.

"I don't want to sleep there," she said.

After the missile strike, the Kharkiv region declared a period of mourning and ordered flags flown at half-staff.

Asked about the strike on Hroza, Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov said the Russian military doesn't target civilians, despite ample evidence to the contrary over the course of the war.

"The strikes target military infrastructure and troop locations," Peskov said.

Liubov Kozyr is still trying to figure out what the future could hold for her and her husband. They expected their daughter and son-in-law would be there through their old age, along with his parents, who had been friends and now were family.

For now, "I'm holding onto pills," she said. "I take them, calm down a bit. I scream, scream, and then calm down."

US fears Canada-India row over Sikh activist's killing could upend strategy for countering China

By MATTHEW LEE AP Diplomatic Writer

WASHINGTON (AP) — The Biden administration is nervously watching a dispute between Canada and India, with some officials concerned it could upend the U.S. strategy toward the Indo-Pacific that is directed at blunting China's influence there and elsewhere.

Publicly, the administration has maintained that Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau's allegations that the Indian government may have been involved in the killing of a Sikh separatist near Vancouver are a matter between the two countries.

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, Oct. 07, 2023 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 105 ~ 45 of 76

But U.S. officials have also repeatedly urged India to cooperate in the investigation. Those calls have been ignored thus far by India, which denies the allegations.

Behind the scenes, U.S. officials say they believe Trudeau's claims are true. And they are worried that Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi may be adopting tactics to silence opposition figures on foreign soil akin to those used by Russia, Iran, Saudi Arabia and North Korea, all of which have faced similar accusations.

Perhaps of more concern, though, is that the Canada-India dispute could have major implications for one of the administration's main foreign policy priorities: the Indo-Pacific strategy, which seeks to counter China's increasing assertiveness in the region, according to numerous U.S. officials who spoke on condition of anonymity due to the extreme sensitivity of the matter.

Both Canada, a Pacific country and key NATO ally that shares with the United States the longest undefended border in the world, and India are critical to U.S.-led efforts to present a united and democratic front against growing Chinese assertiveness.

Aside from countering Russia's war in Ukraine, the administration has been most focused on dealing with China as a competitor and the potential international threat it poses. To that end it has boosted its diplomatic efforts in the Indo-Pacific, including by creating a leaders group that brings together Australia, Japan, India and the United States. President Joe Biden has hailed the formation of the so-called Quad as a key part of that effort.

The fear — albeit a worst-case scenario envisioned by U.S. policymakers — is that the dispute will escalate in the same way that Britain's row with Russia did over the poisoning of former Russian spy Sergei Skripal and his daughter in Salisbury, England, in 2018.

In that case, Britain accused Russia of an assassination attempt on its soil and expelled 23 Russian diplomats from the country. It also sought similar action from its NATO allies and European partners, which almost all agreed to take. For its part, the U.S. expelled 60 Russian diplomats and ordered the closure of Russia's consulate in Seattle in solidarity with its British ally. Russia responded with reciprocal actions, including closing down the U.S. consulate in St. Petersburg.

Shortly after Trudeau made public his allegations last month and expelled a senior Indian diplomat, U.S. officials began to fret over the possibility that Canada might decide to go "full Skripal" with mass diplomatic expulsions and make requests, as the British did in 2018, of its allies to do the same.

If asked by Canada to expel a large number of Indian diplomats, these officials said, the U.S. would have little choice but to comply. That, in turn, could lead to a rupture in U.S.-Indian relations and the possibility that India might either narrow its cooperation with the Quad or drop out entirely.

At the moment, there's relief it hasn't escalated to that point yet — but that could still change.

"I'm not saying we're at the danger zone yet," said Danny Russel, a former senior diplomat in President Barack Obama's administration, who is now vice president for international security and diplomacy at the Asia Society Policy Institute in New York. "But it is a situation I would certainly be watching."

The allegation of Indian involvement in the murder was supported by intelligence from the "Five Eyes" grouping of Australia, Britain, Canada, New Zealand and the U.S.

Even before Canada made the accusations public, Trudeau had frosty encounters with Modi during last month's Group of 20 meeting in New Delhi, and a few days later, Canada canceled a trade mission to India planned for the fall.

This week, India told Canada to remove 41 of its 62 diplomats in the country, ramping up the confrontation. Trudeau and other Canadian officials, including Foreign Minister Melanie Joly, have hinted that Canada won't take reciprocal measures.

Trudeau has appeared to try to calm the diplomatic clash, saying that Canada is "not looking to provoke or escalate," but officials said the concern in Washington persists.

Sex education classes often don't include LGBTQ+ students. New restrictions could make it worse

By CHEYANNE MUMPHREY AP Education Writer

PHOENIX (AP) — In fifth grade, Stella Gage's class watched a video about puberty. In ninth grade, a few sessions of her health class were dedicated to the risks of sexual behaviors.

That was the extent of her sex education in school. At no point was there any content that felt especially relevant to her identity as a queer teenager. To fill the gaps, she turned mostly to social media.

"My parents were mostly absent, my peers were not mature enough, and I didn't have anyone else to turn to," said Gage, who is now a sophomore at Wichita State University in Kansas.

Many LGBTQ+ students say they have not felt represented in sex education classes. To learn about their identities and how to build healthy, safe relationships, they often have had to look elsewhere.

As lawmakers in some states limit what can be taught about sex and gender, it will be that much more difficult for those students to come by inclusive material in classrooms.

New laws targeting LGBTQ+ people have been proliferating in GOP-led states. Some elected officials, including candidates for the Republican presidential nomination, have been pushing to remove LGBTQ+ content from classrooms.

Sex education curriculum varies widely. Some groups including Planned Parenthood have called for sex education to be inclusive of LGBTQ+ students, but some states outright forbid such an approach.

The penal code in Texas, for one, still says curriculum developed by the Department of State Health Services must say homosexuality is not acceptable and is a criminal offense, even though such language was deemed unconstitutional by the U.S. Supreme Court in 2003. Attempts in the Legislature to remove that line from state law have failed.

In practice, LGBTQ+ students say they have looked elsewhere for sex education. Some described watching their peers turn to pornography, and others said they watched videos on YouTube about how to tell if someone is gay and how to flirt with people of the same sex.

Gage grew up in Oklahoma before her military family relocated and she spent her eighth and ninth grade years in a U.S. Department of Defense school in the Netherlands. She then finished high school in Kansas, where she began to recognize she wasn't attracted only to men.

Not seeing a safe outlet at her high school to explore who she was, she went online to research for herself the history of the LGBTQ+ community in the U.S.

"I started to realize there is a huge portion of our history that is conveniently left out. But that history is important to queer youth," she said. She never really questioned gender or social norms, she said, until she started to learn about discrimination others have faced throughout history. "We have such rigid boxes that we expect people to fit into. If you didn't fit, you were called slurs. I wasn't really aware that if you strayed from those norms that people would feel you were attacking their way of life."

Still, the internet contains vast amounts of false information. Some advocates worry students turning to the internet to fill gaps in sex education will struggle to find their way through the morass.

"Any time you have a political controversy, there is a greater potential for a lot more disinformation to be generated," said Peter Adams, senior vice president of research and design at the News Literacy Project.

When schools address sexuality, it is often in the context of disease prevention or anti-bullying programs. School can be a difficult place if your identity is seen only in such negative ways, said Tim'm West, a former teacher and now executive director of the LGBTQ Institute at the National Center for Civil and Human Rights in Atlanta. West can relate: He grew up in Arkansas as a queer Black kid and preacher's son and was constantly made to feel ashamed.

"What if you are a boy in high school that knows you like boys, and you sit in a divided room and listen to a teacher explain how not to have sex with girls. You would be sitting there rolling your eyes, because that is not your issue. But you also haven't been given any instructions on how to protect yourself should you experiment with a person of the same gender," West said.

Students need more applicable sex education regardless of their gender identity or expression, said

Gage, who volunteers with a youth justice advocacy group and is also president of the Planned Parenthood Generation Action Chapter at Wichita State.

"We all have to make large decisions for ourselves about our sexuality and reproductive health. Those decisions should be grounded in knowledge," she said.

Growing up in Washington, D.C., Ashton Gerber had more sex education classes than most. But Gerber, who is transgender, said the lessons weren't all that applicable to their experience.

"Even if you can have sex education every day of the year, there is always going to be something that gets left out," said Gerber, who is a student at Tufts University in Massachusetts. Gerber said educators should point students to trusted online resources so they can do their own research.

Not knowing who you are is a horrible feeling many LGBTQ+ students wrestle with, Gage said. But equally horrible is not feeling accepted once you do understand your sexual identity.

"Had I known then what I know now, I would have felt safe and confident coming out sooner," Gage said. "No one should feel like they don't understand themselves because we are forced to conformity in a world that doesn't care. We can all be inclusive."

Iran unlawfully detaining human rights activists, including new Nobel peace laureate, UN expert says

By EDITH M. LEDERER Associated Press

UNITED NATIONS (AP) — Iran is cracking down on protesters, unlawfully detaining human rights activists, including new Nobel Peace Prize laureate Narges Mohammadi, and carrying out an "alarming" number of executions, the U.N. independent investigator on human rights in the Islamic Republic said in a report circulated Friday.

The wide-ranging report by Javid Rehman, covering the period from October 2022 through July, was written before the announcement early Friday that the Nobel Peace Prize had been awarded to Mohammadi, a longtime campaigner for women's rights even from her current cell in Tehran's notorious Evin Prison.

Rehman, a Pakistani-born professor of international human rights law at Brunel University in London, singled out Mohammadi among lawyers and human rights defenders imprisoned for their work in the report to the General Assembly.

He was highly critical of the "excessive and lethal use of force" unleashed by Iranian authorities in reaction to nationwide protests following the 2022 death of Mahsa Amini, a 22-year-old member of the Kurdish minority who was arrested for wearing an "improper hijab" or head scarf.

By the end of July, Rehman said, at least 537 people, including 68 children and 48 women, had died for protesting and hundreds more had been injured "while thousands have been reportedly arrested, detained or incarcerated."

Iran's U.N. mission spokesman did not respond to an email request seeking comment on the report.

Rehman expressed disappointment that Iran has not carried out an independent and transparent investigation into Amini's death or the unlawful use of force against protesters.

He recommended that Iran's supreme leader, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, and the country's government, judiciary and parliament "accept full responsibility" for Amini's death and take immediate remedial actions.

The investigator, appointed by the Geneva-based U.N. Human Rights Council, also recommended that Khamenei and Iranian authorities undertake prompt, independent investigations into the killings of protesters and "immediately end all forms of violence, including sexual violence and harassment of girls and women protesters."

In the aftermath of the protests, Rehman said, Iranian security forces arrested at least 576 civil rights activists, including teachers and advocates from labor unions and minority groups.

"The arrests and attacks appear to be aimed at punishing and silencing human rights defenders and civil rights activists, in particular in relation to women's rights and those calling for accountability for the death of Ms. Amini," he said, adding that human rights lawyers also continue to be imprisoned for their work.

"Human rights defender Narges Mohammadi remains in prison serving a 16-year prison sentence,"

Rehman said, singling her out by name.

He added that "innumerable reports" he received "establish that the rights to freedom of opinion and expression and to participate are under serious threat" in Iran.

His report also cited "significant reports" of arrests and threats against journalists for their independent reporting, including on the protests.

As of the end of July, Rehman said, 21 journalists remained jailed, including Niloofar Hamedi and Elaheh Mohammadi, who reported Amini's death and are accused of "collaborating with the hostile American government," "colluding against national security" and engaging in propaganda activity against the authorities. "These charges carry harsh sentences and potentially even the death penalty," he said.

Rehman also cited "alarming reports of suspected poisonings in girls' schools across the country." He expressed concern at the timing of the incidents, which began only a few weeks after the nationwide protests.

Since the first case was reported in Qom Province last Nov. 30, he said, 78 targeted poison attacks have been reported in more than 100 girls' schools across Iran. More than 13,000 students, the majority of them girls, reportedly received medical treatment, he said. Symptoms included coughing, difficulty breathing, heart palpitations, headaches, nausea, vomiting and numbness in arms and legs.

Many parents reportedly took their daughters out of school for fear of these attacks, Rehman said.

He expressed serious concern that authorities have subjected the schoolgirls, their parents, teachers, journalists and others to harassment and violence — and have intimidated and arrested those calling for accountability and accusing Iranian authorities of complicity or failure to stop the poisonings.

Rehman reported an "alarming increase in the number of executions" in 2022 — at least 582, including 256 for drug-related offenses. As of July 31, he added, 419 people had reportedly been executed this year, including at least 239 for drug-related offenses.

Since the nationwide protests began, at least seven people have been executed for their involvement, Rehman said. The government claimed that six of the defendants confessed to attacking and killing Basij, paramilitary volunteers who are fiercely loyal to the Islamic Republic, or police officers, he said.

Rehman said he is "extremely concerned at reports of confessions extracted through torture and of the death penalty having been implemented after court proceedings that substantially violated the right to fair trial." He said he views the executions of the seven protesters as a violation of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights.

Sam Bankman-Fried stole customer funds from the beginning of FTX, exchange's co-founder tells jury

By KEN SWEET and LARRY NEUMEISTER The Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — Sam Bankman-Fried authorized the illegal use of FTX customers' funds and assets to plug financial gaps at an affiliated hedge fund from the exchange's earliest days, FTX's co-founder Gary Wang told a New York jury on Friday, as prosecutors pressed their case that Bankman-Fried was the mastermind behind one of the biggest frauds in U.S. history.

Eventually, the losses at the hedge fund, Alameda Research, became so large that there was no way to hide them any longer, Wang said in his second day of testimony.

"FTX was not fine," Wang said, referring to the now-infamous tweet that Bankman-Fried wrote only a few days before the exchange filed for bankruptcy in November 2022.

Prosecutors allege that Bankman-Fried, 31, stole billions of dollars from investors and customers in order to fund a lavish lifestyle in The Bahamas and buy the influence of politicians, celebrities and the public.

Wang was FTX's chief technology officer and is part of what has been referred to as the "inner circle" of FTX executives who have agreed to testify against Bankman-Fried in exchange for leniency in their own criminal cases. He is expected to finish his testimony Tuesday. Wang has pleaded guilty to wire fraud, securities and commodities fraud as part of his agreement with prosecutors.

Prosecutors hope to have Caroline Ellison, the former CEO of Alameda and Bankman-Fried's ex-girlfriend,

take the stand Tuesday.

Wang and Bankman-Fried started Alameda in 2017, then founded FTX in 2019.

Wang told the jury that, at the direction of Bankman-Fried, he inserted code into FTX's operations that would give Alameda Research the ability to make nearly unlimited withdrawals from FTX and have a line of credit up to \$65 billion. Alameda was given these privileges initially because the hedge fund was the primary market maker for FTX's customers in the exchange's early days.

Alameda took advantage of its unlimited withdrawal capabilities and lines of credit from the start, Wang said, in the forms of cryptocurrencies as well as dollars. Initially it was only a few million dollars but grew over the years.

"It withdrew more funds than it had on exchange," Wang said adding that the money that it withdrew "was money from (FTX) customers."

The relationship was effectively a two-way street, where the exchange could help out the hedge fund and vice versa as FTX quickly grew between 2019 and 2022. At one point, when a loophole in FTX's software was exploited to cause hundreds of millions of dollars in paper losses on a particular cryptocurrency, Wang said Bankman-Fried ordered that loss to be moved onto Alameda's balance sheet because FTX's financial condition was more visible to the public while Alameda's balance sheet was not.

Alameda's deep financial ties to FTX were in contrast to Bankman-Fried's public statements that the hedge fund was "no different" from any other FTX customer.

The losses at Alameda reached as much as \$14 billion in the months leading up to the exchange's bankruptcy. Bankman-Fried and Wang discussed solutions to the problems at Alameda in the summer of 2022, including shutting down the hedge fund, but by then it was too late.

"(Alameda) had no way of repaying this," Wang testified.

FTX filed for bankruptcy Nov. 11. Wang testified that, within hours of FTX filing for bankruptcy, Bankman-Fried ordered him to send the bulk of FTX's remaining assets to the securities regulators in The Bahamas instead of to the U.S. authorities handling the bankruptcy.

Bankman-Fried said the Bahamian regulators "seemed more friendly to him, and they seemed more likely to let him stay in control of the company compared to the U.S.," Wang testified.

Following this exchange, Wang contacted the FBI on Nov. 17, saying he knew what he had done was wrong and he wanted to avoid a long prison sentence for his crimes.

In opening statements this week, Bankman-Fried's lawyers claimed that Wang and other FTX lieutenants failed to do their jobs, including setting up appropriate financial hedges that would have protected FTX from last year's crash in crypto prices. They said Bankman-Fried believed he was managing a liquidity crisis caused by cryptocurrency values that collapsed by over 70% and criticism from one of his biggest competitors that caused a run on his companies by customers seeking to recover their deposits.

In their cross examination of Wang on Friday, Bankman-Fried's lawyers tried to downplay any special relationship between Alameda and FTX, saying it was not unusual for market-making entities such as Alameda to have losses or borrow funds from an exchange.

Jailed Iranian activist Narges Mohammadi wins the Nobel Peace Prize for fighting women's oppression

By JON GAMBRELL, JOHN LEICESTER and ELENA BECATOROS Associated Press

Imprisoned Iranian activist Narges Mohammadi won the Nobel Peace Prize on Friday in recognition of her tireless campaigning for women's rights and democracy, and against the death penalty.

Mohammadi, 51, has kept up her activism despite numerous arrests by Iranian authorities and spending years behind bars. She has remained a leading light for nationwide, women-led protests sparked by the death last year of a 22-year-old woman in police custody that have grown into one of the most intense challenges to Iran's theocratic government.

Berit Reiss-Andersen, the chair of the Norwegian Nobel Committee, began Friday's announcement with the words "Woman, Life, Freedom" in Farsi — the slogan of the demonstrations in Iran.

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, Oct. 07, 2023 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 105 ~ 50 of 76

"This prize is first and foremost a recognition of the very important work of a whole movement in Iran with its undisputed leader, Narges Mohammadi," Reiss-Andersen said. She also urged Iran to release Mohammadi in time for the prize ceremony on Dec. 10.

For nearly all of Mohammadi's life, Iran has been governed by a Shiite theocracy headed by the country's supreme leader. While women hold jobs, academic positions and even government appointments, their lives are tightly controlled. Women are required by law to wear a headscarf, or hijab, to cover their hair. Iran and neighboring Afghanistan remain the only countries to mandate that.

In a statement released after the Nobel announcement, Mohammadi said she will "never stop striving for the realization of democracy, freedom and equality."

"Surely, the Nobel Peace Prize will make me more resilient, determined, hopeful and enthusiastic on this path, and it will accelerate my pace," she said in the statement, prepared in advance in case she was named the Nobel laureate.

An engineer by training, Mohammadi has been imprisoned 13 times and convicted five. In total, she has been sentenced to 31 years in prison. Her most recent incarceration began when she was detained in 2021 after attending a memorial for a person killed in nationwide protests.

She has been held at Tehran's notorious Evin Prison, whose inmates include those with Western ties and political prisoners.

U.S. President Joe Biden and Amnesty International joined calls for Mohammadi's immediate release.

"This award is a recognition that, even as she is currently and unjustly held in Evin Prison, the world still hears the clarion voice of Narges Mohammadi calling for freedom and equality," Biden said in a statement. "I urge the government in Iran to immediately release her and her fellow gender equality advocates from captivity."

Friday's prize sends "a clear message to the Iranian authorities that their crackdown on peaceful critics and human rights defenders will not go unchallenged," Amnesty said.

Mohammadi's brother, Hamidreza Mohammadi, said that while "the prize means that the world has seen this movement," it will not affect the situation in Iran.

"The regime will double down on the opposition" he told The Associated Press. "They will just crush people."

Mohammadi's husband, Taghi Rahmani, who lives in exile in Paris with their two children, 16-year-old twins, said his wife "has a sentence she always repeats: 'Every single award will make me more intrepid, more resilient and more brave for realizing human rights, freedom, civil equality and democracy.'"

Rahmani hasn't been able to see his wife for 11 years, and their children haven't seen their mother for seven, he said.

Their son, Ali Rahmani, said the Nobel was not just for his mother: "It's for the struggle."

"This prize is for the entire population, for the whole struggle from the beginning, since the Islamic government came to power," the teen said.

Women political prisoners in Evin aren't allowed to use the phone on Thursday and Friday, so Mohammadi prepared her statement in advance of the Nobel announcement, said exiled Iranian photographer Reihane Taravati, a family friend who spent 14 days in solitary confinement there before fleeing to France this year.

Mohammadi is the 19th woman to win the Nobel Peace Prize and the second Iranian woman, after human rights activist Shirin Ebadi won in 2003.

U.N. Secretary-General Antonio Guterres called Friday's selection "a tribute to all those women who are fighting for their rights at the risk of their freedom, their health and even their lives."

It's the fifth time in its 122-year history that the Nobel Peace Prize has been given to someone in prison or under house arrest. In 2022, the top human rights advocate in Belarus, Ales Bialiatski, was among the winners. He remains imprisoned.

Mohammadi was in detention for the recent protests of the death of Mahsa Amini, who was picked up by the morality police for her allegedly loose headscarf. More than 500 people were killed in a security crackdown, while over 22,000 others were arrested.

But from behind bars, Mohammadi contributed an opinion piece for The New York Times in September. "What the government may not understand is that the more of us they lock up, the stronger we become," she wrote.

Iran's government, which holds Mohammadi behind bars, criticized the Nobel committee's decision as being part of the "interventionist and anti-Iranian policies of some European countries."

It "is another link in the chain of pressure from Western circles against Iran," Iranian Foreign Ministry spokesperson Nasser Kanaani said in a statement. Iranian state media described Mohammadi as being "in and out of jail for much of her adult life," calling her internationally applauded activism "propaganda" and an "act against national security."

In Tehran, people expressed support for Mohammadi and her resilience.

"The prize was her right. She stayed inside the country, in prison and defended people, bravo!" said Mina Gilani, a girl's high school teacher.

Arezou Mohebi, a 22-year-old chemistry student, called the Nobel "an award for all Iranian girls and women," and described Mohammadi "as the bravest I have ever seen."

Political analyst Ahmad Zeidabadi said the prize might lead to more pressure on Mohammadi.

"The prize will simultaneously bring possibilities and restrictions," he wrote online. "I hope Narges will not be confined by its restrictions."

Before being jailed, Mohammadi was vice president of the banned Defenders of Human Rights Center in Iran, founded by Nobel laureate Ebadi.

The Nobel prizes carry a cash award of 11 million Swedish kronor (\$1 million). Unlike the other Nobel prizes that are selected and announced in Stockholm, founder Alfred Nobel decreed the peace prize be decided and awarded in Oslo by the five-member Norwegian Nobel Committee.

The Nobel season ends Monday with the announcement of the winner of the economics prize, formally known as the Bank of Sweden Prize in Economic Sciences in Memory of Alfred Nobel.

Man accused of killing 10 at Colorado supermarket in 2021 is ruled mentally competent to stand trial

By JESSE BEDAYN and COLLEEN SLEVIN Associated Press

BOULDER, Colo. (AP) — A judge ruled Friday that the man accused of killing 10 people at a Colorado supermarket in a 2021 rampage is mentally competent to stand trial, allowing the stalled prosecution to move forward.

Judge Ingrid Bakke ruled that Ahmad Al Aliwi Alissa, who has schizophrenia, is able to understand court proceedings and contribute to his own defense. Bakke presided over a hearing last week to consider an August determination by experts at a state mental hospital that Alissa was competent after previous evaluations found otherwise. Alissa's attorney had asked for the hearing to debate the finding.

In her ruling, Bakke said she was convinced that, following forced medication, Alissa had a "far improved capacity to elucidate his reasoning and decision-making." That's a critical component of competency, which partly hinges on Alissa being able to make informed decisions in his own case, such as whether to testify himself.

Alissa, 24, is charged with murder and multiple attempted murder counts in connection with the shooting spree on March 22, 2021, in a crowded King Soopers Store in Boulder, about 30 miles (50 kilometers) northwest of Denver. Alissa has not yet been asked to enter a plea.

Alissa allegedly began firing outside the grocery store, shooting at least one person in the parking lot before moving inside, employees told investigators. Employees and customers scrambled to escape the violence, some leaving through loading docks in the back and others sheltering in nearby stores.

A SWAT team took Alissa into custody. Authorities haven't yet disclosed a motive for the shooting.

Alissa's mental condition improved this spring after he was forced under a court order to take medication to treat his schizophrenia, said a psychologist who testified for the prosecution last week. He was admitted to the state hospital in December 2021.

Bakke noted that in the August evaluation, Alissa answered questions about the day of the shooting and the offenses alleged against him.

Loandra Torres, a forensic psychologist who evaluated Alissa, testified that Alissa said that he bought firearms to commit a mass shooting. Torres said he also indicated "that there was some intention to commit suicide by cop."

Initial evaluations throughout 2021 and 2022 found Alissa incompetent for trial largely due to his inability to communicate clearly and at times his outright refusal to discuss the allegations against him, Torres said.

Schizophrenia can shake someone's grasp on reality, potentially interfering in a legal defense in court. Mental competency does not mean he's been cured.

Mental competency is also separate from pleading not guilty by reason of insanity, which is a claim that someone's mental health prevented them from understanding right from wrong when a crime was committed.

"This decision provides some hope for the victim families that this case will move forward and that justice will be done," District Attorney Michael Dougherty said in a statement. "We will never stop fighting for the right outcome in this case."

Robert Olds, whose 25-year-old niece Rikki Olds was killed in the shooting, said the last week was an anxious one as he awaited the judge's decision. He heard about the ruling from a friend by text late Friday afternoon.

"Finally, finally a step in the right direction," he said of Bakke's decision.

Alissa is represented by public defenders, who do not comment to the media on their cases.

Now that Alissa has been deemed legally competent to participate in proceedings, Bakke is set to hold a Nov. 14 hearing to determine whether there is enough evidence for the case to proceed to a trial.

Bakke acknowledged that she could not order the state hospital to keep Alissa now that he has been deemed competent, but she urged officials to keep him there anyway since it has the ability to forcibly medicate him, unlike the jail.

She said Alissa has vowed to refuse to take his medicine if he is returned to the jail, noting that that happened when he was temporarily moved there for last week's hearing.

Citing one expert who said Alissa could regress if he bounced back and forth between the jail and the hospital, which has struggled to keep up with demand for its services for years, Bakke said that outcome "would be an injustice to everyone who has been impacted by this case." The hospital is about 140 miles (225 kilometers) from Boulder.

The remodeled King Soopers reopened last year. About half of those who worked there previously chose to return.

Las Vegas police video shows first-ever arrest in rapper Tupac Shakur's 1996 killing

By RIO YAMAT and JOHN ANTCZAK undefined

LAS VEGAS (AP) — The man charged with murder in the 1996 killing of Tupac Shakur knew the gravity of his arrest last week near his home on the outskirts of Las Vegas, according to police body camera footage released Friday.

"So what they got you for, man?" an officer asks Duane "Keffe D" Davis.

"Biggest case in Las Vegas history," Davis says, recounting the date that Shakur was gunned down — "September 7th, 1996."

Police and prosecutors allege Davis was the mastermind behind the drive-by shooting near the Las Vegas Strip that killed Shakur at the age of 25.

Now, more than 27 years later, Davis was handcuffed around the wrists and in ankle shackles in the backseat of Las Vegas police car headed toward a county jail, where he remains held without bond.

"I ain't worried," Davis told the officer. "I ain't did (expletive)."

The police videos, totaling more than an hour of footage, show Davis arrested around sunrise on Sept.

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, Oct. 07, 2023 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 105 ~ 53 of 76

29 while walking in his otherwise quiet neighborhood.

"Hey, Keffe. Metro Police," an officer said. "Come over here."

Davis, holding a water bottle, cooperated as he was patted down and handcuffed next to an unmarked police vehicle.

The 60-year-old had been a long-known suspect in the case. He publicly admitted his role in the killing in interviews ahead of his 2019 tell-all memoir, "Compton Street Legend." His arrest came two months after police raided his home, renewing interest in one of hip-hop's most enduring mysteries.

In the videos, Davis recalled the July 17 raid and peeking over a gate at the same time as a SWAT officer. He said his arrest that morning was much more low-key.

As they drove on the freeway en route to police headquarters to interview Davis, he asks if he was followed the previous night. The officer says no.

"So why you all didn't bring the media?" Davis said.

The officer asked why police would bring the media.

"That's what you all do," Davis said.

The self-described gangster from Compton, California, hasn't yet entered a plea in the case, and he denied a request from The Associated Press for an interview at the jail. His longtime lawyer in Los Angeles, Edi Faal, told AP he has no comment on Davis' behalf.

Davis told police that he had moved to the Las Vegas area in January because of his wife's job. But the audio is redacted when police later ask him what he has been doing since the move.

In an indictment unsealed last Friday in Clark County District Court, Davis is accused of orchestrating the killing of Shakur and providing his nephew, Orlando "Baby Lane" Anderson, with the gun to do it. Anderson, who denied involvement in Shakur's killing, died in 1998.

Grand jurors also voted to add sentencing enhancements for the use of a deadly weapon and alleged gang activity. If Davis is convicted, that could add decades to his sentence.

In Nevada, a person can be convicted of murder for helping another person commit the crime.

Davis' first court appearance this week was cut short when he asked the judge for a postponement while he retains counsel in Las Vegas. He's due in court again Oct. 19.

Authorities say Shakur's killing stemmed from a rivalry and competition for dominance in a musical genre that, at the time, was dubbed "gangsta rap." It pitted West Coast members of a Crips sect that Davis has said he led in Compton against East Coast members of a Bloods gang sect associated with rap music mogul Marion "Suge" Knight, founder of Death Row Records, the music label representing Shakur at the time of his death.

NOT REAL NEWS: A look at what didn't happen this week

By The Associated Press undefined

A roundup of some of the most popular but completely untrue stories and visuals of the week. None of these are legit, even though they were shared widely on social media. The Associated Press checked them out. Here are the facts:

No, migrants do not receive \$2,200 each month from the federal government

CLAIM: The Biden administration is giving people who enter the U.S illegally payments of \$2,200 per month.

THE FACTS: Those who are in the U.S. illegally are not eligible for any cash assistance, with rare exceptions, immigration experts told The Associated Press. Certain groups, such as refugees and people granted asylum, can receive financial benefits from the federal government, though not as high as \$2,200 each month. The issue has been misrepresented before online, and reemerged this week. One tweet states: "According to a release by the legal immigration group ALIPAC, the Biden administration is giving some illegal aliens payments of \$2,200 per month!" The Americans for Legal Immigration PAC did publish this claim, relying on an Aug. 21 Tucker Carlson interview with retired Army Col. Douglas Macgregor, who said that "every alleged asylum seeker, illegal migrant pouring in through the border in Texas or wherever else"

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, Oct. 07, 2023 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 105 ~ 54 of 76

is given a monthly payment of \$2,200. But immigration experts say that's false. "Generally, unauthorized immigrants have very little access to federally-funded public benefits," Julia Gelatt, associate director of the U.S. immigration policy program at the Migration Policy Institute, told the AP in an email. "They can mostly only access emergency, in-kind things like shelter and food during a hurricane or other emergency, or emergency healthcare." Asked for further evidence of the group's claim, ALIPAC President William Gheen acknowledged that "by law illegals are not supposed to receive payments from the federal government," but claimed they are being "misclassified" as asylum seekers and refugees, and pointed to the MacGregor interview as the source of the \$2,200 figure. Macgregor, however, cited an article published by a Houston radio station that quotes Gheen and the ALIPAC release, and was published a week after his interview with Carlson. Regardless, certain Cubans and Haitians are the only people who can receive federal cash assistance while in the U.S. illegally. Those who qualify include nationals of these countries whose cases for removal from the U.S. are still being decided or who have a pending application for asylum. They can apply for the same assistance available to refugees and people granted asylum — both groups that have legal status in the U.S. Those granted asylum include individuals who face persecution and applied for protection while already in the U.S. Stanford Prescott, a spokesperson for the International Rescue Committee, told the AP that "none of these programs provide a regular monthly payment of \$2,200" and that they "typically have strict limitations on eligibility" and length. For example, the Refugee Cash Assistance program provides people who do not have minor children with financial help to meet basic needs such as food, shelter and transportation, for up to 12 months. The amounts vary by location, but according to Gelatt, "seem to be under \$1,000 for a couple, less for a single person." Similarly, the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families program provides financial support to families with minor children. These benefits also vary by state and family size, but Gelatt said they are still less than \$2,000 a month," even for a very large family in a more-generous state." For instance, a household with three children in New York could receive \$698 per month for up to 60 months. The U.S. Department of State also provides local resettlement agencies with a one-time payment of \$2,375 per refugee — \$1,275 of that amount can be used for critical needs such as rent, food and clothing, while the rest is earmarked to fund access to services such as cultural orientation, locating housing and legal help. Mark Miller, a State Department spokesperson, said the agency "does not provide payments or assistance to undocumented immigrants in the United States." Refugees, people granted asylum and certain other groups may also be eligible for supplemental security income if, for example, they are aged 65 or older, blind or disabled. The maximum monthly SSI payment is \$914 for an individual and \$1,371 for a couple.

— Associated Press writer Melissa Goldin in New York contributed this report.

Differing infant mortality rates in Japan and the US are not connected to vaccine policies

CLAIM: Japan stopped mandatory childhood vaccinations in 1994, vastly improving the country's infant mortality rate. By contrast, the U.S. has the highest childhood vaccination rate and has "the worst infant mortality rate of the western nations."

THE FACTS: Both countries have similar and very high childhood vaccination rates, despite their differing policies. And while it's true that Japan has a lower infant mortality rate than the U.S., public health experts say it is not because of vaccines, which actually reduce death in vaccine-preventable diseases. Nevertheless, social media users are sharing an Instagram post claiming that after Japan banned the MMR — or measles, mumps and rubella — vaccine and eliminated mandatory vaccines, the infant mortality rate decreased "as a result." "The United States has the worst infant mortality rate of the western nations and we vaccinate the most," it concludes. While it's true that Japan's infant mortality rate is far lower than the United States', and that childhood vaccines aren't required in the Asian nation, there is no connection between the two, experts say. "To point to vaccinations as the cause, one would need a randomized clinical trial showing that infant vaccines have increased infant deaths," said Alice Chen, vice dean for research at the University of Southern California's Sol Price School of Public Policy. "No such data that I am aware of does that." In 1989, cases of aseptic meningitis in children who received a combined vaccination for measles, mumps and rubella, or MMR, prompted lawsuits against the government, forcing it to scrap the

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, Oct. 07, 2023 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 105 ~ 55 of 76

mix four years later. However, kids can still be inoculated against the three diseases, just with separate injections. Japan revised its vaccination law in 1994 to scrap mandatory inoculation, but the country still recommends people get vaccinated and childhood vaccination rates are very high. For example, in 2022, 99% of Japanese kids had at least one dose of the diphtheria, tetanus and pertussis — or DTaP — vaccine, according to data from the World Health Organization and UNICEF. The rate in the U.S. was 98%. And in 2021, the vaccination rates for both rubella and the first dose of the measles shot were around 95% in Japan and 92% in the U.S., according to data from WHO and UNICEF. Data for mumps vaccination was not readily available, but it reportedly remains lower in Japan, where it is not classified as a routine inoculation. Additionally, Japan's infant mortality rate gradually decreased over time, not dramatically after 1994, according to the infant mortality rate total estimates from the United Nations Inter-agency group for Child Mortality estimation, a group led by UNICEF. U.N. data shows Japan's infant mortality rate was around 1.7 deaths per 1,000 live births in 2021, versus approximately 5.4 deaths per 1,000 live births in the U.S, which is indeed higher than most other Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, or OECD, nations. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention reported in 2021 that the leading causes of infant death in the U.S. were birth defects, preterm birth and low birth weight, maternal pregnancy complication, sudden infant death syndrome — or SIDS — and injuries such as suffocation. Emily Oster, a professor in economics at Brown University who researches infant mortality, noted there has been a large decline of infant deaths due to SIDS due to preventative steps parents have taken, such as having infants sleep on their back. The reasons for these poor outcomes are unclear, though Oster and Chen conducted a study that found higher infant mortality rates in the U.S. versus Europe were driven by those with a lower socioeconomic status.

— Associated Press writer Karena Phan in Los Angeles contributed this report.

Thousands of children are not missing on Maui

CLAIM: Thousands of children are missing following the deadly wildfires on Maui.

THE FACTS: Lists compiled by the Maui Police Department and the FBI contained only one minor who was unaccounted for following the August fires, and the child was later identified as a victim of the blaze. Despite this, false claims that thousands of children remain missing are spreading on social media. "What happened to the missing children of Maui?" asks one Instagram post which includes footage from the wildfires and their aftermath. "According to some adamant news sources, only 122 names remain 'unaccounted' for." A tweet similarly states: "Not forgetting the 2000 missing children from Maui." But just one child was ever officially reported as missing when official lists were released. A list of people unaccounted for after the wildfires released by the Maui Police Department and the FBI on Sept. 1 named 385 people, only one of whom was a minor. It has since been confirmed that he died in the wildfires, according to local newsreports. No other minors were included on four subsequent lists, including the most recent, which was released on Sept. 29 and names only 12 people. More than 3,200 people were initially reported missing, according to a County of Maui press release. The Maui Police Department and the FBI first released a list of 388 validated missing individuals on Aug. 24, though this list did not denote whether individuals were minors. "Unfortunately, not all information is accurate or unbiased, and it is not uncommon for those who wish to cause panic to sensationalize events or present partial information that may not accurately reflect the reality of a situation," Alana Pico, a Maui Police Department spokesperson, wrote in an email to The Associated Press. The Hawaii Department of Education is tracking students whose schools have been affected by the wildfires as they choose alternate education options. It noted in an Aug. 24 report that out of 3,001 students who had pre-registered at Lahaina public schools prior to the wildfires, 2,025 had not re-enrolled at another public school or opted for distance learning as of Aug. 21. The most recent data states that as of Oct. 3, the Department of Education had not achieved some form of active contact with just 13 students. Officials previously said they believed at least 115 people had died in the Maui wildfires, but that number dropped to at least 97 after testing discovered multiple DNA samples from some of the victims.

— Melissa Goldin

Police found 115 bodies at Colorado 'green' funeral home while investigating putrid smells

By JESSE BEDAYN Associated Press

CAÑON CITY, Colo. (AP) — The awful smell seeped from a neglected building in a small Colorado town for days, followed by a report that made police take a closer look at the "green" funeral operator's storage facility. Inside, they made a gruesome discovery: At least 115 decaying bodies.

Investigators were tight-lipped Friday about exactly what they found inside the Return to Nature Funeral Home in Penrose, Colorado, but their plans to bring in teams that usually deal with airline crashes, coroners from nearby jurisdictions and the FBI pointed to a grim mess.

A state document, meanwhile, alleged funeral home owner Jon Hallford tried to conceal the improper storage of corpses. He claimed he was doing taxidermy at the facility, according to the state suspension letter dated Thursday.

Hallford acknowledged that he had a "problem" at the property, the Colorado Office of Funeral Home and Crematory Registration letter said. The document did not elaborate on the taxidermy and alleged improper storage of remains, but the facility's registration has been expired since November.

No one had been arrested or charged. Text messages to the funeral home seeking comment went unanswered. No one at the business picked up the phone and there was no working voicemail.

Funeral home officials were cooperating as investigators sought to determine any criminal wrongdoing, Fremont County Sheriff Allen Cooper said at a news conference where he called the scene inside the building "horrific."

On Friday, a sour, rotten stench still came from the back of the building, where windows were broken. Coroner's officials from Fremont County and nearby El Paso County parked their trucks outside and discussed among themselves as they walked around the building.

Some identifications would require taking fingerprints, finding medical or dental records, and DNA testing in a process that could take several months, Fremont County Coroner Randy Keller said. Families would be notified as soon as possible after body identification, he added.

Family members who have used the funeral home were asked to contact investigators.

As the news broke, Mary Simons, 47, couldn't help but wonder if her husband was inside the building. Darrell Simons had lung cancer and died of pneumonia in August, a few months shy of their 13th anniversary. Mary Simons hired Return to Nature Funeral Home to cremate him, but the ashes never arrived.

Sitting in the rocking chairs that Simons and her husband spent long hours in at their home in nearby Florence, Colorado, she remembered him proposing to her by running, sliding on his knees and popping open a box with a rock inside, and the small pond he built with a trickle of water to calm her anxiety. She'd finally begun to turn the corner of grieving, she said.

"Suddenly it's like 'oh my God', I've lost him all over again," Simons said through tears. "It's like the grieving process is starting all over again."

Police told Simons the process of finding out whether her husband's body was in the building would be slow, she said.

The FBI was bringing in teams with additional training and specialized equipment that process "scenes of national magnitude," such as major airline disasters, Denver-based FBI Special Agent in Charge Mark Michalek said.

The bodies were inside a 2,500-square-foot (230-square-meter) building with the appearance and dimensions of a standard one-story home. The funeral performed burials without embalming chemicals or metal caskets, using biodegradable caskets, shrouds or "nothing at all," according to its website.

The company charged \$1,895 for a "natural burial," not counting a casket or cemetery space, and until July offered cremations, too.

Under Colorado law, green burials are legal but state code requires that any body not buried within 24 hours must be properly refrigerated.

Deputies were called in Tuesday night in reference to a suspicious incident officials haven't yet described.

Fremont County Sheriff's Office investigators returned the next day with a search warrant and found the remains.

Joyce Pavetti, 73, could see the funeral home from the stoop of her house and said she caught whiffs of a putrid smell in the last few weeks.

"We just assumed it was a dead animal," she said.

Auto workers stop expanding strikes against Detroit Three after GM makes battery plant concession

By TOM KRISHER AP Business Writers

DETROIT (AP) — The United Auto Workers union said Friday it will not expand its strikes against Detroit's three automakers after General Motors made a breakthrough concession on unionizing electric vehicle battery plants.

The announcement of the pause in adding factories to the strikes came minutes after GM agreed to bring workers at battery factories into the UAW's national contract, essentially assuring they will be represented by the union.

"We have had a major breakthrough that has not only dramatically changed negotiations, but is going to change the future of our union and the future of our industry," union President Shawn Fain told workers Friday in a video appearance.

Fain, wearing a T-shirt that said "Eat the Rich" in bold letters to back his contention that it's time for the working class to make gains over billionaires, said the UAW is winning at GM and expects to do the same at Ford and Stellantis.

Neither GM nor Stellantis commented directly on unionization of battery factories, but Ford stuck to statements that workers will have to choose once they are hired at plants that haven't even been built.

"We remain open to the possibility of working with the UAW on future battery plants in the U.S., reminding that these are multibillion-dollar investments and have to operate at sustainably competitive levels," Ford said in a statement.

Fain told workers that additional plants could be added to the strikes later. He said GM made the change after the union threatened to strike at a plant in Arlington, Texas, that makes highly profitable large SUVs such as the Chevrolet Tahoe and GMC Yukon.

"Today, under the threat of a major financial hit, they leapfrogged the pack in terms of a just transition" from combustion engines to electric vehicles, he said.

The union, he said, has seen significant progress in talks with all three companies. Ford's general wage offer, for instance, is up to 23% over four years, after starting at 9%. GM and Stellantis, he said, are at 20%. None of the raises is big enough but they're further along, he said.

Ford and Stellantis, Fain said, have agreed to return to a cost-of-living pay raise formula that the union gave up in 2007 as the automakers were in financial trouble. Both sides remain far apart on pension increases for workers hired before 2007 and a switch from defined-contribution to defined-benefit pensions for those hired later.

"Our strike is working, but we're not there yet," Fain told workers.

In addition to the economic issues, the union has long sought assurances that it would represent workers at 10 U.S. battery factories proposed by the companies.

The automakers have said the plants, mostly joint ventures with South Korean battery makers, had to be bargained separately.

Friday's change means the four U.S. GM battery plants would now be covered under the union's master agreement and GM would bargain with the union "which I think is a monumental development," said Marick Masters, a business professor at Wayne State University in Detroit.

"GM went far beyond and gave them this," Masters said. "And I think GM is thinking they may get something in return for this on the economic items."

Shares of all three automakers rose after Fain's announcement in apparent anticipation that deals might

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, Oct. 07, 2023 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 105 ~ 58 of 76

be near. GM's shares ended Friday up almost 2%, Stellantis added 3% and Ford rose just under 1%.

The automakers have resisted bringing battery plants into the national UAW contracts, contending the union can't represent workers who haven't been hired yet. They also say joint venture partners must be involved in the talks.

They also fear that big union contracts could drive up the prices of their electric vehicles, making them more expensive than Tesla and other nonunion competitors.

For the past two weeks the union has expanded strikes that began on Sept. 15 when the UAW targeted one assembly plant from each of the three automakers.

That spread to 38 parts-distribution centers run by GM and Stellantis, maker of Jeeps and Ram pickups. Ford was spared from that expansion because talks with the union were progressing then.

Last week the union added a GM crossover SUV plant in Lansing, Michigan, and a Ford SUV factory in Chicago but spared Stellantis from additional strikes due to progress in talks.

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.

The union had 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 pickups, commercial vans and midsize SUVs, which aren't as profitable as larger vehicles.

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.

Why the NFL cares about Taylor Swift and Travis Kelce

By HOWARD FENDRICH AP National Writer

Eager as the National Football League has been to cater to the recent public fixation with Taylor Swift and Travis Kelce, it's certainly not taking any credit for creating the outsized storyline that has emerged around the pop superstar and the Kansas City Chiefs tight end.

"Not orchestrated by the NFL," league spokesman Brian McCarthy assured The Associated Press with a chuckle during a chat on the phone about what is becoming known as "Tay Tay and Trav," a topic few seemed to be able to get enough of initially, whether football diehards or Swifties, whether via TV or TikTok.

The protagonists largely have remained mum about their actual status since Swift began attending Kelce's games 1½ weeks ago, though Kelce did admit after practice Friday in Kansas City that "everybody is having fun with it."

"You've got a lot of people that care about Taylor and for good reason," he said, without getting into the details of their budding relationship.

But the sport providing the backdrop, and its TV partners, have not been shy about trying to capitalize on the "situationship" and gain new fans, particularly members of Gen Z and more women — although marketing experts are skeptical there will be much of a bump in the long run.

"There is not going to be a 'Pre-Taylor Swift Era' and a 'Post-Taylor Swift Era' for the NFL. ... It's a momentary fascination," said Rebecca Brooks, founder and CEO of Alter Agents, a consulting firm.

"I believe in love and I wish Taylor luck. But ... it's very unlikely people would go to a game to see Taylor and be like, 'Oh, I had no idea this is what football was about! My gosh! I love it now!'" Brooks said. "Or let's say they get married: Taylor is going to show up at games and it's going to become routine."

THE NFL WANTS IN

Still, naturally, the league wants in on the fun. A team of folks monitoring social media see where it could be part of the phenomenon as various memes and trends took off after Swift watched a game in Kansas City alongside Kelce's mom on Sept. 24.

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, Oct. 07, 2023 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 105 ~ 59 of 76

"It was a perfect storm of pop culture and sports colliding in a really positive way, with two incredibly passionate fan bases merging together and interacting in ways that they hadn't before. So for us, it's fantastic," said Ian Trombetta, the NFL's senior vice president of social, influencer and content marketing.

"Hopefully those — especially the young women — that have now gained an interest in not only Travis Kelce, but the NFL more broadly, can stay with us throughout the year and years to come," Trombetta said.

Not that the NFL thinks there's a ton of room for improvement: It says 47% of its fans are women, and it's the No. 1 sport among people ages 8 to 24.

The league has worked for several years to court women, including by promoting flag football or touting female hires for teams' coaching staffs, as negative developments turned people off: domestic violence cases involving players; misogyny and sexual harassment during former Washington Commanders owner Dan Snyder's tenure; an investigation launched in May by New York and California prosecutors into accusations of sexual harassment and racial discrimination at NFL corporate offices.

"Those are each individual situations," Trombetta said. "We've got amazing women throughout the league ... and at the end of the day, we're proud of where we're going as a league and the values that we try to uphold each and every day."

Yet it certainly can't hurt to have Swift, an icon of female empowerment, bringing people to the party.

A year ago, she became the first artist with songs in each of the top 10 spots on the Billboard 100. Overwhelming demand to see her current tour — which resumes in two weeks — resulted in a Ticketmaster debacle. Her Instagram following of more than 270 million is nearly 10 times the NFL's 28.4 million; Kelce's has approached 4 million lately, thanks to a boost from the recent publicity.

This celebrity-athlete pairing is more powerful than many that preceded it. Attribute that to Swift's broad appeal, not just in the U.S. but globally, and to Kelce's status as the NFL's best player at his position and the second-best player, behind quarterback Patrick Mahomes, on the reigning Super Bowl champions. Add the current state of non-stop coverage via cell phones, and the hype surely surpasses Joe DiMaggio and Marilyn Monroe (go ahead and Google them, kids), David Beckham and Posh Spice, the now-divorced Tom Brady and Giselle Bündchen, and so on.

FINDING THE RIGHT 'STORY OF THE WEEK'

This time, there also was a vacuum of viewing choices because of Hollywood strikes.

"There's always a 'story of the week' now, and no matter what it is, you have to figure out how to fit into it. It was 'Barbie' for a while. It was Beyoncé over the summer," said marketing guru Joe Favorito, who counts NFL Media among his past clients.

"If you are in professional sports, that's what you want," he said. "You want to be not just for the core fans. You want to be for everyone, anywhere, who has to talk about this the next day, because they don't want to feel like they're missing out."

One issue with courting the Gen Z cohort (11 to 26), Brooks said, is that it's a group more openly concerned with authenticity than earlier generations. So the NFL can be "seen as self-serving," Brooks said, and "risk looking kind of pathetic and cringy."

Indeed, the oversaturation already is starting to bother some.

The NFL's Instagram feed, for example, briefly placed Swift lyrics in its bio and noted the Chiefs are 2-0 with her on hand. Even Kelce and his brother, Philadelphia Eagles center Jason, noted how many times NBC cameras cut to Swift at Sunday night's game between Kansas City and the New York Jets — sometimes celebrating, sometimes interacting with famous friends and sometimes, well, just standing there.

"Is the NFL overdoing it?" Jason asked Travis on an episode of their podcast released Wednesday. "What is your honest opinion? Take away your feelings for Taylor."

That drew a chuckle from Travis, who said it can be fun for viewers when celebrities are shown at games but agreed with his brother's premise, saying: "They're overdoing it a little bit, especially my situation."

On the other hand, as former CBS Sports president Neal Pilson put it: "You ride the horse as long as it's available. We show (Dallas Cowboys owner) Jerry Jones more than we probably need to during TV broadcasts, so why not show Taylor Swift?"

Pilson noted that NFL TV contracts already worth billions aren't going to be renegotiated any time soon, but an uptick in ratings could be presented to advertisers to seek higher prices for commercials.

"I've been asked the question more than once: 'What happens when and if they break up?'" the NFL's Trombetta said. "I have no idea. But I hope they can stay together as long as possible."

At least 16 migrants killed, 29 injured in a bus crash in southern Mexico

MEXICO CITY (AP) — At least 16 migrants from Venezuela and Haiti died early Friday in a bus crash in southern Mexico, authorities said.

Mexico's National Immigration Institute originally reported 18 dead, but later lowered that figure. Prosecutors in the southern state of Oaxaca later said there had been an overcount due to some of the bodies being dismembered, and that the real death toll was 16.

Both sources said the dead include two women and three children, and that 29 people were injured. There was no immediate information on their condition.

Photos from the scene showed the bus rolled over onto its side on a curvy section of highway in the southern state of Oaxaca. The cause of the crash in the town of Tepelmeme, near the border with the neighboring state of Puebla, is under investigation.

The institute said a total of 55 migrants, mostly from Venezuela, were aboard the vehicle.

It was the latest in a series of migrant deaths in Mexico amid a surge in migrants traveling toward the U.S. border. Because migration agents often raid regular buses, migrants and smugglers often seek out risky forms of transportation, like unregulated buses, trains or freight trucks.

Last week, 10 Cuban migrants died and 17 others were seriously injured after a freight truck they were riding in crashed on a highway in the neighboring state of Chiapas, near the border with Guatemala.

The National Immigration Institute said all of the dead Cuban migrants were women, and one of them was under 18.

The Institute said the driver of the vehicle had apparently been speeding and lost control of the truck, which was carrying 27 migrants at the time. The driver fled the scene.

Mexican authorities generally prohibit migrants without proper documents from buying tickets for regular buses, so those without the money to hire smugglers often hire poorly-driven, poorly-maintained buses that speed to avoid being stopped. Or they walk along the side of highways, hitching rides aboard passing trucks.

Last week, a truck flipped over on a highway in Chiapas, killing two Central American migrants and injuring another 27. And two Central American migrants died last week after trying to board a moving train in the state of Coahuila near the Texas border.

Election denier and 'MyPillow Guy' Mike Lindell confirms he's out of money, can't pay legal bills

By STEVE KARNOWSKI Associated Press

MINNEAPOLIS (AP) — Attorneys who've been defending MyPillow chief executive and election denier Mike Lindell against defamation lawsuits by voting machine companies are seeking court permission to quit, saying he owes them unspecified millions of dollars and can't pay the millions more that he'll owe in legal expenses going forward.

Lindell confirmed in an interview with The Associated Press on Friday that he's out of money and said he understands his lawyers are people who need to make a living.

Attorney Andrew Parker wrote in documents filed in federal court on Thursday that his firm and a second firm representing MyPillow in lawsuits by Smartmatic and Dominion Voting Systems can't afford what it would cost to represent Lindell and MyPillow through the rest of the litigation. Continuing to defend him would put the firms "in serious financial risk," he wrote.

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, Oct. 07, 2023 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 105 ~ 61 of 76

It's the latest in a string of legal and financial setbacks for Lindell, who propagates former President Donald Trump's lies that the 2020 election was stolen from him, in part by rigged voting machine systems. Several big-box retailers, including Walmart, have discontinued his products.

"MyPillow's been decimated. ... We've lost hundreds of millions of dollars," Lindell said, adding that the other main assets he has left are his home and pickup truck. He blamed Dominion, Smartmatic and the news media, including the conservative outlets Fox News and Newsmax.

"You're all doing it because you want me to shut up about security of our elections," a defiant Lindell said. "You're all the same."

But he vowed to keep fighting and to keep MyPillow going. He said he doesn't have any other debts and has no plans to file for bankruptcy for himself or MyPillow.

In a rambling video posted on his FrankSpeech website Thursday night, he depicted himself as a victim of "cancel culture" and said he wasn't done fighting.

"I'm never going to stop trying to secure elections for this country ever," Lindell said.

Parker filed the requests to quit in federal court in Minnesota, where Smartmatic filed a defamation lawsuit seeking over \$1 billion, and in Washington, D.C., where Lindell is a defendant in a similar \$1.3 billion lawsuit by Dominion Voting Systems that also targets Trump allies Rudy Giuliani and Sidney Powell. Dominion won a nearly \$800 million settlement from Fox News in April. Giuliani is being sued by a former lawyer over allegedly unpaid legal bills.

Parker's firm also moved for permission to stop defending Lindell, MyPillow and FrankSpeech from a defamation lawsuit filed in federal court in Colorado by Eric Coomer, former director of product strategy and security for Denver-based Dominion.

In July, Lindell acknowledged to the Star Tribune of Minneapolis that his company was auctioning off equipment and subleasing some of its manufacturing space in Minnesota after several major retailers and some TV shopping networks stopped carrying MyPillow products amid the negative publicity. He said the equipment was no longer needed as MyPillow consolidated its operations and turned its focus to direct sales.

In April, an arbitration panel ordered Lindell to pay \$5 million to a software engineer for breach of contract in a dispute over data that Lindell claimed proves China interfered in the U.S. 2020 elections and tipped the outcome to President Joe Biden. Lindell had launched his "Prove Mike Wrong Challenge," as part of the "Cyber Symposium" he staged in South Dakota in 2021 to further his theories.

Parker wrote in his filings that Lindell and MyPillow had regularly paid his firm in full and on time through the end of 2022. But he said the payments slowed this year while the litigation fees and costs "dramatically increased." By May, the payments slowed to more than 60 days and didn't cover the full bills. Lindell and MyPillow made no payments for the firm's July and August bills, he wrote, though they did make some relatively small payments that were only a fraction of the total owed.

The attorney said his firm, Parker Daniels Kibort, or PDK, warned Lindell and MyPillow in August and September that it would have to withdraw if the bills weren't paid.

He said Lindell and MyPillow understand his firm's position, don't object, and are in the process of finding new lawyers. No trial date is scheduled in either the Smartmatic or Dominion cases.

Ever the pitchman, Lindell, known as the MyPillow Guy, asked viewers of his webcast who wanted to help to call in and buy his pillows, towels and other products.

Trump's New York civil fraud trial rolls on after an appeals judge declines to halt it

By MICHAEL R. SISAK Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — Donald Trump's civil fraud trial will roll ahead next week after the former president lost a bid Friday to halt the proceedings while he fights a pretrial ruling that could strip him of Trump Tower and other marquee properties.

An appeals court judge rebuffed Trump's push to pause the New York trial, but agreed to leave him in

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, Oct. 07, 2023 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 105 ~ 62 of 76

control of his holdings for now. The decision, after an emergency hearing Friday afternoon, came five days into the closely watched trial.

Trump went to the courthouse for the first three days of the trial in New York Attorney General Letitia James' lawsuit, observing testimony — and fulminating to TV cameras outside about a case he deemed a "a witch hunt and a disgrace."

Trump's lawyers had asked the state's intermediate appellate court to suspend the trial and prevent Judge Arthur Engoron from enforcing a ruling he made last week. Engoron's decision revoked the Republican presidential frontrunner's business licenses and puts a court-appointed receiver in charge of his companies.

"This is a massive error. It is irreparable," Trump lawyer Christopher Kise told the appellate judge, Associate Justice Peter H. Moulton. Kise argued that the ruling will make defendants in other cases fear that their companies and properties will be seized without recourse.

"We're not seeking a delay. We're seeking a fair trial," Kise said.

Trump's lawyers said Engoron's ruling could harm not only the ex-president and other defendants but as many as 1,000 employees.

State Deputy Solicitor General Judy Vale told the appeals judge that James' office had already offered to keep the business licenses as-is until after the trial. Kise acknowledged the offer, but said he was worried Engoron wouldn't allow it.

"We could have resolved some of this, and we're still happy to do so," Vale said, calling the defense arguments for a delay "completely meritless."

"No one thinks the lights will go off at 40 Wall Street tomorrow, that's not what's happening," Vale said.

Mounting the trial has been "an enormous endeavor," Vale said, entailing extensive court planning, security resources for Trump's attendance and special arrangements for press and public access.

In a statement, Kise said that he was pleased the appeals court "upheld New York law and put a halt to any cancellation of business certificates, receivers or dissolution."

"The trial court's attempt to reach issues, entities and assets beyond the scope of this case has been suspended," Kise said.

James countered that Trump's side was "falsely claiming victory" for a resolution that her office had proposed and that the big takeaway was that the trial goes on as scheduled.

"Once again, Donald Trump's attempts to delay this trial have been rejected," James said in a statement. "Yet another court denied his efforts to evade justice for his years of fraud. But Donald Trump lives in a fantasy world where money grows on trees and facts don't matter."

The appellate court last week rejected the defense's last-minute effort to delay the trial just days before it began. On Thursday, Trump's lawyers dropped a lawsuit they filed against Engoron as part of that challenge.

Engoron ruled last week that Trump committed years of fraud as he built the real estate empire that vaulted him to fame and the White House.

The judge, ruling on the top claim in James' lawsuit, found that Trump routinely deceived banks, insurers and others by exaggerating the value of assets on his annual financial statements, which were used in making deals and securing loans.

Trump has denied wrongdoing, arguing that some of his assets are worth far more than what's listed on the statements.

Before the appellate action, former Trump Organization controller Jeffrey McConney testified at the trial Friday that values he assigned to Trump's Mar-a-Lago resort in Florida — as much as \$739 million in 2018 — were based on the false premise that it could be sold as a private residence. Such use is prohibited by Trump's 2002 agreement with the National Trust for Historic Preservation.

"Were you aware that Mr. Trump had deeded away his right to use the property for any other purpose than a social club?" state lawyer Andrew Amer asked.

"I was not aware," said McConney, who's also a defendant in this case.

The trial will resume Tuesday with Trump's longtime finance chief Allen Weisselberg on the witness stand. Weisselberg, a defendant, oversaw Trump's dealmaking, was involved in securing loans and supervised McConney's work on the financial statements. He left jail in April after serving about 100 days for dodging

taxes on \$1.7 million in job perks.

As the trial was unfolding this week, Engoron issued an order Thursday setting procedures for enforcing his ruling. He gave both sides until Oct. 26 to submit names of potential receivers and gave Trump and other defendants seven days to provide a court-appointed monitor, retired federal judge Barbara Jones, with a list of all entities covered by the ruling.

He also ordered the defendants to give Jones advance notice of any application for new business licenses in any jurisdiction and any attempts to create new entities to "hold or acquire the assets" of a company that's being dissolved under the ruling.

Trump's lawyers argued in court papers that Engoron had "no rationale or legal authority" to impose what they described as "the corporate death penalty." They also rapped the judge for not being clear in explaining the real-world effects of his decision.

At a pretrial hearing on Sept. 26, Trump lawyer Christopher Kise pressed Engoron to clarify whether his ruling meant Trump would be required simply to close up some corporate entities or if he'd be forced to relinquish some of his most prized assets.

Engoron then said he wasn't "prepared to issue a ruling right now."

Pennsylvania's Democratic governor, a rising political star, crosses partisan school choice divide

By MARC LEVY Associated Press

HARRISBURG, Pa. (AP) — In the partisan politics of education funding, the school choice movement has pressed states for decades to send taxpayer money to private and religious schools and long had to concentrate its efforts on states where a Republican governor was an ally.

That suddenly changed over the summer.

Pennsylvania Gov. Josh Shapiro — a first-term Democrat seen by his party as a rising star nationally — forcefully put his weight behind a Republican-backed proposal to send \$100 million to families for private school tuition and school supplies.

Shapiro would later back down in the face of House Democratic opposition, but his support has raised Pennsylvania's profile in the national voucher debate and given advocates optimism that the program will eventually become law.

With the backing of a major GOP campaign donor and now Shapiro, a private-school product whose near-landslide win in the battleground state has fueled talk of his national political prospects, vouchers are at the forefront of the state's political agenda.

A win for voucher advocates would mark an evolution in traditional alliances on school choice politics and could set Shapiro apart from other Democratic contenders emerging on the national scene. Previously, Democratic governors around the country who had signed voucher measures had done so in compromise deals driven by Republican-controlled legislatures.

The signal Shapiro sent came through loud and clear to supporters of the program.

"What made Shapiro unique is his desire to lead on it," said Robert Enlow, president and CEO of the Indianapolis-based EdChoice.

Vouchers have long been viewed in stark partisan terms: Democrats and public school allies say they drain critical resources from public schools. Republicans and school choice advocates say they give freedom to families who may not like their local public schools.

At \$100 million in a state where public schools spend more than \$35 billion a year, the Pennsylvania proposal was viewed by some as largely symbolic. But both sides say its passage in Pennsylvania would open the door to a larger program eventually.

As many as 16 states have voucher programs, according to groups that study the programs, and they vary in size, with some becoming widely available after big expansions in the past year.

To some, Shapiro's support should be viewed as a potential presidential candidate in 2028 positioning himself as a moderate who bridges political divides.

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, Oct. 07, 2023 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 105 ~ 64 of 76

"I see that he understands the political value of school choice, and I thought, 'My goodness, he's going to pave his way to the White House by embracing this particular issue,'" said Matthew Brouillette, a prominent voucher advocate in Pennsylvania.

Public views about vouchers are complicated — and do not necessarily reflect the partisan divide in statehouses, or even the usual assumptions.

The school choice movement has long been a coalition of Roman Catholic school advocates, libertarians and private school boosters, as well as Black educational empowerment proponents — giving the cause traction with some big-city Democratic lawmakers.

An AP-NORC poll last year found that Americans are divided — 39% favor, 37% oppose — on whether to give low-income parents tax-funded vouchers they can use to help pay for tuition for their children to attend a private or religious school instead of public schools.

Democrats in the poll were similarly divided.

"It's a nuanced picture in terms of public attitudes that don't totally follow partisan divides that are seen across other issues," said Christopher Borick, director of the Muhlenberg College Institute of Public Opinion.

The division reflects similar polls over the past two decades — but support drops when people are told vouchers siphon money from public schools.

Shapiro insists he only supports a voucher program that doesn't do that — something public school advocates dispute, saying every voucher dollar could have gone to public schools.

The voucher debate in Pennsylvania came at a particularly charged time: a court had ruled only months earlier that the state's system of school funding had for decades unconstitutionally discriminated against the poorest districts.

That had motivated public school advocates and Democrats to demand billions more for the poorest public schools, a quest that Shapiro has said he supports.

Shapiro's familiarity with private schools, meanwhile, is born of experience. He attended a private Jewish school, his children attend the same school and his father is on the school's board.

But some observers connect his interest in vouchers to the influence of Jeffrey Yass, a securities trading billionaire who is one of the GOP's top national donors and the biggest donor to Republican campaigns in Pennsylvania.

School choice is Yass' top issue in Pennsylvania.

"In Shapiro's case, I think it demonstrates the long arm and pocketbook of Jeff Yass," said Charlie Gerow, a Republican operative and marketing consultant.

Yass' campaign donations in Pennsylvania filter through groups that put \$13 million into supporting a would-be Republican rival to Shapiro who nonetheless lost in last year's GOP primary. Yass did not ultimately support the GOP nominee whom Shapiro beat.

Shapiro has received a relatively tiny sum from those groups: at least \$135,000 out of nearly \$90 million he's reported raising for races for governor and attorney general since 2015.

But even if Yass never gives another dime to Shapiro's campaigns, keeping Yass on the sidelines may also be a potent strategy to weaken Republican opponents.

Shapiro first broke ranks with Democrats last year when, during his campaign for governor, he said he supported the Republican-sponsored voucher bill.

Still, as governor, Shapiro didn't talk about vouchers until June, while in the midst of intense closed-door budget talks. During an appearance on Fox News, he was asked about the voucher proposal and said "every child of God deserves a shot."

"And one of the best ways we can guarantee their success is making sure every child has a quality education," Shapiro said.

Those fluent in the history of school vouchers could think of no other Democratic governor who had embraced them.

"The last prominent Democrat to really champion school vouchers was like in Milwaukee in 1990," said Joshua Cowen, a Michigan State University professor of education policy, referring to a Democratic state lawmaker in Wisconsin. "Every other champion in state government for these programs has come from

the Republican Party.”

Within days, Shapiro had struck a budget agreement with Senate Republicans that included the \$100 million voucher program — blindsiding Democratic lawmakers, teachers’ unions, public school advocates and school boards.

The budget deal, however, fell far short of what Democratic lawmakers had sought for public schools, adding fodder to their argument that vouchers drain resources from public schools.

“We weren’t prepared to have this conversation when we have this massive problem here,” said House Education Committee Chairman Peter Schweyer, D-Lehigh.

Teachers’ unions — some of Shapiro’s strongest supporters in his campaign for governor — mustered support against the proposal from across labor, including AFSCME, SEIU, the AFL-CIO and building and construction trades.

In the end, House Democratic opposition prompted Shapiro to agree to veto the \$100 million program from wider budget legislation — drawing angry recriminations from Republicans and school choice allies.

Yass, in a letter published by The Wall Street Journal, accused Shapiro of flip-flopping, siding with “radical education activists,” throwing poor children “under the bus” and “cowering before his union financiers.”

The episode has left an uneasy feeling among both voucher opponents and advocates. In an interview last month with WURD radio in Philadelphia, Shapiro shrugged off the fallout.

“I recognize that there are some in my party that don’t agree with that,” Shapiro said, “but my view is we’ve got to be working to empower parents to put their kids in the best possible position to succeed.”

Nearly 1,000 migrating songbirds perish after crashing into windows at Chicago exhibition hall

By TODD RICHMOND Associated Press

David Willard has been checking the grounds of Chicago’s lakefront exhibition center for dead birds for 40 years. On Thursday morning he found something horrible: Hundreds of dead songbirds, so thick they looked like a carpet.

Nearly 1,000 songbirds perished during the night after crashing into the McCormick Place Lakeside Center’s windows, the result, according to avian experts, of a deadly confluence of prime migration conditions, rain and the low-slung exhibition hall’s lights and window-lined walls.

“It was just like a carpet of dead birds at the windows there,” said Willard, a retired bird division collections manager at the Chicago Field Museum, where his duties included administering, preserving and cataloging the museum’s collection of 500,000 bird specimens as well as searching for bird strikes as part of migration research.

“A normal night would be zero to 15 (dead) birds. It was just kind of a shocking outlier to what we’ve experienced,” Willard said. “In 40 years of keeping track of what’s happening at McCormick, we’ve never seen anything remotely on that scale.”

Researchers estimate hundreds of millions of birds die in window strikes in the United States each year. Scientists with the Smithsonian Conservation Biology Institute and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service released a study in 2014 that put the number between 365 million and 988 million birds annually.

Window strikes are an issue in almost every major U.S. city. Birds don’t see clear or reflective glass and don’t understand it’s a lethal barrier. When they see plants or bushes through windows or reflected in them, they head for them, killing themselves in the process.

Birds that migrate at night, like sparrows and warblers, rely on the stars to navigate. Bright lights from buildings both attract and confuse them, leading to window strikes or birds flying around the lights until they die from exhaustion — a phenomenon known as fatal light attraction. In 2017, for example, almost 400 passerines became disoriented in a Galveston, Texas, skyscraper’s floodlights and died in collisions with windows.

“Unfortunately, it is really common,” said Matt Igleski, executive director of the Chicago Audubon Society. “We see this in pretty much every major city during spring and fall migration. This (the window strikes at

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, Oct. 07, 2023 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 105 ~ 66 of 76

McCormick Place) was a very catastrophic single event, but when you add it all up (across the country), it's always like that."

Conditions were ripe for a massive wave of songbird southern migration over Chicago on Wednesday evening, said Stan Temple, a retired University of Wisconsin-Madison wildlife ecology professor and avian expert.

Small songbirds feed during the day and migrate at night to avoid air turbulence and predators. They've been waiting for northerly winds to give them a boost south, Temple said, but September saw unusually warm southern winds that kept birds in a holding pattern here. On Wednesday evening a front swept south, providing a tailwind, and thousands of birds took to the skies.

"You had all these birds that were just raring to go but they've been held up with this weird September and October with temperatures way above normal," Temple said. "You had this huge pack of birds take off."

The birds swept south over Chicago, following the Lake Michigan shoreline - and right into a maze of illuminated structures, Temple said.

Pre-dawn rain forced the birds to drop to lower altitudes, where they found McCormick Place's lights on, Willard said. According to the field museum's count, 964 birds died at the center. That's about 700 more than have been found at the center at any point in the last 40 years, Willard said. Members of 33 species died, according to the field museum; most of them were palm and yellow-rumped warblers.

Window strikes and fatal light attraction are easily preventable, said Anna Pidgeon, an avian ecologist at the University of Wisconsin-Madison. Building managers can simply dim their lights, she said, and architects can design windows with markings in the glass that birds can easily recognize. People can add screens, paint their windows or apply decals to the glass as well.

New York City has taken to shutting off the twin beams of light symbolizing the World Trade Center for periods of time during its annual Sept. 11 memorial ceremony to prevent birds from becoming trapped in the light shafts. The National Audubon Society launched a program in 1999 called Lights Out, an effort to encourage urban centers to turn off or dim lights during migration months. Nearly 50 U.S. and Canadian cities have joined the movement, including Toronto, New York, Boston, San Diego, Dallas and Miami.

Chicago also participates in the Lights Out program. The city council in 2020 passed an ordinance requiring bird safety measures in new buildings but has yet to implement the requirements. The first buildings at McCormick Place were constructed in 1959.

Cynthia McCafferty, a spokesperson for McCormick Place, said the exhibition hall participates in Lights Out and interior lighting is turned off unless staff, clients or visitors need it. She added that the center maintains a six-acre (2.4-hectare) bird sanctuary.

McCafferty said an event has been going on all week at the center so the lights have been on when the building was occupied but turned off when it wasn't. She said she wasn't sure what time the window strikes occurred or whether the center was occupied then.

"It's an odd building," Willard said of the exhibition center. "When it was built, people weren't thinking about bird safety. They still aren't in most architecture. It's right on the lakefront. There are many nights when it's lit up. People are describing the whole night of migration as part of a once in a lifetime thing ... (but) this still is an unacceptable intrusion by humans and their architecture. Just terribly sad and dramatic."

A surge of hiring in September defies predictions, pointing to US job market's enduring resilience

By CHRISTOPHER RUGABER AP Economics Writer

WASHINGTON (AP) — An unforeseen burst of hiring last month has lifted hopes that the economy will prove durable once again, even as an array of threats lie ahead.

Businesses across the U.S. economy ramped up their hiring in September, defying surging interest rates, financial market turmoil, the ongoing threat of a government shutdown and an uncertain outlook to add the most jobs in any month since January.

The hiring binge confounded expectations for a slowdown and added one more layer of complexity to

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, Oct. 07, 2023 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 105 ~ 67 of 76

the Federal Reserve's high-wire effort to defeat inflation without causing a recession.

The 336,000 jobs that were added in September exceeded the 227,000 for August and raised the average gain for the past three months to a robust 266,000. The unemployment rate was unchanged at 3.8%, not far above a half-century low.

Friday's government report raised hopes for a notoriously difficult "soft landing," by which the Federal Reserve would manage to curb high inflation with a series of rate hikes without derailing the economy.

But the healthy pace of hiring also highlights the confounding nature of the U.S. economy as it navigates the uncharted post-pandemic era. A strong job market suggests that growth might be too healthy for inflation to keep declining and that the Fed might have to further raise rates.

Speaking after the September hiring data was released, President Joe Biden asserted that the robust job growth was a result of his policies, a message he has repeated in speeches ahead of next year's elections. Yet polls show that most adults still hold a negative view of the economy, with Biden's agenda having yet to make much impact on public sentiment.

The president attributed public doubts about the economy to the nature of news media coverage, which he said prioritizes the negative.

"I think that the American people are smart as hell and know what their interests are," Biden said. "I think they know they're better off financially than they were before."

Here are some questions and answers about Friday's job report.

WHY IS HIRING STILL SO STRONG?

The Fed has raised its benchmark short-term rate 11 times since last year to about 5.4%, the highest in 22 years — the fastest pace of rate hikes in four decades. The increases are intended to slow borrowing and spending by businesses and consumers, thereby cooling growth. When employers added just 105,000 jobs in June, economists had expected further modest gains to come. Instead, hiring has rebounded with vigor.

There are several likely reasons why: Millions of people have started job hunting in the past year, pulled into the job market by strong demand for workers and higher pay. Others have likely been drawn in by financial stress they feel from higher prices. Immigration has also rebounded after COVID-era restrictions were lifted.

As a result, more workers are available to fill millions of open positions. This trend has lessened the labor shortages that many employers complained about since the recovery from the 2020 pandemic and enabled some companies to finally catch up to their previous employment levels. In September, for example, restaurants and bars added 61,000 positions, finally restoring their pre-pandemic levels of payrolls.

Likewise, hospitals, child care centers and government agencies are still adding workers as they seek to rebuild their staffs after having lost workers during COVID.

"We've seen a very impressive rebound in the labor supply," said Sarah House, senior economist at Wells Fargo. "After a downturn, there's a lot of consternation about to what extent workers will come back. And what we've seen is that workers do respond to a strong jobs market."

Sarah Tilley, a senior vice president at the business software provider ServiceNow, is seeing evidence that more workers are available. Responses to their job listings are 80% higher than they were a year and a half ago, she said, with some of that increase likely a result of widespread layoffs last year by tech companies.

Another change from a year ago, she noted, is that even workers with tech skills are less able to job-hop for large raises.

"People would jump off, get these real meaty increases," she said. "And that's changed. People are less inclined to take the risk."

Consumers spent freely over the summer — on travel, hotels, movies and concert tickets — and lifted the economy in the process. Because consumer spending drives about 70% of the U.S. economy, analysts expect growth to top a healthy 3% annual rate for the July-September quarter. With the economy growing steadily, businesses are likely more confident about adding positions.

WHAT DOES ALL THIS MEAN FOR THE FED?

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, Oct. 07, 2023 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 105 ~ 68 of 76

It could make Fed officials more inclined to raise their key interest rate in November or December. In the past, Chair Jerome Powell has said that slowing inflation back to the Fed's 2% target will require "pain" in the labor market. So far, there's been little to no such pain.

And just Thursday, Mary Daly, president of the Federal Reserve Bank of San Francisco, suggested that the Fed could hold off on another hike "if we continue to see a cooling labor market and inflation heading back to our target." Friday's data doesn't suggest much cooling is happening.

At the same time, the Fed's main concern is that rapid hiring will stoke strong wage increases. Higher wages can fuel inflation if companies raise their prices to offset their higher labor costs. In September, wage growth slowed; it rose 4.2% from a year earlier. That is a solid gain, and slightly faster than inflation. But it was the mildest year-over-year increase in more than two years.

Such data underscores the tantalizing prospect that inflation could continue to ease — it was 3.7% in August — without requiring widespread layoffs or a recession, in what Austan Goolsbee, head of the Federal Reserve Bank of Chicago, calls "the golden path." Some other Fed officials think the economy will have to cool to truly stamp out rising prices.

At the same time, long-term interest rates have spiked in the past two months, making loans more expensive across the economy and potentially serving as a brake on economic growth and inflation. Mortgage rates have jumped to 7.5%, the highest level in 23 years.

"It's a pretty solid report and perhaps it makes the Fed a little bit more nervous just given the overall strength of the jobs market," House said. But the jump in interest rates "is doing some of the Fed's work for it, and that makes another hike less compelling."

Another consideration that economists are increasingly considering is that if the economy is still chugging along, maybe that shows that it can withstand higher interest rates for the long term. If so, the Fed's benchmark rate might not be restricting growth as much as Fed officials think and may need to rise noticeably higher.

IS THE JOB MARKET BENEFITING EVERYONE?

The U.S. economy is vast and diverse, and even in solid job reports there are pockets of weakness. In September, while the overall unemployment rate was unchanged, it rose noticeably for African-American workers.

Higher unemployment for Black Americans can sometimes serve as a warning signal of a weakening economy. That's because Black workers are often the first to be laid off. It's too soon to say if that is happening now, given that Black unemployment is still relatively low at 5.7%.

Still, that rate is up from 5.3% in August, and from a record low for Black unemployment of 4.7% in April.

The jobless rate for Hispanics fell last month from 4.9% to 4.6%. For Asian Americans, it fell from 3.1% to 2.8%. For whites, the unemployment rate was unchanged at 3.4%.

Amazon launches test satellites for its planned internet service to compete with SpaceX

By MARCIA DUNN AP Aerospace Writer

CAPE CANAVERAL, Fla. (AP) — Amazon launched the first test satellites for its planned internet service on Friday as a rival to SpaceX's broadband network.

United Launch Alliance's Atlas V rocket blasted off with the pair of test satellites, kicking off a program that aims to improve global internet coverage with an eventual 3,236 satellites around Earth.

Amazon plans to begin offering service by the end of next year.

Elon Musk's SpaceX has a huge head start over Amazon and its founder Jeff Bezos, who has his own rocket company, Blue Origin.

SpaceX flew its first test Starlink satellites in 2018 and the first operational satellites in 2019. It has since launched more than 5,000 Starlinks from Florida and California, using its own Falcon rockets.

Europe's Eutelsat OneWeb also is launching internet satellites, with around 600 in orbit.

Amazon originally agreed to put the satellites on the debut launch of ULA's Vulcan rocket. But with the

Vulcan grounded by problems until at least the end of this year, Amazon switched to the long-established Atlas V.

When licensing the program, the Federal Communications Commission stipulated that at least half of the planned satellites be operating by 2026 and all of them by 2029.

Amazon has reserved 77 launches from ULA, Blue Origin and Europe's Arianespace to get everything up.

Troopers who fatally shot a 'Cop City' activist near Atlanta won't be charged, prosecutor says

By KATE BRUMBACK and R.J. RICO Associated Press

ATLANTA (AP) — Georgia state troopers who shot and killed an environmental activist at the site of a planned police and firefighter training center near Atlanta will not be charged, a prosecutor announced Friday, saying he found that their use of deadly force was "objectively reasonable."

Opponents of the center, who derisively refer to it as "Cop City," had camped out at an 85-acre (34-hectare) tract of forest that is being developed for the massive facility. It is there that Manuel Paez Terán, 26, was killed on Jan. 18.

Mountain Judicial Circuit District Attorney George Christian was appointed to review the Georgia Bureau of Investigation's file on the shooting. Along with the statement announcing his decision, Christian released a 31-page report detailing his analysis. He declined to release the underlying evidence, however, outraging the family.

State troopers were part of what authorities described as an "enforcement operation" at the site when they encountered Paez Terán, who was known as Tortugueta. When the activist refused to come out of a tent, the troopers fired a pepper ball launcher and Paez Terán responded by firing a handgun four times through the tent, hitting and seriously wounding a trooper, the release says. Six troopers fired back, killing Paez Terán.

Brian Spears, an attorney for the family, called Christian's report "a rubber stamp of the GBI's version of events without any critical analysis."

The troopers who fired on Paez Terán were not wearing body cameras, and Paez Terán's family and other activists have expressed skepticism from the start about law enforcement statements about the shooting.

Specifically, they've pointed to the results of an independent autopsy commissioned by the family that concluded the activist was sitting cross-legged with their hands in the air at the time of the shooting. Separately, the DeKalb County Medical Examiner's Office said the activist's body had at least 57 gunshot wounds. The coroner also said gunpowder residue was "not seen" on Paez Terán's hands, though investigators said forensic tests later "revealed the presence of particles characteristic of gunshot primer residue."

Protesters have also singled out the comment of a responding officer who, seemingly reacting to the radio traffic, had said, "You (expletive) your own officer up." The activists have said on social media that it supports assertions some made from the beginning that the trooper was shot by friendly fire. Christian's report says the bullet that wounded the trooper came from Paez Terán's gun.

Paez Terán's killing was a galvanizing moment for the "Stop Cop City" movement, with activists across the world holding vigils and painting murals in honor of Tortugueta, who friends said was dedicated to helping others and protecting the environment. Three days after the killing, a group of masked protesters torched a police car and attacked the entrance of a downtown skyscraper that houses the Atlanta Police Foundation, the nonprofit that is building the training center.

Several other acts of vandalism have since taken place, including the storming of the construction site in March, an event that led to dozens being charged with domestic terrorism. In late August, Georgia Republican Attorney General Chris Carr secured a racketeering indictment against 61 people connected to the movement.

In the report released Friday, Christian named the state troopers who fired their guns at Paez Terán: Mark Lamb, Jonathan Salcedo, Bryland Myers, Ronaldo Kegel, Royce Zah and Jerry Parrish. He identified Parrish as the trooper who was shot and wounded by Paez Terán.

The report says officers from multiple law enforcement agencies were involved in an operation to remove people who were trespassing on the property, which is owned by the city of Atlanta, and to remove campsites. Activists at the site had "disrupted and intimidated" contractors working at the site and "had committed crimes," it says.

The GBI briefed all of the officers participating before they fanned out into the wooded area, telling them that people at the site had previously been known to have guns and an officer had been confronted by a person with a rifle and pistol on one occasion. Officers were also warned about explosive devices and traps allegedly found on the property and were told that people had previously thrown rocks and fireworks at officers, the report says.

Also according to the report, when the first two troopers arrived at Paez Terán's tent, the tent door flap was open about a foot (30 centimeters) and troopers saw movement inside. A trooper identified himself as police and told Paez Terán to exit the tent. After a minute or two, it became clear the activist wasn't going to come out, and Paez Terán zipped up the tent flap.

One of the troopers radioed to ask that a pepper ball launcher be brought in, and while waiting on that continued to tell Paez Terán to come out. As more troopers arrived, Paez Terán partially unzipped the tent and told the troopers he wouldn't come out and wanted them to leave before closing the tent again. That's when one of the troopers warned Paez Terán he would use a chemical agent and began firing pepper balls into the tent.

Within seconds, Paez Terán began firing at the troopers from inside the tent, the report says. Troopers returned fire. They reported hearing a loud boom and seeing white smoke coming from the front area of the tent, causing them to believe Paez Terán had deployed an explosive device.

Troopers involved said they clearly identified themselves as police and told Paez Terán to come out multiple times. They said they told him he was trespassing and was under arrest and warned him before using the pepper balls. Other officers confirmed hearing troopers identify themselves and issue warnings.

Christian, citing Carr's ongoing racketeering case, said no other records will be released for now. Spears objected to that. He said there is "no possible reasonable justification" to not release all records given that Christian's investigation is complete.

Paez Terán's mother, Belkis Terán, echoed that view in a written statement.

"We have waited eight months for the truth," she wrote. "We are in pain. We want to hear the interviews. We want our experts to review the lab tests. We want our questions answered. This report does not answer our questions. How long must we wait?"

Security questions swirl at the Wisconsin Capitol after armed man sought governor twice in one day

By SCOTT BAUER Associated Press

MADISON, Wis. (AP) — Wisconsin's Capitol building is one of the most open in the country, which made it easy for a man to walk inside with a loaded handgun this week in search of Democratic Gov. Tony Evers.

The man was arrested for illegally openly carrying a weapon, but after posting bail, he returned outside the Capitol that same night with an AK-style semi-automatic rifle. He was placed in protective custody. As of Friday, no charges had been filed.

The episode is once again putting a spotlight on security at the state Capitol, a building that has its own police force but is not protected by metal detectors, screening checkpoints or X-rays. Anyone can walk in off the street between 8 a.m. and 6 p.m. during the week and go straight to the offices of state lawmakers and others.

While concealed weapons are allowed in the building, firearms cannot be openly carried. An Evers administration spokesperson said the man's handgun was in a holster.

Both the governor and Assembly Speaker Robin Vos, the state's top Republican, expressed opposition Friday to adding metal detectors. Evers told Wisconsin Watch that restricting access to the building or requiring people to go through security screening would "be the last thing I want to do."

Vos, reacting on social media, agreed.

"The Capitol Police did their job and we should not restrict the ability of the public to access their elected officials and the State Capitol beyond what we do now," Vos said on X, formerly known as Twitter.

The Wisconsin Capitol is one of 13 state capitols that does not have either metal detectors or X-ray machines, according to a 2021 report from the Council of State Governments.

The governor's office is guarded by a Capitol police officer. That's where the armed man headed Wednesday, demanding to see the governor to talk about "domestic abuse towards men," according to police. Offices for members of the Wisconsin Supreme Court are also behind locked doors, but there is no police guard.

All 132 state lawmakers have offices that are open to the public and unguarded.

Capitol police do have cameras throughout the building, and offices are equipped with a button that can be pushed to signal police in times of emergency.

In January 2022, someone in the office of state Sen. Joan Ballweg triggered the alarm, but no officer responded. That resulted in the state Senate ordering an outside audit of the Capitol Police by the University of Wisconsin-Madison Police Department.

Capitol Police instituted numerous changes following that report, including improving the emergency alarm system, and lawmakers in August ordered another review by the Legislative Audit Bureau that is slated to be done by the end of next year.

"I would bubble wrap each and every one of you if I could," Wisconsin Capitol Police Chief David Erwin told lawmakers at an August hearing focused on security.

There have been temporary upgrades in Capitol security.

Metal detectors were installed at the Capitol in late February 2011 at the height of protests over then-Gov. Scott Walker's proposal that effectively ended collective bargaining for most public workers. Protests lasted for weeks and grew as large as 100,000 people, with demonstrators spending weeks in the Capitol in an ultimately unsuccessful effort to block the proposal.

The metal detectors were removed in June 2011 under an agreement reached between Walker's administration and the state employees union, which sued to get the Capitol reopened without metal detectors.

The Legislature voted to legalize the carrying of concealed weapons in 2011, and allowed them in the Capitol. Leaders argued then that if they were banned in the Capitol, then metal detectors would have to be installed to catch people trying to illegally sneak them in.

State Capitol security concerns were raised again after the riot at the U.S. Capitol on Jan. 6, 2021. But at the time, the Wisconsin Capitol was closed to the general public due to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic.

Lawmakers have historically said little about their wishes for security in the building, out of fears of publicly discussing vulnerabilities. Republican and Democratic legislative leaders contacted Friday voiced support for reviewing building security, but only Vos stated his opposition to metal detectors.

Democratic Senate Minority Leader Melissa Agard said, "We absolutely need to assess all security options to ensure that everyone in our Capitol is kept safe whether they are a legislator, staff, or visitor."

But she called for a broader discussion including laws that would prevent dangerous people from accessing firearms. Evers and Democrats have pushed for so-called red flag laws, but Republicans have blocked them.

Funerals held in Syria for dozens of victims killed in deadliest attack in years

By ALBERT AJI and BASSEM MROUE Associated Press

HOMS, Syria (AP) — Family members of victims of a deadly drone attack on a crowded military graduation ceremony gathered outside a military hospital in the central city of Homs on Friday to collect bodies of loved ones who died in one of Syria's deadliest attacks in years.

Thursday's strike on the Homs Military Academy killed 89 people, including 31 women and five children, and wounded as many as 277, according to the health ministry. The death toll could rise as some of the wounded are in critical condition. Syria announced a three-day state of mourning starting Friday.

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, Oct. 07, 2023 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 105 ~ 72 of 76

The attack is likely to lead to a renewed wave of violence in the country's opposition-held northwest, where front lines have been relatively calm since Russia and Turkey, who support rival sides in the country's conflict, reached a cease-fire in March 2020, ending a three-month Russian-backed government offensive against insurgents.

No group immediately claimed responsibility for Thursday's attack as Syria endures its 13th year of conflict that has killed half a million people. In the aftermath, Syrian government forces intensified their shelling and airstrikes on rebel-held regions and insurgents fired back toward areas held by President Bashar Assad's forces.

The attack was an indication that the war is far from over and a sign of weakness within the Syrian military, which failed to prevent it despite the fact that the army has regained control of most of Syria in recent years with the backing of Russia and Iran.

The last such large-scale killing against government forces came in 2014, when the Islamic State group killed more than 160 Syrian government troops at a military base in the northern province of Raqqqa. In a video released at the time, dozens of terrified young conscripts were made to run while stripped down to their underwear before being killed.

Around noon on Friday, the Syrian military fired machine guns toward another drone that flew over Homs, two pro-government media outlets, Al-Watan and Sham FM, reported. It was not immediately clear if the drone was shot down.

The city of Homs is about 100 kilometers (60 miles) south of rebel-held areas, indicating that insurgents might have acquired weaponized long-range drones.

Fearing retaliation from the government, religious authorities in areas held by the opposition in northern Syria said Friday prayers will not be held in mosques and called on people to pray at home instead "out of concern for the safety of Muslims." Authorities in the region also ordered all private and public schools to close on Saturday and Sunday "because of the brutal campaign that liberated areas are being subjected to."

Syria's military said in a statement Thursday that drones laden with explosives targeted the ceremony packed with young officers and their families as it was wrapping up. Without naming any particular group, the military accused insurgents "backed by known international forces" for the attack and said "it will respond with full force and decisiveness to these terrorist organizations, wherever they exist."

Overnight, Syrian troops pounded the last major rebel-held region in parts of Idlib and Aleppo provinces, killing at least three people and wounding more than 15 in the town of Daret Azeh, according to the opposition's Syrian Civil Defense, also known as White Helmets. The group reported that a child was killed in another strike in a village in the region.

The Britain-based Syrian Observatory for Human Rights, an opposition war monitor, reported that Russian warplanes carried out several airstrikes on the town of Jisr al-Shughour and nearby villages on Friday. The area is a stronghold of the Turkistan Islamic Party, a Uyghur militant group, many of whose fighters are Chinese Muslims.

In Homs, hundreds of people, many of them dressed in black and weeping, gathered outside the Abdul-Qader Shaqfa Military Hospital where the bodies of 30 victims in coffins draped with Syrian flags were put in ambulances to be taken to their hometowns for burial.

Army Lt. Ibrahim Shaaban came to collect the body of his fiancée, Raneem Quba, 23, who was killed along with her father, Mohammed, and younger sister, Rima, while attending the graduation of her brother, Lt. Hussein Quba.

"I feel that my back was broken," Shaaban said, holding back his tears while standing by her coffin. "She was not only a fiancée, but a mother, a sister and a friend."

Legislator Bassam Mohammed said targeting a place where civilians are present "is a terrorist criminal act," and that the attackers intended to inflict large numbers of casualties.

Syrian Defense Minister Gen. Ali Abbas was present Friday outside the hospital, where he comforted the families of victims. An opposition war monitor reported Thursday that Abbas had left the graduation ceremony shortly before the attack.

"We will go after them and after those who support them," Abbas said of the insurgents. "We will avenge the blood of martyrs and clean Syria's soil from terrorists and criminals."

One of the survivors, Lt. Jaafar Mohammed, 23, said he was taking photos with relatives by the platform when something suddenly exploded in front of them.

"I was thrown to the ground," said Mohammed, who suffered an arm injury. He said his brother was killed and his father and younger brother were also injured.

Syria's crisis started with peaceful protests against Assad's government in March 2011 but quickly morphed into a full-blown civil war after the government's brutal crackdown on the protesters. The tide turned in Assad's favor against rebel groups in 2015, when Russia provided key military backing to Syria, as well as Iran and the Lebanese militant group Hezbollah.

A Russian missile attack in eastern Ukraine kills a 10-year-old boy and his grandmother

By HANNA ARHIROVA Associated Press

KHARKIV, Ukraine (AP) — A Russian missile attack killed a 10-year-old boy and his grandmother Friday in the northeastern Ukrainian city of Kharkiv, officials said. Elsewhere in the region, villagers prepared to bury their dead after a strike the previous day killed at least 52 civilians in one of the deadliest attacks in the war in months.

Associated Press reporters saw emergency crews pulling the boy's body from the rubble of a building after the early morning attack. He was wearing pajamas with a Spider-Man design.

The strike also killed the boy's grandmother and wounded an 11-month-old child, Interior Minister Ihor Klymenko said on Telegram. Regional Gov. Oleh Syniehubov said that in all, 30 people were wounded. Rescue operations were continuing.

Officials said preliminary information indicated that the Kremlin's forces used two Iskander missiles in the attack, the same as in the previous day's strike on the village of Hroza that killed 52 people.

In Hroza, workers at the local cemetery on Friday cut down trees and mowed grass to prepare graves for those killed. They are to be buried not far from Ukrainian soldier Andrii Kozyr, whose wake they were attending when the strike happened.

Many people in the village of around 300 lost relatives or friends in the attack. They gathered to mourn in groups in the village center, which was largely deserted except for people picking up humanitarian aid, including materials to repair their damaged houses.

In a courtyard near the café wrecked by the missile, people placed candles and flowers to honor the dead.

In Kharkiv city, one of the Friday morning missiles landed in the street, leaving a crater, and the other hit a three-story building, setting it ablaze, according to Syniehubov, the regional governor.

Debris and rubble littered the street. Surrounding buildings were blackened by the blast, which blew out windows and damaged parked cars.

Yevhen Shevchenko, a resident of a nearby nine-story building, said he was in bed when the attack occurred. "There was a blast wave, a powerful explosion. It blew out the windows and doors in the apartment," he said.

A day earlier, a Russian Iskander ballistic missile turned a village café and store to rubble in Hroza, a village in eastern Ukraine, killing at least 51 civilians, according to Ukrainian officials. Around 60 people, including children, were attending a wake at the café when the missile hit, they said.

Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov denied on Friday that Russia was responsible for the Hroza attack. He insisted, as Moscow has in the past, that the Russian military doesn't target civilian facilities.

The Hroza victims made up most of the 54 civilians killed in the country over the previous 24 hours, Ukraine's presidential office said Friday. It said the U.N. human rights chief, Volker Türk, said he was "shocked and saddened" by the Hroza attack.

The office said on X, formerly Twitter, that its human rights monitors intended to visit the site and collect

information. "Accountability is key," it said.

Ukraine President Volodymyr Zelenskyy, attending a summit of about 50 European leaders in Spain to rally support from Ukraine's allies, called the strike a "demonstrably brutal Russian crime" and "a completely deliberate act of terrorism."

His visit to the summit aimed to secure more military aid, among other goals, and Zelenskyy said late Thursday that his efforts had produced results.

"We will have more air defense systems," he wrote on his Telegram channel. "There will be more long-range weapons."

The air defense systems are crucial as Ukrainian officials try to prevent attacks like the ones in Kharkiv and amid fears Moscow will resume concerted attacks on power facilities during the winter, in a repeat of its tactics from last year when it tried to break the Ukrainians' morale by denying them electricity.

Zelenskyy is also fighting against signs that Western support for his country's war effort could be fraying.

Concerns over the resupply of Ukraine's armed forces have deepened amid political turmoil in the United States and warnings that Europe's ammunition and military hardware stocks are running low.

The Swedish government said on Friday that it plans to send to Ukraine a military aid package worth 2.2 billion kronor (\$199 million), mainly consisting of 155-millimeter artillery ammunition.

"We are preparing for it to be a long war, therefore we need to design our support long-term and sustainably," Defense Minister Pål Jonson told a press conference. "It is now important that more countries step up to support Ukraine."

Meantime, Russia scrambled a MiG-31 fighter jet to shadow a U.S. Navy P-8A Poseidon patrol plane approaching Russian airspace over the Norwegian Sea, Russia's Ministry of Defense said.

When the Russian jet approached the U.S. plane, the American aircraft turned away from, and did not cross, the Russian border, the ministry said. It said the Russian fighter jet flew "in strict accordance" with international rules and did not "dangerously approach" the U.S. plane.

Such intercepts have become more frequent. Protocols in both Russia and the West envisage scrambling fighters if a plane from the other side flies close to the border.

Icy flood that killed at least 41 in India's northeast was feared for years

By ASHOK SHARMA and SIBI ARASU Associated Press

NEW DELHI (AP) — Hundreds of rescuers dug through slushy debris and fast-flowing, icy water Friday in a search for survivors after a glacial lake overflowed and burst through a dam in India's Himalayan north, a disaster that many had warned was possible for years.

The flood began in the early hours of Wednesday, when water overflowed a mountain lake. It smashed through a major hydroelectric dam downstream and then poured into the valley below, where it killed at least 41 people, carrying bodies kilometers (miles) away, and forced thousands to flee their homes.

It wasn't clear what triggered the deadly flood, the latest to hit northeast India in a year of unusually heavy monsoon rains. Experts pointed to intense rain, and a 6.2 magnitude earthquake that struck nearby Nepal on Tuesday afternoon, as possible contributors.

But the disaster also underscores a climate dilemma that pits local environmental activists who say dams in the Himalayas are too dangerous against authorities pursuing a national green energy agenda.

The design and placement of the 6-year-old Teesta 3 dam, the largest in Sikkim state, were controversial from the time it was built. A report compiled by the Sikkim State Disaster Management Authority in 2019 had identified Lhonak Lake as "highly vulnerable" to flooding that could breach dams and cause extensive damage to life and property.

The dam's operator, and local agencies responsible for dam safety, did not respond to requests for comment Friday.

India is counting on hydroelectric dams to meet ambitious clean energy goals that are part of a global

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, Oct. 07, 2023 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 105 ~ 75 of 76

effort to slow climate change. The government aims to increase India's hydro power by half by 2030, to 70,000 megawatts, and has approved hundreds of new dams across the country's mountainous north.

But the growing frequency and intensity of extreme weather, driven in part by climate change, puts many dams and the people living downstream from them at risk. Last month, dam breaches caused by Storm Daniel caused devastating damage to the city of Derna in Libya.

Rising temperatures also cause glaciers to melt faster, putting more pressure on dams. A 2016 study found that over a fifth of the 177 dams built close to Himalayan glaciers in five countries were at risk from glacial lakes, including the Teesta 3 dam.

"We knew that this was coming," said Gyatso Lepcha, general secretary of Affected Citizens of Teesta, an environmental organization based in Sikkim, wrote in a statement that called for a safety review of all dams in the state.

The Teesta 3 hydropower project, built on the Teesta River, took nine years and cost \$1.5 billion to construct. The project was capable of producing 1,200 megawatts of electricity — enough to power 1.5 million Indian homes — and began operation in 2017.

But local activists argued that the dam didn't have enough safety features.

"Despite being the biggest project in the state, there were no early warning systems installed even though the glacier overflowing was a known risk," said Himanshu Thakkar of the non-governmental organization South Asian Network for Rivers, Dams and People.

Thakkar said authorities failed to apply the lessons from a 2021 dam breach in Himalayan state of Uttarakhnad that killed 81 people, allowing an "eerily similar" disaster to occur. India passed a dam safety law in 2021, but Teesta 3 is not on a list of dams whose safety is monitored by India's top dam regulator.

India's National Disaster Management Agency said Friday that it plans to set up early warning systems at most of India's 56 known at-risk glacial lakes.

Parts of northern Bangladesh along the Teesta River also flooded Friday as water traveled from Sikkim, local media reported. The waters are expected to rise more, as the country's weather office forecast possible heavy rains in coming days.

In Sikkim, more than 2,000 people were rescued after Wednesday's floods, the state Disaster Management Authority said, adding that authorities set up 26 relief camps for more than 22,000 people.

One soldier was previously reported missing was rescued, and the bodies of seven have been found, state police said.

Eleven bridges in the Lachan Valley were washed away by the floodwaters, which also hit pipelines and damaged or destroyed more than 270 houses in four districts, officials said.

The army said it was providing medical aid and phone connectivity to civilians in the areas of Chungthang, Lachung and Lachen, and local media reported that said the army was erecting temporary bridges to bring food to affected areas.

Nearly 50 people died in flash floods and landslides in August in nearby Himachal Pradesh state, and record rains in northern India killed more than 100 people over two weeks in July.

Today in History: October 7

Anita Hill alleges sexual harassment by Clarence Thomas

By The Associated Press undefined

Today in History

Today is Saturday, Oct. 7, the 280th day of 2023. There are 85 days left in the year.

Today's Highlight in History:

On Oct. 7, 1991, University of Oklahoma law professor Anita Hill publicly accused Supreme Court nominee Clarence Thomas of making sexually inappropriate comments when she worked for him; Thomas denied Hill's allegations and would go on to win Senate confirmation.

On this date:

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, Oct. 07, 2023 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 105 ~ 76 of 76

In 1765, the Stamp Act Congress convened in New York to draw up colonial grievances against England.
In 1916, in the most lopsided victory in college football history, Georgia Tech defeated Cumberland University 222-0 in Atlanta.

In 1949, the Republic of East Germany was formed.

In 1982, the Andrew Lloyd Webber-Tim Rice musical "Cats" opened on Broadway, the first of what would become a record 7,485 performances in an 18-year run.

In 1985, Palestinian gunmen hijacked the Italian cruise ship Achille Lauro (ah-KEE'-leh LOW'-roh) in the Mediterranean Sea. (The hijackers shot and killed Leon Klinghoffer, a Jewish-American tourist in a wheelchair, and pushed him overboard, before surrendering on Oct. 9.)

In 1989, Hungary's Communist Party renounced Marxism in favor of democratic socialism during a party congress in Budapest.

In 1992, trade representatives of the United States, Canada and Mexico initialed the North American Free Trade Agreement during a ceremony in San Antonio, Texas, in the presence of President George H.W. Bush, Canadian Prime Minister Brian Mulroney and Mexican President Carlos Salinas de Gortari.

In 1996, Fox News Channel made its debut.

In 1998, Matthew Shepard, a gay college student, was beaten and left tied to a wooden fencepost outside of Laramie, Wyoming; he died five days later. (Russell Henderson and Aaron McKinney are serving life sentences for Shepard's murder.)

In 2001, the war in Afghanistan started as the United States and Britain launched air attacks against military targets and Osama bin Laden's training camps in the wake of the September 11 attacks.

In 2003, California voters recalled Gov. Gray Davis and elected Arnold Schwarzenegger their new governor.

In 2012, Venezuelan President Hugo Chavez won re-election for the third time. (Chavez died five months later.)

In 2017, country music star Jason Aldean, who had been on stage at an outdoor concert in Las Vegas less than a week earlier when a gunman opened fire on the crowd, paid tribute to the victims and to the recently deceased Tom Petty by opening "Saturday Night Live" with Petty's song, "I Won't Back Down."

In 2020, President Donald Trump returned to the Oval Office for the first time since he was diagnosed with COVID-19; he credited an experimental drug treatment with helping his recovery.

Today's Birthdays: Author Thomas Keneally is 88. Comedian and talk-show host Joy Behar is 81. Former National Security Council aide Lt. Col. Oliver North (ret.) is 80. Rock musician Kevin Godley (10cc) is 78. Actor Jill Larson is 76. Country singer Kieran Kane is 74. Singer John Mellencamp is 72. Rock musician Ricky Phillips is 72. Russian President Vladimir Putin is 71. Actor Mary Badham (Film: "To Kill a Mockingbird") is 71. Rock musician Tico Torres (Bon Jovi) is 70. Actor Christopher Norris is 68. Cellist Yo-Yo Ma is 68. Gospel singer Michael W. Smith is 66. Olympic gold medal ice dancer Jayne Torvill is 66. Actor Dylan Baker is 65. Actor Judy Landers is 65. Recording executive and TV personality Simon Cowell is 64. Actor Paula Newsome is 62. Country singer Dale Watson is 61. Pop singer Ann Curless (Expose) is 60. R&B singer Toni Braxton is 56. Rock singer-musician Thom Yorke (Radiohead) is 55. Rock musician-dancer Leeroy Thornhill is 54. Actor Nicole Ari Parker is 53. Actor Allison Munn is 49. Rock singer-musician Damian Kulash (KOO'-lahsh) is 48. Singer Taylor Hicks is 47. Actor Omar Miller is 45. Neo-soul singer Nathaniel Rateliff (Nathaniel Rateliff & the Night Sweats) is 45. Actor Shawn Ashmore is 44. Actor Jake McLaughlin is 41. Electronic musician Flying Lotus (AKA Steve Ellison) is 40. MLB player Evan Longoria is 38. Actor Holland Roden is 37. Actor Amber Stevens is 37. MLB outfielder Mookie Betts is 31. Actor Lulu Wilson is 18.