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*“Joy doesn't just happen.
I have to pursue it.”*

ELIZABETH MYERS

Today's Events

- Emmanuel Lutheran: Nigeria Circle, 2 p.m.
- Volleyball Regions at Groton: 6 p.m.: Groton Area vs. Sisseton with the Milbank vs. Roncalli match to follow.
- School Breakfast: Pop Tarts
- School Lunch: Chicken Strips, Tater Tots
- Senior Menu: Baked Pork Chop, Baked Potato/Sour cream, Peas/Carrots, Pineapple-Strawberry Ambrosia, Cookie, Whole wheat Bread.

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

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

World in Brief

House Republicans voted down a resolution introduced by GOP Rep. Marjorie Taylor Greene that would censure Democratic Rep. Rashida Tlaib over her response to the Israel-Hamas war.

More people prepared to leave Gaza after over 400 people through the Rafah border crossing into Egypt. Nearly 200 people have been killed in Israeli strikes on a refugee camp, Hamas said.

District Judge Aileen Cannon, who is overseeing Donald Trump's classified documents case, said she could make "reasonable adjustments" to the timings of the case as it

could "collide" with Trump's other trials.

Texas Rangers beat the Arizona Diamondbacks 5-0 in Game 5 on Wednesday night to win the first World Series championship in the club's 63-year history.

A GOP-led effort to oust Rep. George Santos, who faces several corruption charges, from the House failed as fewer than two-thirds of the chamber supported the resolution.

Hall of Fame college basketball coach Bob Knight, who led Indiana University to three national championship titles, has died at the age of 83.

Donald Trump Jr. said he didn't recall working on his father's financial statements as he testified in Trump's civil fraud trial. Trump Jr. will return to the stand on Thursday.

Disney has agreed to buy the remaining 33% stake of Hulu from Comcast for \$8.6 billion, a deal that will give Disney complete ownership of the streaming service.

In the ongoing war in Ukraine, more than 20 Russian children have been poisoned at a cadet school in the Moscow region, sparking a criminal investigation. Meanwhile, the Wagner Group has reportedly resumed recruitment under the direction of Pavel Prigozhin, son of late Yevgeny Prigozhin, and is now acting as an arm of the Russian National Guard.

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Good Luck Groton Area Tigers in Post Season Action!



Back row: Jaedyn Penning, Chesney Weber, Faith Traphagen, Emma Kutter, Rylee Dunker, Sydney Leicht and Anna Fjeldheim.

Front row: Kella Tracy, Sydney Locke, Talli Wright, Laila Roberts, Carly Guthmiller, Jerica Locke and Elizabeth Fliehs.

Groton Area vs. Sisseton
Thursday, Nov. 2, 2023, 6 p.m.
Groton Area Arena

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Bary Keith at Harr Motors
Bierman Farm Services
BK Custom T's & More
Blocker Construction
Dacotah Bank
Full Circle AG
Groton American Legion Post #39
Groton Chamber of Commerce
Groton Chiropractic Clinic
Groton Dairy Queen

Groton Ford
Ken's Food Fair
Lori's Pharmacy
Love to Travel with Becah Fliehs
Milbrandt Enterprises Inc.
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S & S Lumber & Hardware Hank
Spanier Harvesting & Trucking
The Meathouse of Andover
Weismantel Agency of Columbia

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NSU Band Clinic

Seventeen Groton Area band students took part in the Northern State University Band Clinic held Wednesday in Aberdeen. Pictured in back, left to right, are Kira Clocksene, Becca Poor, Jeslyn Kosel, Alex Warrington, Logan Clocksene, Jayden Schwan, Emerlee Jones, Gavin Kroll, Gretchen Dinger and Emily Clark; in front, left to right, are Carlee Johnson, Jackson Hopfinger, Kianna Sander, Ashlynn Warrington, Blake Lord, Natalia Warrington, Brody Lord and Groton Director Desiree Yeigh; not pictured is Teagan Hanten. (Photo courtesy Desiree Yeigh)

2024 DOG LICENSES DUE BY 12/29/2023

Fines start January 1, 2024



Spayed/Neutered dogs are \$5 per dog, otherwise \$10 per dog

Proof of rabies shot information is **RE-REQUIRED!!**

Email proof to city. kellie@nvc.net, fax to

(605) 397-4498 or bring a copy to City Hall!!

Please contact City Hall as soon as possible if you no longer have a dog(s) that were previously licensed!

Questions call (605) 397-8422

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Legion Auxiliary October Meeting

Groton Unit 39 of the American Legion Auxiliary held their monthly meeting on October 2, with ten members present. Girls State delegates for 2023, Camryn Kurtz and Emily Clark, came before us to share their experiences while attending Girls State this past summer. Both shared how they campaigned for offices, helped other campaign by creating posters and flyers, dignitaries that attended, amount of information learned, and building relationships with other junior girls throughout the state of South Dakota. They had a wonderful experience and will encourage other junior girls to apply this year.



Emily Clark and Camryn Kurtz talked about their experience at Girls State.

(Photo courtesy Jan Seibel)

We talked about community service projects. We want to help support our local veterans through the Food Pantry. Meri Erickson will report back on how we can help our veterans after discussing the issue with the Food Pantry operators. Coralea Wolter is the chairman for Pumpkin fest which will be held on Saturday, Oct. 14 at the local

park. We are giving a \$50 donation to Pumpkin Fest to support this wonderful community service project. The Veterans Day program was discussed. Chairman Jan Seibel stated that Mr. Wanner and Mr. Thorson, teachers from Groton Area School, have offered their junior and seniors students to help with the interviews and making the PowerPoint presentations. Six Vietnam era veterans will be honored with quilts this year which are made by member Karen Wolter. Veteran classroom visits or one to one interviews will take place during October.

The Annual Turkey Party hosted by Groton American Legion Post 39 and supported by our Auxiliary will be Saturday, Nov. 11 starting at 6:30. Auxiliary workers are needed for the kitchen hours of 6-8 and 8-10 and Bingo hours 7 until out of ham/turkey tickets. Menu will be: BBQ sandwich and chips, Nacho supreme, baked goods. ALL members are asked to donate one item for the "Cake Walk." Items don't necessarily have to be cakes. Many delicious items were donated last year like frosted rolls, caramel rolls, puppy chow, etc... Please have those items to the Legion kitchen by 5 PM on that Saturday. Call or email president Samantha to set up your work time and if you can donate a pan of baked goodies for the kitchen.

Membership dues are being collected by membership chairman, Jan Seibel. Please change the return address on your form you received in the mail to 42541 102nd St, Britton, SD 57430. The address listed on your renewal form is not correct. If you've already mailed it in, it has been received by last year's chairman. Senior dues are \$31 and junior dues are \$5.50. Right now we have 53 members paid for 2024. PLEASE GET YOUR DUES PAID ASAP.

Our next meeting will be held on Monday, November 6 at the Legion hall.

Eight named to All Conference Football Team

The following Groton Tiger Football Players were selected to the 2023 Northeast Conference Football Team: All-Conference Players: - Senior, Holden Sippel - Senior, Logan Ringgenberg - Senior, Lane Tietz - Senior, Colby Dunker - Junior, Christian Ehresmann - Junior, Teylor Diegel Honorable Mention Players: - Junior, Korbin Kucker - Sophomore, Keegen Tracy.

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First Quarter Groton Area Honor Roll

Seniors

4.0 GPA: Emily Clark, Lydia Meier, Claire Heinrich, Hannah Monson, Holden Sippel, Cadence Fiest, Camryn Kurtz, Anna Bisbee, Ashlyn Sperry, Kyleigh Englund, Faith Fliehs, Abigail Jensen, Anna Fjeldheim, Sydney Leicht, Lexi Osterman, Bryson Wambach

3.99-3.50: Emma Schinkel, Lane Tietz, Dillon Abeln, Colby Dunker, Logan Ringgenberg, Shea Jandel, Karsyn Jangula, Carly Guthmiller

3.49-3.00: Bradin Althoff, Jackson Garstecki, Jacob Zak, Tyton Stange, Shaela McGannon

Juniors

4.0 GPA: Gretchen Dinger, Axel Warrington, Elizabeth Fliehs, Payton Mitchell, Faith Traphagen, Emma Kutter, Laila Roberts

3.99-3.50: Diego Eduardo Nava Remigio, Blake Pauli, Brevin Fliehs, Brooklyn Hansen, Kennedy Hansen, Jeslyn Kosel, Logan Pearson, Kayla Lehr

3.49-3.00: Kellen Antonsen, Divya Pelmelay, Turner Thompson, Abby Yeadon, Kaden Kampa, Easten Ekern, Carter Simon, Ashlyn Feser, Corbin Weismantel, Emily Overacker, Riley Carman, Rebecca Porr, Caden McInerney, Korbin Kucker, Drew Thurston, Emma Bahr

Sophomores

4.0 GPA: Mia Crank, Carly Gilbert, Jerica Locke, Jaedyn Penning, Gage Sippel, Nathan Unzen

3.99-3.50: Rylee Dunker, Talli Wright, London Bahr, Ryder Johnson, Natalia Warrington, Logan Warrington, Benjamin Hoeft, Raelee Lilly, Olivia Stiegelmeier, Karsten Fliehs, Keegen Tracy, Paisley Mitchell, Lucas Carda, Aiden Meyers, De Eh Tha Say, Hannah Sandness

3.49-3.00: Cali Tollifson, Lincoln Krause, Breslyn Jescke, Cambira Bonn, Garrett Schultz, Jayden Schwan, Keegan Harry, Gentry Pigors, Drake Peterson

Freshmen

4.0 GPA: Liby Althoff, Kira Clocksene, Teagan Hanten, Carlee Johnson, Brody Lord, Ashlynn Warrington

3.99-3.50: Emerlee Jones, Colt Williamson, Kella Tracy, McKenna Tietz, Taryn Traphagen, Hayden Zoellner, Halee Harder, Leah Jones, Aiden Strom, Avery Crank

3.49-3.00: Jackson Hopfinger, Logan Clocksene, Addison Hoffman Wipf, Zander Harry, Ashton Holmes, Blake Lord, Gavin Kroll, Hailey Pauli, Walker Zoellner, Skyler Kramer, Alyssa Beauchamp, Claire Schuelke, Estella Sanchez-Gonzalez, Brenna Imrie

Eighth Graders

4.0 GPA: Makenna Krause, Thomas Schuster

3.99-3.50: Elizabeth Cole, Sydney Locke, Addison Hoeft, Ryder Schelle, Taryn Thompson, Layne Johnson, Rylie Rose, Easton Weber, Mya Feser, Jace Johnson, Ethan Kroll, Kyleigh Kroll, Chesney Weber, John Bisbee, Rylen Ekern, Wyatt Wambach

3.49-3.00: Karson Zak, Braeden Fliehs, Gracie Pearson, Kinsley Rowen, Thomas Aalseth, Alex Abeln, Brayden Barrera, Ryelle Gilbert, Brysen Sandness, Kason Oswald

Seventh Graders

4.0 GPA: Neely Althoff, Kolton Antonsen, Wesley Borg, Zachary Fliehs, Madison Herrick, Brooklyn Spanier, Novalea Warrington

3.99-3.50: Aspen Beto, Abby Fjeldheim, Tevan Hanson, Asher Johnson, Lincoln Shilhanek, Wesley Morehouse, Connor Kroll, Logan Olson, Aurora Washenberger

3.49-3.00: Tenley Frost, Jordan Schwan, Madison Little, Samuel Crank, Arianna Dinger, Sydney Holmes, Kenzey Anderson, Kaedynce Bonn

Sixth Graders

4.0 GPA: Axel Abeln, Hudson Eichler, Amelia Ewalt, Gavin Hanten, Liam Johnson, Liam Lord, Asher Zimmerman

3.99-3.50: Sophia Fliehs, Jameson Penning, Ilyanna Dellaire, Andi Gauer, Ryder Schwan, Aubrie Lier, Trey Tietz

3.49-3.00: Kyson Kucker, Trace Schelle, Nolan Bahr, Keegan Kucker, Haden Harder, Gavin Younger, Rowan Patterson, Wyatt Morehouse, Kamryn McKane, Jaclyn Rudebusch, Peyton Castles, Dacey Kampa

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Groton Wage Memorial Library

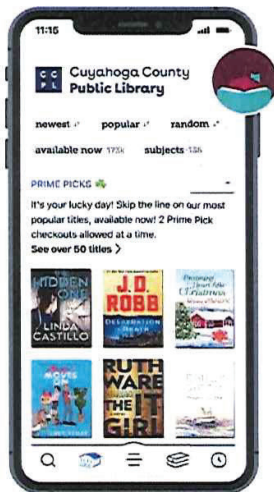


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Saturday, October 28th 3pm-5pm: Halloween Movie Event: Featuring Hocus Pocus 2!

Saturday, December 9th 11am-1pm: Christmas Movie Event (TBA). Jungle Pizza will be served!

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Frosty is Back!!!

Please check the Groton Daily Independent for daily clues as to who the Groton Area Mystery Frosty is. The unveiling of Frosty will take place at the Groton Area Snow Queen and Talent Contest on Sunday, November 26th at 4:00pm.



2023 Frosty Clues

1....

2.) Have completed a
marathon

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PLEASE JOIN US FOR

St Elizabeth Ann Seton Catholic Church

Fall Dinner

NOVEMBER 5TH, 5PM TO 7PM

TOSSED SALAD, LASAGNA, GARLIC BREAD,
ICE CREAM SUNDAE BAR

.....
FREE WILL OFFERING
.....

BINGO, BINGO, BINGO!



Award named for Luitjens would honor basketball coaches

By Dana Hess

For the S.D. NewsMedia Association

PIERRE — Two of the state's high school basketball coaches will be honored this year with the inaugural Larry Luitjens Coach of Influence Award. The award was approved unanimously Wednesday by the board of directors of the South Dakota High School Activities Association.

Luitjens, the winningest basketball coach in South Dakota history, died in June. His son, Lance, talked to the SDHSAA board about the award which would be presented each year to a coach from girls' basketball and a coach from boys' basketball.

"The award represents what he stood for in coaching," Luitjens said, explaining that the criteria for the award would be based on influence on players and the school, impact in the community, game preparation, motivation and communication.

"The purpose of this award is really to give coaches something to strive for," Luitjens said. "I see a need in this state for coaches to be recognized not just on wins and losses."

Nominations for the award could come from players, coaches, parents or community members. Luitjens said he would like the awards presented at a state championship basketball game. The winners would receive a plaque.

Luitjens said he is also working with Native American tribes on a traditional beaded necklace which would also be presented to the winning coaches. He said a similar necklace was often worn by his father when he coached.

Larry Luitjens coached basketball teams to 748 wins over a 45-year career. He won multiple state championships with teams from De Smet and Custer.

—30—

Committee interested in method to move teams down in classification

By Dana Hess

For the S.D. NewsMedia Association

A classification committee working for the South Dakota High School Activities Association is interested in a method for moving poorly performing football teams down to a lower classification. The SDHSAA board of directors heard about the work of the committee at its meeting Wednesday.

The committee is tasked with studying the classification system for high school sports and fine arts. The system should help the association make decisions about placing schools in the right classification to ensure fair and safe competition.

SDHSAA Executive Director Dan Swartos said the committee is interested in the system used in North Dakota that allows poorly performing teams to move down a classification.

Swartos said this could be particularly helpful for football programs that are uncompetitive. He said there are programs in the state that don't play more than a one half of a football game because they are down by 50 or more points at the half.

"Football seems like the hardest program to turn around," Swartos said, noting that he's not aware of the same kinds of struggles in other sports.

Swartos said that if a teams moves down in classification, there is some concern about whether or not they should be eligible for the playoffs. In North Dakota, those teams are eligible, he said.

"There is some interest in looking at this," Swartos said of the North Dakota system. "I think we're close to having something" for the board to consider. The board's next meeting is in January.

—30—

Impact study seeks to offer information on the worth of state tournaments

By Dana Hess

For the S.D. NewsMedia Association

PIERRE — After years of discussion, the South Dakota High School Activities Association has decided to conduct an economic impact study to show communities and chambers of commerce what hosting state events does for local economies.

At its meeting Wednesday, the SDHSAA board of directors approved spending \$9,500 on a one-year contract with IMPLAN of Huntersville, North Carolina. IMPLAN will assign a staff member to work with the association.

SDHSAA Executive Director Dan Swartos explained to the board that the association would be doing some of the data gathering for the impact study. Firms that do all of the data gathering can cost as much as \$60,000 a year for their services, he said.

After state events, the association will send out a link to a survey to the schools that participated. Schools in turn, will pass that link on to families in the school district to ask if they attended the state event and to gather information about how much they spent at the event.

Swartos said the information sought in the survey would include how much was spent on gas, food and lodging.

"The goal is to attempt to get some more buy-in from local chambers of commerce," Swartos said.

In some cases, chambers of commerce have asked the association if it could move a statewide tournament because the chamber has some other event it wanted to host the same weekend.

"We're kind of being pushed out of there," Swartos said. The impact study will show chambers of commerce that "what we do has value to you, has value to your community."

Groton Post No. 39 American Legion

Annual Turkey Party

Saturday, Nov. 11, 2023

Starting at 6:30 p.m.

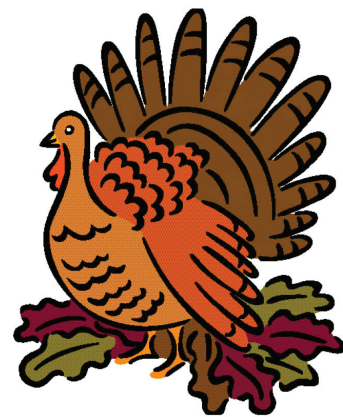
Groton Legion Post Home, 10 N. Main.

Turkey, Ham and Bacon
to be given away

FREE ADMISSION

**DOOR
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Lunch served
by Auxiliary





SOUTH DAKOTA SEARCHLIGHT

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Juvenile justice report: More delinquent kids taken to court

Cases rise to their highest level since 2014

BY: JOHN HULT - NOVEMBER 1, 2023 5:59 PM

South Dakota prosecutors filed more juvenile delinquency petitions in fiscal year 2023 than at any time in nearly a decade, according to an annual report presented Wednesday to a state committee.

The report came during the fall meeting of the Juvenile Justice Reinvestment Oversight Council, which is a group of representatives from law enforcement, schools, the Legislature, social services and the court system. The council is responsible for tracking South Dakota's eight-year effort to reduce the number of children in custody.

The group first came together in 2015, following a set of juvenile justice reforms meant to address South Dakota's status at the time as the state most likely to lock up children.

The number of delinquency petitions was 3,025 in 2014. It had been below 2,800 every year since then until the recent increase, when it hit 2,822.

Children who commit crimes are not "charged" with crimes, as adults are. Instead, prosecutors file "petitions" in the following categories:

Delinquency: actions that would be crimes for adults.

Child in need of supervision (CHINS): actions that are concerning but not illegal, such as running away or skipping school.

Delinquency/CHINS: filed against children who engage in criminal behavior after running away or skipping school.

All the figures presented in the report are based on data for state fiscal years, which begin on July 1 and end on June 30. The state is currently in fiscal year 2024.

State Court Administrator Greg Sattizahn chairs the committee, which met via Zoom. Delinquency cases fell during the COVID-19 pandemic, Sattizahn said, but that impact has dissipated.

"If you remove that COVID dip, we're back to where we were, and even higher," Sattizahn said.

CHINS cases rose to 624 in fiscal year 2023 from the prior year's total of 519. Unlike delinquency petitions, though, that figure represents less than half of the CHINS petitions filed in 2014.

More kids were on probation in the last fiscal year, as well, with 863 under court supervision compared to 663 in fiscal year 2022. Three-quarters of those children finished probation terms without trouble, the report says.

DOC: Few kids in custody

A little over a third of children committed to Department of Corrections custody committed new offenses or otherwise violated the terms of their supervised release within three years of being placed in a DOC-contracted facility – an eight-point jump from the prior year. DOC Juvenile Services Director Kristi Bunkers cautioned against drawing too many conclusions from that figure, as the total number of kids in DOC custody is small.

There were 113 kids released in fiscal year 2023, and 38 committed new offenses. The 8% increase, she said, represents 11 kids.

"When you're talking about small numbers, they're pretty volatile," Bunker said. "So it can look like a big jump, and 8% is a big jump, but we're talking about 11 youths."

Bunkers offered optimistic metrics, as well. She pointed to a drop in the length of stay for youth in treatment, group care or residential treatment centers in and outside of the state, noting that in 2018, kids

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spent an average of 17 months in state-based centers. Last year, the average was nine months.

Those numbers are volatile, as well, Bunkers said, but the steady, lower number of months in custody addresses an issue that had been pronounced prior to the 2015 juvenile justice reforms.

Research from places like the Georgetown Center for Juvenile Justice Reform, she said, shows that longer terms in custody don't reduce repeat offenses.

"You actually can see diminishing returns for kids, and kids end up doing worse," Bunkers said. "They become worse off, the longer they stay."

Bunkers, Sattizahn and presenters from the Department of Social Services were among those who pointed to diversion programs as continued success stories, with 71-92% of kids in trouble for non-violent, low level offenses successfully completing community based diversion programs to keep them out of custody, depending on their offense.

The DOC pays counties \$250 for each successful diversion.

"\$2,693,277.95 has been paid to counties since the inception of the fiscal incentive program for 12,727 successful diversion completers," the report reads.

Sen. Helene Duhamel, R-Rapid City, said the diversion story deserves attention at the legislative level.

"We should be putting more money into this, because it works and we can see that it works," Duhamel said.

More severe crimes on the rise

The jump in delinquency could be tied in part to an increase in population, but Minnehaha County Deputy State's Attorney Carole James said the numbers aren't the most concerning issue.

"We may be having more filings because the population is increasing, but that doesn't necessarily explain the types of crimes we're seeing," James said.

There are drug- and gun-related crimes, stolen vehicles, burglaries and violence coming across her desk as a juvenile prosecutor. She returned to juvenile cases in February of 2022 after a stint working adult cases, and she said the number of gun crimes stood in stark contrast to her pre-2019 work in juvenile justice.

There are a wealth of diversion programs that work for a huge number of kids, James said – Minnehaha County successfully diverted 354 kids last year – but the violence is troublesome.

"Now it seems to be just as easy to get a gun as it used to be to get a joint," James said.

Concerns about unruly kids, particularly from school district officials, animated some changes at the legislative level this year, including a "three strikes" law that can put kids in DOC custody for three offenses in six months, regardless of the seriousness of the offense.

School officials and others testified that the 2015 reforms swung the pendulum too far toward diversion, putting too many disruptive kids back in classrooms.

James has used the "three strikes" option "once or twice," but she said DOC custody is not always the best fit. The DOC contracts with treatment centers and group homes, but now lacks the kind of secure detention facility it once had at Star Academy in Custer before the state closed it.

James said more mental health treatment options are "always welcome," but group homes and treatment facilities aren't always enough for kids with the most violent tendencies.

Some kids aren't welcome at any of them.

"We've come to the point where some kids have literally exhausted all the options that the system has for them," James said.

In Pennington County, delinquency petitions are trending downward compared to last year at this time, said Pennington County State's Attorney spokeswoman Katy Urban, but the West River county has seen many of the same spikes in violence and thefts.

"We have seen an uptick in assaults, and there seem to be more crimes of opportunity; a kid walking down the street happens to see keys hanging from the ignition or something they want in a car, and so they take," Urban said.

Prosecutors in Rapid City would also like to see more treatment options. The list of options are particularly short for kids with more severe offenses, who might not be welcome in the facilities that are available.

"Of course, fewer resources mean these kids are not getting the help they need, resulting in some reoffending," Urban said.

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.

Governors risk NCAA ramifications with opposition to transgender policy, scholar says

Looming rule from U.S. Department of Education delayed

BY: JOSHUA HAIAR - NOVEMBER 1, 2023 5:59 PM

Governors criticizing an NCAA policy on transgender student athletes may put their universities at risk of "penalties or ramifications" if those institutions disobey the policy, according to a sports law scholar.

Joshua Lens is an assistant professor of recreation and sport management at the University of Arkansas, Fayetteville, who wrote an article on NCAA transgender sports participation for a recent edition of the Missouri Law Review.

"The NCAA is a private, voluntary organization," Lens said. "It's a club. Universities choose to belong to the NCAA. And when you join, they have rules, and they have a right to enforce those rules."

The NCAA adopted a policy last year allowing transgender student-athlete participation to be determined by the policy for the national governing body of each sport. The policy is being implemented in three phases, with the final phase beginning next year.

On Monday, Gov. Kristi Noem and eight other Republican governors sent a letter to the NCAA's Committee on Competitive Safeguards and Medical Aspects of Sports urging a rewrite of the policy. The governors want the NCAA to bar transgender women from women's sports.

The governors argue that the NCAA policy fails to "protect, preserve, and encourage fairness in women's athletics."

The NCAA has said its sport-by-sport approach "preserves opportunity for transgender student-athletes while balancing fairness, inclusion, and safety for all who compete."

Once fully implemented, the NCAA policy will require transgender student-athletes to provide documentation no less than twice annually to show they meet sport-specific standards, which can include testosterone level testing.

The organization's new approach is more conservative than its previous policy, Lens said, which allowed transgender people to participate regardless of the sport.

The NCAA has previously shown a willingness to penalize states with anti-transgender laws. In 2016, the NCAA relocated championship events from North Carolina after the state passed a law requiring transgender people to use bathrooms that match the gender on their birth certificates. The law was later repealed.

State trans-athlete laws

Meanwhile, at least 23 states have adopted laws in recent years restricting transgender athletes' participation in sports. South Dakota's law, passed last year, bars transgender girls and women from participating in female sports.

Lens said South Dakota's law supersedes the NCAA policy. The state law bars, for example, a transgender woman from playing on any NCAA women's team in South Dakota, as well as any transgender women on out-of-state teams from competing in South Dakota. It does not stop South Dakota schools from competing against teams that include transgender women if the competition takes place in another state.

When asked if South Dakota's law has been enforced against any athletes, Gov. Kristi Noem's spokesperson, Ian Fury, said "not to my knowledge."

The American Civil Liberties Union of South Dakota criticized the governors' letter, describing it as "political grandstanding."

Samantha Chapman, ACLU of South Dakota advocacy manager, said the letter isn't about ensuring fair-

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ness in women's sports. Instead, she suggests the governors should focus on "actual threats to women's sports" such as "severe underfunding, lack of media coverage, sexist ideologies that suggest that women and girls are weak, and pay equity for coaches and players."

"This letter to the NCAA is just another attempt to erase transgender people from society while stirring up support from their base of anti-trans activists," Chapman said in a news release.

The other governors who signed the letter are Sarah Sanders of Arkansas, Tate Reeves of Mississippi, Mike Parson of Missouri, Greg Gianforte of Montana, Joe Lombardo of Nevada, Kevin Stitt of Oklahoma, Greg Abbott of Texas, and Mark Gordon of Wyoming.

Department of Education rule

Looming over the states' dispute with the NCAA is a U.S. Department of Education rule proposed in April, which would supersede state laws.

The draft rule would allow schools to decide if transgender athletes can compete on teams matching their gender identity based on concerns of fairness and physical advantage, while outright bans on transgender student-athletes – like South Dakota's ban on transgender girls and women in female sports – would be illegal.

The Department of Education has received more than 150,000 written public comments and has not yet released a final version of the rule, despite saying it planned to release the final rule in October.

Noem and 24 fellow governors criticized the rule proposal in a May letter.

"The proposed rule could prevent states from enforcing our duly enacted statutes protecting fairness in women's and girls' sports," the governors wrote.

South Dakota Searchlight asked the athletic departments at South Dakota State University and the University of South Dakota if they're concerned about potential NCAA ramifications from the state law. Neither university responded before the publication of this story.

The NCAA did not immediately respond to Searchlight questions.

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.

23 Republicans, including Johnson, join Democrats to turn back Tlaib censure

BY: ASHLEY MURRAY - NOVEMBER 1, 2023 8:12 PM

WASHINGTON — Lawmakers in the U.S. House of Representatives voted to quash an effort to censure Michigan Democrat Rashida Tlaib after Georgia Republican Marjorie Taylor Greene accused her of "anti-semitic activity."

The motion to table the resolution, introduced by Greene on Oct. 24, succeeded in a 222-186 vote Wednesday night.

The Georgia Republican falsely accused Tlaib of "leading an insurrection" when hundreds of protesters sang and chanted in a U.S. House office building on Oct. 18, advocating for a ceasefire between Israel and Hamas.

Hamas, long designated a terrorist group by the U.S., launched a brutal surprise attack on Israel on Oct. 7, initially killing roughly 1,400. Authorities in the Gaza Strip, a Palestinian territory seized by Hamas in 2007, estimate more than 8,700 deaths since Israeli counterstrikes began.

Tlaib, the only Palestinian-American and one of a handful of Muslims in Congress, spoke at an Oct. 18 demonstration outside of the Capitol. Protesters from the group Jewish Voice for Peace who rallied inside the Cannon House Office Building were arrested and led to an exit in an orderly single-file line.

The Michigan Democrat has long voiced concern over Israeli-Palestinian relations and has escalated those concerns to include U.S. security assistance to Israel as the civilian death toll grows in the Gaza Strip.

She voted against a House resolution on Oct. 25 expressing solidarity with Israel and instead championed a resolution calling for a ceasefire.

Greene said Wednesday night that GOP House members who didn't vote to censure Tlaib are "feckless."

The 23 Republicans who joined Democrats to table the motion against Tlaib included Kelly Armstrong of North Dakota, Ken Buck of Colorado, John Duarte of California, Chuck Edwards of North Carolina, Morgan Griffith of Virginia, Glenn Grothman of Wisconsin, Harriet Hageman of Wyoming, Bill Huizenga of Michigan, Darrell Issa of California, Dusty Johnson of South Dakota, Doug LaMalfa of California, Thomas Massie of Kentucky, Tom McClintock of California, Richard McCormick of Georgia, Max Miller of Ohio, Mariannette Miller-Meeks of Iowa, John Moolenaar of Michigan, Austin Scott of Georgia, Chip Roy of Texas, Victoria Spartz of Indiana, Mike Turner of Ohio, Derrick Van Orden of Wisconsin and Tim Walberg of Michigan.

"This is why Republicans NEVER do anything to stop the communists Democrats or ever hold anyone accountable!! PATHETIC," Greene posted on X.

Twenty-four members did not vote, 13 Democrats and 11 Republicans.

Greene had been pushing for support all week, and wrote in a letter to colleagues Monday that Tlaib "must be held to account."

Greene also admonished Tlaib for publicly blaming Israeli forces for a deadly explosion at a Gaza hospital on Oct. 17. Israel's military immediately denied the claim, and U.S. intelligence officials said the attack appeared to be a misfired rocket from within the Gaza Strip. Tlaib's post on X about the explosion is no longer on her feed.

Tlaib called Greene's censure effort "unhinged" and "deeply Islamophobic."

"I am proud to stand in solidarity with Jewish peace advocates calling for a ceasefire and an end to the violence," she said in a statement posted to X.

"I will not be bullied, I will not be dehumanized, and I will not be silenced. I will continue to call for a ceasefire, for the immediate delivery of humanitarian aid, for the release of the hostages and those arbitrarily detained and for every American to be brought home," she wrote.

Greene's effort to censure Tlaib sparked a retaliatory move from Democrats when Rep. Becca Balint of Vermont re-introduced her own resolution to censure Greene, accusing her of fanning "the flames of racism, antisemitism, LGBTQ hate speech, Islamophobia, anti-Asian hate, xenophobia, and other forms of hatred."

Balint's censure proposal against Greene recounts comments made by the Georgia Republican dating back to 2018 about 9/11, mass shootings and the Jan. 6 attack on the Capitol, among other topics.

Greene is known for incendiary and extreme rhetoric. On Oct. 26 she called Tlaib a "Jihad squad member," referring to the "squad" nickname for a group of progressive House members.

A motion to table Balint's resolution did not reach the floor Wednesday night.

"I'm celebrating the fact that the truth prevailed about my friend and colleague Rep. Rashida Tlaib," Balint said in a statement after the vote. "We couldn't let one of our own be censured for something that is completely fabricated and racist. I was surprised — when on the floor — several Republicans voted with us to table the hateful and untruthful censure resolution that Rep. Greene brought against Rep. Tlaib."

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

Biden launches 'Investing in Rural America' push with Cabinet officials

BY: ASHLEY MURRAY - NOVEMBER 1, 2023 6:00 AM

WASHINGTON — President Joe Biden and administration officials are kicking off an "Investing in Rural America" event series, starting with a visit to a Minnesota farm Wednesday to announce nearly \$5 billion for conservation, economic development and "climate smart" agriculture.

Biden, who is running for reelection in 2024, has been highlighting what the administration calls "Bidenomics" for months as the presidential campaign season escalates. However, polling has found many Americans

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continue to be pessimistic about the economy, despite the upbeat message from the White House.

Cabinet secretaries and senior administration officials will be "barnstorming across the country" for the next two weeks, according to the White House. Visits will include stops in Arizona, Georgia, Indiana, Iowa, Kansas, Michigan, New Hampshire, New Mexico, North Carolina, Oregon, Pennsylvania, Washington, Wisconsin and Wyoming.

In addition to the agriculture dollars, the administration will highlight hundreds of millions for high-speed internet and renewable energy in rural areas.

The programs are funded by a combination of dollars earmarked under 2022's Inflation Reduction Act and the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act and American Rescue Plan of 2021, laws that Biden points to as milestones of his administration.

"This is an exciting opportunity to celebrate the importance of rural America and to reflect the Biden-Harris administration's deep commitment to investment into improving life and opportunity in rural places," Secretary of Agriculture Tom Vilsack, a former Iowa governor, told reporters on a press call Tuesday.

The U.S. Department of Agriculture will distribute the funds across several program areas, including:
\$2 billion across 99 rural economic development projects in nine states and Puerto Rico

\$1.7 billion for climate change mitigation and 81 conservation projects

\$1.1 billion in just over 100 loans and grants for infrastructure upgrades

\$274 million for high-speed internet

\$145 million for renewable energy in rural communities.

Biden and Vilsack will deliver afternoon remarks at Dutch Creek Farms in Northfield, Minnesota, where the family-run operation grows corn and soybeans and raises hogs.

Dutch Creek's owners have "used several climate-smart agriculture techniques to make their farm more sustainable, including growing crops that naturally sequester carbon and improve soil quality, farming in a way that limits soil disturbance, and creating riparian buffers to protect nearby waterways from pollutants," according to the White House.

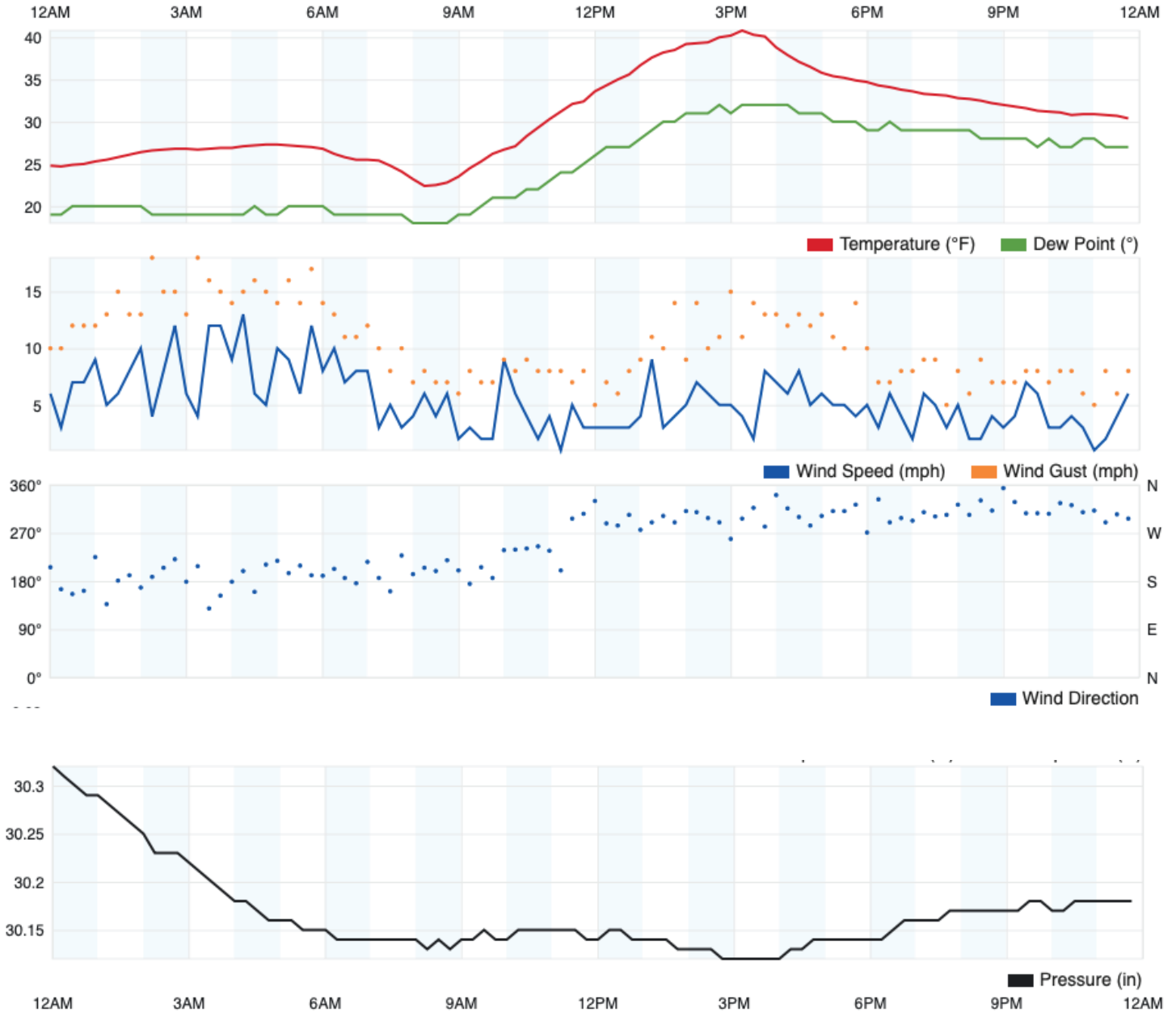
Biden is scheduled to participate in an evening campaign reception in Minneapolis, according to the White House schedule.

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

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Yesterday's Groton Weather Graphs








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Thu Nov 2	Fri Nov 3	Sat Nov 4	Sun Nov 5	Mon Nov 6	Tue Nov 7	Wed Nov 8
						
47° F 28° F	40° F 25° F	50° F 29° F	46° F 30° F	39° F 27° F	38° F 26° F	35° F 31° F
WSW 8 MPH	NNW 10 MPH	S 12 MPH	E 12 MPH	N 12 MPH	E 11 MPH 10%	ESE 10 MPH

Warming in the 50s for the Weekend

<u>Today</u>	<u>Friday</u>	<u>Saturday</u>	<u>Sunday</u>
morning Fog over north central SD	20% chance early morning Rain . Little to no accumulation.	Dry	20-40% chance of Rain , except dry over south central SD
			
45 to 54°	40s	50s	50s
	NWS Aberdeen, SD		weather.gov/abr

Highs will be in the 40s and 50s, warmest this weekend. Mainly dry conditions will continue through the weekend, with a few events of interest. Expect fog this morning over north central South Dakota. While there is a 20 percent chance of rain late tonight into early Friday morning, little to no accumulation is expected. There is also a 20 to 40 percent chance of rain Sunday, with dry conditions continuing over south central South Dakota.

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Yesterday's Groton Weather

High Temp: 41 °F at 3:16 PM

Low Temp: 22 °F at 8:14 AM

Wind: 18 mph at 2:11 AM

Precip: : 0.00

Day length: 10 hours, 8 minutes

Today's Info

Record High: 78 in 1903

Record Low: 0 in 1911

Average High: 50

Average Low: 25

Average Precip in Nov.: 0.07

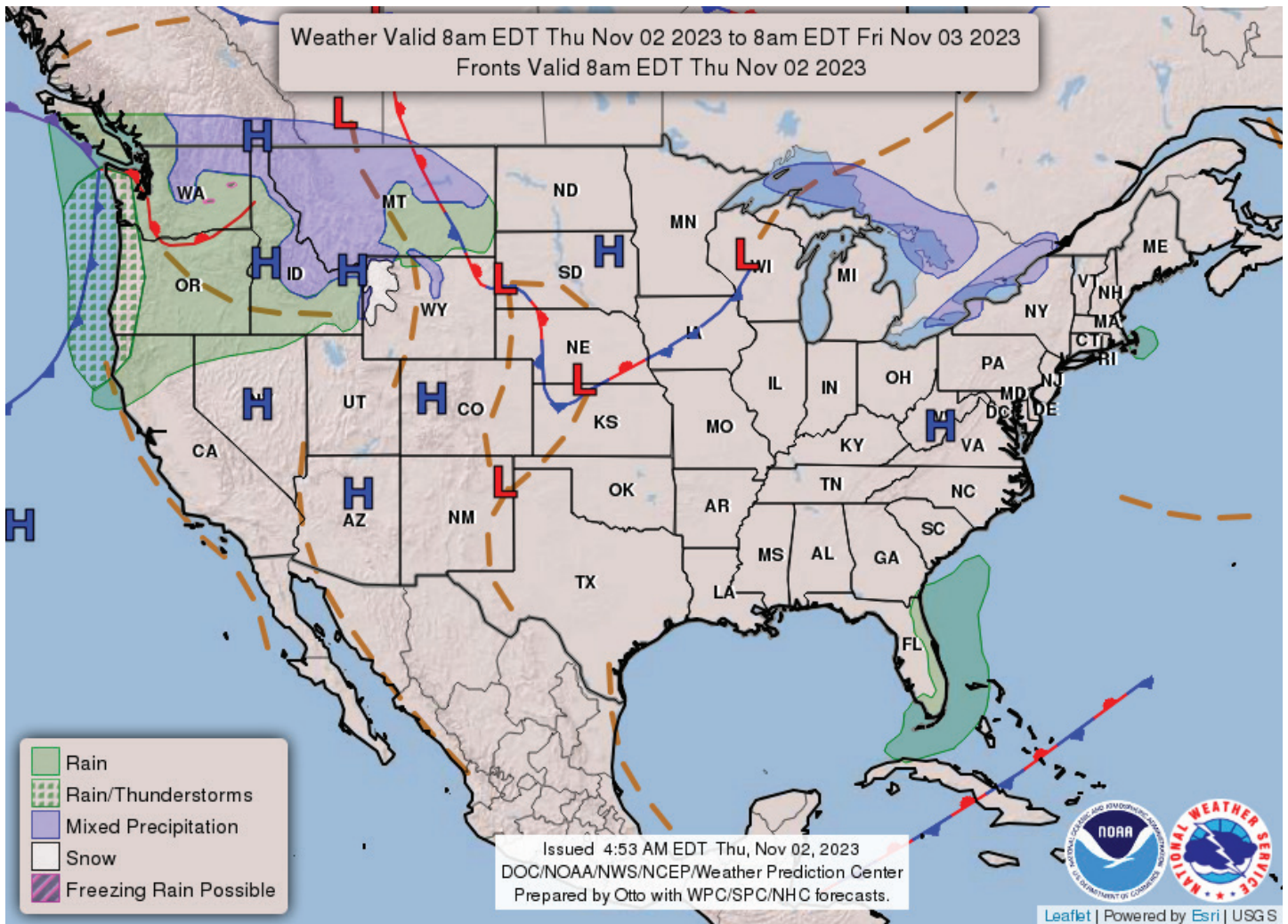
Precip to date in Nov.: 0.00

Average Precip to date: 20.54

Precip Year to Date: 22.98

Sunset Tonight: 6:20:14 PM

Sunrise Tomorrow: 8:13:04 AM



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Today in Weather History

November 2nd, 1961: A snowstorm began in western South Dakota and spread to the remainder of the state on November 2nd. Snowfall was relatively minimal, with 1 to 3 inches falling over most of the state's central and eastern parts, but 40 to 50 mph winds accompanied the storm in eastern South Dakota. Also, temperatures fell rapidly with the passage of a cold front with 24-hour changes of 40 to over 50 degrees. Huron dropped from 73 on the 1st to 21 only 24 hours later, a 52-degree drop.

November 2nd, 1972: Freezing rain caused up to 2 inches of ice to form on trees, bushes, wires, cars, and buildings. The ice brought down many trees and utility lines. Some of the most significant damage occurred from Tulare to Redfield and Doland and Troy to Sisseton in Spink, Brown, Day, Grant, and Roberts Counties. Also, heavy snow up to 20 inches fell in south-central South Dakota. Some snowfall amounts include; 5.2 inches in Huron, 10 inches in Wessington Springs; 12 inches in Platte; 12.5 in Bonesteel, and 19.5 inches in Gregory.

November 2nd, 1997: A low-pressure system over the Great Lakes produced 50 to 60 mph winds over much of northern and central South Dakota. In McLaughlin, high winds damaged a catwalk at the McLaughlin livestock auction. The winds tipped over half of the 400-foot walkway. Along with six-foot waves, the winds destroyed an 85-year old 40 x 75-foot dance hall located on Medicine Lake, 15 miles northwest of Watertown. In Aberdeen, brick from a top portion of an abandoned building collapsed. There were also widespread reports of tree limbs blown down.

1743: Benjamin Franklin's "eclipse hurricane" unlocked the key to storm movement. A rainstorm prevented Ben Franklin from viewing a lunar eclipse in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, but his brother in Boston saw it, though the rain began an hour later.

1946 - A heavy wet snow began to cover the Southern Rockies. Up to three feet of snow blanketed the mountains of New Mexico, and a 31 inch snow at Denver CO caused roofs to collapse. (David Ludlum)

1946: A tornado hit Washington in Hempstead County in Arkansas, killing one.

1961 - The temperature at Atlanta, GA, reached 84 degrees to establish a record for November. (The Weather Channel)

1966 - A storm brought 18 inches of snow to Celia KY in 24 hours. It tied the state 24 hour snowfall record first established at Bowling Green. (The Weather Channel)

1987 - A dozen cities, mostly in the Ohio Valley, reported record high temperatures for the date. Record highs included 83 degrees at Paducah KY and 84 degrees at Memphis TN. Temperatures reached 70 degrees as far north as southern Lower Michigan. Showers and thundershowers over southern Florida, associated with a tropical depression, produced 4.77 inches of rain at Tavernier, located in the Upper Florida Keys. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1988 - A very intense low pressure system brought heavy rain, snow, and high winds, to parts of the northeastern U.S. Portland ME established a record for November with 4.52 inches of rain in 24 hours, and winds along the coast of Maine gusted to 74 mph at Southwest Harbor. Heavy snow blanketed parts of northern Vermont and upstate New York, with 15 inches reported at Spruce Hill NY. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1989 - Squalls in the Upper Great Lakes Region the first three days of the month buried Ironwood MI under 46 inches of snow, and produced 40 inches at Hurley WI. Arctic cold invaded the Southern Plains Region. Midland TX reported a record low of 22 degrees. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1992: Another infamous November Great Lakes Storm brought windy conditions to Minnesota's Lake Superior shoreline. 70 mph winds caused waves to crash over 130-foot walls along the shore.

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Daily Devotionals

Seeds of Hope

"WE REALLY NEED YOU, GOD!"

Little Jeanie and her Mom were saying their "Good Night Prayers" together. Suddenly, she said in a bold voice, "God, please take care of Yourself. If anything happens to You, we're in a great, big mess. We really need You, God."

Thankfully, Isaiah had some comforting words for Little Jeanie. Knowing others would have the same concern, God inspired him to write, "Don't you know that the Lord is the everlasting God, the Creator of the earth? He never grows faint or weary!"

What encouraging words from the Lord Himself! Here we see Isaiah describing our God's power to create, His power to sustain what He creates, and His presence to help when we call upon Him. Our God is almighty and all-powerful. Yet, with all of His greatness, He cares for each of us individually and our concerns and our cares are never beneath Him or beyond Him.

Our God cannot be explained and when we try to describe Him with our finite mind and our limited vocabulary, we only reveal our small, inadequate understanding of His greatness.

But this we know: There is no limit to His love and no end to His forgiveness. No problem is too large for Him to solve nor any person too small for Him to recognize. He is not kind one moment and hateful the next. He is not strong one hour and weak the next. He does not want what is best for us one moment and then forgetful of us the next. Our God is amazing!

Prayer: Thank You, God, for being our God. Thank You for being present today and every day, and for Your promise that You will never leave us nor forsake us. In Jesus' Name, Amen.

Scripture For Today: Don't you know that the Lord is the everlasting God, the Creator of the earth? He never grows faint or weary. Isaiah 40:27-31



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

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2023 Community Events

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

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WINNING NUMBERS

MEGA MILLIONS

WINNING NUMBERS:
10.31.23

14 35 37 55 70 15

MegaPlier: 3x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:
\$181,000,000

NEXT 1 Days 17 Hrs 13
DRAW: Mins 52 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

LOTTO AMERICA

WINNING NUMBERS: 11.01.23

6 19 21 26 29 1

All Star Bonus: 2x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:
\$3,640,000

NEXT 2 Days 16 Hrs 28
DRAW: Mins 52 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

LUCKY FOR LIFE

WINNING NUMBERS: 11.01.23

16 18 32 36 47 14

TOP PRIZE:

\$7,000/week

NEXT 16 Hrs 43 Mins 52
DRAW: Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

DAKOTA CASH

WINNING NUMBERS: 11.01.23

6 10 22 33 35

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:
\$40,000

NEXT 2 Days 16 Hrs 43
DRAW: Mins 52 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

POWERBALL

DOUBLE PLAY

WINNING NUMBERS: 11.01.23

9 26 49 58 61 21

TOP PRIZE:
\$10,000,000

NEXT 2 Days 17 Hrs 12
DRAW: Mins 52 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

POWERBALL

WINNING NUMBERS: 11.01.23

22 26 39 47 63 12

Power Play: 3x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:
\$173,000,000

NEXT 2 Days 17 Hrs 12
DRAW: Mins 52 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

News from the Associated Press

Cleanup is done on a big Kansas oil spill on the Keystone system, the company and EPA say

By JOHN HANNA Associated Press

TOPEKA, Kan. (AP) — The operator of the Keystone pipeline system has finished cleaning up a massive December 2022 oil spill, and the creek affected by it is flowing naturally again, the company and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency say.

Pipeline operator TC Energy promised to continue monitoring the site along Mill Creek in Washington County, about 150 miles (241 kilometers) northwest of Kansas City. The Canada-based company and the EPA's regional office announced Tuesday that berms that had diverted the creek around the spill site had been removed.

The EPA said Kansas' environmental agency and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers also will continue to inspect the area for the next five years or "until it is determined that monitoring is no longer needed."

The spill dumped nearly 13,000 barrels of crude oil — each one enough to fill a standard household bathtub — into the creek as it ran through a rural pasture. The oil was recovered by mid-May, the company has said.

The company said that it has started "demobilization" at the site and, "expect to complete these activities by year end." The pipeline carries oil from Canada to the Texas Gulf Coast.

The company reported in February that a faulty weld in a pipe bend caused a crack that grew over time under stress. An engineering consultant firm's report for U.S. pipeline regulators that became public in May cited pipeline design issues, lapses by its operators and problems caused during pipeline construction as factors in the spill.

The consultants' report said the bend had been "overstressed" since its installation in December 2010, likely because construction activity itself altered the land around the pipe. It was the largest onshore spill in nearly nine years.

Storm Ciaran whips western Europe, blowing record winds in France and leaving millions without power

PARIS (AP) — Winds up to 180 kilometers per hour (108 mph) slammed France's Atlantic coast overnight as Storm Ciaran lashed countries around western Europe, uprooting trees, blowing out windows and leaving 1.2 million French households without electricity Thursday.

Strong winds and rain also battered southern England and the Channel Islands, where gusts of more than 160 kph (100 mph) were reported. Hundreds of schools stayed closed in the coastal communities of Cornwall and Devon as downed trees and flooding hindered morning commutes.

Flights from airports on the Channel Islands of Jersey, Guernsey and Alderney were canceled. Dutch airline KLM scrapped all flights leaving and arriving in the Netherlands from the early afternoon until the end of the day, citing the high sustained wind speeds and powerful gusts expected in the country.

"It looks like a once-in-every-few-years storm for the U.K. and France," Bob Henson, a meteorologist and science writer with Yale Climate Connections said Wednesday, adding that Ciaran could turn into "a once in a generation storm."

A weather-related death already was confirmed in France. A truck driver was killed when his vehicle was hit by a tree in northern France's inland Aisne region, Transport Minister Clement Beaune said.

Nearly all coastlines of the French mainland were under severe weather warnings Thursday morning, from Calais on the English Channel to all the way down the shores of the Atlantic Ocean to Spain, as well as much of France's Mediterranean coast and Corsica, according to national weather service Météo-France.

The weather service reported record-breaking wind speeds of 108 mph (180 kilometers per hour) along

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the Brittany coast. The wind reached up to 96 mph (160 kph) on the Normandy coast and up to 90 mph (150 kph) inland. Waves of almost 33 feet (10 meters) were expected in the country's northwestern tip.

Local trains were canceled across a swath of western France, and all roads in the Finistere region of Brittany were closed Thursday morning. Beaune urged people to avoid driving and to at least exercise caution when traveling across areas with weather warnings.

"We see how roads can be fatal in these circumstances," he told broadcaster France-Info.

The storm cut power to some 1.2 million French households as of Thursday morning, electrical utility Enedis announced in a statement. That includes about half of the homes in Brittany, the Atlantic peninsula hardest hit by Ciaran. Enedis said it would deploy 3,000 workers to restore power as soon as weather conditions allowed.

In the U.K., transportation agencies also advised residents in parts of southern England to stay home and not travel. The Maritime and Coastguard Agency urged people to keep away from the coast.

"Stay out of dangerous situations," the agency said in a post on X, formerly known as Twitter. "A selfie in stormy conditions isn't worth risking your life for."

The Met Office, the government weather agency, issued amber warnings for high winds for parts of southern England. An amber warning is the second highest level of alert, meaning there is a danger to life from flying debris.

The storm produced more than travel misery in the Netherlands.

The eighth edition of the national headwind cycling championship was swiftly organized for riders prepared to pedal into the teeth of the storm Thursday along an 8.5-kilometer (5.3-mile) coastal barrier on bikes with no gears.

The event is only held when a southwesterly storm with a minimum of wind force seven barrels up the North Sea coast.

Friederike Otto, a senior lecturer at Imperial College London's Grantham Institute for Climate Change and the Environment, said few studies have looked at whether climate change is causing higher wind speeds. Answering the question is hampered by a lack of wind speed observations from far back in the past, she said.

But the rainfall from large storms has increased due to human-induced climate change, Otto said. That's because a warmer atmosphere can hold more moisture. On that, the science was "quite clear," she said, with a 7% increase in rainfall for each degree Celsius (1.8 degrees Fahrenheit) of global warming.

Live updates | Israel's troops advance as diplomatic efforts aim to at least pause Gaza fighting

By The Associated Press undefined

Israel's ground troops were advancing toward Gaza City as diplomatic efforts intensified for at least a brief pause in the fighting in Gaza's deadliest war.

U.S. President Joe Biden suggested a humanitarian "pause" and Secretary of State Antony Blinken is expected back in the region on Friday. Arab countries, including those allied with the U.S. and at peace with Israel, have expressed mounting unease with the war.

The opening of the Rafah border crossing, allowing hundreds of foreign passport holders and wounded Palestinians to leave Gaza on Wednesday, followed weeks of talks among Egypt, Israel, the U.S. and Qatar, which mediates with Hamas.

The Palestinian death toll in the Israel-Hamas war has reached 8,805, according to the Hamas-run Health Ministry in Gaza. In the occupied West Bank, 130 Palestinians have been killed in violence and Israeli raids.

More than 1,400 people in Israel have been killed, most of them in the Oct. 7 Hamas attack that started the fighting, and around 240 hostages were taken from Israel into Gaza by the militant group.

Currently:

1. More than 3,600 Palestinian children killed in 3 weeks of war
2. Blinken will enter diplomatic maelstrom over Gaza war on new Mideast trip

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3. Opposition mounts in Arab countries that normalized relations with Israel

4. Israel criticizes South American countries after they cut diplomatic ties

5. Find more of AP's coverage at <https://apnews.com/hub/israel-hamas-war>.

Here's what is happening in the latest Israel-Hamas war:

GERMANY IMPOSES A BAN ON PRO-HAMAS ACTIVITY

BERLIN -- Germany's top security official says she has implemented a formal ban on activity by or in support of Hamas and is dissolving a group that was behind a celebration of Hamas' attack on Israel.

Chancellor Olaf Scholz announced that the government planned to take action against the two groups on Oct. 12.

Interior Minister Nancy Faeser said she is putting the ban on activity related to Hamas, which is already listed by the European Union as a terrorist group, into effect on Thursday.

She said she also is banning and dissolving the German branch of the Samidoun network, which she said "supports and glorifies" groups including Hamas.

Samidoun was behind an Oct. 7 action in which a group of people handed out pastries in a Berlin street in celebration of Hamas' attack on Israel.

Faeser said her ministry had worked "day and night" on implementing the measures quickly.

POWER GENERATOR OUT AT KEY HOSPITAL

RAFAH, Gaza Strip — The main power generator in the northern Gaza Strip's key hospital went out of service early Thursday, Gaza's Health Ministry said.

The Indonesian Hospital in Beit Lahia is near the densely populated Jabaliya refugee camp, which has been the target of heavy Israeli airstrikes this week.

Health Ministry spokesperson Ashraf Al-Qudra said in a televised statement that the hospital is running on a smaller backup generator but had to turn off lights in most rooms, shut down oxygen generators and resort to oxygen cylinders, and turn off mortuary refrigerators.

"These exceptional measures will allow the Indonesian Hospital to work for a matter of days," Al-Qudra says. "However, if we cannot secure electricity or fuel then we will face a disaster."

While some aid trucks have entered the blockaded Gaza Strip since the war began last month, Israel has not allowed trucks to bring fuel.

SAUDI ARABIA LAUNCHES RELIEF CAMPAIGN FOR PALESTINIANS IN GAZA

RIYADH, Saudi Arabia — Saudi Arabia has launched a campaign to raise relief funds for Palestinians in the Gaza Strip.

The state-run Saudi Press Agency reported Thursday that King Salman has donated about \$8 million to the fund and Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman has donated over \$5 million.

Funds will be raised through the online donation platform Sahem, which the kingdom has used to contribute to relief efforts in other countries.

Before the outbreak of the war in Gaza, Saudi Arabia had been in talks with the U.S. over normalizing ties with Israel. The kingdom has called for a halt to the violence and for progress toward establishing an independent Palestinian state alongside Israel.

LEBANESE SHEPHERDS DIE IN CROSSFIRE AT BORDER

BEIRUT — Two Lebanese shepherds who were caught in crossfire during clashes on the Lebanon-Israel border were found dead Thursday, a spokesperson for the U.N. peacekeeping force on the border said.

The Lebanese army had called UNIFIL in to help evacuate the two men Wednesday evening after they were reported injured but had to call off the search "due to the darkness and presence of land mines in the area," UNIFIL spokesperson Andrea Tenenti said. He said Thursday morning that the men's bodies had been found.

A Lebanese security official said the shepherds died from gunshot wounds.

Lebanon's state-run news agency said the shepherds were shot by Israeli troops as they passed with their herds by the Wazani river along the border.

The border has been the site of regular clashes between Israeli forces on one side and Hezbollah and

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Palestinian armed groups in Lebanon on the other.

The shepherds' death raised the numbers of civilians killed on the Lebanese side of the border to six since the exchanges of fire started following the Oct. 7 attack by the Palestinian Hamas group on southern Israel.

RETIRI

NG OFFICIAL CRITICIZES UN FOR FAILING TO STOP 'GENOCIDE' IN GAZA

UNITED NATIONS – A retiring United Nations human rights agency official strongly criticized the U.N. for failing to stop what he called “a genocide unfolding before our eyes” in Gaza.

Craig Mokhiber, a U.S. human rights lawyer who joined the U.N. in 1992, claimed the “slaughter of the Palestinian people” is rooted in decades of persecution and purging by Israel “based entirely upon their status as Arabs.”

Mokhiber left his job heading the New York office of the Office of the U.N. High Commissioner for Human Rights on Tuesday. His four-page letter to U.N. human rights chief Volker Türk makes no mention of Hamas' surprise attack on Israel on Oct. 7. Mokhiber had informed the U.N. in March of his planned retirement, U.N. spokesperson Stephane Dujarric said.

In the letter, Mokhiber accused the U.S., the U.K. and much of Europe of being complicit in the assault on Gaza by Israeli forces.

Mokhiber, who said he has investigated Palestinian human rights since the 1990s and lived in Gaza, also wrote that a two-state solution is an impossibility. He called for the dismantling of Israel and establishment of “a single, democratic, secular state in all of historic Palestine, with equal rights for Christians, Muslims, and Jews.”

'A curse to be a parent in Gaza': More than 3,600 Palestinian children killed in just 3 weeks of war

By ISABEL DEBRE and WAFAA SHURAFU Associated Press

DEIR AL-BALAH, Gaza Strip (AP) — More than 3,600 Palestinian children were killed in the first 25 days of the war between Israel and Hamas, according to Gaza's Hamas-run Health Ministry. They were hit by airstrikes, smashed by misfired rockets, burned by blasts and crushed by buildings, and among them were newborns and toddlers, avid readers, aspiring journalists and boys who thought they'd be safe in a church.

Nearly half of the crowded strip's 2.3 million inhabitants are under 18, and children account for 40% of those killed so far in the war. An Associated Press analysis of Gaza Health Ministry data released last week showed that as of Oct. 26, 2,001 children ages 12 and under had been killed, including 615 who were 3 or younger.

“When houses are destroyed, they collapse on the heads of children,” writer Adam al-Madhoun said Wednesday as he comforted his 4-year-old daughter Kenzi at the Al Aqsa Martyrs Hospital in the central Gaza city of Deir al-Balah. She survived an airstrike that ripped off her right arm, crushed her left leg and fractured her skull.

Israel says its airstrikes target Hamas militant sites and infrastructure, and it accuses the group of using civilians as human shields. It also says more than 500 militant rockets have misfired and landed in Gaza, killing an unknown number of Palestinians.

More children have been killed in just over three weeks in Gaza than in all of the world's conflicts combined in each of the past three years, according to the global charity Save the Children. For example, it said, 2,985 children were killed across two dozen war zones throughout all of last year.

“Gaza has become a graveyard for thousands of children,” said James Elder, a spokesperson for UNICEF, the U.N. children's agency.

Images and footage of shell-shocked children being pulled from rubble in Gaza or writhing on dirty hospital gurneys have become commonplace and have fueled protests around the world. Scenes from recent airstrikes included a rescuer cradling a limp toddler in a bloodied white tutu, a bespectacled father shrieking as he clutched his dead child tight to his chest, and a dazed young boy covered in blood and dust staggering alone through the ruins.

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"It's a curse to be a parent in Gaza," said Ahmed Modawikh, a 40-year-old carpenter from Gaza City whose life was shattered by the death of his 8-year-old daughter during five days of fighting in May.

Israeli children have also been killed. During Hamas' brutal Oct. 7 rampage across southern Israel that sparked the war, its gunmen killed more than 1,400 people. Among them were babies and other small children, Israeli officials have said, though they haven't provided exact figures. About 30 children were also among the roughly 240 hostages Hamas took.

As Israeli warplanes pound Gaza, Palestinian children huddle with large families in apartments or U.N.-run shelters. Although Israel has urged Palestinians to leave northern Gaza for the strip's south, nowhere in the territory has proven safe from its airstrikes.

"People are running from death only to find death," said Yasmine Jouda, who lost 68 family members in Oct. 22 airstrikes that razed two four-story buildings in Deir al-Balah, where they had sought refuge from northern Gaza.

The strike's only survivor was Jouda's year-old niece Milissa, whose mother had gone into labor during the attack and was found dead beneath the rubble, the heads of her lifeless twin newborns emerging from her birth canal.

"What did this tiny baby do to deserve a life without any family?" Jouda said.

Israel blames Hamas for Gaza's death toll — now more than 8,800, according to Gaza's Health Ministry — because the militant group operates from jam-packed residential neighborhoods. Palestinians point to the soaring casualty count as proof that Israeli strikes are indiscriminate and disproportionate.

The war has injured more than 7,000 Palestinian children and left many with lifechanging problems, doctors say.

Just before the war, Jouda's niece Milissa walked a few paces for the first time. She will never walk again. Doctors say the airstrike that killed the girl's family fractured her spine and paralyzed her from the chest down. Just down the hall from her in the teeming central Gaza hospital, 4-year-old Kenzi woke up screaming, asking what had happened to her missing right arm.

"It will take so much care and work just to get her to the point of having half a normal life," her father said.

Even those physically unscathed may be scarred by war's ravages.

For 15-year-olds in Gaza, it's their fifth Israel-Hamas war since the militant group seized control of the enclave in 2007. All they've known is life under a punishing Israeli-Egyptian blockade that prevents them from traveling abroad and crushes their hopes for the future. The strip has a 70% youth unemployment rate, according to the World Bank.

"There is no hope for these children to develop careers, improve their standard of living, access better healthcare and education," said Ayed Abu Eqtaish, accountability program director for Defense for Children International in the Palestinian territories.

But in this war, he added, "it's about life and death."

And in Gaza, death is everywhere.

Here are just a few of the 3,648 Palestinian children and minors who have been killed in the war.

ASEEL HASSAN, 13

Aseel Hassan was an excellent student, said her father, Hazem Bin Saeed. She devoured classical Arabic poetry, memorizing its rigid metric and rhyme scheme, and reveling in its mystical images and florid metaphors. During the war, when Israeli bombardments came so close that their walls shook, she would regale her relatives by reciting famous verses from Abu Al Tayyib al-Mutanabbi, a 10th-century Iraqi poet, her father said.

"When I asked her what she wanted to do when she grew up, she would say, read," said 42-year-old Bin Saeed. "Poems were Aseel's escape."

An airstrike on Oct. 19 leveled his three-story home in Deir al-Balah, killing Aseel and her 14-year-old brother, Anas.

MAJD SOURI, 7

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The explosions terrified Majd, said his father, 45-year-old Ramez Souri.

He missed playing soccer with his school friends. He was devastated that the war had canceled his Christian family's much-anticipated trip to Nazareth, the town in Israel where tradition says Jesus grew up.

"Baba, where can we go?" Majd asked again and again when airstrikes roared. The family, devout members of Gaza's tiny Christian community, finally had an answer — St. Porphyrius Greek Orthodox Church in Gaza City.

Souri said Majd calmed down when they arrived at the church, where dozens of Christian families had taken shelter. Together, they prayed and sang.

On Oct. 20, shrapnel crashed into the monastery, killing 18 people. Among the dead were Majd and his siblings, 9-year-old Julie and 15-year-old Soheil. Israel says it had been targeting a nearby Hamas command center.

Majd was found beneath the rubble with his hands around his mother's neck. His face was completely burned.

"My children just wanted peace and stability," said Souri, his voice cracking. "All I cared about was that they were happy."

KENAN AND NEMAN AL-SHARIF, 18 months

Karam al-Sharif, an employee with the U.N. Palestinian refugee agency, could barely speak Wednesday as he knelt over his children's small shrouded bodies at the hospital. Gone were his daughters, 5-year-old Joud and 10-year-old Tasnim.

Also gone were his twin 18-month-old sons, Kenan and Neman. Al-Sharif sobbed as he hugged Kenan and said goodbye. Neman's body was still lost beneath the rubble of the six-story tower where the family had sought refuge in the Nuseirat refugee camp, in central Gaza.

"They had no time here," Sami Abu Sultan, al-Sharif's brother, said of the baby boys, a day after the building was destroyed. "It was God's will."

MAHMOUD DAHDOUH, 16

On Oct. 25, Al Jazeera's livestream caught the chilling moment when its Gaza bureau chief, Wael Dahdouh, discovered that an Israeli airstrike had killed his wife, 6-year-old daughter, infant grandson and 16-year-old son, Mahmoud.

Swarmed by TV cameras at the hospital, Dahdouh wept over his teenage son, murmuring, "You wanted to be a journalist."

Mahmoud was a senior at the secular American International High School in Gaza City. Set on becoming an English-language reporter, he spent his time honing camera skills and posting amateur reporting clips on YouTube, Dahdouh said.

A video that Mahmoud filmed days before he died showed charred cars, dark smoke and flattened homes. He and his sister, Kholoud, took turns delivering a monologue, straining to be heard over the wind.

"This is the fiercest and most violent war we have lived in Gaza," Mahmoud said, chopping the air with his hands.

At the end of the clip, the siblings stared straight into the camera.

"Help us to stay alive," they said in unison.

Texas Rangers win first World Series title with 5-0 victory over Arizona Diamondbacks in Game 5

By DAVID BRANDT AP Baseball Writer

PHOENIX (AP) — Corey Seager took a mighty swing and barely connected, sending a squibber through an open area on the left side of the infield for his team's first hit in the seventh inning.

The Texas Rangers shortstop and World Series MVP provided plenty of power throughout a stellar October run. But it was a little good fortune that finally sparked the offense Wednesday night and sent the Rangers to their first title.

Considering the heartache this club endured 12 years ago in one of the all-time Fall Classic gut punches,

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Texas was certainly due.

Nathan Eovaldi pitched six gritty innings, Mitch Garver broke a scoreless tie with an RBI single in the seventh and the Rangers won the first World Series championship in their 63-season franchise history by beating the Arizona Diamondbacks 5-0 in Game 5.

"It's just awesome. This is the vision, right?" Seager said. "It's a really special moment."

Marcus Semien homered in a four-run ninth and the Rangers, held hitless for six innings by Zac Gallen, finished a record 11-0 on the road this postseason after capping the Fall Classic with three straight wins in the desert.

"Everything I've ever worked for is for this moment," Semien said. "Gallen was unbelievable tonight. But we came through. Once Corey got the first hit, everybody kind of woke up. Pitching was unbelievable."

In his first season with Texas, manager Bruce Bochy won his fourth World Series title 13 years to the day after his first, which came in 2010 when the Giants beat the Rangers. He also won rings with San Francisco in 2012 and 2014.

The 68-year-old Bochy helped exorcise some painful memories for Texas fans, who watched as their team came agonizingly close to the 2011 crown, needing just one strike on two occasions before losing to the St. Louis Cardinals.

"I was sitting in a recliner there in Nashville, just enjoying myself," said Bochy, who came out of retirement to take over in Texas.

"I was along for the ride, trust me. I was very fortunate and blessed to be able to get back into baseball in this type of a situation."

One night after the Rangers built a 10-run lead by the third inning in Game 4, they finished off baseball's third all-wild card World Series by outlasting Arizona in a white-knuckle pitchers' duel.

Gallen carried a no-hitter into the seventh before giving up an opposite-field single to Seager, whose weak grounder found a hole. Rangers rookie Evan Carter — all of 21 years old — followed with a double. Garver then delivered the first run, pumping his fist as a hard grounder up the middle scored Seager.

Garver was 1 for 17 at the plate in the Series before his huge hit.

With the Rangers clinging to that 1-0 lead, Josh Jung and Nathaniel Lowe singled off Paul Sewald to start the ninth. Jung scored on Jonah Heim's single, and Lowe came all the way around from first base when center fielder Alek Thomas let the ball get past him for an error.

Two outs later, Semien's two-run homer made it 5-0. It was the 13th time Texas scored at least three runs in an inning this postseason.

Meanwhile on the mound, Eovaldi wriggled out of trouble all night before Aroldis Chapman and Josh Sborz closed the door, as the Rangers became the first team to win a World Series game despite having no hits or runs through six innings.

"I kind of joked around: I don't know how many rabbits I have in my hat," said Eovaldi, who improved to 5-0 with a 2.95 ERA this postseason. "I didn't really do a great job tonight in attacking the zone. But our defense, incredible again."

Sborz struck out four in 2 1/3 innings of one-hit relief for his first postseason save. He threw a called third strike past Ketel Marte for the final out, and jubilant Texas players rushed toward the mound to celebrate.

It's the first title for the Rangers, whose history dates back to 1961 when they were the expansion Washington Senators. They moved to Texas for the 1972 season.

Now, after five stadiums, roughly two dozen managers and 10,033 games, the Rangers are finally champions.

It didn't come easy — at all.

Texas led the AL West for most of the year, but coughed up the division crown on the final day of the regular season to rival Houston. The Rangers weathered an early season-ending injury to new ace Jacob deGrom and a significant one to Seager in April as well before red-hot slugger Adolis García and three-time Cy Young Award winner Max Scherzer went down in Game 3 of the World Series.

Yet still, players like trade-deadline acquisition Jordan Montgomery, replacement closer José Leclerc and

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backup outfielder Travis Jankowski picked up the slack throughout for these resilient Rangers, capping a quick and impressive turnaround under general manager Chris Young after Texas lost 102 games in 2021 and went 68-94 last year for its sixth consecutive losing season.

A disheartening 1-0 defeat in the regular-season finale at Seattle left the Rangers with the No. 5 seed in the American League playoffs and sent them across the country to open the postseason at Tampa Bay, part of a two-week trip that took them to four cities — two on each coast. But after sweeping the Rays and AL East champion Orioles, the AL's two winningest teams, Texas got its revenge against 2022 World Series champion Houston, winning a hard-fought AL Championship Series in which the road team won all seven games.

That propelled the Rangers to their first Fall Classic in 12 years. Once there, they became the first team to win the World Series without committing an error since the 1966 Baltimore Orioles.

Texas will celebrate with a parade in the Arlington entertainment district near its stadium on Friday.

"We've just got a group of winners," Lowe said. "When the bus driver's driving slow, we tell him, 'Hey man, you know you're driving a group of winners,' so we believed it through and through. Maybe we struggled at home, but we got it done on the road, and we've got a special group."

In the end, Texas had to get past the young and surprising Diamondbacks, who won just 84 games during the regular season but beat the Brewers, Dodgers and Phillies in a remarkable postseason run that finally fizzled.

"I'm sorry I didn't do my job to get us there," manager Torey Lovullo said, pausing as his voice cracked with emotion. "But I will. We all will."

With some help from his defense, the bespectacled Gallen mowed down his first 14 hitters before walking Lowe.

Eovaldi wasn't as sharp, but still matched Gallen's zeros on the scoreboard despite walking five, his most in an outing since 2013.

Arizona had some juicy opportunities to score in the first five innings, but couldn't convert, going 0 for 9 with runners in scoring position.

Eovaldi made it through six, giving up four hits and striking out five on 97 pitches.

"He was a traffic cop tonight," Rangers pitching coach Mike Maddux said.

VALUABLE COMPANY

Seager, who also led the Los Angeles Dodgers to a championship in 2020, joined Hall of Famers Sandy Koufax, Bob Gibson and Reggie Jackson as the only players to win two World Series MVP awards.

CONNECT FOUR

Bochy is the sixth manager to win four titles, joining Casey Stengel (seven), Joe McCarthy (seven), Connie Mack (five), Walter Alston (four) and Joe Torre (four). All of them are in the Hall of Fame and when Bochy's career is over, it seems a given he'll be enshrined in Cooperstown as well.

MONEY WELL SPENT

The Rangers have been eyeing this moment since Dec. 1, 2021, when they committed more than a half-billion dollars to sign Seager, Semien and pitcher Jon Gray, who delivered a crucial three-inning relief performance in Game 3. Big spending doesn't always lead to titles — just ask the Mets, Yankees and Padres this year — but for the Rangers, it worked.

STREAK STOPPED

Marte went 0 for 2, ending his postseason-record hitting streak at 20 games. He walked three times, though, and has reached base safely in all 21 career postseason games.

LONG AND WINDING ROAD

After baseball expanded its playoffs to 12 teams in 2022, the Rangers became the first team to win 13 postseason games. Texas also became the first club in any of the four major professional sports in North America to win 11 road games in a single postseason, according to OptaSTATS.

BOUND FOR COOPERSTOWN

Bochy's cap, Seager's helmet, Carter's batting gloves, Semien's jersey and Eovaldi's spikes are among the World Series memorabilia items being donated to the Hall of Fame.

THEN THERE WERE FIVE

Colorado, Milwaukee, San Diego, Seattle and Tampa Bay are the franchises that remain without a World Series championship. The Diamondbacks won their only title in 2001.

Diplomatic efforts to pause fighting gain steam as Israeli ground troops push toward Gaza City

By NAJIB JOBAIN and KAREEM CHEHAYEB Associated Press

RAFAH, Gaza Strip (AP) — Israel's ground troops advanced toward Gaza City on Thursday, as the U.S. and Arab countries intensified diplomatic efforts to ease the siege of the Hamas-ruled enclave and bring about at least a brief stop to the fighting to help civilians.

President Joe Biden suggested a humanitarian "pause" on Wednesday, as hundreds of foreign passport holders and wounded Palestinians were allowed out of Gaza for the first time, exiting via Egypt's Rafah crossing. U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken is expected back in the region on Friday.

Arab countries, including those allied with the U.S. and at peace with Israel, have expressed mounting unease with the war. Jordan recalled its ambassador from Israel and told Israel's envoy to remain out of the country until there's a halt to the war and the "humanitarian catastrophe" it is causing. More than 3,600 Palestinian children have been killed in 25 days of fighting, as bombings have driven hundreds of thousands of people from their homes and food, water and fuel run low.

Israeli troops pushed into Gaza in larger numbers over the weekend after three weeks of heavy airstrikes that have demolished entire neighborhoods and driven more than half the territory's 2.3 million people out of their homes. The war, the fifth and by far deadliest in Gaza, began when Hamas launched a bloody Oct. 7 rampage into Israel, which killed hundreds of men, women and children. Some 240 were captured.

The U.S. has pledged unwavering support for Israel as it seeks to end Hamas' rule over Gaza and crush its military capabilities, even as the two allies seem to have no clear plan for the day after. White House officials said a pause in fighting would allow more aid to get into Gaza and create a possibility for more hostages to be freed.

The opening of Rafah came after weeks of talks among Egypt, Israel, the U.S. and Qatar, which mediates with Hamas. It was first time people left Gaza other than four hostages released by Hamas and another rescued by Israeli forces.

Israeli troops meanwhile appear to be advancing on three main routes, according to the Institute for the Study of War, a U.S. research group. One thrust came from Gaza's northeast corner. Another, south of Gaza City, cut across the territory, reaching the main north-south highway.

The third, from Gaza's northwest corner, has moved about 5 kilometers (3 miles) down the Mediterranean coast, reaching the outskirts of the Shati and Jabaliya refugee camps, on the edges of Gaza City. Airstrikes on Tuesday and Wednesday destroyed apartment blocks in Jabaliya, but the number of dead and wounded remained unknown. Israel said the strikes killed militants and demolished Hamas tunnels.

Palestinian militants fired antitank missiles, set off explosive devices and hurled grenades at Israeli troops during an overnight battle, the Israeli military said Thursday. It said soldiers returned fire and called in artillery, as well as strikes from a helicopter and a naval ship. The report could not be independently confirmed.

Hundreds of thousands of Palestinians remain in the path of the fighting in northern Gaza, despite Israel's repeated calls for them to evacuate the region and head to the territory's south, which is also being bombarded.

Casualties on both sides are expected to rise as Israeli troops advance toward the dense residential neighborhoods of Gaza City. Israeli officials say Hamas' military infrastructure, including tunnels, is concentrated in the city and accuse Hamas of hiding among civilians.

Rocket fire from Gaza into Israel, and daily skirmishes between Israel and Lebanon's Hezbollah militants, has disrupted life for millions of Israelis and forced an estimated 250,000 to evacuate towns near the borders in the north and south. Most rockets are intercepted or fall in open areas.

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More than 8,800 Palestinians have been killed in the war, mostly women and minors, and more than 22,000 people have been wounded, the Gaza Health Ministry said Wednesday, without providing a breakdown between civilians and fighters. The figure is without precedent in decades of Israeli-Palestinian violence.

Over 1,400 people have died on the Israeli side, mainly civilians killed during Hamas' initial attack, also an unprecedented figure. Sixteen Israeli soldiers have been killed in Gaza since the start of the ground operation.

At least 335 foreign passport holders left Gaza through the Rafah crossing into Egypt on Wednesday, said Wael Abu Omar, a spokesman for the Palestinian Crossings Authority. Seventy-six Palestinian patients, along with their companions, were evacuated for treatment in Egypt, he said. The U.S. has said it is trying to evacuate 400 Americans with their families.

Egypt has said it will not accept an influx of Palestinian refugees, fearing Israel will not allow them to return to Gaza after the war.

Those remaining in Gaza face an increasingly dire humanitarian situation, with basic supplies running low and hundreds of thousands packed into hospitals and U.N.-run shelters. Israel has allowed more than 260 trucks carrying food and medicine to enter from Egypt, but aid workers say it's not nearly enough.

Hospitals in Gaza say their emergency generators are running dangerously low on fuel amid a territory-wide blackout. The World Health Organization said the lack of fuel puts at risk 1,000 patients on kidney dialysis, 130 premature babies in incubators, as well as cancer patients and patients on ventilators.

Israel has refused to allow fuel in, saying it fears Hamas would steal it for military purposes. The military released a recording of what it said was a Hamas commander forcing a hospital to hand over some fuel. The recording could not be independently verified.

Only hours of electricity remained at Gaza City's largest hospital, Shifa, according to its director, Mohamed Abu Salmia, who pleaded for "whoever has a liter of diesel in his home" to donate it.

The Turkish-Palestinian Hospital, Gaza's only facility offering specialized treatment for cancer patients, was forced to shut down Wednesday because of lack of fuel, leaving 70 cancer patients in a critical situation, the Health Ministry said.

The Indonesian Hospital in northern Gaza, where many of those wounded in the Jabaliya strikes were being treated, was forced to turn off most lights and its mortuary refrigerators.

"These exceptional measures will allow the Indonesian Hospital to work for a few more days," Health Ministry spokesman Ashraf al-Qudra said. "However, if we cannot secure electricity or fuel then we will face a disaster."

Crowds gather near funeral home, lay flowers as former Chinese Premier Li Keqiang is laid to rest

By CHRISTOPHER BODEEN and KEN MORITSUGU Associated Press

HEFEI, China (AP) — Hundreds, possibly thousands, of people gathered Thursday near a state funeral home in Beijing as China's former second-ranking leader, Li Keqiang, was put to rest, while a steady stream of mourners showed their respects at the ex-premier's childhood home in central China.

Li, who was China's top economic official for a decade, died last Friday of a heart attack at age 68.

"The remains of Comrade Li Keqiang ... were cremated at the Babaoshan Revolutionary Cemetery in Beijing on Thursday," the official Xinhua News Agency reported.

State broadcaster CCTV showed President Xi Jinping accompanied by his wife, Peng Liyuan, bowing before Li's body, which was surrounded by greenery and covered with a Communist Party flag.

Xi was followed by the other six members of the all-powerful Politburo Standing Committee.

"Li was extolled as an excellent (Communist Party) member, a time-tested and loyal Communist soldier and an outstanding proletarian revolutionist, statesman and leader of the party and the state," Xinhua said, repeating the language it had used earlier in his brief obituary.

Li was an advocate of private business who promised market-oriented reforms, and helped navigate the world's second-largest economy through challenges such as rising tensions with the United States

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and the COVID-19 pandemic. But he was left with little authority after Xi made himself the most powerful Chinese leader in decades by eliminating presidential term limits and tightening control over the economy and society.

In front of the funeral home, plainclothes and uniformed police lined the roadway for hundreds of meters (yards), blocking traffic and telling people to move along. Police also moved people away from a subway station near the cemetery, where state funerals are held and many top leaders are buried.

A forest of phone cameras rose as the cortege consisting of several buses passed by.

Large crowds also gathered in Li's hometown of Hefei in the central province of Anhui, where a steady stream of people, some wearing black, were permitted to walk down Hongxing Road to lay small bouquets of white and yellow chrysanthemums and pay their respects in front of the three-story shophouse where Li spent his childhood.

The scene was similar to that immediately after Li's death was announced, when the line ran for 10 kilometers (6 miles) and residents waited up to five hours to present flowers, according to Anhui native Liu Xiaoqiang.

That was viewed by some as a protest against Li's political sidelining by the increasingly authoritarian Xi.

Such spontaneous gatherings are almost never permitted in China, but the authorities appeared to be taking a relatively light approach, possibly to avoid sparking a larger incident. However, AP journalists in Hefei were shadowed by unidentified people who monitored their interviews and in some cases tried to record them.

"The death was so sudden and we came here to see him off," said Hefei resident Liu Ying. She brought her 7-year-old son and planned to meet with a friend who was bringing her daughter so they could lay flowers together.

Liu said her son only vaguely knew who Li was. "He does not understand now but he will when he grows up," she said.

Another woman said she and two friends dressed in black traveled Wednesday from the neighboring province of Jiangsu and had laid bouquets three times. She described Li as "a good premier loved by the people."

Li was dropped from the Communist Party's Politburo Standing Committee in October 2022. He left office in March, despite being two years below the informal retirement age of 70.

"He did concrete things for the people," said the woman, who was unable to give her name before being moved along by men and women in blue vests, apparently plainclothes police officers.

The small street was closed to traffic, and visitors proceeded under the watchful eye of a large team of the people in blue vests, who ordered the crowd not to loiter. Hundreds of other bystanders looked on and took videos with their phones.

At least one delivery person wearing a motorcycle helmet and carrying an armful of bouquets sent from Jiangsu was stopped and questioned by two men in blue vests.

By noon, the mound of flowers had grown more than a meter (yard) high and several meters (yards) across.

Flags were lowered to half-staff at government and party offices around the country and at Chinese embassies and consulates abroad.

Li rose from relatively humble roots to attend prestigious Peking University following the end of the 1966-1976 Cultural Revolution and rose steadily up the ranks, holding several high provincial offices before being transferred to Beijing. At one time he was favored for the top spot before being eclipsed by Xi, a member of the prestigious "princeling" class, as the descendants of Communist luminaries are known.

At the 2022 party congress, Xi awarded himself a third five-year term as party leader and filled the top party ranks with loyalists. The No. 2 slot was given to Li Qiang, the party secretary of Shanghai, who lacked Li Keqiang's national-level experience and later told reporters that his job was to carry out whatever Xi decided.

Migrants in cities across the US may need medical care. It's not that easy to find

By DEVI SHASTRI AP Health Writer

All the chairs in the waiting room were filled by dozens of newly arrived migrants waiting to be seen by a Cook County health worker at a clinic in Chicago. Julio Figuera, 43, was among them.

He didn't want to talk much about traveling to Chicago from Venezuela, where a social, political and economic crisis has pushed millions into poverty and led 7 million to flee, Figuera and three of his kids included.

But somewhere along the way, he'd gotten pneumonia.

Figuera, who was living with hundreds of other asylum-seekers at O'Hare International Airport while waiting for more permanent shelter, returned for follow-up care at the county clinic. The stubborn cough came back, so he did, too. The staff checked his vitals, listened to his chest and gave him a hepatitis vaccine.

"I rarely get sick," he said. "It was the journey that got me sick."

Tens of thousands of migrants who've come to the United States are navigating a patchwork system to find treatment for new or chronic health concerns.

Doctors across the country say it's rare that migrants receive medical screenings or anything beyond care for medical emergencies when they arrive at the U.S.-Mexico border, and there's no overarching national system to track the care, either. Migrants' options dwindle or expand after that – depending on where they end up – with some cities guiding new arrivals into robust public health systems and others relying on emergency departments or volunteer doctors to treat otherwise preventable health issues.

"You have these little islands of care. You have these little islands of shelter," said Deliana Garcia, of the nonprofit Migrant Clinicians Network, which supported more than 1,000 migrants in need of medical care in the first 10 months of this year. "But how does anyone know what's going on east to west or north to south?"

More than 2 million people crossed the border illegally between October 2022 and September 2023, according to Border Patrol data. For the most part, doctors told The Associated Press, the migrants are healthy; they have to be to make the arduous journey. It's the travel that can turn manageable health issues into emergencies.

Because of that, public health leaders across the country — from New York to Los Angeles, Boston to Denver — say there's high demand for care. And providing it is central to their organizations' missions.

"It's so core to what we do that I don't feel like anyone's really hesitated around this is the right thing for the organization to do," said Craig Williams, chief administrative officer of Cook County's health system. "I don't feel like over the last year that we've backed off from really anything else because of doing this initiative."

The cost of care

The work is not without a price: Roughly 14,500 migrants have visited the Cook County clinic this year, as many as 100 are picked up in vans from the shelters each day for immediate care, vaccinations and a foothold into the public health care system. The county spends about \$2.2 million a month -- or nearly \$30 million since it opened the clinic about a year ago.

New York City Health and Hospitals logged 29,000 migrant patient visits in the last fiscal year, which ended in mid-June. There, health workers have administered more than 40,000 vaccines and provide medical screenings for all new arrivals.

Other cities are trying to manage as best they can, like Denver, where nearly 26,000 migrants have arrived within the last year. Dr. Steve Federico, a director at Denver Health, said the city's process is inadequate.

Migrants are asked by shelter staff if they need immediate medical attention. If they say yes, they're either sent to an emergency room or connected by phone with a nurse through Denver Health, a public hospital and health organization.

There are no basic health screenings, Federico said, which can increase the risk of infectious disease outbreaks among those living in shelters. In Chicago, one shelter saw a small outbreak of chickenpox.

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Without catching and treating illnesses early, Federico said, "Now everybody has it. And then if somebody is at increased risk, they're going to get sicker."

Federico and city spokesperson Jon Ewing both said Denver is already strained for resources — given the need to shelter and feed migrants. Ewing said Denver is looking to enhance its medical screening process, but added that it's not clear how much that will cost or whether there are enough resources to achieve it.

The challenges of care

Migrants face a lack of access to steady medical care in the U.S., as well as healthy food and stable housing. It can mean that someone with a chronic medical condition, like diabetes or hypertension, can end up in the hospital simply because they lost or ran out of their medications, or had them confiscated during their travels. Doctors said they've also seen migrant children with asthma who need new inhalers.

"You have what were essentially healthy people put in really remarkable circumstances, where they are not able to survive thoroughly and then they come across (the border) in a really compromised state," said Garcia, of the Migrant Clinicians Network.

Some women are arriving far along in their pregnancies, and never had prenatal care.

"We gave the first prenatal visit to a woman who was nine months pregnant just two weeks ago," said Dr. Ted Long, senior vice president at New York City Health and Hospitals, where more than 300 healthy babies have been born to migrant mothers.

Even when care is available, migrants can have a hard time getting it. Some avoid asking for help entirely out of fear of a large bill or longstanding distrust of the medical system.

Dr. Stephanie Lee is the medical director of refugee resettlement and coordinator of the unaccompanied youth program at Penn State Health's Family Practice Pediatrics Clinic. She said she sees many patients who don't have health insurance or don't know how to get it.

One mother who'd been waiting on an asylum request for more than a year told Lee she was paying out of pocket because her family didn't have insurance.

"The process is so broken that you can't even do anything," Lee said. "They came in to see me just paying out of pocket because the kiddo needed a physical and needed to get checked before going to school."

The Migrant Clinicians Network, which has been connecting patients to health providers for 30 years, just received a \$5 million grant from the National Institutes of Health. Its case workers keep in touch with migrants, doing things like setting up medical appointments, helping fill out applications for social services, taking people to appointments and figuring out payment options.

They even keep in touch with a trusted family member in the migrant's home country, in case they fall off the radar.

"We have a lot of babies who are named after the people who work on our team," said Garcia, who oversees the program.

But that's the best-case scenario.

The shelter system in Massachusetts is so full that the governor brought in the National Guard in August to assist. Dr. Fiona Danaher and her colleagues often cannot find migrants when she needs to follow up because they don't have a U.S. phone number.

"We see situations even in migrants who are just moving around between shelter locations in the greater Boston area where they get completely lost to follow up," said Danaher, a primary care pediatrician in the Mass General Brigham health system. "And then the wheel gets reinvented and the same tests get done."

She encourages her colleagues to give patients a physical copy of everything that was done on their visit: vaccines administered, medications prescribed, benefit programs applied for. That way, they can simply hand it to whoever sees them next — like a critical game of telephone.

There's "a lot of low hanging fruit" when it comes to caring for migrant patients, she said, and a "very old-school level of note passing" is "an important investment to make."

Putin is expected to seek reelection in Russia, but who would run

if he doesn't?

By JIM HEINTZ Associated Press

TALLINN, Estonia (AP) — Vladimir Putin isn't quite the man he used to be — more than a decade has passed since the Russian president engaged in public stunts to boast of his vigor by hugging a polar bear or riding a horse barechested in the mountains. The war in Ukraine has further dented that strongman image.

Putin is still expected to seek another term when Russia holds presidential elections next March. In fact, he has pushed through changes in the constitution to allow him to run for two more six-year terms.

But 71 is an age when death or serious illness are hardly distant concerns for the man who has ruled Russia for 24 years. If Putin was not on the ballot for some reason, it's not clear who might take his place.

At the national level, Russia's political system is hermetic. There are no primary elections where voters can choose a candidate; political parties select their own contenders and then present them to the electorate.

In Putin's absence, the loyalist United Russia party could put forth a candidate, although there's no fixed procedure for it to choose one. Officially, Putin ran in 2018 as an independent, a precedent adding uncertainty to how a replacement could emerge.

However it plays out, a candidate almost certainly would come from within the current power structure, as none of the lesser parties' candidates would have wide recognition or support.

Some potential contenders if Putin isn't in the election:

DMITRY MEDVEDEV

Medvedev has unique experience as a Putin surrogate, becoming president in 2008 when Putin could not seek reelection because of term limits. Despite the post, he was widely regarded as secondary to Putin, who became prime minister and effectively still led the country.

He submissively acceded to Putin's desire to run for a new term in 2012, serving as prime minister until 2020. He was then appointed to the new position of deputy head of the national security council.

Although that post was low-visibility and often seen as a sinecure, Medvedev's prominence soared last year when he abandoned his normally mild persona and became one of the most vehement defenders of the war in Ukraine, vividly denouncing the West.

That posture has appeal for Russian nationalists, but Medvedev could be tarnished by the perception he was too accommodating to the United States as president during the Obama administration's "reset" initiative, as well as a high-profile expose alleging corruption and garishly lavish living.

ALEXEI DYUMIN

As governor of the Tula region, Dyumin does not have wide public visibility, but he has been tipped for years as possible Putin successor due to his close relationship with the president, including serving as his bodyguard.

Dyumin did come to public notice with his dramatic claim that he had once saved Putin from a bear. In Dyumin's telling, he was at a mountain residence where Putin was sleeping when he was informed a bear was outside the door.

"The bear and I looked each other in the eyes. He backed off a little, I opened the door and discharged the entire clip of my pistol at his feet," he said.

Dyumin was the leader of special forces of the military intelligence agency, in Russia's 2014 annexation of Crimea, giving him an aura of valor and success related to Ukraine, in contrast to the grim struggles and failures of the current war.

SERGEI SOBYANIN

If visuals matter in a Russian presidential race, Sobyenin could have the strongest portfolio of anyone. As mayor of Moscow since 2010, the Russian capital has undergone remarkable and visible changes.

New recreation areas, pedestrian zones, sports facilities and other amenities have flourished. Electric buses replaced rattling old trolleys, new commuter rail lines reduced the city's notorious traffic jams, and once-ragged parks were tidied up and enhanced.

Sobyenin offended Western-leaning liberals by banning LGBTQ+ parades in the city, but tolerance of

gay rights is not a winning stance in Russia. Sobyenin also has avoided the flamboyance and divisiveness of his predecessor, Yuri Luzhkov.

MIKHAIL MISHUSTIN

Russia's prime minister since 2020, Mishustin has provoked no excitement and relatively little notice, but he does have one significant potential advantage: if Putin were to die or become unable to fulfill his duties before the election, Mishustin would become acting president. That's the same path Putin took when he became acting president upon Boris Yeltsin's resignation on New Year's Eve 1999, then capitalized on the position to win election the following year.

Mishustin doesn't appear to have that ambition, however. He is a quiet technocrat, regarded as highly competent in his previous post as head of the national tax service. As prime minister, he has received approval ratings of up to 70% for supervising the administration and ministries.

Although many observers think he was blindsided by Putin's decision to invade Ukraine, he has continued his tasks stolidly.

NIKOLAI PATRUSHEV

The parallels between Putin and Patrushev are striking. They were born in Leningrad 10 months apart, and Patrushev became head of the Federal Security Service, the main KGB successor agency, in 1999 when Putin became prime minister. Now head of the national security council, he echoes and sometimes amplifies Putin's hawkish views and animosity toward the West.

Although Patrushev initially demurred on recognizing the independence of the rebel leadership in Ukraine's separatist regions of Donetsk and Luhansk, which preceded the invasion by a few days, he later became a strong proponent of the war, arguing that Russia needed to wipe out what he called "neo-Nazis" on its doorstep and claiming that Ukraine and its Western orientation was a clear security threat.

He also denounced the alleged creep of Western neo-liberal ideas into Russia and defends preservation of the country's traditions, a philosophical stance identical to Putin's.

Confusion, frustration and hope at Gaza's border with Egypt as first foreign passport-holders depart

By NAJIB JOBAIN and ISABEL DEBRE Associated Press

RAFAH, Gaza Strip (AP) — Hundreds of foreign passport-holders and dozens of other seriously wounded Palestinians desperate to escape Israel's bombardment of Gaza crowded around the black metal gate on the Egyptian border Wednesday, hoping to pass through the enclave's only portal to the outside world for the first time since the war began.

Restless children pressed their faces against the wire mesh as families with backpacks and carry-on suitcases pushed and jostled. The air was thick with apprehension.

Everyone was waiting for the Hamas authorities to call their names over the scratchy loudspeaker. Each name represented another individual with a chance to escape the punishing war that has killed over 8,800 Palestinians, according to the Health Ministry in Hamas-ruled Gaza, and forever altered the enclave they had called home.

"We are relying on God and hoping that we get out," said Rania Hussein, a Jordanian resident of Gaza, as she breathlessly described the horrors she had fled — entire Palestinian neighborhoods razed and families crushed to death since Oct. 7, when Hamas mounted its unprecedented attack on Israel.

"If it wasn't for what had happened, we wouldn't leave Gaza," she said.

After three weeks of repeatedly dashed hopes and torturous negotiations between Egypt, Israel and Gaza's Hamas rulers, the first group of Palestinians left the besieged strip through the Rafah crossing, swarmed by TV cameras.

Squeezing through the border gates were 335 foreign passport-holders, mostly Palestinian dual nationals but also some foreigners, 76 critically wounded patients bound for Egyptian hospitals and some staffers from aid organizations, including Doctors Without Borders, the International Committee of the Red Cross and the United Nations agency for Palestinian refugees.

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The breakthrough for the hundreds of Palestinians traveling by foot and in ambulances into the Sinai peninsula left many others holding their breath. Confusion reigned as hundreds of people who had braved Israeli air raids to flock to the Egyptian border found themselves stranded after the roll-call ended.

There are thousands of foreign passport holders stuck in the Gaza Strip, including an estimated 400 Americans who want out. A widely shared Google spreadsheet outlining just a few hundred names of those cleared for departure Wednesday raised even more questions.

The list included citizens from a handful of European countries as well as Australia, Japan and Indonesia. There were no Americans or Canadians, but the U.S. State Department later confirmed that a few U.S. citizens had managed to cross.

"No one understands how you get on this list or why you're not on this list," said Hammam al-Yazji, a Palestinian businessman trying to get out of Gaza with his 4-year-old American son.

Phone and internet connections were down early Wednesday across the strip, adding to the frustration.

"We came here today to the Egyptian borders hoping to leave Gaza, but our Canadian Embassy didn't contact due to the bad network," said Asil Shurab, a Canadian citizen.

Dr. Hamdan Abu Speitan, a 76-year-old Palestinian American physician from Syracuse, said he had no idea what to expect.

"All I can do is wait and pray," he said.

The terms of the deal between Israel, Egypt and Hamas — reached with the help of Qatar and the United States — remained shrouded in secrecy as diplomats promised more foreign passport-holders would be able to cross Rafah in the coming days.

"We expect exits of U.S. citizens and foreign nationals to continue over the next several days," State Department spokesperson Matthew Miller told reporters on Wednesday.

It still was not clear how long the departures of foreign nationals would go on, which countries' citizens would depart when and how that order would be decided.

None of the roughly 240 hostages believed to be held by Hamas were released. Most are Israeli citizens, but roughly half hold foreign passports, according to Israel's Foreign Ministry.

For some, the past weeks of false starts and thwarted plans did not instill much confidence.

"We have little hope," Shurab said, "to leave and save our lives."

Court fights invoking US Constitution's 'insurrection clause' against Trump turn to Minnesota

By STEVE KARNOWSKI and NICHOLAS RICCARDI Associated Press

ST. PAUL, Minn. (AP) — Efforts to use the Constitution's "insurrection" clause to prevent former President Donald Trump from running again for the White House turn to Minnesota on Thursday with oral arguments before the state Supreme Court, a hearing that will unfold as a similar case plays out in Colorado.

Those lawsuits are among several filed around the country to bar Trump from state ballots in 2024 over his role in the Jan. 6, 2021, attack on the U.S. Capitol, an assault intended to halt Congress' certification of Joe Biden's win. The Colorado and Minnesota cases are furthest along, putting one or both on an expected path to the U.S. Supreme Court, which has never decided the issue.

The central argument is the same — that Section Three of the 14th Amendment bars anyone from holding office who previously swore an oath to uphold the Constitution and then "engaged in insurrection" against it.

In the Minnesota case, the plaintiffs are asking the state's highest court to declare that Trump is disqualified and direct the secretary of state to keep him off the ballot for the state's March 5 primary. They've also broached the possibility of the court ordering an evidentiary hearing, which would mean further proceedings and delay a final resolution, something Trump's legal team opposes.

"The events of January 6, 2021, amounted to an insurrection or a rebellion under Section 3: a violent, coordinated effort to storm the Capitol to obstruct and prevent the Vice President of the United States and the United States Congress from fulfilling their constitutional roles by certifying President Biden's victory,

and to illegally extend then-President Trump's tenure in office," the petitioners wrote.

Trump's lawyers acknowledged in their filings that the question of whether Trump "is suited to hold the Presidency has been the defining political controversy of our national life" for the last several years. They've also argued that while the events of Jan. 6 devolved into a riot, they were not an insurrection in the constitutional sense.

Trump's lawyers noted that the former president has never been charged in any court with insurrection — although he does face state and federal criminal charges for his attempts to overturn the 2020 results.

"Both the federal Constitution and Minnesota law place the resolution of this political issue where it belongs: the democratic process, in the hands of either Congress or the people of the United States," they wrote in one of their filings.

Some of Trump's main arguments are that Minnesota and federal law don't allow courts to strike him from the ballot and that the insurrection clause doesn't apply to presidents, anyway.

"The riot that occurred at the Capitol on January 6, 2021, was terrible. The January 6 rioters entered the Capitol for a few hours and fought with police. But as awful as the melee was, and as disturbing as the rioters' actions were, it was not a war upon the United States," they wrote in an earlier filing. "Ultimately, Congress counted the electoral votes early the next morning. No evidence shows that the rioters — even the worst among them — made war on the United States or tried to overthrow the government."

The insurrection clause does not mention the office of president directly, but instead includes somewhat vague language saying it applies to the "elector of president and vice president." That was an issue debated during the Colorado case on Wednesday, when a law professor, relying on research into the thinking at the time the amendment was adopted, testified that it was indeed intended to apply to presidential candidates.

That case already has delved into whether the Jan. 6 attack meets the definition of an insurrection and whether Trump was responsible for inciting the mob and met his responsibility as president to stop the attack.

The relative lack of case law on how to apply the provision means that both sides are having to reach back as far as 150 years to find precedents. Congress passed the 14th Amendment in 1866, a year after the Civil War ended, and it was ratified two years later.

The Minnesota Supreme Court justices have scheduled just over an hour for oral arguments Thursday. They'll hear from attorneys for the petitioners, who include former Minnesota Secretary of State Joan Grove and former Justice Paul Anderson, as well as lawyers for Trump, the Republican Party of Minnesota and current Secretary of State Steve Simon.

The Minnesota case was filed by Free Speech For People, while the Colorado case came from another long-established group with significant legal resources, Citizens for Responsibility and Ethics in Washington. In Colorado, ballot challenges first go to a judge for a hearing and then can be appealed to the state Supreme Court. In Minnesota, they go straight to the high court.

Simon, the secretary of state, has asked the court to rule quickly so he can send instructions to local election officials about Minnesota's March primary no later than Jan. 5.

At 15, he is defending his home and parenting his sister. One young man's struggle to stay in school

By BIANCA VÁZQUEZ TONESS AP Education Writer

LOS ANGELES (AP) — This was the summer Deneffy Sánchez was supposed to learn algebra, biology and the other ninth grade classes he failed last year because he was too depressed and overwhelmed. But advancing to 10th grade had to take a back seat for now. He had more pressing concerns.

It was June. Deneffy, 15, lay in the twin bed he shares with his mother and little sister, while their new roommate — a stranger only weeks before — lamented having to live with his family.

"I would never have let them live here if I'd known how they behave," Fabiola Del Castillo told a reporter in Spanish. Deneffy's mother, Lilian López, stood next to her in the cramped room where they all ate and slept.

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"Saturday is the first. You need to leave by then," Del Castillo said, turning to López. Saturday was only three days away. For Deneffy, that meant a ticking clock. He had to save his apartment.

No one has stopped the clock for Deneffy or other older students who fell behind when the pandemic shuttered classrooms.

Time is running out on high school, yet millions of students aren't showing up to class every day. When they do make it, untold numbers are so consumed with their troubles that they struggle to learn. Others have disappeared from school altogether.

Each community has its own set of circumstances that have conspired to sabotage young people's dreams during and after COVID-19. In Los Angeles and much of California, housing insecurity has devastated children and teens' chances at recovery like nothing else.

"Housing is the biggest reason kids aren't going to school or we can't find them," says Elmer Roldan, executive director of Communities in Schools of Los Angeles, an organization that helps dozens of Los Angeles Unified schools follow up with students who are chronically absent.

Last year, two in five Los Angeles Unified School District students missed more than 10% of the school year, according to data supplied by the district.

There's more. By April, the district had lost track of more than 2,500 students — kids who quietly stopped attending school and never appeared to enroll elsewhere, according to preliminary data posted on the district website.

The reasons are varied and, in many cases, entirely unknown. Deneffy's odyssey is but one example of how the pandemic wrecked the life of a vulnerable teen, and why he's struggled to return to studying.

Before the pandemic, Deneffy didn't like school. But he rarely missed it.

He spent his afternoons playing soccer or baseball with friends at the park. On the weekends, he trained with the police department's youth cadet program, advancing his mom's dream that he become a police officer.

This summer, while more fortunate teens worked their first jobs, flirted at the beach or even attended summer school, Deneffy was inside. He was holding down a spot in an apartment, engaged in a battle of wills with a hostile adult roommate.

On the day a reporter visited his home, he lay in bed, a fuzzy blanket emblazoned with the face of Queen Elsa from "Frozen" pinned to the wall behind him. He pretended to be lost in his phone, but he was secretly recording Del Castillo just in case his family needed it someday.

Just feet away, his mother, a petite 47-year-old who emigrated from Guatemala 22 years ago, stood calm, her 3-year-old daughter at her knee.

"But I paid all of the rent for June since you didn't have it. And you said that you would pay for July," she said in Spanish. López had given Del Castillo money orders totaling \$1,240, though López doubted the landlords charged that much for the dilapidated 450-square-foot apartment.

"Yes," said Del Castillo, acknowledging López had paid for both June and July. "But how am I going to have you here two months? I can't."

Turning back to the reporter, Del Castillo continued: "They don't let me sleep. They're loud and they snore." She started to cry.

Then she added a new threat. Having spent all the money López gave her, Del Castillo didn't have July's rent. So she would relinquish the apartment and keys at the end of the month.

They needed to get out.

The majority of students the government considers "homeless" do indeed have a place to sleep, but it's precarious and often shared with roommates, according to federal statistics. In Los Angeles, more than 13,000 students are homeless and 2,000 of them stay in shelters, the city's superintendent said last spring.

López says she was assaulted while the family stayed in a shelter after getting evicted three years ago.

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That's why she's determined to find her own housing.

The scarcity of affordable housing in Los Angeles has given anyone with an apartment lease in their name the power to take advantage of people like López who don't have the saved cash, references or savvy to compete for their own place and are desperate to avoid shelters.

It was Deneffy's idea for him to stay in the apartment for weeks on end and physically block Del Castillo from throwing them out. She had once locked out López and Jennifer, his little sister, while he was at school.

"It's scary that she could do that again and we couldn't do anything about it," he said. "I don't feel safe leaving."

Without a father at home, Deneffy, in some ways, has filled the gap. He watches Jennifer when his mom has to work. He wants a job to help pay rent. He often thinks about López dying and making him responsible for his little sister.

Jennifer already has a name for her teenage brother. She calls him Papá.

Studies show students who take on parental roles have struggled to stay in school. Family responsibilities or financial obligations have caused 35% of student dropouts since the pandemic, according to a January report from Communities in Schools and MDRC, a think tank focused on poverty and education.

Deneffy began shouldering adult responsibilities at the same time he lost control over his home and school life. He became homeless in September 2020, just a week after his mom gave birth to Jennifer.

School was online that fall and for most of the year. Instead of engaging and supporting him at that difficult moment, school was alienating. When he logged into seventh grade Zoom classes from the chaotic shelter, "I felt like they were judging me," he says of his classmates. "I couldn't focus."

Seventh grade was a total loss academically and socially. Not wanting to explain his living situation, he stopped talking to friends, classmates and teachers.

That all caught up to him in ninth grade as classes became harder. He never raised his hand. He didn't have home internet, making it difficult to complete homework. When the school gave tests, he guessed at the answers.

His school offered homework help after his grades crashed. It was assistance he could use.

But what he really wanted was a therapist.

Deneffy says he asked his school's "psychiatric social worker" sometime in the fall of ninth grade if she could get him professional mental health counseling. But the demand for such help has skyrocketed. A full 42% of high school students surveyed in 2021 by the Centers for Disease Control said they felt persistently sad or hopeless, compared with 28% a decade before.

Instead of getting him his own therapist, the social worker pulled him out of study hall when she could — about once a month — for "check-ins," according to Deneffy. District and school representatives said they supported homeless students, but would not comment on Deneffy's situation.

When he visited the social worker, he'd smile at the pictures of her dog, play with the fidget spinners on her desk and update her on his living situation. She'd ask him to rate his stress levels. It was usually a 10 — the highest level.

She'd praise him for recognizing his depression and finding his own coping mechanisms, drawing princesses and people wearing Victorian clothing and repeating positive affirmations to himself. He'd return to class feeling relaxed.

Until the next class started.

The stress started to mount that spring. One of the families they were sharing an apartment with had a daughter in drug rehabilitation. She would come home and suffer from withdrawal, or she would use drugs again. And Deneffy would witness a lot of it.

He spent school days listening to moody electronic music in his earbuds and staring at his phone. "When is this gonna be over?" he would think to himself. "When will I get my happy ending — an apartment?"

Some days he didn't show up to school at all, skipping as much as 30 days of school that spring. During year-end finals, two of the women assigned to help him with his homework pulled him out of class and

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brought him to their office, a former storage space outfitted with desks and a table.

Why hadn't he done any homework all year? they asked. Why hadn't he studied?

"I'm sorry," he remembers telling them. "You should just give up on me."

They wouldn't lose hope, they said. They urged him to go to summer school.

It was a five-week session meant to help him pass his subjects and feel confident going into 10th grade. Without summer school, he might not have enough credits to graduate on time. (Studies show that failing classes increases the likelihood of a student dropping out.)

All of this would make it harder for Deneffy to reach his goal of going to college and becoming a therapist. But any personal goals felt remote as Del Castillo continued to rage against his mother. She regularly fought with López and called her ugly names in front of Deneffy and Jennifer.

"It felt," Deneffy says, "like knives stabbing me in my stomach."

As Del Castillo hounded them to leave by July 1, López told friends and acquaintances they needed a new place.

That was easier said than done.

She applied for public housing and cobbled together enough cleaning jobs so her family would receive priority status. Los Angeles County prioritizes people who work at least 20 hours a week, veterans, disabled people and full-time college students. Notably, parents with young children are not on the preference list. Even at the front of the line, López was told it would take six years to get an apartment.

The first of July came, and Deneffy and his family stayed in the apartment. Del Castillo didn't move out either. A few days later, she brought in another roommate — this time a man whom Deneffy had seen sleeping on the street, but who had cash to cover the rent. One day the man crumpled to the floor, started bleeding from the mouth and was taken away in an ambulance.

"I saw this man almost die and I didn't feel anything," Deneffy says. "I knew something was wrong with me."

One day toward the end of July, López came home and told Deneffy they were leaving. Would he help her pack up their things?

Deneffy sat still on the bed. This was the day he'd been waiting for, but he couldn't move. He couldn't imagine going out into the world again.

Had he forgotten how to talk to people? He panicked at the thought of anyone seeing him dressed, as he was, in shorts and sandals exposing his toes. Or without the black surgical mask that he'd come to rely on to hide his "lumpy and bumpy" face. He sat on the bed as his mom packed up the things around them and moved them into the hallway.

Del Castillo realized they were leaving, and started tossing their things into the hallway. Once everything was out, Deneffy stepped across the threshold and she latched the door behind him.

López had found the new apartment through old friends. It was on the bottom floor of a two-story complex of studio apartments that opened onto a shared concrete courtyard. She knew many of the families that lived there, but not the man they would end up moving in with — a retiree originally from El Salvador.

It was more comfortable than at Del Castillo's. There was air conditioning. The new roommate didn't yell. Jennifer could play with other little kids in the courtyard.

But after a few weeks, signs of trouble started to emerge. For the \$900 apartment, the roommate was charging López \$700 — and another man who slept in the closet \$450.

He demanded total silence. López said he tried to kiss her and make other advances. "I'm not sure how long we're going to be able to stay here," López said recently.

When school started during the second week of August, Deneffy was allowed to take 10th grade classes as long as he promised to attend summer school next year.

To mentally prepare himself for school, Deneffy wakes up around 4 a.m. He tells himself: "You got this." He tells himself: "A new day means there are going to be new people to talk to with new, interesting

problems.”

Even with this preparation, he is already behind.

He couldn't do any homework for the first month of school because, again, he lacked home internet. Now, armed with a school laptop with its own wireless Internet connection, he's wading through the backlog while trying to tackle new assignments. He's most worried about the essays his English teacher has assigned.

“I hate writing,” he says. “I never know where to put the commas and other punctuation.”

He sees a therapist at school every Wednesday for 50 minutes. Things are looking up, he said, but he realizes his new peace is fragile. Against all odds, his mother has convinced the managers of the apartment building where they live to rent them their own small apartment for \$1,250 — more than she brings in each month through government cash assistance and her cleaning jobs. The new place would mean an end to their roommate nightmares. To cover the rent, she'll have to find a full time job.

“She tells me not to worry about it,” says Deneffy. “But I do. What if we don't have money and we get kicked out again?”

Blinken will enter diplomatic maelstrom over Gaza war on new Mideast trip

By MATTHEW LEE AP Diplomatic Writer

WASHINGTON (AP) — Just weeks after a frenzied trip to the Middle East, Secretary of State Antony Blinken is returning to the region with a somewhat more nuanced message than he offered in the immediate aftermath of Hamas' bloody Oct. 7 attack on Israel and Israel's military response.

As he did last month, Blinken will stress U.S. support for Israel and try to prevent a wider Mideast war as he visits Israel and Jordan starting on Friday. But Blinken's agenda this time is more crowded and more complex as the conflict intensifies and the Biden administration grapples with competing domestic and international interests and anger.

He'll push for the evacuation of more foreigners from Gaza and more humanitarian aid for the territory. He'll press Israel to rein in violence against Palestinians in the occupied West Bank committed by Jewish settlers. And, he'll stress the importance of protecting civilians — even though the administration has yet to offer any criticism of Israel for strikes that have killed thousands of civilians in Gaza.

So, while calling for brief pauses in airstrikes and fighting for humanitarian purposes he will continue to oppose growing calls for a broader cease-fire. President Joe Biden said Wednesday he thought there should be a humanitarian “pause” in the Israel-Hamas war in order to get “prisoners” out.

But, Blinken will also be introducing a new element to the U.S. list of priorities: the need for Israel and its neighbors to begin to consider what a post-conflict Gaza will look like, who will govern it, how it can be made secure and how to establish an independent Palestinian state.

U.S. officials, including Biden and Blinken, have said repeatedly that they do not believe an Israeli re-occupation of Gaza is feasible, and Israel agrees. But what comes next has been little explored beyond brief comments Blinken made Tuesday in congressional testimony when he talked about the possibility of a revitalized Palestinian Authority and perhaps Arab states and international organizations playing a significant role in post-conflict Gaza.

Blinken will speak about “the U.S. commitment to working with partners to set the conditions for a durable and sustainable peace in the Middle East to include the establishment of a Palestinian state that reflects the aspirations of the Palestinian people in Gaza and in the West Bank,” State Department spokesman Matthew Miller said.

The change in messaging reflects a shift in the international view of the war, of which Blinken has heard plenty since his last trip to the region when he traveled to Israel and six Arab states — several multiple times — in a frenetic shuttle diplomacy mission that required numerous last-minute schedule changes.

His itinerary after Jordan remains uncertain, although he will attend a Group of Seven foreign ministers meeting in Japan next week before traveling on to South Korea and India for much broader discussions, including on Russia's war in Ukraine and China.

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The shift in public opinion has been palpable. After receiving a wave of global sympathy after the Oct. 7 attacks, Israel now faces widespread criticism for its massive military response, something that many believe is fueling a worldwide spike in antisemitic violence as well as incidents targeting Muslims.

As the situation in Gaza deteriorates, U.S. officials are keenly aware that they risk severe damage in ties with the Arab world and beyond if the U.S. fails to use its influence with its close ally Israel to keep what's already a humanitarian disaster from getting even worse.

Underscoring those concerns, Blinken will be flying into a diplomatic maelstrom between Israel and Jordan, which on Wednesday recalled its ambassador to Israel and told Israel's envoy not to return to Amman. Jordan's foreign minister said the decision would not be reconsidered until after the Gaza operation is stopped.

Miller said the U.S. shares Jordan's concerns about "the dire humanitarian situation in Gaza" and that Blinken will make that a priority on his trip.

"But ultimately," he said, "we believe that increased diplomacy is important and steps to reduce diplomatic channels are not productive to our shared goals of promoting a long-term solution to this crisis."

Jordan, Egypt and Turkey, along with Gulf Arab nations, are on tenterhooks as anger grows throughout the region at Israel's tactics despite the horrific nature of the Oct. 7 attacks by Hamas and will be watching the visit closely.

Before leaving Washington, Blinken met on Wednesday with the Saudi defense minister, whose country has effectively suspended U.S.-mediated normalization talks with Israel. But neither man spoke as they posed for photos for roughly 10 seconds at the State Department.

And, although there was some progress in securing the evacuation of foreigners from Gaza, including a small number of Americans, into Egypt on Wednesday, thousands more want to leave. Yet, even resolving that situation will still leave more than 200 Israelis and others held captive by Hamas.

"I personally spent a lot of time speaking with Prime Minister Netanyahu of Israel and the President Sissi of Egypt and others, to make sure that we could open this access for people to get out," Biden said Wednesday. "I want to thank our partners, in particular Qatar, who worked so closely with us to support negotiations to facilitate the departure of these citizens."

Biden added that much work needs to be done to "significantly step up the flow of critical humanitarian assistance into Gaza."

Biden calls for humanitarian 'pause' in Israel-Hamas war

By CHRIS MEGERIAN and AAMER MADHANI Associated Press

MINNEAPOLIS (AP) — President Joe Biden said he thought there should be a humanitarian "pause" in the Israel-Hamas war, after his campaign speech Wednesday evening was interrupted by a protester calling for a cease-fire.

"I think we need a pause," Biden said.

The call was a subtle departure for Biden and top White House aides, who throughout the Mideast crisis have been steadfast in stating they will not dictate how the Israelis carry out their military operations in response to the Oct. 7 attack by Hamas.

But the president has faced intensifying pressure from human rights groups, fellow world leaders and even liberal members of his own Democratic Party, who say that the Israeli bombardment of Gaza is collective punishment and that it is time for a cease-fire.

In his comments, Biden was exerting pressure on Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu to give Palestinians at least a brief reprieve from the relentless military operation that's left thousands dead and mired the 141-square-mile strip in a roiling humanitarian crisis.

The White House has refused to call for a cease-fire but has signaled that the Israelis should consider humanitarian pauses to allow civilians to receive aid and for foreign nationals trapped on the strip to leave Gaza.

Israeli ground troops have advanced near Gaza City in heavy fighting with militants, the military said on

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Wednesday. Meanwhile, hundreds of foreign nationals and dozens of seriously injured Palestinians were allowed to leave Gaza after more than three weeks under siege.

The first people to leave Gaza — other than four hostages released by Hamas and another rescued by Israeli forces — crossed into Egypt, escaping even as bombings drive hundreds of thousands from their homes, and food, water and fuel run low.

White House National Security Council spokesman John Kirby said earlier on Wednesday that Biden's newly confirmed ambassador to Israel, Jack Lew, would soon be dispatched to the Middle East and would be tasked in part with "supporting U.S. efforts to create the conditions for a humanitarian pause to address the worsening humanitarian conditions facing Palestinian civilians."

Israeli Ambassador to the U.S. Michael Herzog told "The Hill" on NewsNation Wednesday "we don't need urging" in response to calls for more aid for Gaza.

"We are ramping up humanitarian supplies into Gaza in those areas which are away from Hamas in the southern part of Gaza. The number of truckloads doubles and is going to pick up more and more," he said. "We provide water. We provide other types of supplies."

He said to NewsNation they were happy to see foreigners leave Gaza. "So we don't need urging, urging in that sense. Our Cabinet discussed this week this issue and decided there are no limitations as long as we can make sure that Hamas does not put its hands on humanitarian supplies and uses them to feed its war machine. That will not happen. Short of that, everything is open."

On Wednesday evening, Biden was speaking to a crowd of supporters in Minneapolis about his reasons for running for president in 2020 when a woman got up and yelled: "Mr. President, if you care about Jewish people, as a rabbi, I need you to call for a cease-fire."

His presence in the city drew more than 1,000 demonstrators not far from where the fundraiser was held, and they carried Palestinian flags and signs that said "Stop Bombing Children," "Free Palestine" and "Ceasefire now."

Biden said he understood the emotions motivating the demonstrator, who was quickly shouted down by others in the room and removed. He said, when asked, that a pause "means give time to get the prisoners out." White House officials later clarified he meant hostages and humanitarian aid.

"This is incredibly complicated for the Israelis," Biden went on. "It's incredibly complicated for the Muslim world as well. ... I supported a two-state solution, I have from the very beginning."

"The fact of the matter is that Hamas is a terrorist organization. A flat-out terrorist organization," he said.

But Biden noted that he's been working on humanitarian aid, saying he was the one who convinced both Netanyahu and Egyptian President Abdel Fattah el-Sissi to allow aid into Gaza.

"I'm the guy," he said.

Republicans confront Tuberville over military holds in extraordinary showdown on Senate floor

By MARY CLARE JALONICK and LOLITA BALDOR Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Republican senators angrily challenged Sen. Tommy Tuberville on his blockade of almost 400 military officers Wednesday evening, taking over the Senate floor for more than four hours to call for individual confirmation votes after a monthslong stalemate.

Tuberville, R-Ala., stood and objected to each nominee — 61 times total, when the night was over — extending his holds on the military confirmations and promotions with no immediate resolution in sight. But the extraordinary confrontation between Republicans, boiling over almost nine months after Tuberville first announced the holds over a Pentagon abortion policy, escalated the standoff as Defense Department officials have repeatedly said the backlog of officials needing confirmation could endanger national security.

"Why are we putting holds on war heroes?" asked Republican Sen. Dan Sullivan of Alaska, himself a colonel in the U.S. Marine Corps Reserve. "I don't understand."

Wrapping up for the night at almost 11 p.m., Sullivan said the senators will keep returning to the floor to call up nominations. If the standoff continues and officers leave the military, he said, Tuberville's blockade

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will be remembered as a “national security suicide mission.”

South Carolina Sen. Lindsay Graham told Tuberville, who mostly sat quiet and alone as they talked, that he should sue the military if he thinks the policy is illegal. “That’s how you handle these things,” Graham said.

After Tuberville objected to a vote on a two-star general nominated to be a deputy commander in the Air Force, Graham turned and faced him. “You just denied this lady a promotion,” Graham said angrily to Tuberville. “You did that.”

Tuberville said Wednesday there is “zero chance” he will drop the holds. Despite several high-level vacancies and the growing backlog of nominations, he has said he will continue to hold the nominees up unless the Pentagon ends — or puts to a vote in Congress — its new policy of paying for travel when a service member has to go out of state to get an abortion or other reproductive care. President Joe Biden’s administration instituted the policy after the Supreme Court overturned the nationwide right to an abortion, and some states have limited or banned the procedure.

“I cannot simply sit idly by while the Biden administration injects politics in our military from the White House and spends taxpayers’ dollars on abortion,” Tuberville said.

Showing obvious frustration and frequent flashes of anger, the Republican senators — Sullivan, Graham, Iowa Sen. Joni Ernst, Indiana Sen. Todd Young and others — read lengthy biographies and praised individual nominees as they called for vote after vote. They said they agree with Tuberville on the policy, but questioned — as Democrats have for months — why he would hold up the highest ranks of the U.S. military.

Sullivan said Tuberville is “100 percent wrong” that his holds are not affecting military readiness. Ernst said the nominees are being used as “political pawns.” Utah Sen. Mitt Romney advised Tuberville to try to negotiate an end to the standoff. All of them warned that good people would leave military service if the blockade continues.

As the night wore on, Sullivan and Ernst — herself a former commander in the U.S. Army Reserve and Iowa Army National Guard — continued to bring up new nominations and appeared to become increasingly frustrated. They noted that they were bringing up the nominations “one by one” as Tuberville had once called for, and asked why he wouldn’t allow them to go forward. Tuberville did not answer.

“I do not respect men who do not honor their word,” Ernst said at one point.

Sullivan said “China is smiling” as the United States blocks its own military heroes. “As an American, it almost wants to make you weep.”

The GOP effort to move the nominations came after Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer, D-N.Y., said Wednesday morning they are trying a new workaround to confirm the officers. Schumer said the Senate will consider a resolution in the near future that would allow the quick confirmation of the now nearly 400 officers up for promotion or nominated for another senior job.

The resolution by Senate Armed Services Chairman Jack Reed, D-R.I., and Independent Sen. Kyrsten Sinema of Arizona would tweak the rules until the end of this session of Congress next year to allow a process for the Senate to pass multiple military nominations together. It would not apply to other nominations.

To go into effect, the Senate Rules Committee will have to consider the temporary rules change and send it to the Senate floor, where the full Senate would have to vote to approve it. That process could take several weeks and would likely need Republican support to succeed.

“Patience is wearing thin with Senator Tuberville on both sides of the aisle,” Schumer said.

Schumer separately moved to hold confirmation votes as soon as Thursday on three top Pentagon officers affected by the holds — Adm. Lisa Franchetti to be the chief of naval operations, Gen. David Allvin to be chief of staff of the U.S. Air Force and Lt. Gen. Christopher Mahoney to serve as assistant commandant for the U.S. Marine Corps.

Sullivan had gathered enough signatures to force a vote on Franchetti and Allvin and spoke out in frustration about the issue at the weekly GOP lunch on Tuesday, according to a person familiar with Sullivan’s comments who requested anonymity to discuss the closed-door meeting.

Senate Republican leader Mitch McConnell has also criticized the holds, saying on Tuesday that they are

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"a bad idea" and he'd tried to convince the Alabama Republican to express his opposition some other way. Tuberville said earlier on Wednesday he disagrees with the Democratic effort to try to get around his hold and pass the nominations in large groups, arguing that the workaround would "burn the city down" and take away one of the only powers that the minority party has.

The new efforts to move the nominations come after the Marine Corps said that Gen. Eric Smith, the commandant, was hospitalized on Sunday after "suffering a medical condition" at his official residence in Washington. Smith, who is currently listed in stable condition and is recovering, was confirmed to the top job last month, but had been holding down two high-level posts for several months because of Tuberville's holds.

Smith himself was blunt about the demands of serving as both assistant commandant and acting commandant for months in the wake of Gen. David Berger's retirement after four years as the top Marine. In public remarks in early September, Smith described his grueling schedule as he juggled the strategic and oversight responsibilities of commandant and member of the Joint Chiefs of Staff and the personnel and management duties of the No. 2 job. "It is not sustainable," Smith said. "What doesn't stop is the clock. The adversary doesn't take a pause."

When Schumer announced the vote this week on Mahoney's nomination to be assistant commandant, he said Smith's sudden medical emergency is "precisely the kind of avoidable emergency that Sen. Tuberville has provoked through his reckless holds."

Tuberville has challenged Schumer to put each individual nomination on the floor. But Democrats have been hoping to force Tuberville's hand as the number of stalled nominations has grown. "There's an old saying in the military, leave no one behind," Senate Armed Services Chairman Jack Reed said in July.

That strategy has become more difficult as months have passed, and as Tuberville has dug in. In September, Schumer relented and allowed confirmation votes on three of the Pentagon's top officials: Gen. CQ Brown, the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, Gen. Randy George, Army Chief of Staff, and Smith as commandant of the U.S. Marine Corps.

Rep. George Santos survives effort to expel him from the House. But he still faces an ethics report

By KEVIN FREKING and STEPHEN GROVES Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Rep. George Santos easily survived a vote Wednesday to expel him from the House as most Republicans and 31 Democrats opted to withhold punishment while both his criminal trial and a House Ethics Committee investigation proceed.

The effort to kick Santos out of the House was led by his fellow New York Republicans, who are anxious to distance themselves from a colleague infamous for fabricating his life story and accused of stealing from donors, lying to Congress and receiving unemployment benefits he did not deserve.

But the resolution failed to gain the required two-thirds vote. Supporters could not even gain a simple majority, with the final vote being 179 for expulsion and 213 against.

To succeed, numerous Republican lawmakers would have had to break ranks with newly elected Speaker Mike Johnson, who has said Santos should get his day in court. Johnson, R-La., also recently told Fox News that if Congress is going to expel members because they are charged with a crime or accused of wrongdoing, "that's a problem."

Some Democrats also voiced concerns about getting ahead of the Ethics Committee, which issued a rare memo the day before, citing the depth of its investigation with some 40 witnesses contacted and the issuance of 37 subpoenas. It also said the next steps of the committee's investigation would be announced by Nov. 17.

"I feel like due process is still alive. I feel like there's enough colleagues on both sides of the aisle here who understand that," Santos said after the vote.

Congress has rarely resorted to the most extreme punishment at its disposal. The House has expelled only five members in its history — three during the Civil War and two after their convictions on public cor-

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ruption charges. It would be groundbreaking for the House to kick out Santos before his case in federal court is resolved.

Some Republicans, however, said they had seen enough of Santos. Rep. Steve Womack, R-Ark., said he believes in due process, but also thinks Santos misrepresented himself to New York voters and they never would have elected him if they had "known the true George Santos."

"We don't need the Santos charade all the way through the 2024 election cycle. I think the Congress needs to take action now," Womack said.

The House floor debate over whether to expel Santos was undertaken strictly by members of the New York congressional delegation. On one side, Republican Reps. Anthony D'Esposito, Nick LaLota and Mike Lawler laid out their case for expelling Santos.

"Mr. Santos is a stain on this institution and not fit to serve his constituents in the House of Representatives," D'Esposito said.

On the other side was Santos, who appealed to lawmakers to hold off on expulsion, saying that passing judgment without due process would engender mistrust.

"I'm fighting tooth and nail to clear my name in front of the entire world," Santos said. "It hasn't been easy, but I'm fighting by God's grace."

The only Democratic lawmaker to speak during the debate was Rep. Dan Goldman. He said Santos should have been expelled in May when Democrats brought an expulsion resolution, and the only reason the New York Republicans were leading the effort now was because Santos "hangs like an albatross around the necks of every single Republican from New York."

"They don't care any more about integrity or morality or the reputation of this institution than they did in May when they voted to protect Mr. Santos," Goldman said. "They just care about their reelection in one year when they know that their support for George Santos is going to be a problem."

The New York Republicans laid out in their expulsion resolution the array of charges Santos is facing in federal court, saying the charges indicated Santos engaged in serious financial fraud throughout his 2022 campaign for the House. The resolution said he deceived voters regarding his biography and is "not fit to serve his constituents as United States Representative."

"Mr. Santos has said expelling him before he is formally charged and found guilty would create a new precedent in this body, one that could have negative consequences for generations," LaLota said. "Respectfully, Mr. Speaker, I disagree. The consequences and precedents of not expelling him for his lies and fraud has the potential to do far more damage to this institution."

In May, Republicans under then-Speaker Kevin McCarthy of California sidestepped the Democratic-led effort to expel Santos. While 204 Democrats voted against a motion to refer the matter to the House Ethics Committee, House Republicans stood unified behind the effort that delayed action on Santos' conduct.

Johnson, who took the speaker's gavel last week, made it clear he would prefer not to oust Santos at this point, despite the many charges against the congressman, as Johnson struggles to control a very slim majority.

"He's only been charged. He hasn't been found guilty of anything. We have due process in America," said GOP Rep. Jim Jordan of Ohio, the chairman of the House Judiciary Committee, who opposed the expulsion resolution.

Democrats were also more divided than they were during the previous expulsion effort against Santos. "Neither the Ethics Committee nor the courts have finished adjudicating this," tweeted Rep. Jim Himes, D-Conn., who voted against expulsion. "In this country, one is presumed innocent until PROVEN guilty. No exceptions."

Rep. Marc Molinaro, a New York Republican who supported the expulsion effort, said the delegation would likely raise it again once the Ethics Committee releases the findings of its investigation.

"I suspect the report is going to come public soon, and it's going to be clear that he should be removed from Congress," he said.

Santos faces 23 charges in federal court. His trial has been scheduled for September next year. He has

pleaded not guilty to those charges.

Also on Wednesday evening, the House voted to reject an effort to censure Rep. Rashida Tlaib, D-Mich., and Democrats called off an effort to censure Rep. Marjorie Taylor Greene, R-Ga.

Hearing to determine if Trump can be barred from office reaches far back in history for answers

By NICHOLAS RICCARDI Associated Press

DENVER (AP) — The effort to ban former President Donald Trump from the ballot under the Constitution's "insurrection clause" turned to distant history on Wednesday, when a law professor testified about how the post-Civil War provision was indeed intended to apply to presidential candidates.

Gerard Magliocca, of Indiana University, said there was scant scholarship on Section Three of the 14th Amendment when he began researching it in late 2020. He testified that he uncovered evidence in 150-year-old court rulings, congressional testimony and presidential executive orders that it applied to presidents and to those who simply encouraged an insurrection rather than physically participated in one.

Magliocca didn't mention Trump by name, but the plaintiffs in the case have argued that Colorado must ban him from the ballot because his role in the Jan. 6, 2021, assault on the U.S. Capitol, which was intended to halt Congress' certification of Joe Biden's win and keep Trump in power, falls under the provision. The section originally was designed to prevent former Confederates from returning to their old federal and state jobs and taking over the government.

"It was not intended as punishment," Magliocca said of the ban. "A number of senators discussed the fact that this was simply adding another qualification to office."

Trump's attorneys on Wednesday moved for an immediate ruling dismissing the case because they said the plaintiffs had not proved that Trump "incited" the Jan. 6 riot, saying all his actions were legal speech. District Court Judge Sarah B. Wallace denied the motion, noting that many of the legal questions raised during the hearing have never been addressed by a court before and that she'll rule on them later.

Trump's attorneys have condemned the lawsuit as "anti-democratic" and warned that using an obscure provision to disqualify the Republican front-runner would be antithetical to the traditions of the world's oldest democracy. On Tuesday night, Trump slammed the Colorado proceedings in a video posted to his social media site, Truth Social.

"A fake trial is currently taking place to try and illegally remove my name from the ballot," Trump said.

In a reference to President Joe Biden, he added: "If crooked Joe and the Democrats get away with removing my name from the ballot, then there will never be a free election in America again. We will have become a dictatorship where your president is chosen for you. You will no longer have a vote, or certainly won't have a meaningful vote."

The Colorado lawsuit and a parallel case being heard Thursday by the Minnesota Supreme Court were organized by two separate liberal organizations, and the Trump campaign has alleged they're plots by Democrats to short-circuit the 2024 election.

It's likely the U.S. Supreme Court will have the final word on the issue. The nation's highest court has never ruled on Section Three, which was almost exclusively used during between 1868 and 1872, when Congress granted amnesty to many former Confederates who had previously been barred by it.

That section bars anyone from Congress, the military, and federal and state offices if they previously took an oath to support the Constitution and "have engaged in insurrection or rebellion against the same, or given aid or comfort to the enemies thereof." It does not specifically name the office of president, but instead reads "elector of president and vice president."

Trump's attorneys began putting on their case Wednesday afternoon, calling former administration officials Kash Patel and Katrina Pierson to testify that Trump had told them he wanted as many as 10,000 national guard ready to deal with any violence on Jan. 6. The troops were never mobilized and that request is not in the timeline of that day issued by the Department of Defense. The plaintiff's attorneys noted that Pierson told the congressional Jan. 6 committee that one main concern was the safety of pro-Trump

protesters, not the capitol.

On Tuesday, a legal expert testified for the plaintiffs that Trump could have mobilized federal resources to aid the Capitol in the hours after the protest turned violent. That followed nearly two days of testimony about the Jan. 6 riot and Trump's relationship with right-wing extremists.

But Wednesday got to what makes the challenge against Trump's ability to run for office novel. The case raises issues that have rarely, if ever, been aired in courtrooms before the Jan. 6 attack: Does Congress need to create a mechanism to implement the ban? Does it apply to the presidency, especially since an earlier draft specified that office, but then it was removed? What constitutes an "insurrection" under its definition?

There's been an explosion of legal scholarship in recent months trying to figure that out. Going through dictionaries and court rulings from the mid-19th-century, Magliocca contended that the ban was implemented even without any congressional procedure, that senators noted it applied to the president and that the definition of an insurrection was simply a large-scale effort to impede the execution of laws.

Critics have warned that, if the provision is used to bar Trump, that could open the door to other, more conventional politicians getting banned for activities such as supporting protests against police brutality or other forms of civil disobedience.

Trump's team is scheduled to call their own law professor to argue that the provision doesn't apply to him.

Legal scholars believe the measure was cited just once in the 20th century, as justification for Congress not seating an anti-war socialist elected after World War I. The group behind the Colorado litigation, Citizens for Responsibility and Ethics in Washington, successfully used it to bar a rural county commissioner in New Mexico from office after he was convicted in federal court of a misdemeanor for entering the Capitol grounds during the attack.

The other liberal group behind the Minnesota challenge cited the Section Three provision in challenging the candidacies of Republican Reps. Marjorie Taylor-Greene of Georgia and Madison Cawthorn of North Carolina in 2022. The case against Taylor-Greene failed; Cawthorn's became moot after he lost his primary.

Donald Trump Jr. testifies he never worked on the key documents in his father's civil fraud trial

By MICHAEL R. SISAK and JENNIFER PELTZ Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — Donald Trump Jr. testified Wednesday that he never worked on his father's financial statements, the documents now at the heart of the civil fraud trial that threatens former President Donald Trump's real estate empire.

The ex-president's eldest son is an executive vice president of the family's Trump Organization and has been a trustee of a trust set up to hold its assets when his father was in the White House.

At least one of the annual financial statements bore language saying the trustees "are responsible" for the document. But Donald Trump Jr. said he didn't recall ever working on any of the financial statements and had "no specific knowledge" of them.

The lawsuit centers on whether the former president and his business misled banks and insurers by inflating his net worth on the financial statements. He and other defendants, including sons Donald Jr. and Eric, deny wrongdoing.

Trump Jr. said he signed off on statements as a trustee, but had left the work to outside accountants and the company's then-finance chief, Allen Weisselberg.

"As a trustee, I have an obligation to listen those who are expert — who have an expertise of these things," he said.

"I wasn't working on the document, but if they tell me that it's accurate, based on their accounting assessment of all of the materials," he said, "these people had an incredible intimate knowledge, and I relied on them."

The first family member to testify, he is due to return to the stand Thursday. Next up will be his brother and fellow Trump Organization Executive Vice President Eric Trump and, on Monday, their father — the

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family patriarch, company founder, former president and 2024 Republican front-runner.

Daughter Ivanka, a former Trump Organization executive and White House adviser, is scheduled to take the stand Nov. 8. But her lawyers on Wednesday appealed Judge Arthur Engoron's decision to require her testimony.

New York Attorney General Letitia James brought the lawsuit, alleging that Donald Trump, his company and top executives, including Eric and Donald Jr., conspired to exaggerate his wealth by billions of dollars on his financial statements. The documents were given to banks, insurers and others to secure loans and make deals.

The former president has called the case a "sham," a "scam," and "a continuation of the single greatest witch hunt of all time."

James is a Democrat, as is Engoron, who ruled before the trial that Trump's financial statements were fraudulent. The judge ordered that a court-appointed receiver seize control of some Trump companies, potentially stripping the former president and his family of such marquee properties as Trump Tower, though an appeals court has halted enforcement for now.

"Leave my children alone, Engoron," Trump wrote in a post on his Truth Social site Wednesday, before court convened.

Engoron will decide the current case; state law doesn't allow for juries in this type of lawsuit, he has said.

The Trumps are being summoned to the stand by James' office, but defense lawyers will also have a chance to question them and can call them back as part of the defense case later.

During about 85 minutes on the witness stand Wednesday, Trump Jr. seemed collected, quipping "I should have worn makeup" as news photographers took his photo before questioning began.

He made some more lighthearted asides during questioning about his education and career. When asked whether he belonged to an accountants organization, the non-accountant replied, "Sounds very exciting, but no."

More seriously, he appeared to be laying groundwork to blame any irregularities in the financial statements on the Trump Organization's longtime outside accountant, Donald Bender. Trump Jr. testified that the company "relied heavily on" Bender as "a point person for just about anything we did, accounting wise."

Bender, for his part, testified last month that Trump's company wasn't always forthcoming with all the information required for the financial statements.

During a deposition, or sworn pretrial questioning, Eric Trump also said he hadn't had "any involvement in the statement of financial condition, to the best of my knowledge."

Eric Trump has attended several days of the trial, but his elder brother hadn't been to court before Wednesday. Out of court, however, Trump Jr. had repeatedly denounced the case and judge.

"It doesn't matter what the rules are, it doesn't matter what the Constitution says, it doesn't matter what general practices and business would be," Donald Trump Jr. said Monday on Newsmax. "It doesn't matter. They have a narrative, they have an end goal, and they'll do whatever it takes to get there."

State lawyers have asked other witnesses about the Trump children's roles leading the Trump Organization and their involvement, over the years, in valuing their father's properties and preparing his financial statements. Their names have also appeared on various emails and documents entered into evidence.

Donald Trump Jr. and Eric Trump were also heard from — briefly and virtually — earlier in the trial. Snippets of their depositions were shown during opening statements on Oct. 2.

After weeks in besieged Gaza, some foreign nationals and wounded Palestinians are allowed to leave

By NAJIB JOBAIN, JACK JEFFERY and LEE KEATH Associated Press

RAFAH, Gaza Strip (AP) — Israeli ground troops have advanced to "the gates of Gaza City" in heavy fighting with militants, the military said Wednesday, as hundreds of foreign nationals and dozens of seriously injured Palestinians were allowed to leave Gaza after more than three weeks under siege.

The news came as U.S. President Joe Biden called for a humanitarian "pause" in the fighting. Biden was

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speaking at a Minneapolis campaign fundraiser when a protester interrupted him, calling for a cease-fire. "I think we need a pause," Biden responded. White House officials later said a break in fighting would allow more aid to get into Gaza and create a possibility for more hostages held by Hamas to be freed.

The first people to leave Gaza — other than four hostages released by Hamas and another rescued by Israeli forces — crossed into Egypt, escaping the territory's growing misery as bombings drive hundreds of thousands from their homes, and food, water and fuel run low.

The U.S. State Department said some American citizens were among those who left, without giving specifics. It said it expected more Americans and other foreign nationals to get out of Gaza in coming days. Talks were reportedly ongoing among Egypt, Israel and Qatar, which has been mediating with Hamas.

Heavy airstrikes demolished apartment buildings for the second day in a row in the densely populated Jabaliya refugee camp near Gaza City. Al Jazeera television showed wounded people, including children, being brought to a hospital.

U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken will visit Israel and Jordan on Friday — his second trip to the region since the war was sparked by Hamas' bloody Oct. 7 rampage in southern Israel. Blinken aims to reiterate U.S. support for Israel, but also to push to ensure humanitarian aid reaches Palestinians in Gaza.

In a sign of increasing alarm over the war among Arab countries, Jordan — a key U.S. ally with a peace deal with Israel — recalled its ambassador from Israel and told Israel's ambassador to remain out of the country.

Deputy Prime Minister Ayman al-Safadi said the return of the ambassadors is linked to Israel "stopping its war on Gaza ... and the humanitarian catastrophe it is causing."

ISRAELI ARMY ADVANCES DEEPER

Brig Gen. Itzik Cohen, commander of the 162nd Armored Division, said his troops were deep in Gaza. "We are located at the gates of Gaza City."

Israeli forces appeared to be advancing on three main routes, according to the Institute for the Study of War, a U.S. research group. One thrust came from Gaza's northeast corner. Another south of Gaza City cut across the territory, reaching the main north-south highway.

The third from Gaza's northwest corner had moved about 3 miles (5 kilometers) down the Mediterranean coast, reaching the outskirts of the Shati and Jabaliya refugee camps on the edges of Gaza City.

Hamas and the smaller Islamic Jihad militant group reported clashes with Israeli troops in several locations. Hamas' armed wing posted video purporting to show its fighters emerging from tunnels and firing rockets at Israeli tanks.

The Israeli military said its airstrikes killed the head of Hamas' anti-tank rocket unit in Gaza.

Several hundred thousand Palestinians remain in northern Gaza in the path of the fighting. Casualties on both sides are expected to rise as Israeli troops advance toward the dense residential neighborhoods of Gaza City. Israeli officials say Hamas' military infrastructure, including tunnels, is concentrated in the city.

The toll was not known from the strikes Wednesday in Jabaliya. Airstrikes in the same area killed or wounded hundreds, according to the director of a nearby hospital. Israel said those strikes destroyed Hamas tunnels beneath the buildings and killed dozens of fighters.

Rocket fire by Gaza militants into Israel has continued, disrupting life for millions of people and forcing an estimated 250,000 people to evacuate towns in northern and southern Israel. Most rockets are intercepted.

BORDER OPENS TO ALLOW SOME PEOPLE OUT

By midafternoon Wednesday, 335 foreign passport holders left Gaza through the Rafah crossing into Egypt, said Wael Abu Omar, a spokesman for the Palestinian Crossings Authority.

Seventy-six Palestinian patients, along with their companions, have been evacuated for treatment in Egypt, Abu Omar said.

The authority said the plan was for more than 400 foreign passport holders to leave for Egypt. The White House said it expected a "handful" of American citizens to be among them, and German, French, British and Australian officials said their citizens were among the evacuees.

Hundreds more remain in Gaza. The U.S. has said it is trying to evacuate 400 Americans with their families. Egypt has said it will not accept an influx of Palestinian refugees, fearing Israel will not allow them to

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return to Gaza after the war.

BIDEN URGES "PAUSE"

Biden's call for a "pause" was a subtle departure for White House policymakers, who have insisted they will not dictate how the Israelis carry out military operations. The White House has, however, been signaling that Israel should consider humanitarian pauses to allow more aid into Gaza and for trapped foreign nationals to leave. Biden's new comments put pressure on Netanyahu to give Gaza's civilians at least a brief reprieve.

"A pause means give time to get the prisoners out," Biden said at the Minneapolis fundraiser for his 2024 reelection campaign.

HOSPITALS WARN OF DEPLETING FUEL

Over half of Gaza's 2.3 million people have fled their homes, and supplies of food, medicine, water and fuel are running low.

Hospitals in Gaza expressed increasing alarm that the generators running life-saving equipment were dangerously low on fuel after weeks of siege.

Only hours of electricity remained at Gaza City's largest hospital, Shifa, according to its director, Mohammed Abu Salmia, who pleaded for "whoever has a liter of diesel in his home" to donate it.

The Turkish-Palestinian Hospital, Gaza's only facility offering specialized treatment for cancer patients, was forced to shut down because of lack of fuel, leaving 70 cancer patients in a critical situation, the Health Ministry said.

The World Health Organization said the lack of fuel puts at risk 1,000 patients on kidney dialysis, 130 premature babies in incubators, as well as cancer patients and patients on ventilators.

The Israeli military released a recording of what it said was a Hamas military commander forcing a hospital to give some fuel. The recording could not be independently verified.

DEATH TOLL KEEPS RISING

More than 8,800 Palestinians have been killed in the war, mostly women and minors, and more than 22,000 people have been wounded, the Palestinian Health Ministry said Wednesday, without providing a breakdown between civilians and fighters. The figure is without precedent in decades of Israeli-Palestinian violence.

Over 1,400 people have died on the Israeli side, mainly civilians killed during Hamas' initial attack, also an unprecedented figure. Palestinian militants also abducted around 240 people during their incursion and have continued firing rockets into Israel.

Sixteen Israeli soldiers have been killed in Gaza since the start of the ground operation.

An estimated 800,000 Palestinians have fled south from northern Gaza following Israeli evacuation orders, but hundreds of thousands remain.

Israel has allowed more than 260 trucks carrying food and medicine to enter from Egypt over the past 10 days, but aid workers say it's not nearly enough.

AFTER WAR, THEN WHAT?

Israel has vowed to crush Hamas' ability to govern Gaza or threaten Israel. But it has said little about who would govern Gaza afterwards.

During his visit Friday, Blinken wants to discuss those issues with Israel and Jordan, State Department spokesman Matthew Miller said. To that end, Blinken will push Israeli officials on reining in violence by Israeli settlers against Palestinians in the West Bank and will restate U.S. backing for the eventual establishment of a Palestinian state in the West Bank and Gaza, he said.

On Tuesday, Blinken suggested President Mahmoud Abbas's Palestinian Authority could govern Gaza.

Hamas drove the authority's forces out of Gaza in heavy fighting in 2007, leaving it with limited control over parts of the Israeli-occupied West Bank and little Palestinian support.

In other developments Wednesday:

— Yemen's Houthi rebels fired "a large batch of drones" toward Israel, Brig. Gen. Yahya Sarea, a Houthi spokesman, said on social media. The announcement came one day after the Houthis said their forces had targeted Israel with at least three missile and drone attacks. The Houthi involvement brings Iran, a longtime sponsor of the Houthis, Hamas and the Lebanese militia group Hezbollah, even closer to the war.

House rejects effort to censure Rashida Tlaib over the Palestinian-American's rhetoric about Israel

By FARNOUSH AMIRI Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — The House late Wednesday rejected an effort to censure Democratic Rashida Tlaib of Michigan, scrapping a Republican attempt to condemn the only Palestinian-American in Congress over her recent rhetoric around the ongoing Israel-Hamas war.

A measure to move forward with a censure resolution of Tlaib, a punishment one step below expulsion from the House, was dismissed with broad bipartisan support as both parties raised concerns about violating First Amendment rights.

A Democratic effort to in turn censure Rep. Marjorie Taylor Greene, R-Ga., who had sponsored the Tlaib resolution, was called off in response.

The scheduled votes were among the House's first acts of business after a nearly monthlong gridlock caused by the removal of Republican Rep. Kevin McCarthy of California as speaker.

The agenda of retribution reflects the growing divisiveness of the House, where severe forms of punishment that had long been viewed as an option of last resort, to be triggered only for the most egregious wrongdoing, are quickly becoming routine, often wielded in strikingly partisan ways. While the censure itself carries no practical effect, it leaves a historic footnote that marks a lawmaker's career.

Greene introduced a censure resolution last week against Tlaib, one of two Muslims in Congress. The resolution accuses Tlaib of "antisemitic activity" after she voiced concern over America's continued role in supplying arms to Israel as it engages in a bloody battle with Hamas following Hamas' deadly Oct. 7 surprise attack.

Greene also falsely accused Tlaib of "leading an insurrection" in the Capitol complex when she participated in a pro-Gaza rally organized by Jewish advocacy groups last month.

Tlaib called Greene's resolution "unhinged" and said it's "deeply Islamophobic and attacks peaceful Jewish anti-war advocates."

In response to Greene's resolution, House Democrats, led by Rep. Becca Balint of Vermont, introduced a resolution censuring Greene for what they called her record of "racist rhetoric and conspiracy theories." Balint said Greene's resolution to censure Tlaib "is an overt Islamophobic attack on the only Palestinian-American member of Congress."

Greene has not commented on the resolution to censure her but criticized the dozens of Republicans who voted against moving the Tlaib measure forward.

The vote on Wednesday evening comes as the chamber returns to normal legislative business for the first time in weeks. The abrupt ouster of McCarthy on Oct. 4 brought the House to a standstill, pausing legislative work on the floor, as Republicans struggled over who should replace him.

Now that Speaker Mike Johnson is in charge of the House, following his election to the top position last week, he inherits one of the problems that often afflicted McCarthy: difficulty controlling what happens on the House floor.

Both of the censure resolutions are "privileged," which is a procedural tool lawmakers can use to bypass leadership and committees and force votes in the House. The stigma around privileged resolutions has eroded, leading more lawmakers to deploy the tactic.

A group of Republicans from New York, for instance, is set to force a separate vote on whether to expel indicted Rep. George Santos from the House. Santos, a fellow New York Republican, is facing federal prosecution on several charges and has pleaded not guilty.

If the resolutions had passed, Greene and Tlaib would have joined a small but growing group of lawmakers who have been censured in the last 20 years.

In June, Republicans voted to censure Democrat Adam Schiff of California for comments he made several years ago about investigations into then-President Donald Trump's ties to Russia. When the House was under Democratic control, Republican Rep. Paul Gosar of Arizona was censured in 2021 for tweeting an

animated video that depicted him striking Democratic Rep. Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez of New York with a sword. And Democratic Rep. Charlie Rangel of New York was censured in 2010 over serious financial and campaign misconduct.

The House in recent years has also sought to punish members for their words and actions by removing them from their respective committee assignments.

Earlier this year, the House stripped Democratic Minnesota Rep. Ilhan Omar, who's the other Muslim member of Congress, from her committee assignment on Foreign Affairs for her rhetoric about Israel. And in 2021, Democrats in the majority punished Greene, holding a vote that stripped her of all of her committee assignments for spreading hateful and violent conspiracy theories.

The mayors of five big cities seek a meeting with Biden about how to better manage arriving migrants

By COLLEEN LONG Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — The mayors of Chicago, Denver, Houston, Los Angeles and New York are pressing to meet with President Joe Biden about getting federal help in managing the surge of migrants they say are arriving in their cities with little to no coordination, support or resources from his administration.

The Democratic leaders say in a letter obtained by The Associated Press on Wednesday that while they appreciate Biden's efforts so far, much more needs to be done to ease the burden on their cities.

Migrants are sleeping in police station foyers in Chicago. In New York, a cruise ship terminal was turned into a shelter. In Denver, the number of migrants arriving has increased tenfold and available space to shelter them has withered. With fewer available work authorizations, these migrants cannot find work that would allow them to get into proper housing.

Denver Mayor Mike Johnston, who is leading the coalition, said nearly every conversation he has had with arriving migrants is the same: Can he help them find a job, they ask.

"The crisis is we have folks here who desperately want to work. And we have employers here who desperately want to hire them. And we have a federal government that's standing in the way of employers who want to hire employees who want to work," Johnston said.

Also signing on were the mayors of the country's four largest cities: Eric Adams of New York, Karen Bass of Los Angeles, Brandon Johnson of Chicago and Sylvester Turner of Houston.

The situation at the U.S.-Mexico border has vexed the Democratic president, who is seeking reelection in 2024. He is increasingly under fire from members of his own party who are managing the growing number of migrants in their cities. Republicans claim Biden is soft on border security and is allowing too many people to enter the United States.

He has responded by toughening rules at the border meant to curb illegal crossings and by offering work authorizations and other incentives to those who come to the U.S. legally — applying ahead of time and arriving by plane.

"We're committed to supporting local jurisdictions that are hosting migrants that have recently arrived into the country. We're going to continue to deliver support every way that we can," said Emilie Simons, deputy White House press secretary.

Simons said the administration is already working to reduce to 30 days the time it takes to get arriving migrants through the system.

The White House said it has entered into a partnership with New York City on a work authorization clinic where up to 300 migrants per day can come in to submit work permit applications.

The reason for the ballooning number of migrants in these cities is complicated, but economic and climate-related hardships in their home countries are key drivers. There are increasing numbers of families arriving and asking for asylum.

Some conservative-leaning states have sent migrants to so-called sanctuary cities such as New York or Chicago, where laws are more favorable to noncitizens. But that alone does not explain why the cities are

facing such increases.

In years past, when migrants arrived, they would be released and picked up by nonprofit groups before usually going to stay with a relative already in the U.S. But the nationalities of the people arriving have changed, and many no longer have any place to go.

Winning asylum is a long and difficult process through a badly clogged immigration court system. In some cases, migrants may wait up to a decade for a court date. They are released into the U.S. to wait. Some are eligible to work, but such authorizations are badly delayed. There are concerns, too, that allowing too much work authorization will encourage more people to make the dangerous journey to the U.S. on foot. So thousands are in limbo, unable to work, sleeping in shelters or government facilities.

Biden has requested \$1.4 billion from Congress to help state and local governments provide shelter and services for migrants, after earlier pleas from Democratic mayors and governors.

Johnston and the other mayors say in their letter that more is needed, and they are asking for \$5 billion.

"While we are greatly appreciative of the additional federal funding proposed, our city budgets and local taxpayers continue to bear the brunt of this ongoing federal crisis," the letter says. "Cities have historically absorbed and integrated new migrants with success."

Denver is spending \$2 million a week on sheltering migrants. New York has surpassed a total of \$1.7 billion and Chicago has spent \$320 million, according to the letter.

"Our cities need additional resources that far exceed the amount proposed in order to properly care for the asylum seekers entering our communities," the mayors' letter says. "Relying on municipal budgets is not sustainable and has forced us to cut essential city services."

The mayors also want an accelerated work authorization approval process so migrants can find work.

Mayor Johnson told reporters Wednesday that Chicago and other U.S. cities have borne the brunt of the responsibility for migrants.

"From day one, I've said that the federal government has to do more," he said.

The cities are full of people who have applied, but there are delays of six months or more. The mayors also are pushing to expand authorizations so anyone released into the U.S. would become eligible to find work while they wait for their immigration cases to play out.

Lastly, they are asking for the administration to create a regional migration coordinator who would work with the federal government, nonprofits and state and local officials. The aim is to better coordinate and place migrants in areas where there is capacity for them.

It's unclear whether Congress, including the Republican-controlled House, will pass any of the funding Biden has requested, let alone an increase for local support.

"We think there is a real commonsense path here that and that's why we thought it was important," Johnston said.

Collapse of Kentucky plant being demolished at abandoned mine leaves 1 worker dead, another trapped

By LEAH WILLINGHAM Associated Press

INEZ, Ky. (AP) — One man has died after he and a coworker were trapped beneath tons of concrete and steel when an 11-story building being demolished collapsed at an abandoned eastern Kentucky mine's coal preparation plant.

The building at Martin Mine Prep Plant in Martin County collapsed around 6:30 p.m. Tuesday. Teams used cameras, listening devices and search dogs to try to rescue the men, but Gov. Andy Beshear announced Wednesday that one of the men had died.

"It's a terrible day for us. We've seen tragedies like this before associated of course with the industries that we're involved in. So it's not foreign to us, but it's still a terrible day any time we see a tragedy," Martin County Judge Executive Lon Lafferty said during an afternoon news conference at the scene.

Lafferty said the search is ongoing for the other worker.

"As of right now, the situation does not look good," Lafferty said. "This remains, as of this hour, a rescue

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operation.”

Lafferty said the men were working to demolish part of the abandoned mine site on Wolf Creek when the collapse occurred. He said the workers were trapped under a “tremendous pile of rubble.”

First responders made contact with one of the trapped men and entered the rubble to try to extricate him, but he died shortly afterward. The plant hasn’t been in use for several years and the men were on the bottom floor when it collapsed.

In a social media post Wednesday morning, Beshear said he had declared a state of emergency in the county — mobilizing state resources to help with the rescue. The governor asked for prayers for the safety of the workers and the rescue teams.

“Kentucky, keep praying — but the scene is bad,” Beshear said in a post about two hours later.

Several rescuers were inside the rubble as part of the rescue effort. The rescue could take days, Kirk said.

“This is a lot of weight. A lot of large metal structures, a lot of concrete, and very confined space last. Very tight spaces,” he said.

Special Operations Battalion Chief Chris Ward of the Lexington Fire Department said rescue crews have been using search dogs and cadaver dogs to look through the rubble. The men were part of a larger crew working on the ground level of the site at the time of the collapse, and law enforcement has been coordinating with at least one eye witness to help identify key search areas.

“We’re in under that structure and we’re just trying to search all the voids with cameras, listening devices, just trying to see if we can get any idea of where that individual might be. But at this time, we haven’t located anything,” Ward said during an afternoon news conference.

Officials lamented the lack of cell phone and internet service in providing timely updates to various agencies as well as moving necessary equipment on small, rural roads.

Director of Kentucky Emergency Management Col. Jeremy Slinker said several state agencies have begun investigations into the collapse and possible causes, including Kentucky state police.

The Kentucky Division of Occupational Safety and Health Compliance said one of its officers was on site and that an inspection had been opened with Lexington Coal Company LLC, which had contracted with Skeens Enterprises LLC for site demolition and salvage operations.

The division said the investigation could take up to six months to complete.

In a statement, State Sen. Phillip Wheeler, whose district includes Martin County, said he was saddened by the news.

“This incident is a stark reminder of the inherent risks in any job and the unexpected nature of tragedy,” Wheeler said.

President Lyndon Johnson visited Inez during his “War On Poverty” in 1964.

In 2000, a coal-sludge impoundment in Inez collapsed, sending an estimated 300 million gallons into the Big Sandy River and its tributaries. A byproduct of purifying coal, the sludge oozed into yards and streams for miles in what was considered one of the South’s worst environmental disasters at the time.

Federal Reserve leaves its key rate unchanged but keeps open possibility of a future hike

By CHRISTOPHER RUGABER AP Economics Writer

WASHINGTON (AP) — The Federal Reserve kept its key short-term interest rate unchanged Wednesday for a second straight time but left the door open to further rate hikes if inflation pressures should accelerate in the months ahead.

The Fed said in a statement after its latest meeting that it would keep its benchmark rate at about 5.4%, its highest level in 22 years. Since launching the most aggressive series of rate hikes in four decades in March 2022 to fight inflation, the Fed has pulled back and has now raised rates only once since May.

The central bank’s latest statement noted that the economy “expanded at a strong pace” in the July-September quarter and that job gains “remain strong.” And it reiterated that future rate hikes, if the Fed

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finds them necessary, remain under consideration.

But it also acknowledged that recent tumult in the financial markets has sent interest rates on 10-year Treasury notes to near 16-year highs and contributed to higher loan rates across the economy — a trend that helps serve the Fed's goal of cooling the economy and inflation pressures.

At a news conference, Chair Jerome Powell suggested that the Fed was edging closer to the end of its rate-hiking campaign. He noted that the sharply higher longer-term rates could help lower inflation without necessarily requiring further rate hikes from the Fed. And he highlighted a steady decline in pay increases, which tends to ease inflation because companies may find it less necessary to offset their labor costs by raising prices.

The Fed chair expressed confidence that inflation, despite some signs of persistence in the most recent monthly data, is still heading lower even as the economy is still growing.

"The good news," Powell said, "is we're making progress. The progress is going to come in lumps and be bumpy, but we are making progress."

The Fed chair said the central bank's policymakers recognize that the effects of their rate hikes have yet to be fully felt in the economy and that they want to take time to assess the impact, another reason why the Fed may not feel compelled to raise rates anytime soon.

"Slowing down" the rate increases, Powell said, "is giving us a better sense of how much more we need to do, if we need to do more."

Stock prices rose and bond yields fell as the Fed chair spoke to reporters, as investors interpreted his remarks to mean that the Fed may be done hiking rates.

"The (stock) market is convinced that the Fed is done," said Michael Arone, chief investment strategist at State Street Global Advisors. "That may in fact be true, but they haven't said that yet."

Arone noted that hiring remains robust, that inflation remains persistently above the Fed's 2% target and that the economy is still expanding at a healthy clip.

In his remarks, Powell cautioned that the central bank isn't yet confident that its own key rate is high enough to reduce growth over time.

"The Fed," Arone said, "continues to give themselves plenty of wiggle room in terms of what they're going to do next."

Powell himself suggested that Fed officials remain unsure about whether further rate increases might still be needed to defeat inflation. That stance marks a shift from earlier this year, when the policymakers had made clear that they leaned toward pushing rates higher.

"That's the question we're asking: Should we hike again?" Powell said.

Long-term Treasury yields have soared since July, the last time the Fed raised rates, swelling the costs of auto loans, credit card borrowing and many forms of business loans. Nationally, the average long-term fixed mortgage rate is nearing 8%, its highest level in 23 years.

Economists at Wall Street banks have estimated that recent losses in the stock market and higher bond yields could have a depressive effect on the economy equal to the impact of three or four quarter-point rate hikes by the Fed.

Those tighter credit conditions, though, have yet to cool the economy or slow hiring as much as the Fed had expected. Growth soared at a 4.9% annual pace in the July-September quarter, powered by robust consumer spending, and hiring in September was strong.

Consumer inflation has dropped from a year-over-year peak of 9.1% in June 2022 to 3.7% last month. But recent data suggests that inflation remains persistently above the Fed's 2% target.

Market analysts say an array of factors have combined to force up long-term Treasury yields and couple with the Fed's short-term rate hikes to make borrowing costlier for consumers and businesses. For one thing, the government is expected to sell potentially trillions of dollars more in bonds in the coming years to finance huge budget deficits even as the Fed is shrinking its holdings of bonds. As a result, higher Treasury rates may be needed to attract more buyers.

And with the future path of rates murkier than usual, investors are demanding higher yields in return for the greater risk of holding longer-term bonds.

What's important for the Fed is that the yield on the 10-year Treasury has continued to zoom higher even without rate hikes by the central bank. That suggests that Treasury yields may stay high even if the Fed keeps its own benchmark rate on hold, helping keep a lid on economic growth and inflation.

Other major central banks have also been dialing back their rates hikes with their inflation measures having appeared to improve. The European Central Bank kept its benchmark rate unchanged last week, and last month inflation in the 20 countries that use the euro fell to 2.9%, its lowest level in more than two years.

The Bank of England also kept its key rate unchanged in September. The Bank of Japan, meanwhile, is inching toward higher borrowing costs, as it loosens control on longer-term rates.

Opposition mounts in Arab countries that normalized relations with Israel

By SAM METZ Associated Press

RABAT, Morocco (AP) — Arab nations that have normalized or are considering improving relations with Israel are coming under growing public pressure to cut those ties because of Israel's war with Hamas.

Tens of thousands of people have taken to the streets of Rabat and other Moroccan cities in support of the Palestinians. In Bahrain — a country that almost never allows protest — police stood by as hundreds of people marched last month, waving flags and gathering in front of the Israeli Embassy in Manama.

The demonstrations, which mirror protests across the Middle East, present an uncomfortable dilemma for governments that have enjoyed the benefits of closer military and economic ties with Israel in recent years.

In Egypt, which has had ties with Israel for decades, protesters rallied in cities and at universities, at times chanting "Death to Israel." A parliamentary committee in Tunisia last week advanced a draft law that would criminalize normalization with Israel.

In Morocco and Bahrain, the public anger has an additional dimension; activists are demanding the reversal of agreements that formalize ties with Israel, underscoring discord between the governments and public opinion.

The U.S.-brokered Abraham Accords, aimed at winning broader recognition of Israel in the Arab world, paved the way for trade deals and military cooperation with Bahrain, Morocco, Sudan and the United Arab Emirates starting in 2020. Their autocratic rulers — as well as American and Israeli officials — continue to frame the deals as a step toward a "new Middle East" in which closer ties could foster peace and prosperity.

The accords marked a major diplomatic victory for Morocco because they led the U.S. — and eventually Israel — to recognize its autonomy over the disputed Western Sahara. Morocco's Foreign Ministry did not respond to questions about the agreement or protests.

The accords also led Washington to remove Sudan from its list of state sponsors of terrorism, presenting a lifeline for the ruling military junta fighting a pro-democracy movement and spiraling inflation.

Large protests against the Israel-Hamas war have not erupted in Sudan or the United Arab Emirates.

A highly sought-after agreement between Israel and Saudi Arabia has become less likely due to the war and nationwide protests, Steven Cook, a senior fellow for Middle East and Africa Studies at the Council on Foreign Relations, told The Associated Press in October.

"I think this dynamic of normalization will likely slow down or come to a halt, at least for a period of time," Cook said.

Opponents of normalization say the protests make clear the governmental wins that resulted from the accords did little to move public opinion.

"Hamas isn't terrorists. It's resistance to colonization. Imagine someone enters your house. How would you behave? Smile or make them leave by force?" said Abouchitae Moussaif, the national secretary of Morocco's Al Adl Wal Ihsane, a banned but tolerated Islamist association that has long supported the Palestinian cause.

The group, which rejects King Mohammed VI's dual authority as head of state and religion, organizes

throughout Morocco, where undermining the monarchy is illegal.

Morocco has not always been so lenient with opponents of normalization. Before the war, authorities broke up protests and sit-ins outside Parliament and a judge in Casablanca sentenced a man to five years in prison for undermining the monarchy because he criticized normalization.

Now, law enforcement personnel mostly stand aside as the large daily protests take place.

"Normalization is a project of the state, not the people," Moussaif said. "The protests touched on a project of the government, more specifically a project of the King."

Zakaria Aboudahab, a professor of International Relations at Universite Mohammed V in Rabat, said the protests likely won't lead to Morocco overturning normalization but that allowing them works as a "safety valve" to temper public outrage.

"The Moroccan state knows very well that when popular anger reaches such proportions and people express injustice and so on, it has to listen to the people," he said.

Bahrain had banned protests since the 2011 uprisings, when thousands poured into the streets emboldened by pro-democracy protests in Egypt, Syria, Tunisia and Yemen. But in recent weeks, demonstrations have been allowed again.

"Now people are taking some risks to be in the street and participate," said Jawad Fairouz, a former leader of Bahrain's outlawed Al Wefaq Party who lives in exile in London. "Governments want to give some relief to people's anger by allowing them to get together."

As the war intensified, Arab leaders moved from condemning violence and calling for peace to more pointed criticism of Israel's attacks in Gaza.

The United Arab Emirates Foreign Ministry initially called Hamas' Oct. 7 raid in southern Israel a "serious and grave escalation," and its finance minister told reporters the country does not mix trade with politics. After Israel struck Gaza's Jabaliya refugee camp on Tuesday, the UAE warned that "indiscriminate attacks will result in irreparable ramifications in the region."

Morocco's Foreign Ministry initially said it "condemns attacks against civilians wherever they may be." But it later blamed Israel for the escalation of violence — including an explosion at a hospital in Gaza City — and highlighted its humanitarian aid efforts in Gaza.

In a statement last week, Morocco called its delivery of food, medical supplies and water part of the king's commitment to the Palestinian cause.

Israel criticizes South American countries after they cut diplomatic ties and recall ambassadors

By DANIEL POLITI Associated Press

BUENOS AIRES, Argentina (AP) — Israel criticized Bolivia, Chile and Colombia on Wednesday after the South American countries undertook a series of diplomatic moves to protest Israel's military operations against Hamas in Gaza.

Other Latin American countries, including Argentina and Brazil, have also increased their criticism of the impact that Israel's military operations are having on civilians.

Israel on Wednesday called on Colombia and Chile to "explicitly condemn the Hamas terrorist organization, which slaughtered and abducted babies, children, women and the elderly," according to a statement by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

The call came hours after Chile and Colombia both recalled their ambassadors to Israel on Tuesday evening amid criticism of the killing of civilians in Gaza.

"Israel expects Colombia and Chile to support the right of a democratic country to protect its citizens, and to call for the immediate release of all the abductees, and not align themselves with Venezuela and Iran in support of Hamas terrorism," Israel's Foreign Ministry said.

Although the statement from Chile's Foreign Ministry regarding the recall of its ambassador did not mention Hamas, President Gabriel Boric did mention Hamas in a separate statement on X, formerly Twitter, in which he said "innocent civilians" were the "main victims of Israel's offensive."

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Chile "doesn't doubt in condemning the attacks and kidnappings perpetrated by Hamas," Boric wrote. "Humanity cannot sustain itself through ties that dehumanize."

Colombia's President Gustavo Petro has been more direct as he has shared lots of messages on social media condemning Israel's actions.

"It's called genocide; they're doing it to remove the Palestinian people from Gaza and take it over," Petro wrote on X. "The head of the state committing this genocide is a criminal against humanity."

Earlier, Israel had condemned Bolivia's decision Tuesday to sever diplomatic ties with Israel, characterizing it as a "surrender to terrorism and to the Ayatollah's regime in Iran." Although Sunni, Hamas has grown increasingly close to the Shiite powerhouse, Iran.

Cutting diplomatic ties with Israel means "the Bolivian government is aligning itself with the Hamas terrorist organization," Israel's Foreign Ministry said. Bolivia had previously severed diplomatic ties with Israel in 2009 only to resume them in 2020.

The diplomatic moves by the three South American countries, all of which are led by leftist leaders, come as others in the region have ramped up their criticism of Israel's military activity.

Argentina on Wednesday criticized Israel's attack in the Jabaliya refugee camp and said the "humanitarian situation in Gaza is ever more alarming."

"Argentina has unequivocally condemned the terrorist attacks carried out by Hamas on Oct. 7 and recognizes Israel's right to its legitimate defense. However, nothing justifies the violation of international humanitarian law and the obligation to protect the civilian population in armed conflicts," Argentina's Foreign Ministry said.

There are 21 Argentine citizens still missing and presumed to be held hostage by Hamas, according to estimates by the Foreign Ministry, which says nine Argentines have been killed in the conflict.

Argentina's statement came hours after Brazilian President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva called on Israel to end its bombing of Gaza.

"We are seeing, for the first time, a war in which the majority of those killed are children," Lula wrote on X. "Stop! For the love of God, stop!"

The Simon Wiesenthal Center, a Jewish human rights organization, criticized Bolivia, Chile and Colombia for their diplomatic moves.

"Bolivia's alliance with Iran is becoming clearer every day considering that the breakup is not due to the real interests of the Bolivian people," Ariel Gelblung, the center's director for Latin America, said in a statement Tuesday.

The center characterized the decision by the governments of Colombia and Chile to recall their ambassadors on Tuesday evening "a clearly coordinated action."

"Both leaders have always been hostile toward Israel and both have a history of diplomatic disagreements with representatives of the Jewish State," the Simon Wiesenthal Center said.

Why was Maine shooter allowed to have guns? Questions swirl in wake of massacre

By HOLLY RAMER, LINDSAY WHITEHURST, KIMBERLEE KRUESI, BERNARD CONDON and PATRICK WHITTLE Associated Press

LEWISTON, Maine (AP) — A history of mental illness. An array of weapons. Law enforcement knew about his potential for violence. But he was still able to own guns and commit the deadliest mass shooting in Maine's history.

One week later, many in Lewiston and nationwide are asking: Why did he have guns at all?

Robert Card was identified by authorities as a person of interest four hours after he shot and killed 18 people and wounded 13 others at a bowling alley and a bar in Maine's second-largest city. But Card, who was found dead two days after his rampage, had been well known to law enforcement for months.

"This is the clearest-cut case I've seen where an extreme risk protection order could have saved all these lives," said Mark Collins, federal policy director at the gun-violence prevention group Brady, referring to

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measures often called “red flag” laws, which Maine does not have.

“This guy did everything short of taking out a front-page ad in the newspaper saying he was going to commit an atrocity,” Collins said.

The intensifying scrutiny over Card’s access to firearms underscores the difficulty in seizing guns from potentially dangerous people with mental illness — especially when numerous states and jurisdictions are involved, as was the case with Card.

The U.S. Army reservist spent time in a psychiatric facility in New York this summer and he reportedly blamed fellow military officials for his hospitalization, according to a letter an unidentified member of the unit wrote to a Maine sheriff’s deputy.

It’s unclear when the letter was sent, but the writer describes getting a call from a friend of Card’s who was concerned Card was “going to snap and commit a mass shooting.” The letter was included in the deputy’s Sept. 15 report about efforts to contact Card.

Card threatened to shoot up the Army reserve drill center in Saco, Maine, and other places, and said that he was going to get “them.”

“Since the commander and I are the ones who had him committed we are the ‘them,’” wrote the unidentified letter writer. “He also said I was the reason he can’t buy guns anymore because of the commitment.”

Authorities at the state and federal level have not said that Card’s history of mental illness should have triggered laws that kept him from owning guns. There was nothing on Card’s record before the shooting that would have kept him from passing a federal background check to buy a gun, the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives said in a statement.

Involuntary commitments are reported to federal authorities differently from state to state, said Collins.

Generally, though, not everyone who gets mental health treatment at a facility is considered involuntarily committed. That’s a determination legally made by a court or a board, which then communicates it to another state body tasked with sending that information to the federal background-check system maintained by the FBI.

Each state has an agency that should report it, but it’s not legally required everywhere, he said. Maine does require the State Bureau of Identification to report commitments to the FBI database.

Facts about the shooting — and the police response — will be determined by an independent commission, Democratic Gov. Janet Mills said Wednesday, adding she wants to know “what more could have been done to prevent this tragedy from occurring.”

Concern about Card’s behavior accelerated following an altercation he had with fellow Army Reserve members. Card and other members of the Army Reserve’s 3rd Battalion, 304th Infantry Unit were in New York for training on July 15 when he accused several of them of calling him a pedophile, shoved one of them and locked himself in his motel room. The next morning, he told another soldier that he wanted people to stop talking about him.

“I told him no one was talking about him and everyone here was his friend. Card told me to leave him alone and tried to slam the door in my face,” the soldier later told Maine authorities, according to documents released by the sheriff’s office.

New York State Police responded and helped bring Card to a hospital at the U.S. Military Academy in West Point for an evaluation. Card spent 14 days at the Four Winds Psychiatric Hospital in Katonah, New York, which is a few miles (kilometers) from West Point.

Jonathan Crisp, an army lawyer for two decades before starting a criminal defense practice, said when soldiers are committed involuntarily to mental health facilities by others in the chain of command, it is a “reportable” event under Army regulations that triggers a requirement to alert others, including the FBI.

“If they took him and he didn’t want to go and he refused to be admitted, it’s a slam dunk,” Crisp said. “This should have been reported.”

Questions over military protocols that should’ve been enacted with Card are similar to those raised after a 2017 mass shooting during Sunday services at a church in Sutherland Springs, Texas. More than two dozen people — including eight children — were shot and killed by a gunman who had served in the Air Force before the attack and had once escaped a mental health center.

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After Card left the psychiatric facility in early August, the Army directed that while on duty, he shouldn't be allowed to have a weapon, handle ammunition or participate in live-fire activity. It also declared him to be non-deployable.

Military experts say that even if Card's commanders determined he shouldn't be around weapons after being committed, they would have had only a handful of options to implement, such as prohibiting him from handling weapons while on duty or attempting to sever him from the Army Reserves. There's little they can do when the citizen-soldiers are back in civilian life.

Several weeks after his release from the hospital, on Sept. 15, a deputy was sent to visit Card's home in Bowdoin, about 10 miles (16 kilometers) southeast of Lewiston, for a wellness check. A deputy went to Card's trailer but couldn't find him.

The sheriff's office then sent out a statewide alert seeking help locating Card. It included a warning that he was known to be "armed and dangerous" and that officers should use extreme caution.

On Sept. 16, the same deputy and another one returned to Card's trailer. Card's car was there and the deputy said he could hear him moving around the trailer, but no one answered the door, according to the deputy's report.

Deputies didn't have legal authority to press the case if Card didn't want to open the door, Sagadahoc County Sheriff Joel Merry said Wednesday .

On Oct. 18, the sheriff's office canceled a statewide alert seeking help locating Card.

A week later, shortly before 7 p.m. on Oct. 25, authorities began receiving 911 calls about a gunman at the Just-In-Time Recreation bowling alley in Lewiston.

Blinken heads to Israel, Jordan as Gaza war and criticism of it intensifies

By MATTHEW LEE AP Diplomatic Writer

WASHINGTON (AP) — Secretary of State Antony Blinken will visit Israel and Jordan this week as Israel's war in Gaza and international criticism of it intensify, the State Department said Wednesday.

Blinken will depart Washington on Thursday and will be in Israel and Jordan on Friday and Further stops in the Middle East are possible, meaning the trip may follow the frenetic pace of Blinken's last trip to the region shortly after the Oct. 7 Hamas attacks in Israel where last-minute schedule changes were frequent. Blinken ended up traveling to Israel three times as well as six Arab nations during that trip.

Blinken will be entering a diplomatic maelstrom that will likely complicate his mission. Jordan announced Wednesday that it had recalled its ambassador to Israel and would not permit Israel's ambassador to Jordan to return to the country. It said it would not revisit those moves until the Gaza conflict was over.

State Department spokesman Matthew Miller said Blinken would once again underscore the Biden administration's support for Israel's right to defend itself but also stress the importance of minimizing civilian casualties and ensuring that humanitarian assistance reaches innocent Palestinians in Gaza.

Securing the release of hundred of Israelis and others held hostage by Hamas in Gaza, easing the transit of dual Palestinian nationals and foreigners currently in Gaza into Egypt and preventing a broader regional war from erupting will also be key agenda items, Miller said.

At the same time, Blinken wants to begin a conversation with Israel and with Jordan about an end game for the Gaza conflict once it is over, Miller said. To that end, Blinken will push Israeli officials on reining in violence being committed by Israeli settlers against Palestinians in the West Bank and will be re-stating U.S. backing for the eventual establishment of a Palestinian state in the West Bank and Gaza, he said.

Blinken speak about "the U.S. commitment to working with partners to set the conditions for a durable and sustainable peace in the Middle East to include the establishment of a Palestinian state that reflects the aspirations of the Palestinian people in Gaza and in the West Bank," Miller said.

Although there was some progress in securing the evacuation of foreigners, including a small number of Americans, from Gaza into Egypt on Wednesday, thousands more want to leave.

Cyprus plans to send humanitarian aid directly to Gaza by ship, where UN personnel would receive it

By MENELAOS HADJICOSTIS Associated Press

NICOSIA, Cyprus (AP) — Cyprus offered more detail Wednesday on its initiative to create a sea corridor for the steady flow of humanitarian assistance from Cyprus to Gaza, saying that aid-laden ships would sail directly to the enclave, where United Nations personnel would receive it for eventual distribution.

Cyprus government spokesman Constantinos Letymbiotis said that Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu "saw the initiative in a positive light" during a long telephone conversation Tuesday evening with Cypriot President Nikos Christodoulides.

Cyprus is still sketching out with fellow European Union member countries and Arab states the logistical details of its plan to ferry aid from its main port of Limassol to Gaza once conditions on the ground permit it.

Ships would be vetted at the point of departure at the Limassol port to ensure that nothing would be transported that could be weaponized by Hamas to use against Israel.

Gaza's humanitarian needs have escalated since the Israel-Hamas war erupted following the Palestinian militant group's surprise Oct. 7 attacks in Israel that left nearly 1,400 Israelis dead and at least 240 people taken hostage. Israel retaliated with a military operation that has so far left over 8,000 Palestinians dead.

United Nations Under Secretary-General for peace operations Jean-Pierre Lacroix said that U.N. officials "are actively working so that more humanitarian assistance can be delivered to the population of Gaza."

Lacroix said it's up to the parties to decide the best way to ensure that the aid reaches those who need it most.

"But I can assure you that the determination to work actively in that direction is there from the U.N.," Lacroix told reporters after talks with Christodoulides in the Cypriot capital of Nicosia.

The U.N. official said the Cypriot initiative is "highly appreciated" by the world body.

The Supreme Court seems likely to rule against a trademark in the 'Trump too small' case

By MARK SHERMAN Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — The Supreme Court signaled Wednesday that it would rule against a man who wants to trademark the suggestive phrase "Trump too small."

The dispute is over the government's decision to deny a trademark to Steve Elster, a California man seeking exclusive use of the phrase on T-shirts and potentially other merchandise. It is the latest case relating to former President Donald Trump to reach the Supreme Court, following arguments Tuesday in social media cases with echoes of Trump.

The justices repeatedly invoked the phrase as they questioned whether the government was justified in denying the trademark. Elster's lawyers argue that the decision violated his free speech rights, and a federal appeals court agreed.

Chief Justice John Roberts, positing what might happen if Elster were to win, said people then would race to trademark "Trump too this, Trump too that."

The Justice Department is supporting President Joe Biden's once and possibly future rival. Government officials said the phrase "Trump too small" could still be used, just not trademarked because Trump had not consented to its use. Indeed, "Trump too small" T-shirts already can be purchased online.

Justice Sonia Sotomayor said that distinction was important because Elster is free to say and "sell as many shirts as he wants."

Justice Amy Coney Barrett, one of Trump's three Supreme Court appointees, leaned into the phrase as she wondered how the court would analyze an imaginary law denying a copyright to an author.

"Somebody wants to write a book called 'Trump too small' that details Trump's pettiness over the years and just argues that he's not a fit public official," Barrett said.

Twice in the past six years, the justices have struck down provisions of federal law denying trademarks

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seen as scandalous or immoral in one case and disparaging in another.

The new case deals with another measure calling for a trademark request to be refused if it involves a name, portrait or signature "identifying a particular living individual" unless the person has given "written consent."

The phrase at the heart of the case is a reference to an exchange Trump had during the 2016 presidential campaign with Florida senator and GOP presidential rival Marco Rubio.

Rubio began the verbal jousting when he told supporters at a rally that Trump was always calling him "little Marco" but that Trump — who says he is 6-feet-3-inches tall — has disproportionately small hands. "Have you seen his hands? ... And you know what they say about men with small hands," Rubio said. "You can't trust them."

Trump then brought up the comment at a televised debate on March 3, 2016.

"Look at those hands. Are they small hands? And he referred to my hands — if they're small, something else must be small. I guarantee you there's no problem. I guarantee you," he said.

The high court has considered several Trump-related cases in recent years. The justices have dealt with Trump's claims of fraud in the 2020 election and with his efforts to shield his tax records from Congress and to keep other tax records from prosecutors in New York, among other things.

The justices also could be asked to decide whether Trump can be disqualified from running for the White House again because of his role in the Jan. 6, 2021, assault on the U.S. Capitol.

A decision in *Vidal v. Elster*, 22-704, is expected by early summer.

Henry Winkler rises above dyslexia to write children's books and a memoir: 'There is always a way'

By ALICIA RANCILIO Associated Press

If Henry Winkler is not a morning person, it's impossible to tell. He's logged onto Zoom for an interview about his new memoir but occasionally is interrupted by a phone call — which he answers with a cheery "Good Morning." His granddaughter walks through his home office, as do his dogs. He introduces them. At one point, Winkler stops to point out roses on his desk that he picked from his garden.

The beloved TV icon says this is a good example of his morning routine. He wakes up early and takes care of the dogs. He checks Twitter. "That's the only social media I do. I like Twitter, but it's getting tough," Winkler said of the platform now called X. He also likes to play a game on his phone called Zuma. And he occasionally meditates in the middle of the day.

"I listen to sounds of rain. A rainstorm in Cologne. A rainstorm in Scotland. I sit in an armchair and meditate. Two frogs next to a lake in Switzerland. It could really be a rainstorm in West Covina, California. I'd have no idea," he said.

This overall cheeriness and settled demeanor is particularly interesting because Winkler didn't grow up in a happy home. His parents left Germany in 1939. His father told his mother they were going on a business trip to the United States. They never returned. The rest of their family was killed in World War II by Nazis, Winkler says.

Winkler's parents belittled him because he did poorly in school, thinking "if I stayed at my desk long enough, I was going to get it." Winkler is dyslexic. The struggles with reading have brought him shame and frustration for much of his life, yet Winkler has gone on to co-write more than one dozen children's books and now a memoir, "Being Henry: The Fonz...and Beyond" was released this week. A new children's book called "Detective Duck" is also available.

Winkler writes about landing the role of Arthur Fonzarelli, the Fonz, on TV's "Happy Days" in a 1973 audition. The role made him an overnight star. In 2018, he received his first primetime Emmy for his role as Gene Cousineau on "Barry."

Winkler spoke with The Associated Press about making peace with the lack of relationship with his parents, experiencing superstardom on the sitcom "Happy Days" and his decades-old friendship with Ron Howard.

The conversation has been edited for clarity and brevity.

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AP: You've written so many books. How does that feel in light of your dyslexia struggles?

WINKLER: I have never gotten used to it. I cannot believe that dummer Hund, that dumb dog, (a name his parents called him) has done this accomplishment. And the great thing is there is always a way. You think you can't do something, but there is a way. That is one of the things I would like to pass on.

AP: You seem matter-of-fact about your poor relationship with your parents.

WINKLER: It might be crazy on my part, but I have never mourned not having a relationship with them. You know, people have said to me, 'My parents are my best friends. Oh my God. I miss my parents.' It was like they were talking Russian to me. I didn't understand what they were saying to me in any shape, way, form but I had to figure it out. And I made a deal with myself and then with my wife, Stacey, I would be a different parent. I think I've done a mostly good job.

AP: Did they ever acknowledge your acting talent or that performing was the right thing for you?

WINKLER: No. Only when it benefited them. They called themselves, which I think was so telling, "the co-producers of the star." So they were going to figure out a way in, even though they did not want me to do what they later became the creators of.

AP: You write about rising to fame overnight as Fonzie on "Happy Days." How did you handle that attention?

WINKLER: You're treated like you can walk on water. Not just me, but, you know, whoever is hot at the moment. But you cannot get lost in that because you will drown...I see power as a mirage... So you let other people think you're powerful, and you just go about your business and enjoy your puppies and your work and your family.

AP: One surprise in the book was how ABC wanted to rename "Happy Days" to "Fonzie's Happy Days" to capitalize on your popularity, but you asked them not to.

WINKLER: I was very aware that it would be so hurtful, a slap in the face to these people that helped me get to the position where they could want to change the name of the show or give me my own show. It would have been disastrous.

AP: And you're still close to Ron Howard.

WINKLER: They were just here. His whole family and mine talking about when Ron called me to tell me he was leaving "Happy Days."

He called me on the pay phone on soundstage 19, right next to the donuts. He said, 'I'm not coming back.' And I was silent.

What I didn't know was the other end of that silence. Ron told me the other night, 'I didn't know what to expect, but there was this long silence. And then you said, 'You know what, Ron? Go and do this. Get this. This is yours. You want this. We've talked about it for the last seven years. It's your dream.'

He said, 'When you said that to me, I knew I was doing the right thing.' I said, 'It took you 50 (expletive) years to tell me that? You couldn't have shared that with me?' But it was so powerful.

Israeli envoy to Russia says Tel Aviv passengers hid from weekend airport riot in terminal

By DASHA LITVINOVA Associated Press

TALLINN, Estonia (AP) — Israel's ambassador to Moscow gave new details Wednesday of the weekend riot at an airport in southern Russia when a flight from Tel Aviv landed there, saying some of the passengers had to hide in the terminal before being flown by helicopter to safety.

Ambassador Alexander Ben Zvi blamed Sunday night's unrest on extremist elements resulting from "indoctrination" in the mostly Muslim republic of Dagestan. But he said that overall, there is no antisemitism "on an organized level" in Russia. He added, though, that authorities should take the incident seriously so such actions don't spread.

"Of course, there has always been, is and will be antisemitism on the everyday level. The important thing is that it doesn't develop into what we saw in Makhachkala," Ben Zvi told The Associated Press in an online interview from Moscow. "If all this is under control, I think there will be no problems."

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The angry mob stormed the airport in Makhachkala, the capital city of Dagestan, when the flight from Israel landed there. Hundreds of men, some carrying banners with antisemitic slogans, roamed the building and rushed onto the tarmac looking for Israeli passengers. It took the authorities several hours to disperse the mob, which threw stones at police.

At least 20 people, both police and civilians, were injured and more than 80 were detained. Russia's Investigative Committee opened a probe on the charges of organizing mass unrest.

Authorities in Dagestan said 17 people were charged with petty hooliganism and of participating in an unauthorized mass event, with courts ordering 15 of them to serve short stints in jail and two others — to undertake correctional labor.

It remains unclear whether dozens of others detained Sunday night would face any charges and whether any of them would be implicated in the criminal probe.

Ben Zvi said more than 30 people on the flight were Israeli citizens, and none were hurt.

When the passengers got off the plane and passed through passport control, "they apparently ran into some kind of unrest," he said.

"In the end, most of them ended up in a VIP room, and they hid there and spent some time there" until they could be flown by helicopter to a closed facility, he added.

After spending the night there, the passengers were flown — again by helicopter — to Mineralnye Vody, a city in the neighboring Stavropol region, and from there they traveled onward, he said.

Although no passengers were hurt, "I must say, that both the regional and the federal authorities should take this very seriously, because it could have led to victims. And that really would have influenced the entire situation in Russia," he added.

President Vladimir Putin blamed the unrest on "agents of Western special services" in Ukraine, saying without offering evidence that they provoked the rampage in Dagestan to weaken Russia.

U.S. National Security Council spokesman John Kirby called Putin's allegation "classic Russian rhetoric," adding that "the West had nothing to do with this." Kirby criticized Putin for not doing more to condemn the violence, which he described as "a chilling demonstration of hate."

Ben Zvi said he had no information about the unrest being orchestrated from abroad.

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's office had said Israel "expects the Russian law enforcement authorities to protect the safety of all Israeli citizens and Jews wherever they may be and to act resolutely against the rioters and against the wild incitement directed against Jews and Israelis."

In the AP interview, Ben Zvi said his country's relations with Russia relations are normal amid the Israel-Hamas war, even though there are disagreements over some of the Kremlin's policies in the Middle East.

"There are highs, there are lows. Not always we're happy with Russia's position, not always they're happy with our position. We express it to each other," he said, citing the recent visit of a Hamas delegation to Moscow as an example of something that Israel "really didn't like."

Tyreek Hill and A.J. Brown are setting their sights on the NFL receiving record

By JOSH DUBOW AP Pro Football Writer

Inside the Numbers dives into NFL statistics, streaks and trends each week. For more Inside the Numbers, head here.

The way Tyreek Hill and A.J. Brown are playing, the NFL's single-season receiving record could be in serious jeopardy.

With both receivers off to historic starts and the addition of the 17th game to the schedule, Calvin Johnson's record of 1,964 yards receiving set in 2012 is in danger of being broken.

Hill has 1,104 yards receiving for the Miami Dolphins, becoming the first player in 52 years to reach the 1,000-yard mark in the first eight games of the season. The only other players to reach 1,000 yards

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receiving in the first eight games are Charley Hennigan (1,122 in 1961), Elroy Hirsch (1,058 in 1951) and Don Hutson (1,032 in 1942).

Hill would be on pace to break Johnson's record even without the 17th game as he is averaging 126.8 yards per game. He needs to average 106 yards the rest of the way to break Johnson's mark.

Brown is slightly behind that pace with 939 yards for the Philadelphia Eagles, but he is closing fast. He had eight catches for 130 yards and two TDs last week to set an NFL record with his sixth straight game with at least 125 yards receiving.

Brown has 831 yards in his last six games and is currently on pace for 1,995 — slightly ahead of Johnson's record.

ROOKIE QBS

Will Levis had a memorable debut as the latest rookie QB to get a start this season.

Levis threw four TD passes in Tennessee's 28-23 win over Atlanta, tying former Titans QB Marcus Mariota (2015) and Hall of Famer Fran Tarkenton (1961) as the only players to throw at least four TD passes in their NFL debuts.

Levis was the seventh rookie quarterback to start a game this season, following Bryce Young, C.J. Stroud, Anthony Richardson, Aidan O'Connell, Dorian Thompson-Robinson and Tyson Bagent. That's the most rookie starters in the first eight weeks of the season since the merger, excluding the replacement player season in 1987.

There could be even more this week with Jaren Hall set to start in Minnesota after Kirk Cousins got hurt and Clayton Tune a possibility to start for Arizona. If both get the nod this week, that would tie the 2019 record for most rookie starting QBs in a non-replacement player season with nine.

Young and Stroud faced off on Sunday, with Young earning his first win for the Panthers in a 15-13 victory. It was the fifth time in the common draft era that QBs taken with the top two picks met as rookies, with Young joining Peyton Manning (1998 vs. Ryan Leaf) as the only top picks to win.

Zach Wilson beat Trevor Lawrence in 2021, Mariota beat Jameis Winston in 2015 and Rick Mirer beat Drew Bledsoe in 1993.

STREAK BUSTER

Kansas City's 24-9 loss at Denver ended several long streaks.

The Chiefs had won 16 in a row against the Broncos, which was tied for the third-longest streak ever in the regular season, trailing only a 20-gamer for Miami against Buffalo in the 1970s and a 17-gamer for San Francisco against the Rams in the 1990s.

Patrick Mahomes had been 12-0 as a starter against the Broncos, which was tied with Otto Graham for the best record against one team since 1950.

Mahomes had won 13 straight games in the division, one shy of the longest streak since the merger held by Peyton Manning and Andrew Luck.

Mahomes also saw an end to his streak of 35 straight games in the regular season or playoffs with at least one TD pass. That was tied for the seventh-longest streak but well shy of Drew Brees' record of 60 in a row.

The game was also a rare one for the Chiefs that wasn't close. Kansas City had gone a record 40 games in a row in the regular season and playoffs without losing by at least four points.

COMEBACK KIDS

The win by Carolina ended a long streak of comeback futility.

The Panthers had lost 56 straight games when they trailed at any point in the fourth quarter for the longest streak since at least 1991. Their last win before Sunday came on Oct. 21, 2018, against Philadelphia.

The victory for Carolina gave every team in the league at least one win and one loss this season — the first time that has happened in the first eight weeks since 1999.

While the Panthers ended their streak, San Francisco extended one by losing for the 38th straight time when trailing by at least eight points in the fourth quarter in the regular season or playoffs. That includes 37 straight losses under coach Kyle Shanahan.

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OFFENSE GROUNDED

The New York Giants' passing game went backward on Sunday in a loss to the Jets.

The Giants finished with minus-9 net yards passing, with Tyrod Taylor going 4 for 7 for 8 yards and rookie Tommy DeVito going 2 for 7 for minus-1 yard. The Giants also took four sacks for 16 yards against the Jets for the total of minus-9 yards passing.

That was the fewest yards passing in a game since Cleveland had minus-9 against Jacksonville on Dec. 3, 2000. The last team with fewer yards was the Chargers with minus-19 against Kansas City in Ryan Leaf's third career start in 1998.

The teams combined for 24 punts in the game that the Jets won 13-10 in overtime, the third most in a game since at least 1960, trailing only the 27 for a Raiders-Chargers game in 1998 and 25 in an Eagles-Giants game in 1987.

AP NFL: <https://apnews.com/hub/nfl>

A media freedom group accuses Israel and Hamas of war crimes and reports deaths of 34 journalists

By MIKE CORDER Associated Press

THE HAGUE, Netherlands (AP) — Thirty-four journalists have been killed in the war between Israel and Hamas, an international media freedom group said Wednesday, accusing both sides of committing possible war crimes.

Reporters Without Borders called on International Criminal Court prosecutors to investigate the deaths. The organization said it already filed a complaint regarding eight Palestinian journalists it said were killed in Israel's bombardment of civilian areas in the Gaza Strip, and an Israeli journalist killed during Hamas' surprise attack in southern Israel.

"The scale, seriousness and recurring nature of international crimes targeting journalists, particularly in Gaza, calls for a priority investigation by the ICC prosecutor," Christophe Deloire, director-general of the group also known by the French abbreviation RSF, said. The organization is headquartered in France.

It's the third such complaint to be filed by the group since 2018 alleging war crimes against Palestinian journalists in Gaza. Israel says it makes every effort to avoid killing civilians and accuses Hamas of putting them at risk by operating in residential areas.

The latest complaint also cites "the deliberate, total or partial, destruction of the premises of more than 50 media outlets in Gaza" since Israel declared war against Hamas over the militant group's bloody Oct. 7 incursion, the organization said.

Another media freedom organization, the Committee to Protect Journalists, said Wednesday that it was investigating reports of journalists "killed, injured, detained or missing" in the war, including in Lebanon. It said its preliminary death toll was at least 31 journalists and media workers.

"CPJ emphasizes that journalists are civilians doing important work during times of crisis and must not be targeted by warring parties," said Sherif Mansour, the New York-based nonprofit's Middle East and North Africa program coordinator.

The ICC's prosecution office is already investigating the actions of Israeli and Palestinian authorities dating back to the Israel-Hamas war in 2014. The probe can also consider allegations of crimes committed during the current war.

During a visit to the Rafah border crossing on Sunday, International Criminal Court Prosecutor Karim Khan called on Israel to respect international law but stopped short of accusing the country of war crimes. He called Hamas' Oct. 7 attack a serious violation of international humanitarian law.

Israel argues the ICC has no jurisdiction in the conflict because Palestine is not an independent sovereign state. Israel isn't a party to the treaty that underpins the international court and is not one of its 123 member states.

Reporters Without Borders said Sunday that strikes that hit a group of journalists in southern Lebanon earlier this month, killing one, were targeted rather than accidental and that the journalists were clearly identified as members of the press.

The organization published preliminary conclusions from an ongoing investigation, based on video evidence and witness testimonies, into two strikes that killed Reuters videographer Issam Abdallah and wounded six journalists from Reuters, AFP and Al Jazeera as they were covering clashes on the southern Lebanese border on Oct. 13.

China keeps up military pressure on Taiwan, sending 43 planes and 7 ships near self-governing island

By CHRISTOPHER BODEEN Associated Press

TAIPEI, Taiwan (AP) — Taiwan said Wednesday that China sent 43 military aircraft and seven ships near the self-ruled island, the latest sign that Beijing plans no let-up in its campaign of harassment, threats and intimidation.

Taiwan's Defense Ministry said the figure was current for the 24 hours up to 6:00 a.m. Wednesday and that 37 of the aircraft had crossed the median line in the Taiwan Strait, which China no longer recognizes as an informal divider between the sides.

It said Taiwan had monitored the situation, scrambled jet fighters, dispatched ships and activated land-based missile systems, all standard responses to Chinese military activities, which include crossing into Taiwan's air defense identification zone but not into its actual airspace.

Such Chinese maneuvers have become frequent and aggressive since then- U.S. House Speaker Nancy Pelosi visited Taiwan in August 2022. China suspended military communication with the U.S. to show its displeasure over her trip to Taiwan, which Beijing considers part of its territory to be brought under its control by force if necessary.

China's military maneuvers are seen as intended to break down Taiwanese morale, exhausting its pilots and other personnel and wearing down its equipment. Despite that, the present status of de-facto independence remains widely popular among the island's voters and the defense budget has been increased to purchase new equipment from the U.S., its chief ally, and to produce some items locally, including submarines.

At an international defense forum in Beijing on Monday, China's second-ranking military official Gen. Zhang Youxia reiterated threats by the Chinese government to retaliate against moves toward establishing Taiwan's formal independence, saying that "no matter who tries to split Taiwan from China in any form, China and the Chinese military will never allow that to happen."

Zhang, who is also vice chairman of the Central Military Commission, which oversees the world's largest standing military, opened the three-day event in the absence of former Defense Minister Gen. Li Shangfu, who would have normally hosted the event.

Li was removed from his position last week after a two-month absence from public view. The government has not provided any reason for his removal.

The Beijing event, attended by military representatives from dozens of countries, was an occasion for China to project regional leadership and boost military cooperation. That comes despite frictions with the U.S., with Japan over an uninhabited East China Sea island group, with its Southeast Asian neighbors over China's claim to virtually the entire South China and with India along their disputed border.

But in a sign that Washington and Beijing were considering a possible resumption of military dialogue, the U.S. was represented at the forum by a delegation led by Cynthia Carras, the Defense Department's leading official on China. As of Wednesday, it appeared she had departed without holding any formal meetings with Chinese officials or speaking to the media.

Groton Daily Independent

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Today in History: November 2

Jimmy Carter beats Gerald Ford in presidential election

By The Associated Press undefined

Today is Thursday, Nov. 2, the 306th day of 2023. There are 59 days left in the year.

On Nov. 2, 1976, former Georgia Gov. Jimmy Carter became the first candidate from the Deep South since the Civil War to be elected president as he defeated incumbent Gerald R. Ford.

On this date:

In 1783, General George Washington issued his Farewell Address to the Army near Princeton, New Jersey.

In 1861, during the Civil War, President Abraham Lincoln relieved Maj. Gen. John C. Fremont of his command of the Army's Department of the West based in St. Louis, following Fremont's unauthorized efforts to emancipate slaves in Missouri.

In 1917, British Foreign Secretary Arthur Balfour issued a declaration expressing support for a "national home" for the Jews in Palestine.

In 1920, white mobs rampaged through the Florida citrus town of Ocoee, setting fire to Black-owned homes and businesses, after a Black man, Mose Norman, showed up at the polls to vote on Election Day; some historians estimate as many as 60 people were killed.

In 1950, playwright George Bernard Shaw died in Ayot St. Lawrence, Hertfordshire, England at age 94.

In 1994, a jury in Pensacola, Florida, convicted Paul Hill of murder for the shotgun slayings of an abortion provider and his escort; Hill was executed in September 2003.

In 2000, American astronaut Bill Shepherd and two Russian cosmonauts, Yuri Gidzenko and Sergei Krikalev, became the first residents of the international space station.

In 2003, in Iraq, insurgents shot down a Chinook helicopter carrying dozens of U.S. soldiers, killing 16.

In 2004, President George W. Bush was elected to a second term and Republicans strengthened their control of Congress.

In 2007, British college student Meredith Kercher, 21, was found slain in her bedroom in Perugia, Italy; her roommate, American Amanda Knox and Knox's Italian boyfriend, Raffaele Sollecito, were convicted of killing Kercher, but both were later exonerated.

In 2016, ending a championship drought that had lasted since 1908, the Chicago Cubs won the World Series, defeating the Cleveland Indians 8-7 in extra innings.

In 2017, authorities in Los Angeles and New York said they had opened new investigations prompted by sexual misconduct allegations against movie mogul Harvey Weinstein.

In 2018, the Trump administration restored U.S. sanctions on Iran that had been lifted under the 2015 nuclear deal but carved out exemptions for eight countries that would still be able to import Iranian oil.

In 2020, in the closing hours of the presidential campaign, President Donald Trump charged across the nation delivering a false allegation that the election was being rigged, while Democrat Joe Biden pushed to claim states that were once seen as safely Republican.

In 2021, the Atlanta Braves won their first World Series championship since 1995, hammering the Houston Astros in Game 6.

In 2022, the two largest U.S. pharmacy chains, CVS Health and Walgreen Co., announced agreements in principle to pay about \$5 billion each to settle lawsuits nationwide over the toll of opioids.

Today's Birthdays: Political commentator Patrick Buchanan is 85. Actor Stefanie Powers is 81. Country-rock singer-songwriter J.D. Souther is 78. Actor Kate Linder is 76. Rock musician Carter Beauford (The Dave Matthews Band) is 65. Actor Peter Mullan is 64. Singer-songwriter k.d. lang is 62. Rock musician Bobby Dall (Poison) is 60. Pulitzer Prize-winning playwright Lynn Nottage is 59. Actor Lauren Velez is 59. Actor Sean Kanan is 57. Actor David Schwimmer is 57. Christian/jazz singer Alvin Chea (Take 6) is 56. Jazz singer Kurt Elling is 56. Former Wisconsin Gov. Scott Walker is 56. Rock musician Fieldy is 54. Actor Meta Golding is 52. Actor Marisol Nichols is 52. Rapper Nelly is 49. Actor Danny Cooksey is 48. Rock musician Chris Walla is 48. Actor Reshma Shetty is 46. TV personality Karamo Brown ("Queer Eye," "Dancing With the Stars") is 43. Country singer Erika Jo is 37. Actor-singer Kendall Schmidt is 33.