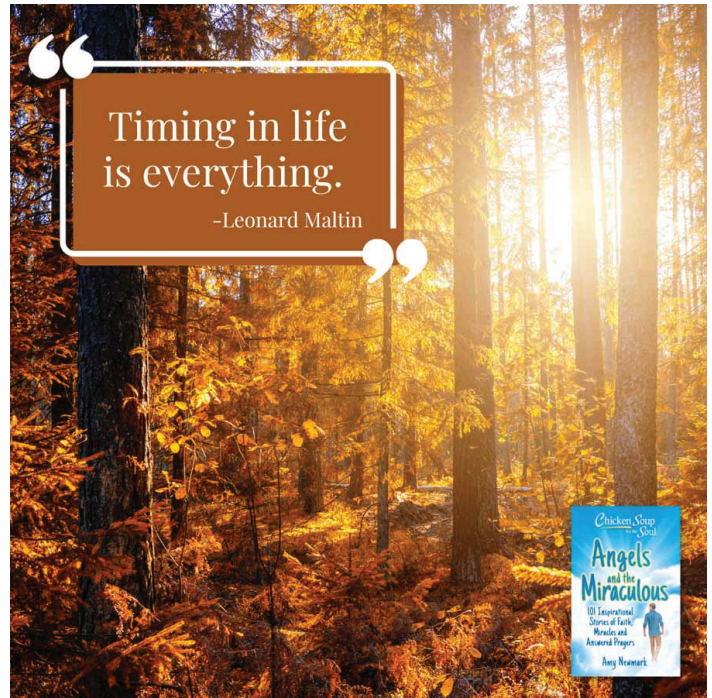


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“
Timing in life
is everything.
”

-Leonard Maltin

Today's Events

School Breakfast: Egg Wraps
School Lunch: Lasagna Hotdish, Corn
Senior Menu: Sloppy Joe On Bun, Oven Roasted Potatoes, Mixed Vegetables, Acini Di pepe Fruit Salad

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

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

Amazon used a "secret algorithm" to help identify products and raise prices across other online retailers to "extract more than a billion dollars directly from Americans' pocketbooks," the U.S. Federal Trade Commission said in a new court filing.

Apple reported better-than-expected iPhone quarterly revenue and sales totaling \$43.8 billion. CEO Tim Cook told Reuters that demand for iPhones was strong in China amid worries that Apple was losing ground to local smartphone makers.

At least 32 people have died in a fire at a drug rehabilitation center in the city of Langarud in northern Iran, local authorities have said.

A bomb blast near a police convoy in Pakistan's city of Dera Ismail Khan has reportedly killed at least five people and injured over a dozen others, officials said.

In the ongoing war in Ukraine, new satellite images show that Russia's Minsk Ropucha-class landing ship has been dismantled, weeks after it was struck in a Ukrainian cruise missile attack on the Russian Black Sea Fleet in the port of Sevastopol, in annexed Crimea.

Eric Trump took the witness stand in his father's civil trial, where he appeared to stumble when questioned on Donald Trump's financial statements. Donald Trump Jr. wrapped up his testimony, which could haunt him.

An inquest into the death of hockey player Adam Johnson is set to start today in England. The former NHL star died after colliding with opposition player Matt Petgrave while playing for the Nottingham Panthers against the Sheffield Steelers last weekend.

Thomas K. Mattingly, a commander during the Apollo 16 mission to the Moon, has died at 87, NASA announced.



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Netters head to SoDak16

The Groton Area volleyball team has hit 20 wins, only the second time the Tigers hit the 20 mark in its season record. The Tigers, 20-4, are ranked third in the state and will advance to the SoDak16 next Tuesday as they will take on Lennox. Groton Area defeated Sisseton Thursday night, 3-0, in the second round of the Region 1A competition.

The first set was close as it was tied 11 times and there were five lead changes. The Tigers had a 23-18 lead, but Sisseton battled back and tied the set at 24. Then it was tied at 25 and Sisseton took the lead. Groton Area tied it up and got the lead, 27-26. Sisseton tied it at 27 and 28 before the Tigers would score the last two points including the game winning ace serve by Jaedyn Penning.

The Tiger win took the wind out of the sails for Sisseton as Groton Area would win the next two sets by identical scores of 25-14.

Rylee Dunker led Groton Area with 13 kills and one assisted block. Sydney Leicht had nine kills including the match winning kill in the third set. Chesney Weber had nine kills and three ace serves. Anna Fjeldheim had eight kills and one block. Emma Kutter had two solo and two assisted blocks and one kill. Jaedyn Penning had four ace serves. Elizabeth Flihs had two ace serves, two assisted blocks and one kill. Carly Guthmiller had two ace serves and Laila Roberts had two kills.

Chloe Langager led Sisseton with 13 kills, two solo and two assisted blocks and one ace serve. Krista Langager had five kills, one ace serve and one block.



Groton Area Athletic Director Alexa Schuring (right) hands the SoDak16 volleyball to Groton Area Head Coach Chelsea Hanson.

(Photo by Jeslyn Kosel)



Head Coach Chelsea Hanson holds up the SoDak16 volleyball as the Tigers are heading to the final round before the state tournament. (Photo by Jeslyn Kosel)

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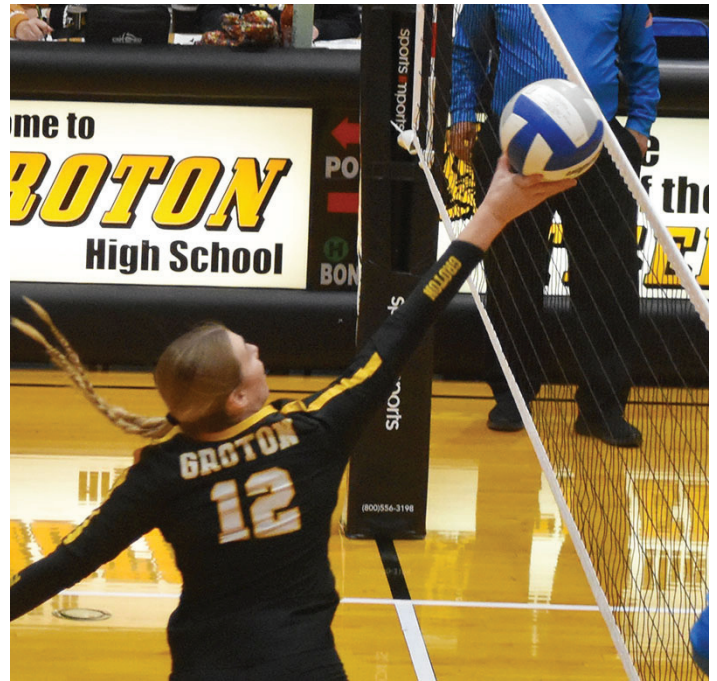
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Emmalee Nielsen had two kills and one ace serve, Tara Nelson had a kill and an ace serve and Ruby Rice and Jourdes Chanku each had one kill.

Groton Area, now on a 13 game winning streaks, is 20-4 on the year. Sisseton finishes its season 12-15.

The match was broadcast live on GDILIVE.COM, sponsored by Avantara of Groton, 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., MJ's Sinclair, Professional Management Services, S & S Lumber & Hardware Hank, Spanier Harvesting & Trucking, The Meat-house, Weismantel Agency. Justin Hanson and Ryan Tracy provided the play-by-play commentary.

- Paul Kosel



Rylee Dunker

(Photo by Jeslyn Kosel)



Carly Guthmiller

(Photo by Jeslyn Kosel)



Anna Fjeldheim

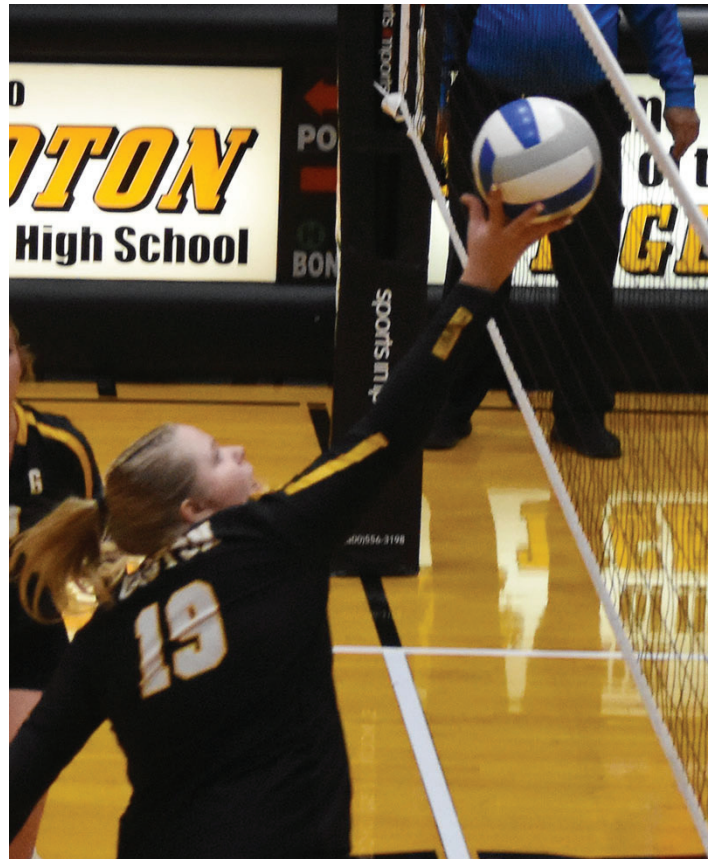
(Photo by Jeslyn Kosel)

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Laila Roberts
(Photo by Jeslyn Kosel)



Emma Kutter
(Photo by Jeslyn Kosel)

Aberdeen Roncalli advances to the SoDak 16

Aberdeen Roncalli defeated Milbank, 25-18, 25-14 and 25-19 to advance to the SoDak16. The match was played in Groton and was broadcast live on GDLIVE.COM with Justin Hanson and Ryan Tracy doing the play-by-play.

McKenna O'Keefe led the Cavaliers with 12 kills and one ace serve while Maddie Huber had eight kills and one ace serve, Ava Hanson had seven kills and one block, Rylee Voeller had six kills, Jaidyn Feickert had five kills and one ace serve, Morgan Helms had two kills, Ava Danielson had a kill and an ace serve and Camryn Bain had an ace serve.

Rachel Schulte led the Bulldogs with 11 kills while Skyler Skoog and Shaylee Schuchard each had six kills, Claire Snaza had two blocks and a kill, Isabella Anderson had two kills and Addisyn Krause had an ace serve.

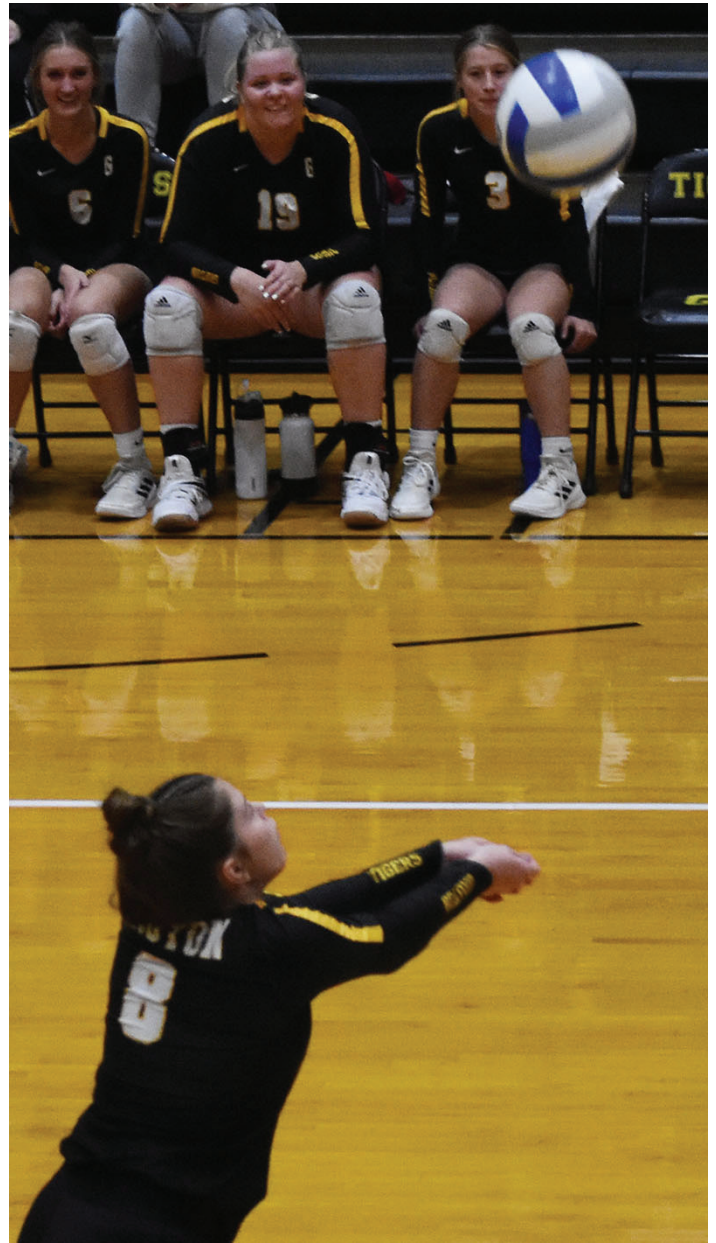
Aberdeen Roncalli will play Dakota Valley in the SoDak 16.

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Elizabeth Flihs
(Photo by Jeslyn Kosel)



Chesney Weber
(Photo by Jeslyn Kosel)

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Groton Wage Memorial Library

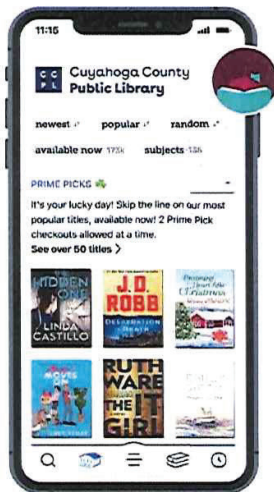


120 N Main St – Groton, SD – (605) 397-8422

Open Monday-Friday 8am-5pm

- Library Cards are FREE to ALL Groton Area Residents!
- Offer a variety of books, magazines, audiobooks and DVDs!
- Offer printing, copying, faxing and scanning services!
- Computer Lab, laptops and tablets available for public use!
- Now offering e-books and audiobooks with the FREE OverDrive/Libby App!

Discover new reads on Libby, the free app from your local library that allows you to borrow ebooks, audiobooks & more on your phone or tablet.



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- Quick and easy setup! Just follow the prompts to start reading
- A unified bookshelf for all your loans and holds
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- Push notifications so you never miss a thing, including available holds
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Summer Storytime EVERY Thursday in the Summer June-August!
'1,000 Books Before Kindergarten Program' is NOW available!

FREE UPCOMING EVENTS: MUST PREREGISTER BY CALLING LIBRARY

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

I....

3.) Am an SDSU Alum

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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!



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SoDak16 Pairings

<p>#1 -</p> <p> 1 Sioux Falls Christian 31-4 11/7 TBD</p> <p> 16 Bennett County 11-15 11/7 TBD</p>	<p>STATE QUALIFIER</p>	<p>STATE QUALIFIER</p>	<p>#5 -</p> <p> 5 Aberdeen Roncalli 20-5 11/7 TBD</p> <p> 12 Dakota Valley 18-10 11/7 TBD</p>
<p>#2 -</p> <p> 2 Rapid City Christian 32-5 11/7 TBD</p> <p> 15 Winner 13-17 11/7 TBD</p>	<p>STATE QUALIFIER</p>	<p>STATE QUALIFIER</p>	<p>#6 -</p> <p> 6 Platte-Geddes 30-6 11/7 TBD</p> <p> 11 Elkton-Lake Benton 21-11 11/7 TBD</p>
<p>Match locations and times will be assigned on Friday, Nov. 3</p>			
<p>#3 -</p> <p> 3 Groton Area 20-4 11/7 TBD</p> <p> 14 Lennox 18-10 11/7 TBD</p>	<p>STATE QUALIFIER</p>	<p>STATE QUALIFIER</p>	<p>#7 -</p> <p> 7 Dell Rapids 25-6 11/7 TBD</p> <p> 10 Hill City 27-6 11/7 TBD</p>
<p>#4 -</p> <p> 4 Miller 27-6 11/7 TBD</p> <p> 13 Flandreau 18-9 11/7 TBD</p>	<p>STATE QUALIFIER</p>	<p>STATE QUALIFIER</p>	<p>#8 -</p> <p> 8 Mobridge-Pollock 26-7 11/7 TBD</p> <p> 9 Wagner 25-6 11/7 TBD</p>

Seed Points Averages (calculated Oct. 24)

#1 Sioux Falls Christian 45.273 - #2 Rapid City Christian 44.500 - #3 Groton Area 44.455 - #4 Miller 44.290 - #5 Aberdeen Roncalli 44.217 - #6 Platte-Geddes 43.912 - #7 Dell Rapids 43.621 - #8 Mobridge-Pollock 43.452 - #9 Wagner 43.172 - #10 Hill City 42.871 - #11 Elkton-Lake Benton 42.667 - #12 Dakota Valley 42.654 - #13 Flandreau 41.840 - #14 Lennox 41.615 - #15 Winner 40.107 - #16 Bennett County 38.000

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.

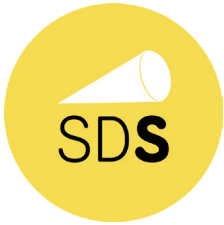
Turkey, Ham and Bacon
to be given away

FREE ADMISSION

**DOOR
PRIZE!**

Lunch served
by Auxiliary





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Tourism and fairness concerns delay decision on fishing-license oddity

Out-of-staters can buy three one-day licenses cheaper than one three-day license

BY: JOSHUA HAIAR - NOVEMBER 2, 2023 6:25 PM

MADISON — It's still cheaper for visitors from other states to buy three one-day South Dakota fishing licenses than one three-day license, at least for now.

Amid debates about tourism and the fairness of fees for in-state anglers vs. out-of-staters, the Game, Fish and Parks Commission postponed its anticipated vote Thursday in Madison on the elimination of non-resident, one-day licenses.

"I think it's a good move to step back," said Commission Chair Stephanie Rissler.

The commission had already postponed the decision in October to allow for more public comment, after a rush of comments arrived prior to that meeting.

"And to no surprise, we did get more dialogue," said GF&P Wildlife Director Tom Kirschenmann.

Sixty-four comments about the proposal were submitted to the commission, with the majority in opposition to eliminating the one-day license.

GF&P staff, after hearing from the tourism and outdoor-guiding industry and others concerned about the policy change, advised the commission to table the decision in favor of a more comprehensive review.

Non-resident loophole

In South Dakota, non-residents can choose from three fishing licenses: one-day, three-day and annual. Since 2020, there's been an uptick in one-day license sales.

Anglers and hunters are required to purchase a Habitat Stamp (\$10 for residents, \$25 for non-residents) in addition to some of their licenses. Revenue from the stamp supports wildlife habitat conservation and restoration, and hunting and fishing access.

Habitat Stamps are not required with a one-day, non-resident fishing license, which costs \$16. Habitat Stamps are required for three-day and annual licenses, the prices of which are \$62 and \$92, respectively, including the stamp.

A cost-conscious, non-resident angler can buy three one-day licenses for a total of \$48 — \$14 less than the three-day license. In 2021, one non-resident purchased 17 one-day fishing licenses, according to the GF&P.

Some resident anglers find that unfair.

Kerry Stiner, of Burke, wrote that in boat-ramp parking lots, "I think there are more out-of-state vehicles than SD vehicles."

"I also see them bring their \$90,000 boats and \$100,000 pickups, so I don't think a few extra dollars for licenses is going to affect anybody," Stiner wrote to the commission.

Justin Allen, of Pierre, expressed a similar opinion.

"If NRs [non-residents] want to enjoy SD resources they should fund the programs through license fees like everyone else," he wrote to the commission.

Kirschenmann said Habitat Stamp revenue helps pay for boat docks, access roads, fish hatcheries and the creation and maintenance of fish habitat.

"It's one of those resources for us to use as an agency, as a commission, to provide the programs and services that we do," he told the commission.

GF&P staff explained during previous commission hearings that eliminating the one-day license could generate an additional \$500,000 to \$1.3 million in revenue for the department by forcing out-of-state anglers to purchase more expensive licenses.

What's next?

Kirschenmann explained during the October commission hearing that the department wasn't requesting the addition of the Habitat Stamp to one-day licenses, because that would require a law change by the Legislature.

Secretary Kevin Robling told South Dakota Searchlight on Thursday that the department is not asking the Legislature to change the law.

It remains unclear when the commission will revisit the topic or what alternative solutions might be proposed.

Tourism representatives argue that the availability of short-term licenses is vital for attracting visitors, especially those making impromptu trips to South Dakota's lakes and rivers. Additionally, Kirschenmann said some resident anglers have family from out of state that don't fish regularly, but are happy to buy a one-day license.

"A one-day fishing license for friends and family that may not be dedicated fishermen is a necessity," wrote Todd Martell, of Pierre, in a submitted comment. "\$62 for one day of fishing with a three-day license and habitat fee will cause people to not participate; a slight increase in the cost of a one-day license would be more appropriate."

Dennis Block of Sioux Falls was more blunt in his comments.

"The one-day non-resident proposal is, in my opinion, asinine!" He wrote to the commission. "Who in their right mind would purchase a 3-day license for \$62!?!"

Kirschenmann said the decision's postponement indicates the department's commitment to public feedback in decision-making.

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.

Task force: Young adults up to 25 need special attention from courts, corrections

BY: JOHN HULT - NOVEMBER 2, 2023 5:54 PM

People between 18 and 25 years old are more likely to commit crimes, get arrested and lose momentum in their emerging adult lives as a result.

Early intervention and structured support can help keep them out of the justice system altogether.

At least that's what criminal justice research suggests.

But under South Dakota law, courts and corrections can only help pay for intervention programs that are "evidence-based," meaning those whose approaches have peer-reviewed science behind them.

Getting that "evidence" is expensive, time-consuming and especially hard to come by for start-up programs in rural parts of South Dakota, as it was for Pennington County's Oyate Court, a diversion program led by Lakota elders and funded without state help.

A study group of criminal justice experts wants lawmakers to clear a funding path for programs like that.

Adjusting state law to open the door to more innovative, emerging and culturally focused approaches to diversion for young people is the first recommendation on a five-point list produced by the state's Barriers for Emerging Adults Task Force.

The other five recommendations are:

Encourage counties to put non-violent 18- to 25-year-old offenders in diversion programs that keep them out of the courtroom and clear their charges upon successful completion, as courts already do for those

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younger than 18, and pay counties for successful diversions.

Train court and corrections employees and their community partners on the developmental differences between emerging adults and those older than 25.

Extend access to the cognitive behavioral therapy and skills-building programs now used for minors to those older than 18.

Adjust court and supervision practices across the state Unified Judicial System to allow for tailored support programs for those 18-25 years old.

The study group met virtually on Thursday to finalize the report. In the months between the task force's creation this spring by the Legislature and this week's meeting, the members gathered three times to study various approaches and discuss how to better help young adults learn from their interactions with the justice system and avoid coming back.

"If you can divert them and they stay out of the system, that's great for the individual. It also saves a lot of money for the system in the long-term," said State Court Administrator Greg Sattizahn, who chairs the task force.

The report points to Pennington County as a place where diversion programs for younger adults have paid off. More than 1,000 have been funneled into diversion in the past five years, and just over half made it 18 months without breaking any laws, making them eligible to have their charges cleared.

"Every case is reviewed and is eligible for diversion if the person pleads guilty to the charges, the victim consents, and the case occurs in Pennington County," the report says.

Before voting to send the report to South Dakota Supreme Court Chief Justice Steven Jensen, Gov. Kristi Noem and lawmakers, the task force made a few slight adjustments.

The draft report recommended requiring all cases involving people 18-25 to be reviewed for possible diversion, which caught the attention of Pennington County State's Attorney Lara Roetzel and Minnehaha County State's Attorney Daniel Haggar.

Haggar's office also offers diversion programs for adults, but the Sioux Falls-based prosecutor didn't want to see a mandate to review all cases.

"All of the sudden it's not optional anymore. And what are the criteria? Is that mandates coming from the Legislature?" Haggar said. "That makes it difficult to tailor these programs for these young adults."

Roetzel said she couldn't support a requirement unless additional funding were attached. Her office has several dedicated staff for diversion, which she said are more intensive cases to manage than most. Both prosecutors wanted to see such diversion reviews recommended but not required.

Pennington County Public Defender Eric Whitcher worried aloud that striking the "requirement" language could be a problem, especially in counties less committed to the concept of diversion.

"I'm concerned that we'll have a patchwork of state's attorneys that are fully engaged in diversion and those that are not, so that you have a real disparity and outcomes for individuals," Whitcher said.

Minnehaha County Deputy Public Defender Betsy Doyle suggested compromise language that would recommend financial incentives to counties that use diversion programs, which the group ultimately backed. The original report said that the state "may" offer financial incentives to counties.

The report and other materials on young adults, including a 2022 report on their outsized impact on the justice system, are available online.

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.

SD's Johnson votes yes as House pushes through Israel-only aid bill

BY: JENNIFER SHUTT - NOVEMBER 2, 2023 5:36 PM

WASHINGTON — The U.S. House on Thursday approved a \$14.3 billion spending bill to aid Israel in its war against Hamas, but the measure stands no chance of passing the Senate and has elicited a veto threat from the White House.

The 14-page bill, one of the first major tests for newly elected GOP Speaker Mike Johnson of Louisiana, doesn't include additional funding for Ukraine, Taiwan or the U.S. Southern border — all of which the Biden administration requested last month.

House debate on the Israeli spending bill fell largely along party lines, as did the 226-196 vote to approve the legislation. Two Republicans, Georgia's Marjorie Taylor Greene and Kentucky's Thomas Massie, voted against the bill while 12 Democrats voted for it.

Rep. Dusty Johnson, R-South Dakota, voted in favor of the measure.

The House GOP proposed paying for the new spending for Israel by cutting an equal amount of funding for the Internal Revenue Service that Democrats included in their signature climate change and health care package in 2022.

But several organizations, including the nonpartisan Congressional Budget Office, said that so-called "pay for" would actually increase the federal deficit by at least \$12 billion by eroding the IRS' ability to enforce that everyone pays their taxes.

Ultimately, Speaker Mike Johnson will need to negotiate a bipartisan, bicameral spending package with the three other congressional leaders and President Joe Biden. That will be a new experience for Johnson in his debut as speaker.

Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer, a New York Democrat, said on the floor Wednesday the House's Israel aid bill was a "joke" that "needlessly politicizes aid to Israel."

"It's utterly baffling, baffling that at a moment that demands maximum bipartisanship — when the country is in crisis and our friends in Israel and Ukraine are in crisis — that the House GOP is instead trying to pick an egregiously partisan fight over wealthy tax cheats," Schumer said.

Senate Minority Leader Mitch McConnell, a Kentucky Republican who staunchly supports more aid for Ukraine, dismissed Johnson's decision to exclude aid for Ukraine, Taiwan and the U.S.-Mexico border from this spending bill.

"In order to make a law, it has to pass both bodies and be signed by the president," McConnell said Tuesday, after noting that "conceptually" he and Schumer are in the same place on how to construct the bill.

But McConnell said, "Democrats will have to accept a really serious U.S.-Mexico border protection bill in order to get our people on board for a comprehensive approach."

House wants Ukraine, border aid separate

Johnson said Thursday during a press conference that House Republicans will insist on paying for additional aid to Israel, rather than using emergency funding that does not have to be offset by cuts, saying it's an "important principle."

"We want to protect and help and assist our friend Israel, but we have to keep our own house in order as well," Johnson said. "And I think people at home, the American people, understand that."

Johnson said he's made that clear to Biden and several Cabinet secretaries as well as Senate Republicans.

Johnson also seemed determined to separate aid for Israel from a spending package for Ukraine and U.S. border security.

"Ukraine will come in short order, it will come next," Johnson said. "And you've heard me say that we want to pair border security with Ukraine because I think we can get bipartisan agreement on both of those matters."

Johnson said he and House Republicans feel strongly that the United States can meet its obligations around the world, "but we have to take care of our own house first."

"As long as the border's wide open, we're opening ourselves up to great threat and again it's just a matter of principle — if we're going to take care of a border in Ukraine, we need to take care of America's

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border as well," Johnson said.

Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin and Secretary of State Antony Blinken testified before a Senate committee earlier this week that not providing significant support for both Israel and Ukraine would have negative repercussions for U.S. national security.

'Israel has a right to defend itself'

During House debate on Thursday, Arkansas Republican Rep. Steve Womack urged members to "reject the demands for the perfect and instead support the good" in the bill.

"Israel has a right to defend itself, it needs the freedom of action to do so," Womack said. "We did not accept arbitrary restrictions on our actions following 9/11 nor should we place any restrictions on Israel's response."

Womack said after aid to Israel is enacted, the House would bring up legislation to assist Ukraine.

Minnesota Democratic Rep. Betty McCollum criticized Republicans for not including aid to Ukraine or humanitarian assistance for civilians in Gaza in the spending bill.

"The United States faces two immense national security crises at one time — Russia's illegal and unjust invasion of Ukraine and Israel's military response to the barbaric Hamas attacks on Oct. 7," McCollum said.

For the security of both Palestinians and Israelis, McCollum said, the violence "must stop and all hostages must be released."

"And we must work with the United Nations and regional partners on a cease fire that holds every party accountable," McCollum said. "Until then, declared safe areas must be truly safe for civilians fleeing violence."

House Majority Leader Steve Scalise, a Louisiana Republican, said the legislation is essential to ensure Israel's sovereignty and safety.

"We have seen the atrocities in Israel. We have always stood with Israel," Scalise said.

'Political gotcha'

Maryland Democratic Rep. Steny Hoyer said that Republicans, instead of working on a bipartisan bill, "constructed a political gotcha bill."

"The majority tries to score political points at the expense of Jewish lives and the confidence of both our allies and enemies in our resolve and reliability," Hoyer said. "They undermine the critical aid for Israel with their misguided attacks on the IRS."

The nonpartisan Congressional Budget Office issued a report before House debate began that clawing back \$14.3 billion in IRS funding would reduce tax revenue by \$26.786 billion for a net increase to the deficit of \$12.498 billion during the next decade.

The Biden administration issued a veto threat on the House's bill, saying "the bill fails to meet the urgency of the moment by deepening our divides and severely eroding historic bipartisan support for Israel's security."

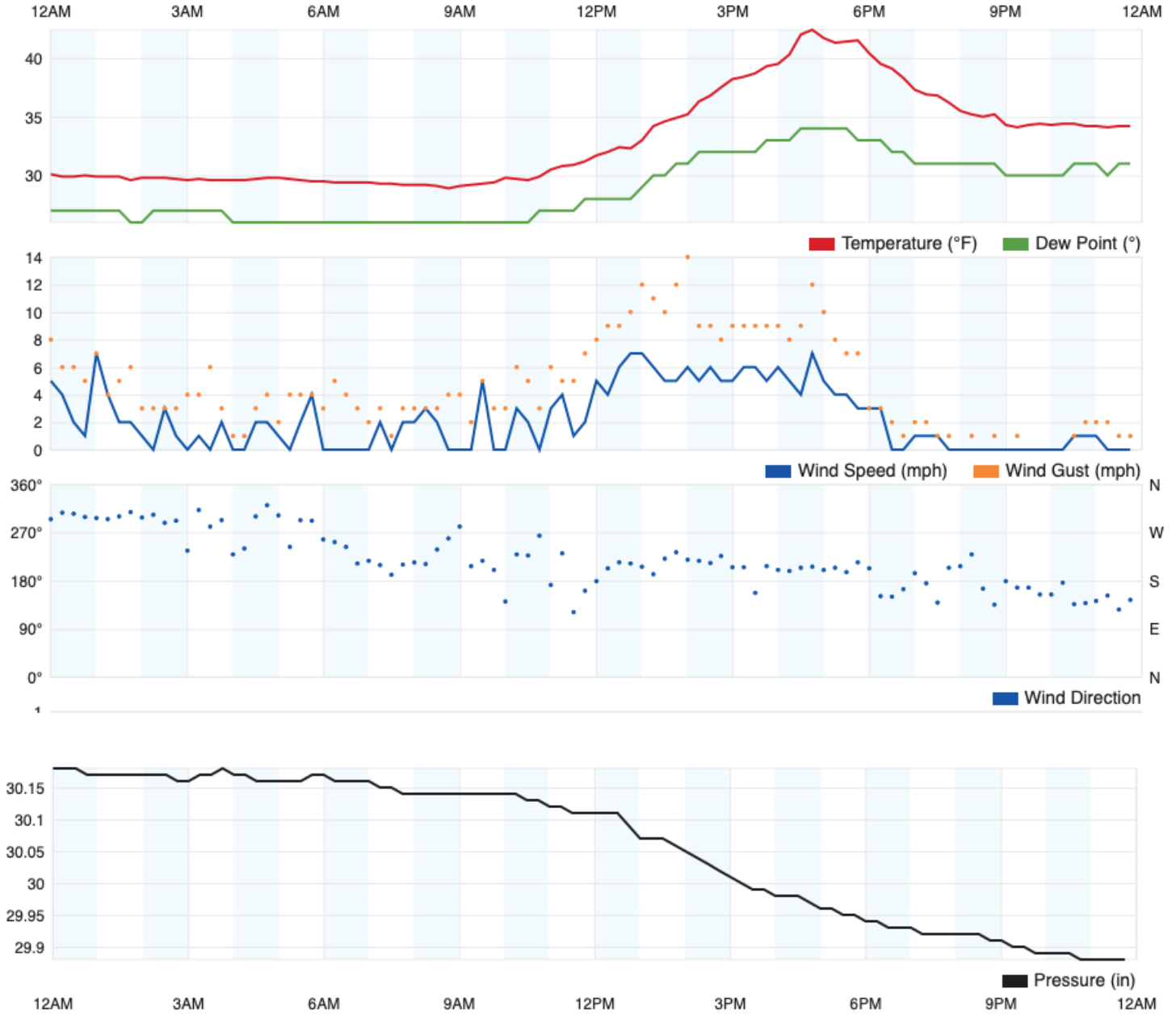
"It inserts partisanship into support for Israel, making our ally a pawn in our politics, at a moment we must stand together," the White House said in the Statement of Administration Policy. "It denies humanitarian assistance to vulnerable populations around the world, including Palestinian civilians, which is a moral and strategic imperative."

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

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Yesterday's Groton Weather Graphs



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Fri Nov 3	Sat Nov 4	Sun Nov 5	Mon Nov 6	Tue Nov 7	Wed Nov 8	Thu Nov 9
						
42° F 26° F	51° F 32° F	56° F 36° F	50° F 28° F	45° F 28° F	42° F 27° F	38° F 28° F
N 11 MPH	S 13 MPH	SSE 12 MPH	WNW 15 MPH	E 11 MPH 10%	NW 10 MPH	NW 11 MPH



The Rest of the week

Today: A Mix of Sun and Clouds. An Isolated Shower or Sprinkle East of the James River Valley this Morning; South of US Highway 14 this Afternoon. Highs: 38-51° - Warmest Along and South of US Highway 14.

Tonight: Decreasing Cloudiness.
Lows: 23-30°

Saturday: Mostly Sunny.
Highs: 47-62° - Warmest South of US Highway 212.

- The Warm-Up Continues Sunday
- Highs in the mid 50s to low 60s
- A 15-30% Chance of Rain Mainly Sunday Evening



National Weather Service
Aberdeen, SD

After today, the forecast is generally dry and warm through Sunday. A few showers will be possible Sunday night, while 15 to 25 mph northwest winds develop.

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Yesterday's Groton Weather

High Temp: 42 °F at 4:44 PM

Low Temp: 29 °F at 8:42 AM

Wind: 14 mph at 1:58 PM

Precip: : 0.00

Day length: 10 hours, 5 minutes

Today's Info

Record High: 76 in 2020

Record Low: 1 in 1991

Average High: 49

Average Low: 25

Average Precip in Nov.: 0.10

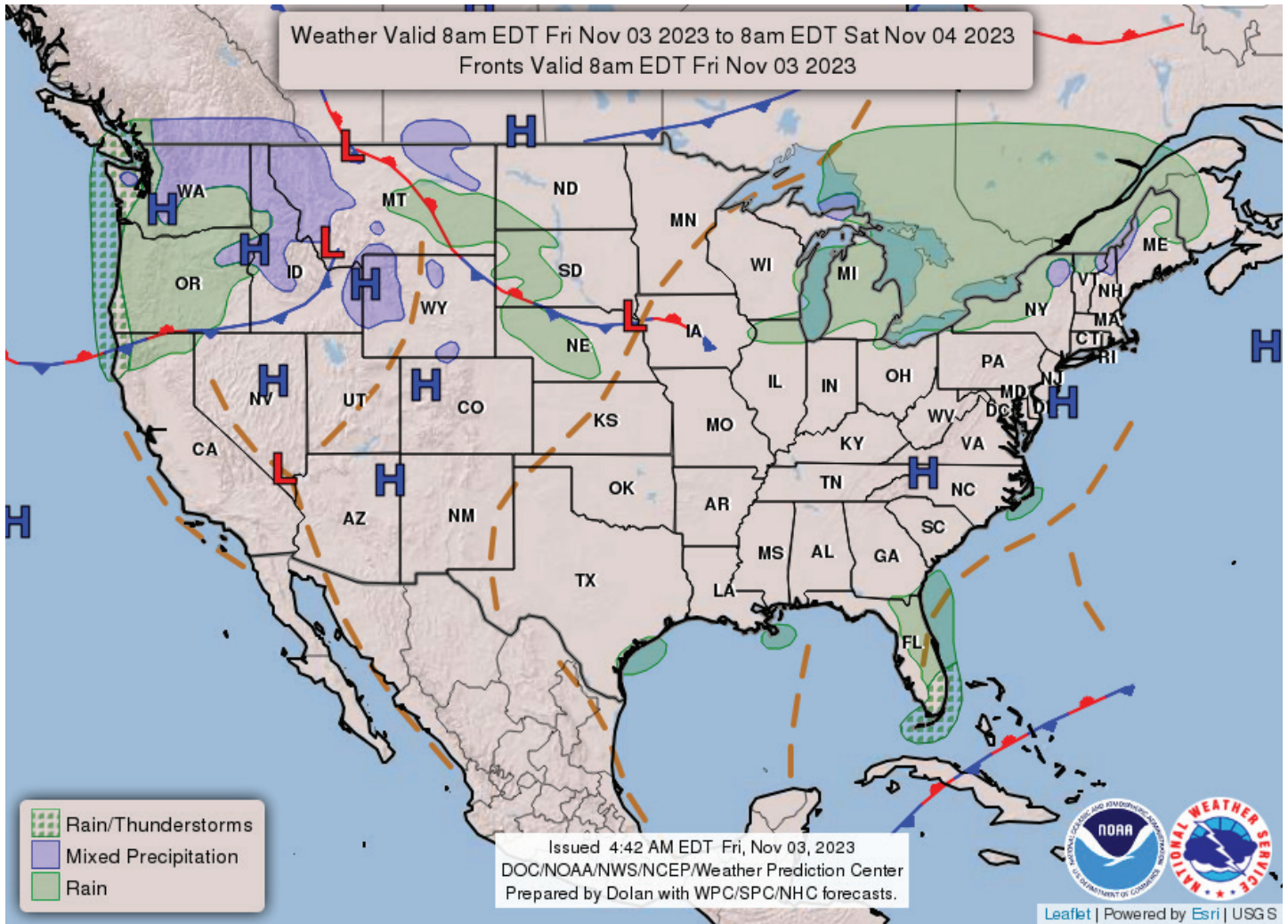
Precip to date in Nov.: 0.00

Average Precip to date: 20.57

Precip Year to Date: 22.98

Sunset Tonight: 6:18:50 PM

Sunrise Tomorrow: 8:14:27 AM



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Today in Weather History

November 3rd, 2003: Heavy snow fell across the area, including 6 to 9 inches across Big Stone County in Minnesota, with nine inches in Ortonville. Heavy snow of up to eight inches fell across Grant County in South Dakota. Six inches fell at Big Stone City, and 8 inches fell at Milbank. Heavy snow also fell from the early morning to around noon across parts of central South Dakota. Six inches of snow fell at Kennebec, Fort Thompson, Gann Valley, and Miller.

1890 - The temperature at Los Angeles, CA, reached 96 degrees, a November record for 76 years. (David Ludlum)

1927: Historic flooding occurred across Vermont from November 2nd through the 4th. The flood washed out 1285 bridges, miles of roads and railways, and several homes and buildings. Eighty-four people were killed from the flooding, including Lt. Governor S. Hollister Jackson.

1961 - A rare November thunderstorm produced snow at Casper, WY. (3rd-4th) (The Weather Channel)

1966: An early season snowfall, which started on the 2nd, whitened the ground from Alabama to Michigan. Mobile, Alabama, had their earliest snowflakes on record. Louisville, Kentucky measured 13.1 inches, Nashville; Tennessee reported 7.2 inches, and Huntsville, Alabama, had 4 inches of snow. 1987 - Twenty-one cities, mostly in the Ohio Valley, reported record high temperatures for the date. The afternoon high of 80 degrees at Columbus OH was their warmest reading of record for so late in the season. Showers and thundershowers associated with a tropical depression south of Florida produced 4.28 inches of rain at Clewiston in 24 hours. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1988 - A sharp cold front brought about an abrupt end to Indian Summer in the north central U.S. Up to a foot of snow blanketed Yellowstone Park WY, and winds in the mountains near the Washoe Valley of southeastern Wyoming gusted to 78 mph. Unseasonably warm weather continued in the south central U.S. Del Rio TX tied Laredo TX and McAllen TX for honors as the hot spot in the nation with a record warm afternoon high of 91 degrees. (Storm Data) (The National Weather Summary)

1989 - Cold weather prevailed in the central U.S. Six cities in Texas, Minnesota, and Michigan, reported record low temperatures for the date. The low of 7 above zero at Marquette MI was their coldest reading of record for so early in the season. (The National Weather Summary)

2001: Hurricane Michelle reached peak intensity on this day as a Category 4 storm. Michelle made landfall on November 4-5, between Playa Larga and Playa Giron, Cuba, as a Category 4 hurricane, the strongest to strike the country since 1952's Hurricane Fox. The storm caused an estimated \$2 billion US dollars in damage to Cuba.

2002: A Magnitude 7.9 earthquake struck central Alaska. The quake is the 9th largest to be recorded in the US.

2007: Dense fog in the early morning hours resulted in a 100 vehicle pile-up just north of Fowler, CA on I-99. Two people were killed, and 41 others were injured. The thick seasonal fog is known as "Tule fog" and typically occurs in Central California in late fall and winter.

2011: Floodwaters by Tropical Depression Keila's heavy rainfall were responsible for several deaths in Oman.

2013: The town of Arnhem in the Netherlands was hit with several tornadoes.

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Daily Devotionals

Seeds of Hope

THE TRUE BELIEVER

His license plate proudly proclaimed "SAY NO." But when the "outspoken" advocate for living a drug-free life was stopped for speeding, the police officers discovered that he was transporting drugs in his automobile.

While we may shake our heads in disbelief at that man's hypocrisy, he is not that different from many Christians. The Apostle John wrote, "Those who say they live in God should live their lives as Christ did." We might say that this is an "If/Then" statement. John wants us to have no doubt about one important fact: "If we say that we live in God, then others will be able to see Christ living in us, in what we do to and for others and hear the way we speak His love in what we say." A rather troubling statement, isn't it?

In only a few words John states two ways that will assure us that we belong to Christ: If we do what Christ says and live as Christ wants us to live. A few verses later in his little letter John clearly describes what he means: "Believe in the name of His Son and love one another."

True "lived-out" Christian faith results in "loving behavior." For this reason, John reminds us that what we say and the way we act is proof that we are living in God and belong to Christ. If we are obedient to the teachings of Scripture and show God's love as Jesus did, then we know without a doubt that we "live in God."

Prayer: Father, we truly love You and want to "live in You" as You would have us to live. Make our faith strong, our love deep, and our lives worthy of Your grace. In Jesus' Name, Amen.

Scripture For Today: Those who say they live in God should live their lives as Jesus did. 1 John 2:6



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 16 Hrs 50 Mins
DRAW: 20 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 1 Days 16 Hrs 5
DRAW: Mins 20 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

LUCKY FOR LIFE

WINNING NUMBERS:

11.02.23

10 14 17 27 48 10

TOP PRIZE:

\$7,000/week

NEXT 16 Hrs 20 Mins
DRAW: 20 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

DAKOTA CASH

WINNING NUMBERS: 11.01.23

6 10 22 33 35

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:

\$40,000

NEXT 1 Days 16 Hrs 20
DRAW: Mins 20 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

POWERBALL

DOUBLE PLAY

WINNING NUMBERS: 11.01.23

9 26 49 58 61 21

TOP PRIZE:

\$10,000,000

NEXT 1 Days 16 Hrs 49
DRAW: Mins 20 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 1 Days 16 Hrs 49
DRAW: Mins 20 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

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News from the  Associated Press

Thursday's Scores

The Associated Press

PREP VOLLEYBALL=

Harrisburg def. Brookings, 25-13, 20-25, 25-21, 25-21

Huron def. Brandon Valley, 25-17, 20-25, 25-19, 25-18

Sioux Falls Jefferson def. Aberdeen Central, 25-16, 25-9, 25-13

Sioux Falls O'Gorman def. Mitchell, 16-25, 21-25, 25-19, 25-16, 15-9

Spearfish def. Douglas, 25-17, 25-11, 25-14

Watertown def. Yankton, 25-22, 24-26, 25-17, 25-15

SDHSAA Playoffs=

Class A=

Region 1=

SoDak 16 Qualifier=

Aberdeen Roncalli def. Milbank, 25-18, 25-14, 25-19

Groton Area def. Sisseton, 30-28, 25-14, 25-14

Region 2=

SoDak 16 Qualifier=

Elkton-Lake Benton def. Estelline-Hendricks, 23-25, 25-20, 25-20, 25-10

Flandreau def. Hamlin, 25-18, 25-18, 25-20

Region 3=

SoDak 16 Qualifier=

Dell Rapids def. Madison, 25-23, 25-17, 29-27

Sioux Falls Christian def. Baltic, 25-11, 25-12, 25-17

Region 4=

SoDak 16 Qualifier=

Dakota Valley def. Elk Point-Jefferson, 24-26, 20-25, 25-12, 25-20, 15-9

Lennox def. Canton, 25-19, 23-25, 25-23, 25-16

Region 5=

SoDak 16 Qualifier=

Platte-Geddes def. Mt. Vernon/Plankinton, 25-19, 25-20, 25-16

Wagner def. Parkston, 25-18, 25-17, 16-25, 25-16

Region 6=

SoDak 16 Qualifier=

Miller def. North Central Co-Op, 25-21, 25-14, 25-12

Mobridge-Pollock def. Stanley County, 25-13, 25-15, 25-11

Region 7=

SoDak 16 Qualifier=

Bennett County def. Pine Ridge, 25-22, 25-17, 22-25, 17-25, 15-11

Winner def. Lakota Tech, 25-11, 25-13, 25-19

Region 8=

SoDak 16 Qualifier=

Hill City def. Belle Fourche, 25-14, 19-25, 25-20, 25-21

Rapid City Christian def. Custer, 31-33, 25-14, 25-13, 25-20

Class B=

Region 1=

SoDak 16 Qualifier=

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Hitchcock-Tulare def. Northwestern, 27-25, 23-25, 25-22, 25-18

Warner def. Leola-Frederick High School, 25-9, 25-10, 25-5

Region 2=

SoDak 16 Qualifier=

Castlewood def. Iroquois-Lake Preston, 25-11, 25-17, 25-22

Wolsey-Wessington def. Arlington, 29-27, 19-25, 18-25, 25-21, 15-7

Region 3=

SoDak 16 Qualifier=

Chester def. Ethan, 25-13, 25-17, 25-13

Colman-Egan def. Sioux Falls Lutheran, 25-20, 25-12, 19-25, 20-25, 15-11

Region 4=

SoDak 16 Qualifier=

Alcester-Hudson def. Centerville, 25-19, 21-25, 22-25, 25-19, 15-7

Gayville-Volin High School def. Scotland, 25-11, 25-22, 25-9

Region 5=

SoDak 16 Qualifier=

Burke def. Gregory, 25-11, 25-16, 25-10

Tripp-Delmont/Armour def. Avon, 25-19, 25-19, 18-25, 25-27, 15-13

Region 6=

SoDak 16 Qualifier=

Faulkton def. Highmore-Harrold, 25-18, 25-12, 25-20

Herreid/Selby Area def. Sully Buttes, 25-12, 25-21, 25-21

Region 7=

SoDak 16 Qualifier=

Kadoka Area def. Wall, 25-15, 25-12, 25-21

Philip def. White River, 25-14, 25-15, 25-20

Region 8=

SoDak 16 Qualifier=

Faith def. Newell, 25-11, 25-19, 25-15

Lemmon High School def. Harding County, 25-18, 19-25, 25-17, 25-20

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

State funded some trips for ex-North Dakota senator charged with traveling to pay for sex with minor

By JACK DURA Associated Press

BISMARCK, N.D. (AP) — A former North Dakota legislator charged with traveling to Prague with the intent of paying for sex with a minor used state funds to pay for at least three trips to that city and to other destinations in Europe, according to a group that organized the travel.

Travel records from the North Dakota School Boards Association show that former state senator Ray Holmberg used public funding for trips in 2011, 2018 and 2019 to Prague in the Czech Republic and to other cities, including Amsterdam and Berlin. The trips were arranged through the Germany-based Global Bridges teacher exchange program, which received funding from the North Dakota Legislature.

A federal indictment unsealed Monday charged Holmberg with traveling to Prague with the intent of paying for sex with a minor and also with receiving images depicting child sexual abuse. Holmberg, 79, has pleaded not guilty.

It's unclear whether the alleged conduct happened during the publicly funded trips. But the indictment says Holmberg traveled to Prague "from on or about June 24, 2011, to on or about Nov. 1, 2016 ... for the purpose of engaging in any illicit sexual conduct." One of the travel records for the funded trips lists

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a departure date of June 24, 2011, to Prague and other cities.

The North Dakota Legislature gave money to the state Department of Public Instruction, which essentially passed it along to Global Bridges to pay for trips for teachers and legislators.

State Rep. Bob Martinson said he picked the legislators who went on the trips, usually a combination of men and women, House and Senate, Democratic and Republican for "a balanced group of people who were interested in learning and would all get along together so it would not be a political trip."

Holmberg "established a really good rapport with Global Bridges, and they liked him, and they requested that he go to those meetings. They wanted him involved," Martinson said.

His brother, former Association Executive Director Jon Martinson, was the project director and participated in the selection of teachers for the trips. Holmberg traveled with teachers twice and also on independent trips where he was invited to participate, such as for a forum, annual meeting or symposium, said Jon Martinson. He said he didn't know how many trips Holmberg took through the program.

The trips are beneficial for legislators because of the knowledge they gain on topics such as energy and international relations, Jon Martinson said.

Bob and Jon Martinson said they didn't know of what Holmberg is accused of doing in Prague.

Holmberg declined to answer questions from The Associated Press.

"My lawyer tells me don't talk to anyone because I've got that criminal thing, so I'm following my attorney's advice," Holmberg said Wednesday.

Bob Martinson called the allegations raised by the indictment "terribly sad." Holmberg has been a friend for over 40 years, he said.

The state-paid travel was first reported by KFGO and The Forum of Fargo-Moorhead.

Gov. Doug Burgum's spokesman, Mike Nowatzki, said, "Speaking broadly, (Burgum) finds such allegations involving children disturbing and disgusting and believes perpetrators should be prosecuted to the fullest extent of the law."

Longtime Democratic state Sen. Tim Mathern said he has "no objection to conferences and ways to educate our legislators about what's going on in the world, but certainly the scrutiny needs to be much higher." The Legislature could take "a fine-tooth comb going through our budgets," provide accountability such as names of people "promoting certain things," and revisit records retention, he said.

If Holmberg traveled on the state's dime to commit the alleged conduct, "I would say it was a misuse of dollars," Mathern said. "I have no question that this was a misuse of tax dollars." The situation indicates "we as a system need to make some changes," he said.

Holmberg served over 45 years in the North Dakota Senate. He was a powerful lawmaker, chairing the Senate Appropriations Committee, which writes budgets, and a top legislative panel that handles legislative matters between biennial sessions. He took dozens of state-funded trips throughout the U.S. and abroad in the last decade, according to legislative travel records.

Holmberg resigned last year after The Forum reported on his dozens of text messages exchanged with a man in jail at the time on charges related to images of child sexual abuse.

A state panel on Thursday voted unanimously to suspend Holmberg's lifetime teaching license, intending to revoke it immediately if he pleads guilty to or is convicted of any charge based on the case's underlying facts, according to the motion in meeting minutes.

Holmberg, who is retired, had a career with Grand Forks Public Schools from 1967 to 2002, including years as a teacher, child find coordinator and counselor.

As billions roll in to fight the US opioid epidemic, one county shows how recovery can work

By GEOFF MULVIHILL and CARLA K. JOHNSON Associated Press

FINDLAY, Ohio (AP) — Communities ravaged by America's opioid epidemic are starting to get their share of a \$50 billion pie from legal settlements.

Most of that money comes with a requirement that it be used to address the overdose crisis and prevent

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more deaths.

But how?

It could mean that places look more like the area around Findlay. Here, conservative Hancock County has built a comprehensive system focused on both treatment and recovery by adding housing, a needle exchange, outreach workers and a community center.

"People recover in a community," said Precia Stuby, the official who heads the county's addiction and mental health efforts. "We have to build recovery-oriented communities that support individuals."

It was 2007 when Stuby began hearing from officials about prescription opioids being misused. That was about the same time Jesse Johnson, then 14, was prescribed the painkiller Percocet.

The Findlay native was pregnant when she needed stents put into her kidneys as treatment for infections and kidney stones. After seven months on the opioid medication, she gave birth to a healthy daughter. Then she underwent an operation to remove the stents. The prescriptions stopped and she became sick from withdrawal.

"I remember not even being able to hold my daughter," said Johnson, now 31. "It just hurt."

Alcohol, marijuana and, a few years later, cocaine and opioids from the black market helped Johnson ease the pain.

By then, county officials were seeing the area's fatal opioid overdose toll tick up. The recovery system then included only some outpatient services and Alcoholics Anonymous.

"We were grossly underprepared, like I think many places across the country were, for the opioid epidemic," Stuby said.

From 1999 through 2020, 131 deaths in the county were attributed to opioids. Across the country, it was more than 500,000. The county's opioid-linked death rate over that period paralleled the nation's.

But the county took a path that many places did not.

Officials created a plan with the help of the federally funded Addiction Technology Transfer Center that stressed recovery and built upon a local recognition that "this is our family, our friends, our brothers, our sisters," Stuby said.

A lot of the pieces of the county's transformation, including aggressive outreach to people who had overdosed, were in place nearly four years ago, when an overdose put Johnson at the edge of death. By then, the crisis had shifted from prescription painkillers to heroin and then to even more potent fentanyl, an opioid produced cheaply in illicit labs.

Her mother was told to prepare for a funeral.

Johnson, then 27, survived. But when she was well enough to leave the hospital, her mother didn't let her come home. Instead, she went to Findlay's homeless shelter. She had just hospital scrubs to wear.

There, a peer support worker — someone in recovery herself — tracked her down.

"The person who was trying to find me didn't give up," Johnson said. "She took me under her arm and carried me through some of the hardest weeks that I would have."

The settlement funds from drugmakers, wholesalers and pharmacies will not be enough for every harm reduction, treatment, recovery and prevention program that might be needed to fight the nation's opioid epidemic.

But it could be enough to jumpstart major changes to the efforts.

Since its implementation began a decade ago, Hancock County has brought in more than \$19 million in grants, largely from the federal government. Other funding comes from a county tax levy and the state. Health insurance helps pay for treatment.

Like hundreds of U.S. communities, it's launched a drug court where people can avoid jail if they work on recovery. At a recent session in the county's historic courthouse, applause rang out as one woman advanced toward graduation. The judge also ordered an immediate drug test to determine whether one man could continue in the program.

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Some advocates urge communities not to spend settlement funds on drug courts, saying there's limited evidence they work and that participants who return to drugs can end up with harsh jail sentences.

Kerri Kostic, who had been using drugs for 30 years, said drug court helped her stop using.

"It was just an endless, ridiculous, awful cycle," said Kostic, now a peer support worker in a neighboring county. "Thank God I went to drug court here in Hancock County."

At Stuby's urging, the University of Findlay launched classes on addiction. They can lead to an entry-level certificate for work in the field — a partial answer to a recovery workforce crunch.

There are three recovery homes and a community center where people can attend 12-step meetings, play video games or learn to crochet — and a similar place for teens.

Hancock's network amounts to a "no wrong-door" system, said Meelee Kim, a Brandeis University social scientist who evaluates some of the county's federal grants. Someone showing up at the recovery center can be connected in a "warm handoff" to a treatment provider because of personal connections between the programs.

The idea, which echoes experts' recommendations for use of the settlement money, is that people with the right support can recover from addiction. Every person who stays in recovery is a person who will not die of an overdose.

"It's not just about how to get people off of opioids, but how do we keep them in remission and increase their stable recovery?" said John F. Kelly, of Harvard Medical School. His research has shown that recovery support services — such as housing, community centers and peer coaching — can help.

"That's something to be optimistic about, for families to not give up hope that their loved one will be able to get and stay in remission," he said.

The first step is keeping people who use drugs alive using practices known collectively as harm reduction.

There's evidence that the efforts are helping. After 28 overdose deaths from all drugs last year, Hancock County has three confirmed overdose deaths and five suspected ones so far in 2023.

The county launched a needle exchange, providing supplies to reduce needle sharing and the risk of HIV and hepatitis C. These are policy staples in larger cities, but less common in smaller ones, in part because critics worry they enable illegal and unsafe behavior.

Earlier this year, the staff added safe smoking supplies so people who smoke drugs can avoid burns and the release of toxic fumes. But it agreed to stop after city officials objected.

Other harm reduction measures in Hancock County include distributing naloxone, a drug that can reverse overdoses, and strips to test drugs for the powerful opioid fentanyl and for xylazine, a veterinary tranquilizer that can slow the nervous system and cause wounds that can become infected.

Stuby said she would like to send people released from jail home with naloxone, but that law enforcement officials haven't been willing to go that far.

Instead, distributing the opioid antidote happens elsewhere.

At the Family Resource Center, the quick response team compiles lists of overdose survivors and people with substance use disorder who are being released from jail or prison.

One afternoon, Misty Weaver, the team coordinator, went out to check on two recent overdose survivors. One who overdosed in a Walmart parking lot gave a home address that didn't exist. The person who answered the door for the other said the man had gone to a rehab facility. Weaver left a bag full of materials, including socks, naloxone, test strips, condoms and information about other services.

Christina McCarver, then living in Toledo, did a 30-day treatment program to address her opioid addiction. Within 24 hours of being released, she relapsed and returned to the treatment center.

The center found a place for her in its Findlay facility. After that program, she moved into a room at the women's recovery home. It turned out to be an important part of her recovery.

"We keep each other in check," she said. Instead of talking about drugs with "using friends," she said, "we kind of do it the other way, where we talk ourselves into, 'Let's go to a meeting instead.'"

For the 49-year-old McCarver, who's survived a half-dozen overdoses in a life rife with trauma, being in the house made her feel like she was trusted and needed again.

After eight months living there, McCarver became the on-staff coordinator for the house. After three years with that job, she recently moved to a similar position at the home for mothers.

The homes, in residential neighborhoods, require people to be in recovery for 30 days before moving in. Rules include doing jobs around the house, attending mandatory meetings and events — and drug test requirements.

In the men's house, William Mull appreciates having structure and a mentor, Cory Kinn, who's a few years further along in recovery.

"That's always better than having someone who's just trying to tell you something they've read out of a book," said Mull, 38.

When the first home was planned in 2015, it faced strong community opposition.

After that, Stuby said she increased her efforts to keep Findlay officials and the public in the loop. The newer homes haven't caused a stir.

Kinn, a former construction worker who got into recovery work after a stint in jail on a drug conviction, spends his nights as the live-in coordinator at the men's recovery house and his days working with clients involved in the criminal justice system.

Even early in his recovery, he said, he didn't care if he stayed alive. Now? "I've built a life that I don't have to escape from."

The community could use more recovery housing, he and others say.

And it's hard for clients to get to probation meetings, medical appointments, 12-step meetings and other places they need to be. In a spread-out community with no bus system, getting around is an issue for people who don't have cars or aren't allowed to drive.

If they call someone they know for a ride, it could be "the dope man" or drug dealer, he said.

In November 2021, when Jesse Johnson was about a year into recovery, her mother let her come to her home for double festivities: Thanksgiving and her daughter's birthday.

The next day, Johnson said, her mother was in a hospital with COVID-19. She died within weeks.

It was a stressful period, but Johnson did not return to using drugs.

"I still sometimes wonder how I didn't turn back to what I knew best," Johnson said.

Instead, she's persevered and has relationships she thought she never would: Her 16-year-old daughter and 2-year-old son live with her, and she often sees her two other sons, who live with her stepfather.

Earlier this year, she started a job with the Family Resource Center, the same organization that employed the peer support worker who was so instrumental in her own early recovery. She's working with jail inmates and people on the outside.

"It's something that I've always wanted to do," she said, "because I wanted to be that person that reached out to me and then found me at one of the worst times in my life and pulled me together somehow."

FTX founder Sam Bankman-Fried convicted of defrauding cryptocurrency customers

By LARRY NEUMEISTER Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — FTX founder Sam Bankman-Fried's spectacular rise and fall in the cryptocurrency industry — a journey that included his testimony before Congress, a Super Bowl advertisement and dreams of a future run for president — hit rock bottom Thursday when a New York jury convicted him of fraud for stealing at least \$10 billion from customers and investors.

After the monthlong trial, jurors rejected Bankman-Fried's claim during testimony in Manhattan federal court that he never committed fraud or meant to cheat customers before FTX, once the world's second-largest crypto exchange, collapsed into bankruptcy a year ago.

"Mr. Bankman-Fried. Please rise and face the jury," Judge Lewis A. Kaplan commanded just before a

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jury forewoman responded "guilty" seven times to two counts of wire fraud, two counts of wire fraud conspiracy and three other conspiracy charges, which carry potential penalties adding up to 110 years in prison. Bankman-Fried is likely to face far less than the maximum at a sentencing set for March 28.

As the verdict was read, Bankman-Fried seemed stunned, appearing stone-faced, his hands clasped before him, as his lawyers remained sitting beside him. When he sat down, he looked down for several minutes.

His lawyer, Mark Cohen, later read a statement outside court to say they "respect the jury's decision. But we are very disappointed with the result."

"Mr. Bankman Fried maintains his innocence and will continue to vigorously fight the charges against him," Cohen said.

U.S. Attorney Damian Williams, who sat in the front row of the spectator section during the verdict, stood before cameras outside the courthouse and said Bankman-Fried "perpetrated one of the biggest financial frauds in American history, a multibillion dollar scheme designed to make him the king of crypto."

"But here's the thing: The cryptocurrency industry might be new. The players like Sam Bankman-Fried might be new. This kind of fraud, this kind of corruption is as old as time and we have no patience for it," he said.

He said the case should serve as a warning to every other fraudster who "thinks they're untouchable, that their crimes are too complex," that they are too powerful to prosecute or can talk their way out of their crimes because "I promise we'll have enough handcuffs for all of them."

The jury rejected Bankman-Fried's insistence during three days of testimony that he never committed fraud or plotted to steal from customers, investors and lenders and didn't realize his companies were at least \$10 billion in debt until October 2022.

After the jury left the room, Bankman-Fried's parents, both Stanford University law professors, moved to the front row behind him. His father put his arm around his wife. As Bankman-Fried was led out of the courtroom, he looked back and nodded toward his mother, who nodded back and then became emotional, wiping her hand over her face after he left the room.

The trial attracted intense interest with its focus on a fraud on a scale not seen since the 2009 prosecution of Bernard Madoff, whose Ponzi scheme over decades cheated thousands of investors out of about \$20 billion. Madoff pleaded guilty and was sentenced to 150 years in prison, where he died in 2021.

The prosecution of Bankman-Fried, 31, put a spotlight on the emerging industry of cryptocurrency and a group of young executives in their 20s who lived together in a \$30 million luxury apartment in the Bahamas as they dreamed of becoming the most powerful player in a new financial field.

Prosecutors made sure jurors knew that the defendant they saw in court with short hair and a suit was not the man with big messy hair and shorts that became his trademark appearance after he started his cryptocurrency hedge fund, Alameda Research, in 2017 and FTX, his cryptocurrency exchange, two years later.

They showed the jury pictures of Bankman-Fried sleeping on a private jet, sitting with a deck of cards and mingling at the Super Bowl with celebrities including the singer Katy Perry. Assistant U.S. Attorney Nicolas Roos called Bankman-Fried someone who liked "celebrity chasing."

In a closing argument, Cohen said prosecutors were trying to turn "Sam into some sort of villain, some sort of monster."

"It's both wrong and unfair, and I hope and believe that you have seen that it's simply not true," he said. "According to the government, everything Sam ever touched and said was fraudulent."

The government relied heavily on the testimony of three former members of Bankman-Fried's inner circle, his top executives including his former girlfriend, Caroline Ellison, to explain how Bankman-Fried used Alameda Research to siphon billions of dollars from customer accounts at FTX.

With that money, prosecutors said, the Massachusetts Institute of Technology graduate gained influence and power through investments, contributions, tens of millions of dollars in political contributions, Congressional testimony and a publicity campaign that enlisted celebrities like comedian Larry David and football quarterback Tom Brady.

Ellison, 28, testified that Bankman-Fried directed her while she was chief executive of Alameda Research to commit fraud as he pursued ambitions to lead huge companies, spend money influentially and run for U.S. president someday. She said he thought he had a 5% chance to eventually be U.S. president.

Becoming tearful as she described the collapse of the cryptocurrency empire last November, Ellison said the revelations that caused customers collectively to demand their money back, exposing the fraud, brought a "relief that I didn't have to lie anymore."

FTX cofounder Gary Wang, who was FTX's chief technology officer, revealed in his testimony that Bankman-Fried directed him to insert code into FTX's operations so that Alameda Research could make unlimited withdrawals from FTX and have a credit line up to \$65 billion. Wang said the money came from customers.

Nishad Singh, the former head of engineering at FTX, testified that he felt "blindsided and horrified" at the result of the actions of a man he once admired when he saw the extent of the fraud. He said the collapse last November left him suicidal.

Ellison, Wang and Singh all pleaded guilty to fraud charges and testified against Bankman-Fried in the hopes of leniency at sentencing.

Bankman-Fried was arrested in the Bahamas last December and extradited to the United States, where he was freed on a \$250 million personal recognizance bond with electronic monitoring and a requirement that he remain at the home of his parents in Palo Alto, California.

His communications, including hundreds of phone calls with journalists and internet influencers, along with emails and texts, eventually got him in trouble when the judge concluded he was trying to influence prospective trial witnesses and ordered him jailed in August.

During the trial, prosecutors used Bankman-Fried's public statements, online announcements and his Congressional testimony against him, showing how the entrepreneur repeatedly promised customers that their deposits were safe and secure as late as last Nov. 7 when he tweeted "FTX is fine. Assets are fine" as customers furiously tried to withdraw their money. He deleted the tweet the next day. FTX filed for bankruptcy four days later.

In his closing, Roos mocked Bankman-Fried's testimony, saying that under questioning from his lawyer, the defendant's words were "smooth, like it had been rehearsed a bunch of times?"

But under cross examination, "he was a different person," the prosecutor said. "Suddenly on cross-examination he couldn't remember a single detail about his company or what he said publicly. It was uncomfortable to hear. He never said he couldn't recall during his direct examination, but it happened over 140 times during his cross-examination."

Former federal prosecutors said the quick verdict — after only half a day of deliberation — showed how well the government tried the case.

"The government tried the case as we expected," said Joshua A. Naftalis, a partner at Pallas Partners LLP and a former Manhattan prosecutor. "It was a massive fraud, but that doesn't mean it had to be a complicated fraud, and I think the jury understood that argument."

Live updates | Israeli troops tighten encirclement of Gaza City as top US diplomat arrives in Israel

By The Associated Press undefined

Israeli troops tightened their encirclement of Gaza City on Friday as U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken arrived in Israel to press for a humanitarian "pause" in the fighting with Hamas and for more aid to be allowed into besieged Gaza.

Tensions continued to escalate along the northern border with Lebanon ahead of a speech planned later Friday by Hassan Nasrallah, the leader of Hezbollah, a Hamas ally. It is his first public speech since Hamas attacked Israel last month, stoking fears the conflict could become a regional one.

Roughly 800 people — including hundreds of Palestinians with foreign passports and dozens of injured — have been allowed to leave the Gaza Strip via the Rafah crossing under an apparent agreement among

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the U.S., Egypt, Israel and Qatar, which mediates with Hamas.

Israel has allowed more than 260 trucks carrying food and medicine through the crossing, but aid workers say it's not nearly enough. Israeli authorities have refused to allow fuel in.

The Palestinian death toll in the Israel-Hamas war has reached 9,061, according to the Hamas-run Health Ministry in Gaza. In the occupied West Bank, more than 140 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 242 hostages were taken from Israel into Gaza by the militant group.

Currently:

1. Following an Israeli airstrike, crowded Gaza hospital struggles to treat wounded children
2. As more Palestinians with foreign citizenship leave Gaza, some families are left in the lurch
3. Stay in Israel, or flee? Thai workers caught up in Hamas attack and war are faced with a dilemma
4. Netanyahu has sidestepped accountability for failing to prevent Hamas attack, instead blaming others
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:

IRAN-BACKED IRAQI MILITIAS ANNOUNCE EXPANDED ATTACKS ON US BASES

BAGHDAD — The Islamic Resistance in Iraq, a coalition of Iran-backed Iraqi militias, announced Friday that it will launch a more "intense and expansive" phase of operations against U.S. bases in the region starting next week.

It said the escalation is "in support of our people in Palestine and to avenge the martyrs" in the ongoing Israel-Hamas war.

The group has launched a string of attacks on U.S. bases in Iraq and Syria in recent weeks, some of which have injured U.S. personnel. As of Tuesday, the Pentagon said there had been 27 rocket and drone attacks on U.S. bases in Iraq and Syria and that the U.S. was deploying an additional 300 troops to the Middle East to bolster those already there.

PALESTINIAN OFFICIALS SAY ISRAELI RAIDS KILLED 7 IN WEST BANK

JERUSALEM — In large-scale raids in the occupied West Bank overnight, Israeli forces killed seven Palestinians and arrested scores more, Israeli military officials and Palestinian health officials said.

Israeli forces killed three in Jenin, two in Hebron, one in Nablus and one in Qalandiya, according to the Palestinian Health Ministry.

The military said the attack in Jenin included an airstrike — a once rare but now increasingly common form of attack in the territory. It said Israeli forces killed Hamas militants after they threw explosives at the soldiers. Forces also found explosives buried under the roads of the Jenin refugee camp, as well as an underground space with ammunition.

In Nablus, Israeli forces demolished the home of a Palestinian militant whom they accused of carrying out a shooting attack in the town of Huwara earlier this year, killing two Israelis.

Across the West Bank, the military arrested 37 Palestinians, identifying 17 of them as Hamas militants. Israel has stepped its raids on Palestinian towns and cities in the West Bank since the start of the war, leaving at least 141 Palestinians dead in what U.N. monitors say is the deadliest period in the territory on record.

BLINKEN ARRIVES IN ISRAEL FOR URGENT TALKS ON WAR

TEL AVIV, Israel — U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken has arrived in Israel for urgent talks with Israeli officials about their escalating war with Hamas in Gaza.

Blinken landed in Tel Aviv on Friday for his third trip to Israel since the war began with Hamas' incursion into Israel on Oct. 7. Blinken will also visit Jordan and may make additional stops in the region before traveling to Asia early next week.

He will meet Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and other top officials at a highly charged and sensitive time as Israel intensifies its military operations in Gaza and international criticism of its tactics increases over the large number of civilian casualties.

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U.S. President Joe Biden has called for a “humanitarian pause” in the fighting in order to arrange the evacuation of dual citizens and foreigners still trapped in Gaza as well as to try to secure the release of more than 240 hostages Hamas is holding and to increase humanitarian aid to civilians in Gaza.

Blinken will again stress Israel’s right to defend itself but will also be making the case for Israel to respect the rules of war as well as consider postwar scenarios for how the territory can be run if and when it succeeds in eradicating Hamas.

For the past week, the U.S. administration has been pushing a two-state resolution to establish a durable and lasting peace, although neither the current Israeli nor Palestinian leaderships have shown interest in such negotiations, which have failed multiple times.

Blinken will also urge Israeli authorities to rein in violence against Palestinians in the West Bank by Jewish settlers.

LEBANON REPORTS ISRAELI SHELLING ALONG BORDER

BEIRUT — In the hours before a much-anticipated speech by Hezbollah leader Hassan Nasrallah on Friday, his first since the beginning of the Israel-Hamas war, Lebanon’s state news agency reported Israeli shelling on the outskirts of several towns along the Lebanese border.

Nasrallah’s speech comes as low-level clashes have increased between Hezbollah and Palestinian armed groups on one side and Israeli forces on the other.

On Thursday, Hezbollah announced a simultaneous attack against 19 Israeli military posts with mortar fire and anti-tank missiles and also launched suicide drones for the first time in the conflict, targeting an Israeli post in the disputed Chebaa Farms area. Also Thursday evening, Hamas claimed responsibility for rocket strikes on the northern Israeli town of Kiryat Shmona that injured two people.

Israel responded with airstrikes and artillery shelling of Lebanese border areas, with Lebanese state media reporting four civilians were killed in the Saluki Valley area. At least 10 civilians and dozens of fighters with Hezbollah and allied groups have been reported killed in Lebanon since Oct. 7.

ISRAEL RELEASES HUNDREDS OF PALESTINIAN WORKERS

RAFAH CROSSING, Gaza Strip — Israel on Friday released hundreds of Palestinian workers who said they had been held in an Israeli-run jail since the Israel-Hamas war broke out Oct. 7.

The workers were dropped off by buses early Friday near Gaza and walked into the southern edge of the besieged enclave through the Kerem Shalom border crossing.

The workers were among what Israeli rights groups believe are thousands of laborers marooned in Israel since the outbreak of the war. They say some of the workers were detained by Israel without charge or due process.

The rights groups say the workers had their work permits revoked and any trace of their status wiped from their records, leaving them vulnerable and in legal limbo at a time when their families in Gaza are enduring Israel’s massive bombardment.

Some of those walking into Gaza early Friday said they had been held at Ofer, an Israeli-run detention center in the occupied West Bank.

One of those released, Mohammed Shalaya, said treatment was bad during the first five to six days but that conditions then improved.

Shalaya said he worked at a quarry in northern Israel. He said he and the other workers were forced to hand over their money, cellphones and identity cards after being detained and didn’t get their possessions back before being dropped off near Gaza.

JAPAN AIRLIFTS 46 PEOPLE FROM ISRAEL

TOKYO — A Japanese Defense Ministry aircraft carrying 46 passengers — 20 Japanese residents of Israel and two of their non-Japanese relatives, 15 South Koreans, four Vietnamese and one Taiwanese — from Israel is on its way to Tokyo and is expected to arrive later Friday, Japan’s Foreign Ministry said.

BAHRAIN’S AMBASSADOR TO ISRAEL HAS RETURNED HOME

DUBAI, United Arab Emirates — Bahrain’s government says its ambassador to Israel has returned to the island nation as Israel continues its war on Hamas in the Gaza Strip.

The state-run Bahrain News Agency issued a statement late Thursday saying the ambassador “returned

to the kingdom some time ago," hours after the lower house of its parliament made a series of claims about relations between the two countries.

The Israeli Embassy in Manama, Bahrain's capital, had evacuated in mid-October amid security concerns.

The Bahraini statement did not say that the country had severed diplomatic and economic ties despite an earlier assertion by parliament's lower house. Israel's Foreign Ministry said, "Relations between Israel and Bahrain are stable."

Bahrain was one of several Arab nations that diplomatically recognized Israel in 2020. In the time since, Bahrain has heralded its ties to the country, despite protests. Those ties have been strained by the war.

Bahrain is also home to the U.S. Navy's 5th Fleet and long has had tense relations with Iran, which has backed Hamas.

UN FINDS ISRAEL USED DISPROPORTIONATE FORCE IN WEST BANK IN RECENT YEARS

UNITED NATIONS – U.N. Secretary-General Antonio Guterres said in a report that Israel used disproportionate force against Palestinians in the occupied West Bank and some killings "appeared to amount to extrajudicial executions."

In the report circulated Thursday, Guterres said Israeli forces have escalated the use of deadly force in recent years across the West Bank, while attacks by Palestinians also rose. He said Israeli security forces killed 304 Palestinians, including 61 boys and two girls, in the West Bank and east Jerusalem during the two-year period ending May 31.

In numerous instances monitored by the U.N. human rights agency, Guterres said, "Israeli security forces apparently used force unnecessarily or in a disproportionate manner, resulting in a possible arbitrary deprivation of life," which is prohibited under international humanitarian law.

The secretary-general said the number of Palestinians in Israeli detention increased considerably in those two years, and Israel continued restricting the rights to freedom of expression, peaceful assembly and association, and to freedom of movement.

ISRAEL WILL BAR PALESTINIANS IN GAZA FROM WORKING IN ISRAEL

JERUSALEM — Israel will stop providing funding to the Palestinian Authority earmarked for the Gaza Strip and will bar Palestinians in Gaza from working in Israel.

Though Hamas seized control of Gaza from the Palestinian Authority in 2007, the PA has continued to pay tens of thousands of civil servants in the strip. The decision by Israel's Security Cabinet on Thursday would punish the cash-strapped PA for continuing those salaries.

"Israel is severing off all contact with Gaza," the government's statement said.

Under interim peace accords from the 1990s, Israel collects tax funds on behalf of Palestinians and transfers the money to the PA each month.

The statement also said Israel was revoking permits for the roughly 18,000 Palestinians from Gaza who were allowed to work inside Israel. The jobs were highly coveted in Gaza, which has an unemployment rate of roughly 50%.

Israel's encirclement of Gaza City tightens as top US diplomat arrives to push for humanitarian aid

By NAJIB JOBAIN, BASSEM MROUE and DAVID RISING Associated Press

KHAN YOUNIS, Gaza Strip (AP) — U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken arrived in Israel on Friday to press for more humanitarian aid to be allowed into besieged Gaza, while Israeli troops tightened their encirclement of Gaza City, the focus of Israel's campaign to crush the enclave's ruling Hamas group.

On the northern border with Lebanon, tensions escalated ahead of a speech planned for later Friday by Hezbollah leader Hassan Nasrallah. He is making his first public comments since Hamas attacked Israel last month.

Hezbollah, an Iran-backed ally of Hamas, attacked Israeli military positions in northern Israel with drones, mortar fire and suicide drones, stoking fears the Israel-Hamas war could become a regional one. The

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Israeli military said it retaliated with warplanes and helicopter gunships.

Since the war began on Oct. 7, Hezbollah has taken calculated steps to keep Israel's military busy on the country's border with Lebanon but so far has done nothing of the extent to ignite an all-out war.

More than 9,000 Palestinians have been killed in Gaza so far, and another 1,400 people have died in Israel, mainly civilians killed during Hamas' initial attack.

Blinken is making his third trip to Israel since the Hamas attack. This trip takes him to Tel Aviv and Amman, Jordan, and follows President Joe Biden's suggestion for a humanitarian "pause" in the fighting. The aim would be to let in aid for Palestinians and let out more foreign nationals and wounded. Around 800 people left Gaza over the past two days.

Israel did not immediately respond to Biden's suggestion. But Netanyahu, who has previously ruled out a cease-fire, said Thursday: "We are advancing ... Nothing will stop us." He vowed to destroy Hamas rule in the Gaza Strip.

The U.S. has pledged unwavering support for Israel after Hamas militants killed hundreds of men, women and children and took some 240 people captive almost four weeks ago.

Before Blinken departed, the U.S. State Department reiterated American "support for Israel's right to defend itself." At the same time, the Biden administration has pushed for Israel to let more aid into Gaza amid growing alarm over the humanitarian crisis in the Palestinian territory.

More than 3,700 Palestinian children have been killed in 25 days of fighting, according to the Health Ministry in Hamas-run Gaza. Bombardment has driven more than half the territory's 2.3 million people from their homes. Food, water and fuel are running low under Israel's siege, and overwhelmed hospitals warn they are on the verge of collapse.

Israel has allowed more than 260 trucks carrying food and medicine through the crossing, but aid workers say it's not nearly enough. Israeli authorities have refused to allow fuel in, saying Hamas is hoarding fuel for military use and would steal new supplies.

White House national security spokesman John Kirby said the U.S. was not advocating for a general cease-fire but a "temporary, localized" pause.

Israel and the U.S. seem to have no clear plan for what would come next if Hamas rule in Gaza is brought down — a key question on Blinken's agenda on his upcoming visit, according to the State Department.

Earlier in the week, Blinken suggested that the Palestinian Authority govern Gaza. Hamas drove the authority's forces out of Gaza in its 2007 takeover of the territory. The authority now holds limited powers in some parts of the Israeli-occupied West Bank.

Military officials said Israeli forces have now completely encircled Gaza City, a densely packed cluster of neighborhoods that Israel says is the center of Hamas military infrastructure and includes a vast network of underground tunnels, bunkers and command centers.

Israeli forces are "fighting in a built-up, dense, complex area," said the military's chief of staff, Herzi Halevy.

The Israel military spokesperson, Rear Adm. Daniel Hagari, said Israeli forces were in "face to face" battles with militants, calling in airstrikes and shelling when needed. He said they were inflicting heavy losses on Hamas fighters and destroying their infrastructure with engineering equipment.

Casualties on both sides were expected to rise as Israeli troops advance toward the dense residential neighborhoods of Gaza City. Israel has warned residents to immediately evacuate the Shati refugee camp, which borders Gaza City's center.

Hamas' military wing, the Qassam Brigades, said early Friday that its fighters battled Israeli troops in several areas in Gaza and claimed they killed four soldiers on the northern edge of the city of Beit Lahiya. The Hamas military group also claimed to have destroyed several tanks with locally made anti-tank rockets.

Video released Friday by Israel of recent fighting in Gaza showed Israeli troops engaging in small arms fire and driving bulldozers, tanks and other armored vehicles into urban areas.

Hundreds of thousands of Palestinians remain in the path of fighting in northern Gaza, despite Israel's repeated calls for them to evacuate. Many have crowded into U.N. facilities, hoping for safety.

Still, four U.N. schools-turned-shelter in northern Gaza and Bureij were hit in recent days, killing 24 people, according to Philippe Lazzarini, general-secretary of the U.N. agency for Palestinian refugees,

known as UNRWA.

In addition to the 9,061 Palestinians killed in the war, mostly women and minors, more than 32,000 people have been wounded, the Gaza Health Ministry said, without providing a breakdown between civilians and fighters.

In Israel, some 5,400 have been injured in addition to the 1,400 killed, and 19 Israeli soldiers have been killed in Gaza since the start of the ground operation.

Rocket fire from Gaza into Israel, and daily skirmishes between Israel and Lebanon's Hezbollah militants, have also disrupted life for millions of Israelis and forced an estimated 250,000 to evacuate border towns.

Several hundred Palestinians with foreign passports were allowed to flee the fighting this week, leaving Gaza through the Rafah crossing into Egypt.

U.S. officials said 79 Americans were among those who got out. 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.

A fire at a drug rehabilitation center in Iran kills 27 people, injures 17 others, state media say

TEHRAN, Iran (AP) — A fire broke out at a drug rehabilitation center in northern Iran on Friday, killing at least 27 people, state media reported.

Seventeen others were injured and taken to hospitals in Langroud city, about 200 kilometers (125 miles) northwest of the capital, Tehran, state TV said.

It said the fire started at the private rehabilitation center early Friday morning, and showed a video of flames and smoke pouring into the dark sky.

The fire was extinguished, and authorities are investigating the cause, it said.

Such accidents are not rare, mainly because of the disregarding of safety measures, aging facilities and inadequate emergency services.

In September, a fire broke out at a car battery factory owned by Iran's Defense Ministry for the second time in less than a week. There were no reports of casualties.

Biden's handling of the Israel-Hamas war is a political test in South Florida's Jewish community

By ADRIANA GOMEZ LICON Associated Press

SURFSIDE, Florida (AP) — On a recent balmy South Florida night, dozens of people gathered at a synagogue along a palm tree-lined road to talk about the war going on thousands of miles away.

Located just north of Miami Beach, the Shul of Bal Harbour is in the heart of South Florida's Jewish community. Its rabbi is a well-known supporter of Florida Gov. Ron DeSantis, a Republican who has long supported conservative priorities on Israel and spoken at the Shul.

But in potentially unfriendly territory for Democrats, several people who attended the meeting said they were pleased President Joe Biden's support of the Israeli offensive against Gaza.

"I think he has sent a strong message, and that is very important," said Georg Lipsztein, a member of the congregation. "Israel is going to do what it has to do."

This swath of South Florida used to be a Democratic stronghold but has moved to the right, helping former President Donald Trump win the state in 2020 and DeSantis coast to a huge re-election win last year and flipping Miami-Dade County, long key to Democratic strength in the state. If Florida is to regain its status as a perennially competitive state, how Jewish voters perceive Biden's handling of the Israel-Hamas war will be critical.

Hamas' Oct. 7 attack killing more than 1,400 Israeli civilians evoked feelings of deep frustration, grief and anger among American Jews.

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"The comfort and the resolve that he's demonstrated has been really critical at a time when people are really just desperate," said U.S. Rep. Debbie Wasserman Schultz, a Biden surrogate who represents suburbs south of Fort Lauderdale. "I've never seen in my 30 years of public service this magnitude of pain, shock and anger burning in the hearts of all Jews."

In 2016, Democrats had about 327,000 more registered voters in the state. The GOP now has about 626,000 more registered voters.

In South Florida, rabbis and community leaders are pushing their congregations to call their lawmakers and insist they back Israel as it ramps up its offensive. In Michigan, another swing state, many Arab-American and Muslim communities are angry about the Biden administration's response as Israel's offensive has resulted in thousands of Palestinian deaths. And some Democrats are concerned about younger voters who polls show have greater sympathy for Palestinian concerns than the party's older and more centrist voters.

The administration is having to strike "a delicate balance of showing support for Israel rhetorically and militarily but trying to prevent the humanitarian crisis in Gaza from getting out of control," said Eric Lob, a Florida International University professor and non-resident scholar at the Washington-based think tank Middle East Institute.

About 43% of Florida's Jewish voters supported Donald Trump in the 2020 presidential election, compared with 30% of Jewish voters who supported him nationwide, according to AP VoteCast. Florida Gov. Ron DeSantis won 45% of Jewish voters in his re-election, when he flipped traditionally Democratic Miami-Dade County while also winning a majority of Latino voters statewide.

An estimated 525,000 Jews live in Miami's metropolitan area which includes Fort Lauderdale and Pompano Beach, according to the American Jewish Population Project at Brandeis University.

Jacob Solomon, president of the Greater Miami Jewish Federation, said South Florida has a large Orthodox community along with immigrants from Central and South America for whom English is not a first language. South Florida's Jewish population includes Cubans and Venezuelans who closely follow U.S. relations with their countries of origin and generally support Republicans.

"We are among the most pro-Israel Zionist communities in North America," he said, adding that he thinks it is the community with the strongest connection to Israel in the U.S.

On her trips to Israel, Lauren Book, the top Democrat in the Florida State Senate, uses an app that warns Israelis about incoming rockets from Hamas. But even back in Florida, the alert still goes off sometimes awakening her 6-year-old twins.

"I keep it on, just so I know what's happening and so my children understand that if we were in Israel, you don't have the luxury of turning it off," she said in an interview.

Elected to the state senate in 2016, Book is a vocal opponent of DeSantis on most issues and was arrested near the state Capitol earlier this year in a protest against a ban on abortions after six weeks that he eventually signed. But she told The Associated Press last week that she was thankful for his sending charter planes to Israel to transport people seeking evacuation.

"We are all deeply, deeply connected and only one or two degrees separated from all of the things that have happened there," Book said.

Rabbis and community leaders are holding Zoom calls with survivors of the Hamas attack.

Many leaders oppose a ceasefire. Israel has launched a total blockade of Gaza; airstrikes have flattened buildings and homes, killing civilians and forcing hundreds of thousands to evacuate as it prepares for a possible ground invasion, vowing to destroy Hamas.

Rabbi Andrew Jacobs, who leads a synagogue in Fort Lauderdale, Ramat Shalom, says he encourages members of the congregation to stay informed and reach out to leaders and thank them for standing by Israel. He said he warns congregants to be prepared for voices to change "when the ugliness of war comes out" as Israel, with support from the United States, continues to bombard Gaza.

"We have to be vigilant to all calls and cries for ceasefire or putting blame on Israel right now because this work needs to be done once and for all to bring peace to that region," Jacobs said. "President Biden

has expressed very strong support for Israel and those of us who support the Jewish state are going to continue to expect him to keep doing the same thing.”

Many are worried that anti-Israel sentiment is growing, particularly in universities. In California, an incident was reported at Stanford University in which a lecturer singled out Jewish students in an undergraduate class asking them to stand in a corner and told the room that was what Israel does to the Palestinians. In New York, threatening statements about Jews were shared on an internet discussion board at Cornell University, prompting officials to send police to guard a Jewish center and kosher dining hall.

At the University of Miami, vigils and rallies have been held by both students mourning the loss of Israelis and calling for the return of hostages as well as those grieving the loss of Palestinians in the war. The university’s president, Julio Frenk, issued a statement in solidarity with Israel.

One Miami student, 20-year-old Nicole Segal, says she is hoping for continuing support from the administration, but has been disheartened by what she sees as a lack of support from other progressive groups.

“It’s very shocking that not enough non-Jewish people are standing up for Israel. I feel as if when there were other political matters, they stood up,” she said. “It’s upsetting.”

In the wake of Matthew Perry’s death, Chinese fans mourn an old friend

By FU TING Associated Press

Long before “Friends” made its official debut in China, the show was a word-of-mouth phenomenon in the country. In the wake of Matthew Perry’s death at 54, fans in China are mourning the loss of the star who felt less like a distant celebrity and more like an old friend.

A Wednesday evening memorial at a cafe in Shenzhen, a busy city across the border of Hong Kong, was one of several held throughout the country for the actor who played Chandler Bing and died Saturday in Los Angeles. The coffee shop — an homage to the 10-season sitcom, from its name (Smelly Cat) to the Central Perk sign on its glass wall — was packed with people and floral arrangements as the TV mounted in the corner played an episode of “Friends.”

“There are more people who showed up than we expected,” said cafe manager Nie Yanxia. “People shared their own memories about Chandler and ‘Friends’ and many teared up.”

A large poster displayed on the bar featured pictures of Perry over the years. “We love you, friend,” read the message at the bottom.

While “Friends” didn’t debut in China until 2012 — through Sohu, a streaming platform — the show had become popular more than a decade earlier thanks to bootleg DVD and hard drive copies. Once Chinese fans added Mandarin subtitles to the show, which ran in the U.S. from 1994 to 2004, it quickly gained a following.

“China was experiencing this drastic historical change marked by the rise of consumerism and also individualism and urbanization back then,” said Xian Wang, a professor on modern Chinese literature and popular culture at the University of Notre Dame. “This TV show actually offered a way to imagine this kind of so-called metropolitan utopian imagination.”

Many Chinese fans learned English through watching the show and got a peek into American life and culture. The uncensored underground version of “Friends” also opened a window into topics that weren’t commonly broached on Chinese television, like LGBTQ+ themes and sexual content. (While “Friends” wasn’t initially censored on Sohu, the platform — and others that later began officially distributing the show in China — would increasingly cut out scenes.)

Wang said many young people in China identified with Perry’s character and his fictional friends as they navigated living independently and developing their own identity in a big city.

“It’s kind of like the loss of one of their own friends,” Wang said. “So that’s emotional because there was a sense of the childhood or youth memory, a sense of nostalgia.”

In the bustling neon city of Shanghai on Wednesday night, more than 30 people packed a petite rendition of the Central Perk cafe. There was barely room to stand, and just space for three to sit on a replica of

the iconic orange sofa. Those who couldn't fit inside the cafe spilled out the door, peering in, while others sat on chairs outside. Inside, fans took turns reading articles about Perry. Some choked up.

Nilufar Arkin, who lives in Tianjin, says she and her boyfriend have been described by their friends as the real-life Monica and Chandler. The couple even got matching tattoos two years ago with the lyrics from the theme song "I'll Be There For You," performed by The Rembrandts. The artwork on their arms also depict the classic Thanksgiving scene where Monica dances in front of Chandler wearing a turkey on her head. It was the first time Chandler told Monica that he loved her.

"I think Chandler and Monica is the model as a couple," Arkin, 27, said. "This is what I admire for a couple, I love both of them. He's my type as a husband."

Arkin heard about Perry's death when she woke up at her friend's home in Xinjiang and broke down in tears.

"I couldn't believe it and had to verify it again and again until I found it was true, then I just cried," Arkin said. "He's my top one character in the show."

Fu Xueying has watched the series repeatedly; each time, it grows on her more. The 20-year-old student has visited three Central Perk-themed cafes, in Shanghai, Shenzhen and Guangzhou, where she felt like she was part of the show.

"Friends' has been a haven for my life," Fu said. "Every time I have too much pressure from school or being unhappy, I watch it and forget the things that happened to me."

For mechanical engineer Zhang Fengguang and his fiancée Sun Tiantian, both 30, Perry and the show will always be a part of their lives. In September, Zhang recreated Chandler and Monica's proposal scene; Sun said yes.

"I used his scene and his line," Zhang said. "It feels like I just got to know this long-lost friend, but he's just gone."

Biden is bound for Maine to mourn with a community reeling from a shooting that left 18 people dead

By FATIMA HUSSEIN and PATRICK WHITTLE Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Joe Biden is heading to Lewiston, Maine to mourn with a community where 18 people were killed in the deadliest mass shooting in state history. It's the type of trip that is becoming far too familiar.

"Too many times the president and first lady have traveled to communities completely torn apart by gun violence," White House press secretary Karine Jean-Pierre said on the eve of the Bidens' trip on Friday. "We can't accept it as normal."

In addition to those killed, 13 people were injured in the Oct. 25 shootings at a bar and a bowling alley.

The Bidens will pay their respects to the victims, meet with first responders and grieve with families and community members affected by the shootings, Jean-Pierre said.

The president has said he's determined to fight gun violence in the U.S. He created the first-ever White House office of gun violence prevention, which is charged with finding solutions and fully implementing landmark gun safety legislation enacted last year. He's also pushing for a ban on so-called assault weapons.

The president has visited many communities scarred by mass shootings. He's been to Buffalo, New York; Uvalde, Texas; Monterey Park, California just in roughly the past year.

"There are too many other schools, too many other everyday places that have become killing fields, battlefields here in America," Biden said during a speech on gun violence last year.

As of Friday, there have been at least 37 mass killings in the U.S. so far in 2023, leaving at least 195 people dead, not including shooters who died, according to a database maintained by The Associated Press and USA Today in partnership with Northeastern University.

The shooting has many searching for answers.

Elizabeth Seal, whose husband Josh Seal was killed in the Maine shootings, said previously she was frustrated to learn that semiautomatic weapons were used.

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"In general, I have no issue with the use of guns. Some people feel more comfortable having a gun for protection or for some it's a hunting tradition," Seal, who communicated through an ASL interpreter because she's deaf, told the AP earlier this week.

"But why do we have semiautomatic weapons available that people can get? That can cause such severe devastation? I don't see the point. There's no good reason for that. And so I hope that our lawmakers will do something to change that. I don't see this problem in other countries, right? This is an American issue."

Overall, stricter gun laws are desired by a majority of Americans, regardless of what the current gun laws are in their state. That desire could be tied to some Americans' perceptions of what fewer guns could mean for the country — fewer mass shootings.

In Maine, shooter Robert Card, a 40-year-old firearms instructor, was found dead of an apparent self-inflicted gun shot wound after the killings. Authorities said this week that his family had brought their concerns about his deteriorating mental health to the local sheriff five months before the deadly rampage. He had also undergone a mental health evaluation after he began behaving erratically at a training facility last summer.

Several thousand people attended vigils for the victims over the weekend, and residents started returning to work and school on Monday after stay-at-home orders were lifted.

Biden was notified of the shooting as he hosted a White House state dinner honoring Australia. He later stepped out of the event to speak by telephone with Maine Gov. Janet Mills and the state's representatives in Congress.

Mills, a Democrat, said she felt Biden's arrival in the city would be significant because it shows the country is grieving with Maine, and that the state has the president's support.

"By visiting us in our time of need, the president and first lady are making clear that the entire nation stands with Lewiston and with Maine — and for that I am profoundly grateful," she said.

How an American meat broker is fueling Amazon deforestation

By SASHA CHAVKIN Pulitzer Center

WASHINGTON (AP) — As incomes in China have grown in the last decade, so has China's appetite for beef. No longer out of reach for China's middle class, beef now sizzles in home woks and restaurant kitchens.

China has become the world's biggest importer of beef, and Brazil is China's biggest supplier, according to United Nations Comtrade data. More beef moves from Brazil to China than between any other two countries.

But the Brazilian cattle industry is a major driver of the destruction of the Amazon rainforest. Data analysis by The Associated Press and the Rainforest Investigations Network, a nonprofit reporting consortium, found that a little-known American company is among the key suppliers and distributors feeding China's hunger for beef — and the Amazon deforestation that it fuels.

The world's largest rainforest, the Amazon plays a critical role in the global climate by absorbing carbon emissions. A new study published this week in the journal of the National Academy of Sciences linked Amazon deforestation to warmer regional temperatures.

Salt Lake City-based Parker-Migliorini International, better known as PMI Foods, has been a major beneficiary of the beef trade between Brazil and China. PMI has shipped more than \$1.7 billion in Brazilian beef over the last decade — more than 95% of it to China, according to data from Panjiva, a company that uses customs records to track international trade. Over the last decade, Chinese beef imports have surged sixfold, U.N. Comtrade data shows, and PMI has helped satisfy China's growing demand.

As a middleman that has been one of the leading importers of Brazilian beef to China, PMI provides a window into how that growing international trade is driving deforestation.

This story was supported by the Pulitzer Center's Rainforest Investigations Network.

Holly Gibbs, a professor of geography and environmental studies at the University of Wisconsin-Madison

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who studies land use changes linked to the beef industry, says that PMI has contributed to the Amazon's destruction, because it sources beef from companies that purchase cows raised on deforested land.

Last year, the Brazilian Amazon lost more than 4,000 square miles (10,360 square kilometers) of rain-forest, the equivalent of nearly 3,000 soccer fields each day, according to a January report by Imazon, a Brazilian research group that uses satellite monitoring to track deforestation.

More than two-thirds of deforested land in the Brazilian Amazon has been converted to cattle pastures, according to Brazil's Ministry of Environment and Climate Change.

PMI gets more of its Brazilian beef from Sao Paulo, Brazil-based meat processing giant JBS SA than from anywhere else. In a series of reports released between 2018 and 2023, Brazilian prosecutors have determined that JBS purchased massive numbers of cattle raised on illegally deforested land. Last December, prosecutors found that JBS had bought more than 85,000 cows from ranches that engaged in illegal deforestation in Pará, one of nine states in the Brazilian Amazon. Their latest report, released October 26, found that JBS had substantially lower but still significant rates of purchases from ranches involved in environmental violations across four Amazon states.

"There's no doubt that PMI Foods is benefiting from the deforestation of the Amazon," Gibbs said. "They're also helping to drive that deforestation by continuing to pay into that system."

In an email, a PMI spokesperson said that "in a world where famine, malnutrition and acute food insecurity are a global concern, PMI is focused on feeding millions of people all over the world," including providing meals to refugees.

PMI said it is working to strengthen environmental practices of its beef operations. "While our absolute primary priority is feeding people, we remain committed to continuous improvement of sustainability across the beef value chain," the spokesperson said.

PMI Foods is a \$3 billion global enterprise that buys and sells more than 1.6 billion pounds (725.7 million kilograms) of beef, pork, chicken, seafood and eggs each year. In the last decade, PMI Foods shipped more than \$616 million of Brazilian beef from JBS, almost twice as much as from any other supplier, shipping records show.

JBS, in turn, purchased a significant share of its cattle from ranches that were illegally deforested, Brazilian prosecutors have found. These properties accounted for 15% of JBS's cattle supply in the Amazon state of Pará from 2019 to 2020, according to an audit by prosecutors audit last December. The company's purchases from properties linked to environmental violations decreased to 6% of its supply across four Amazon states in the following year, prosecutors found in an audit published in October.

JBS has been investigated and fined by Brazilian authorities in connection with its purchases of cattle from illegal farms, but these are separate from the audits, which are focused on improving company practices.

JBS, the world's largest meat processor, asserts that it has fixed the problems identified in previous audits by prosecutors. In a statement, JBS said it has a "zero-tolerance policy for illegal deforestation" in its supply chains, and is adopting block chain technology to include vetting of indirect suppliers by 2025.

Yet as recently as last fall, JBS admitted to a large-scale purchase of cattle raised on illegally deforested land. Following an investigation by Repórter Brasil, a contributor to the Rainforest Investigations Network, JBS acknowledged it had illegally bought nearly 9,000 cattle from a rancher whom Brazilian authorities have described as "one of the biggest deforesters in the country." The rancher, Chaules Volban Pozzebon, is now serving a 70-year prison sentence for offenses including leading a criminal gang.

PMI also buys in large volume from Brazil's second largest meat processor, Marfrig, which has been dogged as well by reports by environmental groups and news outlets alleging that it purchased cattle from ranches that were involved in illegal deforestation. In February 2022, the Inter-American Development Bank scrapped a \$200 million loan to Marfrig amid criticism of the company's environmental record. In September, the Swiss food multinational Nestlé dropped Marfrig as a beef supplier in Brazil following media reports last year that Marfrig had bought cattle raised on land that was seized from indigenous peoples.

Marfrig said in an email that the ranch cited in last year's reports was on land that had not yet been designated protected indigenous territory. Marfrig did not face legal penalties in connection with the case. The company said it has a "rigorous livestock sourcing policy" that uses satellite monitoring to avoid sup-

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pliers linked to deforestation.

Asked about its leading suppliers, JBS and Marfrig, buying cattle raised on deforested or illegally seized lands, PMI said it requires its suppliers to follow local laws, and depends on government environmental agencies in Brazil and elsewhere to enforce them. "PMI relies on the assurances set forth in the sustainability policies of its suppliers," a company spokesman said in an email.

For its part, Brazil's Environment Ministry said independent audits have shown that major meat processors are still buying significant quantities of cattle raised on deforested land through their indirect suppliers.

"The persistence of these cases shows that the companies' systems are flawed and there is not sufficient effort to avoid illegal purchases," the ministry said in a statement.

The FBI Investigation

PMI Foods has come under scrutiny from U.S. authorities before for its shipments to China.

Between 2008 and 2011, PMI took in more than \$289 million in revenue from illegal beef shipments to China, representing the majority of U.S.-sourced sales to the country, according to a spreadsheet produced by a whistleblower for FBI investigators.

"They were willing to break laws," whistleblower Brandon Barrick said in an interview in 2022, referring to the time that he worked at PMI. "They were willing to do whatever it took to make a buck for themselves."

In spring of 2014, PMI pled guilty to a misdemeanor charge of making a false statement to U.S. authorities about the destination of its beef exports and paid a \$1 million fine.

In an email, PMI said it had put the "entire episode behind us" nine years ago, and emphasized that it pleaded guilty only to making a false statement. "PMI was never charged with a crime for its export operations," said company attorney Mark Gaylord.

Rise of beef in China

In the last decade, Chinese imports of beef from Brazil have increased from \$1.3 billion in 2013 to more than \$8 billion in 2022, according to U.N. Comtrade data.

PMI has been a major player in feeding that growing market. As of 2017, the company was the second largest importer of Brazilian beef to China, according to a 2020 report by Trase, a research group that studies commodity supply chains.

As Brazil became China's biggest supplier, cattle production ramped up. China imposes relatively few environmental demands on its beef importers, meaning suppliers who need land for cattle may be tempted to engage in deforestation, said Gibbs, the University of Wisconsin geography professor.

"As China's demand for beef goes up, so does the stress on the rainforest," Gibbs said.

Daniel Azeredo, a Brazilian federal prosecutor who has led crackdowns on illegal deforestation in the beef industry, said companies must ensure that products from the Amazon region do not come from illegally deforested land.

"Everyone who participates in the trade of products that come from the Amazon has to be able to transparently determine the products' origin," Azeredo said.

In response to inquiries about whether it had raised concerns about deforestation with JBS or other suppliers, PMI Foods said it "has discussions with our partners, vendors and suppliers including JBS, about always improving best practices towards the environment and sustainability."

Middlemen avoid scrutiny

As a middleman rather than a company that raises animals or processes meat, PMI's role in deforestation has been little examined.

PMI's reliance on JBS is not unusual among food companies. While a handful of European retailers have dropped JBS beef products in recent years due to deforestation concerns, major American brands such as Kroger and Albertsons, the parent company of Safeway, still purchase its beef.

Albertsons confirmed that it sources beef from JBS, but said it is only a small quantity. Kroger did not respond to inquiries but its online store includes JBS beef products.

JBS, Marfrig and other top beef producers have signed pledges to work against illegal deforestation. But unlike most leading meat processors and commodity traders, PMI has not signed on to agreements to fight deforestation, such as the New York Declaration on Forests, in which endorsers commit to goals

including eliminating deforestation by 2030.

Two months after initial inquiries about its environmental policies for this story, PMI said it was joining industry efforts to combat deforestation.

"We are now proud to partner with One Tree Planted, Green Business Bureau and the U.S. Roundtable for Sustainable Beef," the company said last November. Since then it has planted 10,000 trees in the Amazon, the company said, part of a longer-term plan to plant a million trees.

The company has not yet signed a pledge against rainforest destruction, but last month said it was considering making one. "We are open to pledges and currently working on these matters," the company said.

Gibbs, the University of Wisconsin professor, said that because PMI and other middlemen have such strong purchasing power, they "need to come to the table" to help stop deforestation.

So far meat brokers have been "completely ignored," she said, allowing beef to reach consumers' tables without meeting environmental standards strong enough to protect the Amazon.

Azeredo, the Brazilian prosecutor, emphasized that not just meat processors, but all companies in the beef and leather industries share the obligation to avoid suppliers that violate environmental laws.

"The entire industry that buys those animals, that sells leather or meat, must make sure that they don't allow products from areas of illegal deforestation," Azeredo said.

Poll shows most US adults think AI will add to election misinformation in 2024

By ALI SWENSON and MATT O'BRIEN Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — The warnings have grown louder and more urgent as 2024 approaches: The rapid advance of artificial intelligence tools threatens to amplify misinformation in next year's presidential election at a scale never seen before.

Most adults in the U.S. feel the same way, according to a new poll from The Associated Press-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research and the University of Chicago Harris School of Public Policy.

The poll found that nearly 6 in 10 adults (58%) think AI tools — which can micro-target political audiences, mass produce persuasive messages, and generate realistic fake images and videos in seconds — will increase the spread of false and misleading information during next year's elections.

By comparison, 6% think AI will decrease the spread of misinformation while one-third say it won't make much of a difference.

"Look what happened in 2020 — and that was just social media," said 66-year-old Rosa Rangel of Fort Worth, Texas.

Rangel, a Democrat who said she had seen a lot of "lies" on social media in 2020, said she thinks AI will make things even worse in 2024 — like a pot "brewing over."

Just 30% of American adults have used AI chatbots or image generators and fewer than half (46%) have heard or read at least some about AI tools. Still, there's a broad consensus that candidates shouldn't be using AI.

When asked whether it would be a good or bad thing for 2024 presidential candidates to use AI in certain ways, clear majorities said it would be bad for them to create false or misleading media for political ads (83%), to edit or touch-up photos or videos for political ads (66%), to tailor political ads to individual voters (62%) and to answer voters' questions via chatbot (56%).

The sentiments are supported by majorities of Republicans and Democrats, who agree it would be a bad thing for the presidential candidates to create false images or videos (85% of Republicans and 90% of Democrats) or to answer voter questions (56% of Republicans and 63% of Democrats).

The bipartisan pessimism toward candidates using AI comes after it already has been deployed in the Republican presidential primary.

In April, the Republican National Committee released an entirely AI-generated ad meant to show the future of the country if President Joe Biden is reelected. It used fake but realistic-looking photos showing

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boarded-up storefronts, armored military patrols in the streets and waves of immigrants creating panic. The ad disclosed in small lettering that it was generated by AI.

Ron DeSantis, the Republican governor of Florida, also used AI in his campaign for the GOP nomination. He promoted an ad that used AI-generated images to make it look as if former President Donald Trump was hugging Dr. Anthony Fauci, an infectious disease specialist who oversaw the nation's response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Never Back Down, a super PAC supporting DeSantis, used an AI voice-cloning tool to imitate Trump's voice, making it seem like he narrated a social media post.

"I think they should be campaigning on their merits, not their ability to strike fear into the hearts of voters," said Andie Near, a 42-year-old from Holland, Michigan, who typically votes for Democrats.

She has used AI tools to retouch images in her work at a museum, but she said she thinks politicians using the technology to mislead can "deepen and worsen the effect that even conventional attack ads can cause."

College student Thomas Besgen, a Republican, also disagrees with campaigns using deepfake sounds or imagery to make it seem as if a candidate said something they never said.

"Morally, that's wrong," the 21-year-old from Connecticut said.

Besgen, a mechanical engineering major at the University of Dayton in Ohio, said he is in favor of banning deepfake ads or, if that's not possible, requiring them to be labeled as AI-generated.

The Federal Election Commission is currently considering a petition urging it to regulate AI-generated deepfakes in political ads ahead of the 2024 election.

While skeptical of AI's use in politics, Besgen said he is enthusiastic about its potential for the economy and society. He is an active user of AI tools such as ChatGPT to help explain history topics he's interested in or to brainstorm ideas. He also uses image-generators for fun — for example, to imagine what sports stadiums might look like in 100 years.

He said he typically trusts the information he gets from ChatGPT and will likely use it to learn more about the presidential candidates, something that just 5% of adults say they are likely to do.

The poll found that Americans are more likely to consult the news media (46%), friends and family (29%), and social media (25%) for information about the presidential election than AI chatbots.

"Whatever response it gives me, I would take it with a grain of salt," Besgen said.

The vast majority of Americans are similarly skeptical toward the information AI chatbots spit out. Just 5% say they are extremely or very confident that the information is factual, while 33% are somewhat confident, according to the survey. Most adults (61%) say they are not very or not at all confident that the information is reliable.

That's in line with many AI experts' warnings against using chatbots to retrieve information. The artificial intelligence large language models powering chatbots work by repeatedly selecting the most plausible next word in a sentence, which makes them good at mimicking styles of writing but also prone to making things up.

Adults associated with both major political parties are generally open to regulations on AI. They responded more positively than negatively toward various ways to ban or label AI-generated content that could be imposed by tech companies, the federal government, social media companies or the news media.

About two-thirds favor the government banning AI-generated content that contains false or misleading images from political ads, while a similar number want technology companies to label all AI-generated content made on their platforms.

Biden set in motion some federal guidelines for AI on Monday when he signed an executive order to guide the development of the rapidly progressing technology. The order requires the industry to develop safety and security standards and directs the Commerce Department to issue guidance to label and watermark AI-generated content.

Americans largely see preventing AI-generated false or misleading information during the 2024 presidential elections as a shared responsibility. About 6 in 10 (63%) say a lot of the responsibility falls on the

technology companies that create AI tools, but about half give a lot of that duty to the news media (53%), social media companies (52%), and the federal government (49%).

Democrats are somewhat more likely than Republicans to say social media companies have a lot of responsibility, but generally agree on the level of responsibility for technology companies, the news media and the federal government.

US jobs report for October could show solid hiring as Fed watches for signs of inflation pressures

By PAUL WISEMAN AP Economics Writer

WASHINGTON (AP) — America's employers likely kept hiring at a healthy pace last month, defying high interest rates, rising pressure on consumers and labor strikes that idled big swaths of the nation's auto industry.

The government's October jobs report is expected to show Friday that companies and government agencies added 184,000 jobs, a solid showing, though down sharply from a blockbuster 336,000 gain in September. The unemployment rate is expected to stay at 3.8%, a couple of notches above a half-century low, according to a survey of forecasters by the data firm FactSet.

The U.S. job market has remained surprisingly strong even as the Federal Reserve has raised its benchmark interest rate 11 times since March 2022 to try to slow the economy, cool hiring and tame inflation, which hit a four-decade high last year.

The Fed scrutinizes the monthly job data to assess whether employers are still hiring and raising pay aggressively as a result of labor shortages. When that happens, companies typically try to pass on their higher labor costs to their customers in the form of higher prices, thereby raising inflationary pressures.

The Fed's policymakers are trying to calibrate their key interest rate to simultaneously cool inflation, support job growth and ward off a recession.

"It's still a very strong labor market," said Nancy Vanden Houten, lead U.S. economist at Oxford Economics. "The Federal Reserve would like to see something a little less strong ... We're moving in that direction."

Vanden Houten expects October's job growth to come in at 170,000, even though the United Auto Workers' strikes against the Detroit automakers probably shrank last month's gain by about 30,000. The auto strikes ended this week with tentative settlements in which the companies granted significantly better pay and benefits to the union's workers.

At the same time, inflationary pressures have been easing as the Fed has sharply raised borrowing costs. U.S. consumer prices rose 3.7% in September from a year earlier, down drastically from a year-over-year peak of 9.1% in June 2022.

Wage gains, which can fuel inflation, have been slowing, too. Private workers' average hourly earnings were up 4.2% in September from a year earlier, down from a recent peak of 5.9% in March 2022. Vanden Houten predicted that hourly wages rose 0.2% from September to October and 4% from October 2022.

Yet inflation remains well above the Fed's 2% target, and workers' year-over-year pay gains, Vanden Houten said, would need to fall to 3.5% to be consistent with the central bank's inflation goal.

In the meantime, despite long-standing predictions by economists that the Fed's ever-higher interest rates would trigger a recession, the U.S. economy, the world's largest, remains sturdy. From July through September, the nation's gross domestic product — the output of all goods and services — rose at a 4.9% annual pace, the fastest quarterly growth in more than two years.

And companies have remained eager to hire, though below the sizzling pace of earlier this year. In 2023, the economy has added a robust average of 260,000 jobs a month through September.

On Wednesday, the Labor Department reported that employers posted 9.6 million job openings in September, up slightly from August. Opening are down substantially from the record 12 million recorded in March 2022 but are still high by historical standards: Before 2021 and the economy's powerful recovery from the COVID-19 recession, monthly job openings had never topped 8 million. There are now 1.4 jobs available, on average, for every unemployed American.

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The combination of a durable economy and decelerating inflation has raised hopes that the Fed can nail a so-called soft landing — raising interest rates just enough to tame inflation without tipping the economy into recession.

Adding to the optimism is an influx of people into the job market, drawn by higher wages and reduced health risks from COVID-19 and the childcare struggles caused by pandemic-related school closings. Immigration has also rebounded after falling at the height of the pandemic.

Over the past year, more than 3.3 million people have either taken jobs or begun looking for one. Having more job applicants to choose from reduces pressure on companies to raise wages.

This week, the Fed's policymakers announced that they had decided to leave their benchmark rate unchanged for a second straight time, giving themselves time to assess the cumulative effects of their previous rate hikes. Many economists say they believe the Fed is done raising rates for now.

Still, at a news conference Wednesday, Fed Chair Jerome Powell cautioned that any evidence that the economy is running too hot "or that tightness in the labor market is no longer easing" could hinder further progress on inflation and justify additional rate hikes.

Missy Elliott, Willie Nelson, Sheryl Crow and Chaka Khan ready for Rock & Roll Hall of Fame

By MARK KENNEDY AP Entertainment Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — Fans of hip-hop, country, pop, funk, R&B and rock all have reason to cheer the 2023 class entering the Rock & Roll Hall of Fame.

Missy Elliott, Kate Bush, Willie Nelson, Sheryl Crow, Chaka Khan, "Soul Train" creator Don Cornelius and the late George Michael will be inducted into the hall on Friday night in New York City. The ceremony is also streaming live for the first time on Disney+.

Also entering the hall are The Spinners, Rage Against the Machine, DJ Kool Herc, Link Wray, Al Kooper and Elton John's longtime co-songwriter Bernie Taupin.

The ceremony in Brooklyn will feature either as presenters or performers John, Brandi Carlile, Dave Matthews, H.E.R., Chris Stapleton, St. Vincent, New Edition, Stevie Nicks, Adam Levine, Carrie Underwood, Common, Ice-T, LL Cool J, Miguel, Queen Latifah and Sia. There's even money that John will sing some of the songs he wrote with Taupin.

Elliott becomes the first female hip-hop artist in the rock hall, which called her "a true pathbreaker in a male-dominated genre." Taupin makes it into the rock hall 29 years after his writing partner, John.

Artists must have released their first commercial recording at least 25 years before they're eligible for induction. Nominees were voted on by more than 1,000 artists, historians and music industry professionals.

Bush was a nominee last year but didn't make the final cut. She got in this year due to a new wave in popularity after the show "Stranger Things" featured her song "Running Up That Hill (A Deal with God)." The hall hailed her for "using lush soundscapes, radical experimentation, literary themes, sampling, and theatricality to captivate audiences and inspire countless musicians."

Bush comes into the ceremony having broken three Guinness World Records, including becoming the oldest woman to reach No. 1 and the longest gap between No. 1s on the UK's singles chart.

Michael, first as a member of Wham! and then as a solo artist, was cited for "paving the way for a generation of proud LGBTQIA+ artists, from Sam Smith to Lil Nas X to Troye Sivan" and the 90-year-old Nelson was simply described as "an American institution."

Crow was recognized for key songs in the 1990s musical canon like "All I Wanna Do" and "Every Day Is a Winding Road," while Rage Against the Machine "forged brazen protest music for the modern world."

The hall called DJ Kool Herc "a founding father of hip-hop music" who "helped create the blueprint for hip-hop." And Chaka Khan was described as "one of the mightiest and most influential voices in music" a "streetwise but sensual hip-hop-soul diva," who paved the way for women like Mary J. Blige, Erykah Badu and Janelle Monáe.

The Spinners became a hit-making machine with four No. 1 R&B hits in less than 18 months, including

"I'll Be Around" and "Could It Be I'm Falling in Love." Rock guitarist Wray was said to be ahead of his time, influencing Jeff Beck, Jimmy Page, Eric Clapton, Jimi Hendrix and Bruce Springsteen.

Cornelius, who died in 2012, was celebrated for creating a nationally televised platform for African American music and culture. He "became a visionary entrepreneur who opened the door — and held it open — for many others to follow him through."

ABC will air a special featuring performance highlights and standout moments on Jan. 1.

House approves nearly \$14.5 billion in military aid for Israel. Biden vows to veto the GOP approach

By LISA MASCARO AP Congressional Correspondent

WASHINGTON (AP) — The House approved a nearly \$14.5 billion military aid package Thursday for Israel, a muscular U.S. response to the war with Hamas but also a partisan approach by new Speaker Mike Johnson that poses a direct challenge to Democrats and President Joe Biden.

In a departure from norms, Johnson's package required that the emergency aid be offset with cuts in government spending elsewhere. That tack established the new House GOP's conservative leadership, but it also turned what would typically be a bipartisan vote into one dividing Democrats and Republicans. Biden has said he would veto the bill, which was approved 226-196, with 12 Democrats joining most Republicans on a largely party-line vote.

Johnson, R-La., said the Republican package would provide Israel with the assistance needed to defend itself, free hostages held by Hamas and eradicate the militant Palestinian group, accomplishing "all of this while we also work to ensure responsible spending and reduce the size of the federal government."

Democrats said that approach would only delay help for Israel. Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer, D-N.Y., has warned that the "stunningly unserious" bill has no chances in the Senate.

The first substantial legislative effort in Congress to support Israel in the war falls far short of Biden's request for nearly \$106 billion that would also back Ukraine as it fights Russia, along with U.S. efforts to counter China and address security at the border with Mexico.

It is also Johnson's first big test as House speaker as the Republican majority tries to get back to work after the month of turmoil since ousting Rep. Kevin McCarthy, R-Calif., as speaker. Johnson has said he will turn next to aid for Ukraine along with U.S. border security, preferring to address Biden's requests separately as GOP lawmakers increasingly oppose aiding Kyiv.

The White House's veto warning said Johnson's approach "fails to meet the urgency of the moment" and would set a dangerous precedent by requiring emergency funds to come from cuts elsewhere.

While the amount for Israel in the House bill is similar to what Biden sought, the White House said the Republican plan's failure to include humanitarian assistance for Gaza is a "grave mistake" as the crisis deepens.

Biden on Wednesday called for a pause in the war to allow for relief efforts.

"This bill would break with the normal, bipartisan approach to providing emergency national security assistance," the White House wrote in its statement of administration policy on the legislation. It said the GOP stance "would have devastating implications for our safety and alliances in the years ahead."

It was unclear before voting Thursday how many Democrats would join with Republicans. The White House had been directly appealing to lawmakers, particularly calling Jewish Democrats, urging them to reject the bill.

White House chief of staff Jeff Zients, counselor to the president Steve Ricchetti and other senior White House staff have been engaging House Democrats, said a person familiar with the situation and granted anonymity to discuss it.

But the vote was difficult for some lawmakers, particularly Democrats who wanted to support Israel and may have trouble explaining the trade-off to constituents, especially as the large AIPAC lobby and other groups encouraged passage. In all, two Republicans opposed the bill.

Rep. Brad Schneider, D-Ill, who voted against the package, said: "It was one of the hardest things I've

had to do.”

To pay for the bill, House Republicans have attached provisions that would cut billions from the IRS that Democrats approved last year and Biden signed into law as a way to go after tax cheats. The nonpartisan Congressional Budget Office says doing that would end up costing the federal government a net \$12.5 billion because of lost revenue from tax collections. Taken together, the cost of the aid package and revenue reduction adds up to more than \$26 billion.

Republicans scoffed at that assessment, but the independent budget office is historically seen as a trusted referee.

Backers said the package would provide support for Israel’s Iron Dome missile defense system, procurement of advanced weaponry and other military needs, and help with protection and evacuations of U.S. citizens. CBO pegged the overall package at about \$14.3 billion for Israel.

As the floor debate got underway, Democrats pleaded for Republicans to restore the humanitarian aid Biden requested and decried the politicization of typically widely bipartisan Israel support.

“Republicans are leveraging the excruciating pain of an international crisis to help rich people who cheat on their taxes and big corporations who regularly dodge their taxes,” said Rep. Jim McGovern of Massachusetts, the top Democrat on the House Rules Committee.

Rep. Dan Goldman of New York described hiding in a stairwell with his wife and children while visiting Israel as rockets fired in what he called the most horrific attack on Jews since the Holocaust.

Nevertheless, Goldman said he opposed the Republican-led bill as a “shameful effort” to turn the situation in Israel and the Jewish people into a political weapon.

“Support for Israel may be a political game for my colleagues on the other side of the aisle,” the Democrat said. “But this is personal for us Jews and it is existential for the one Jewish nation in the world that is a safe haven from the rising tide of antisemitism around the globe.”

The Republicans have been attacking Democrats who raise questions about Israel’s war tactics as antisemitic. The House tried to censure the only Palestinian-American lawmaker in Congress, Rep. Rashida Tlaib, D-Mich., over remarks she made. The censure measure failed.

Rep. Andrew Clyde, R-Ga., said he was “so thankful there is no humanitarian aid,” which he argued could fall into the hands of Hamas.

In the Democratic-controlled Senate, Schumer made clear that the House bill would be rejected.

“The Senate will not take up the House GOP’s deeply flawed proposal, and instead we’ll work on our own bipartisan emergency aid package” that includes money for Israel and Ukraine, as well as humanitarian assistance for Gaza and efforts to confront China.

Senate Republican leader Mitch McConnell of Kentucky is balancing the need to support his GOP allies in the House while also fighting to keep the aid package more in line with Biden’s broader request, believing all the issues are linked and demand U.S. attention.

McConnell said the aid for Ukraine was “not charity” but was necessary to bolster a Western ally against Russia.

In other action Thursday, the House overwhelmingly approved a Republican-led resolution that focused on college campus activism over the Israel-Hamas war. The nonbinding resolution would condemn support of Hamas, Hezbollah and terrorist organizations at institutions of higher education.

Death of a player from a skate to the neck reignites hockey’s stubborn debate over protective gear

By STEPHEN WHYNO and PAT GRAHAM AP Sports Writers

It took the NHL until 1979 to mandate helmets and goalie masks for new players. It wasn’t until 2013 that eye-protecting visors became mandatory — grandfathered in for veterans, of course. A handful of players still don’t wear them.

Broken jaws, smashed noses and concussions haven’t led to full face shields or cages in professional men’s hockey at any level, either. This week, the death of an American player from a skate blade to the

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neck during a game in England has reignited the debate over cut-resistant protection and why more players don't wear it.

That this is a debate might be surprising to some outside the sport. It shouldn't be. Change in hockey tends to be slow, if it comes at all.

Ask players if they have been cut by a skate in an NHL game or practice, and the affirmative answers are startlingly high. Some are well-known — Erik Karlsson's Achilles tendon injury a decade ago and Evander Kane's sliced wrist last year, for example. The death of a prep school player in Connecticut in 2022 got some thinking about safety improvements again, and the topic is the talk of the sport this week after Adam Johnson, a former NHL player, died at a U.K. hospital from his cut.

Just the same, it is unlikely to bring immediate change to a sport stubbornly resistant to it. The helmet mandate, for example, came 11 years and countless head injuries after Bill Masterton became the only NHL player to die as a direct result of injuries suffered on the ice.

"It's always tough to change," player-turned-Philadelphia general manager Danny Briere said Wednesday. "Unfortunately, you're always waiting for something tragic to happen for change to come. Hopefully we don't have to wait for another one."

Neck guards are not mandatory in the NHL, and neither is any kind of cut protection for wrists or the back of players' legs, areas that are more vulnerable than heavily-guarded shoulders and elbows. Karlsson's gruesome injury prompted more players to try socks made of Kevlar, the synthetic fiber used in making bulletproof vests, and Cutlon, a fabric used in shark bite-resistant suits.

Some are reluctant still because of concerns over comfort on the ice.

"They feel weird in my skates," veteran Colorado defenseman Jack Johnson said of the socks before this season. "I wasn't too happy with the way that I felt. But I've made it this far, so I'm going to stick with what's working."

Karlsson, now with Pittsburgh, said he wishes he was wearing cut-proof socks when a skate blade from Matt Cooke sliced through his left Achilles tendon in 2013.

"That's probably what started that trend was my injury there because I don't think anyone was really wearing it before that," Karlsson said. "I think most guys just wear it because it's just like a normal sock anyways."

It seems like nearly everyone around hockey has a story of a skate cut, whether they've been stitched up themselves or seen it happen. Colorado defenseman Josh Manson recalled a cut when he was in juniors.

"I hit a guy and he fell back and kind of kicked up and kicked me in the stomach. I went into the penalty box and as I'm sitting there, like kind of felt something burning. So I lifted up my shirt and there was blood just kind of pouring down," he said. "It was as if like you took a sharp knife on a piece of steak and just kind of like dragged it along it and opened up the top a little bit."

He was sewed up "in, like, the laundry room" and played the rest of the game.

In 1989, Buffalo goaltender Clint Malarchuk's neck was sliced open by a skate during a game and in 2008 it happened to Florida forward Richard Zednik. Both got immediate help from trainers and medical personnel and both returned to the game they loved.

Johnson, 29, will not.

"It's a game," NHLPA executive director Marty Walsh said. "It's a job for the players, but it's something that you don't want anyone when they go to work to not come home."

Advocates of mandatory neck guards like Mercyhurst College men's hockey coach Rick Gotkin see Johnson's death as a wake-up call.

"These guys are skating on razor blades," said Gotkin, whose efforts began in earnest earlier this year after seeing an Army player need surgery for a skate cut to the neck. "You think about the course of a game: guys hunched over, scrambles in front of the goal and everything else, you could see where this is something that needs to be addressed."

Washington's T.J. Oshie said he received more than 100 messages since Johnson's death about cut-resistant protection made by his company, and Warroad Hockey sold out within hours. He wore a neck

guard in the Capitals' game Thursday night.

Bauer Hockey pledged to work with other equipment manufacturers to make neck guards more widely available and, eventually, mandatory, like the England Ice Hockey Association did this week.

Mandates exist at some youth programs in the U.S., Canada and other countries, but not in the NHL. League and union leaders have studied cut-resistant materials for years and have resumed talks about them in light of the tragedy in England.

"Players are free to wear it now," NHL Commissioner Gary Bettman said. "Whether it's something that's mandated either directly or on a phased-in basis, that's something we discuss with the players' association."

When Bettman's son, Jordan, played high school hockey before mandates were in place, his wife, Shelli, wouldn't let him on the ice without a neck guard. Bettman recalled one early practice when Jordan told his mother the coach said it was voluntary, and she responded, "No, it's not."

Long time Professional Hockey Players' Association executive director Larry Landon feels the same pull as the representative of hundreds of minor leaguers and a grandfather, who said of his grandsons: "Do I want them to wear cut-resistant stuff? Absolutely. Paint their body with it if they have to."

Walsh wants to have those discussions with his members across the NHL. There is evidence some attitudes are already changing.

"Wearing as much protective cut-proof gear as you can is always smart," said Colorado's Ross Colton, who wears cut-proof socks pulled up to his knees and protects his wrists with what resemble sweat bands. In youth hockey, Colton wore a layer that zipped up into pretty much a neck guard, after his dad pushed him to wear it.

Once sliced on the wrist and knowing his father once took a skate to the neck when he played, Vegas defenseman Nicolas Hague felt differently hopes this was just a one-off fluke.

"It's just such a shame that it even had to happen once," Hague said. "It's hard. Guys are stuck in their ways."

Sabres captain Kyle Okposo, who wears cut-resistant socks, compared this situation in hockey to the on-field collapse of Damar Hamlin of the NFL's Buffalo Bills as something that makes players appreciate their moments in the game but doesn't stop them from doing it for a living.

"You play this game and you obviously understand there's risk to it," Okposo said. "It's incredibly unfortunate. It's just one of those things as players I don't think you can really allow your mind to go to that place. I think you just play the game the way you play it."

Carolina captain Jordan Staal has been wearing protective socks for years and is looking at more options to avoid getting cut.

"I got one right up the leg, about 50 stitches, a long time ago," he recalled. "They said I got a skate right up close to my artery — really close. ... The big man upstairs was watching out for me there. I got very fortunate. It's kind of what we flirt with, and you try to take as much protection as you can."

Maine mass shooting puts spotlight on a complex array of laws, and a series of missed chances

By DAVID SHARP and LINDSAY WHITEHURST Associated Press

PORTLAND, Maine (AP) — Across the nation, much of the debate around gun rights and restrictions centers on mental health. Many advocates on both sides agree that getting people with serious mental health struggles into treatment, and preventing people who are dangerous from accessing guns, is key to preventing mass shootings.

Yet in the weeks and months before the mass shooting in Lewiston, there were so many warning signs from the killer that people all around him were raising concerns to authorities. He was still able to massacre 18 people, wound another 13 and shatter a community's sense of security.

Lawmakers want answers as to why laws in two states — Maine and New York — didn't prevent the tragedy.

"It's a massive failure," said Republican state Sen. Lisa Keim, sponsor of Maine's so-called "yellow flag"

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law. "This one, it seems that there were too many touchpoints for neither law to come into play."

The law in Maine, a state that is staunchly protective of gun rights, requires more hurdles than "red flag" laws in more than 20 states, including New York. Also known as extreme risk protection orders, they generally allow family members or police to ask a judge to temporarily keep guns away from someone who presents a danger to themselves or other people, said Allison Anderman of the Giffords Law Center to Prevent Gun Violence.

Maine's requirement of a medical evaluation adds an extra hurdle, especially in cases where people are acting dangerously but don't have a diagnosed mental illness, Anderman said. "They're really very different laws," she said.

Keim, meanwhile, said "yellow flag" law process can begin with a phone call and noted it has been successfully invoked 82 times since taking effect in 2020.

Leroy Walker, whose son was killed in the shootings, said he's pleased Maine's governor is bringing together an independent panel of experts "to find out how this slipped through the cracks and we ended up losing 18 beautiful lives."

The Auburn city councilor said he's not ready to point fingers, but feels frustrated to learn from news outlets about the missed opportunities, including those under red and yellow flag laws.

"None of 'em worked. We definitely need to go back and figure out where these mistakes were made," Walker said.

Behind the Oct. 25 tragedy is a confusing web of federal and state laws.

Under Maine's yellow flag law, a warning to police can trigger a process where an officer visits an individual and makes a judgment call on whether that person should be placed in temporary protective custody, in turn triggering assessments that with a judge's approval can lead to a 14-day weapons restriction. A full court hearing could lead to an extension of restrictions for up to a year.

There were plenty of warnings that Card might snap.

During military training in New York, he said people were accusing him of being a pedophile. He pushed one reservist and locked himself in his motel room, leading commanders to take him to the base hospital. From there, he was taken to a private mental health facility where he was hospitalized for 14 days. His military weapons were taken away.

Maine officials say they were unaware of any alerts from officials in New York. And it's unclear if there was any effort to invoke New York's red flag law while he was in the state.

Army spokesperson Lt. Col. Ruth Castro said she couldn't tell The Associated Press whether Card was committed to a psychiatric facility on his own free will or involuntarily because of a federal health privacy law. She said the same law prevented her from saying what Card's diagnosis was after he was evaluated.

She denied requests to answer other questions about what the Army did or did not do to inform others of Card's condition, citing ongoing law enforcement investigations.

Back in Maine, reservists kept voicing their worries about Card after he returned in early August. Family members told a deputy that his mental health deterioration had begun in January, and his ex-wife and son had alerted police in Maine that Card was angry and paranoid, as well as heavily armed with 10-15 guns he'd taken from his brother's home.

People can be legally barred from having guns for a few reasons, including felony convictions and domestic-violence protection orders. But whatever the reason, removing guns a person already has is often complicated, said Anderman, the senior counsel at the gun violence law center.

"Most states do not have adequate relinquishment provisions for when people become prohibited," she said.

A commitment to a mental-health facility also bars people from having guns under federal law, but that measure doesn't have a mechanism to take away any weapons a person already has. And although Card was treated at a facility, the FBI says nothing was entered into the federal background check system that would have prevented him from buying weapons.

In a text early on Sept. 15, one of Card's fellow reservists urged a superior to change the passcode to the gate and have a gun if Card arrived at the Army Reserve drill center in Saco. The reservist said Card

refused to get help for his mental illness “and yes, he still has all his weapons.”

“I believe he’s going to snap and do a mass shooting,” the reservist wrote.

That was the same day a deputy went to Card’s home in Bowdoin, but no one was home. The deputy returned the following day and heard noises inside but Card didn’t answer the door. The deputy called for backup, but they eventually left.

The sheriff said his deputies didn’t have legal authority to break down the door and take Card, and there’s no indication the deputy ever spoke to him — the first step to triggering the yellow card law.

The sheriff’s office canceled its statewide alert seeking help locating Card, who they described as “armed and dangerous,” a week before Lewiston became the 36th mass killing in the United States this year.

Pressure rises on Israel to pause fighting and ease siege as battles intensify near Gaza City

By WAFAA SHURAF, JACK JEFFERY and LEE KEATH Associated Press

DEIR AL-BALAH, Gaza Strip (AP) — Israeli troops battling Hamas militants encircled Gaza City on Thursday, the military said, as the Palestinian death toll rose above 9,000. U.S. and Arab leaders raised pressure on Israel to ease its siege of Gaza and at least briefly halt its attacks in order to aid civilians.

Nearly four weeks after Hamas’ deadly rampage in Israel sparked the war, U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken was heading to the region for talks Friday in Israel and Jordan following President Joe Biden’s suggestion for a humanitarian “pause” in the fighting. The aim would be to let in aid for Palestinians and let out more foreign nationals and wounded. Around 800 people left over the past two days.

Israel did not immediately respond to Biden’s suggestion. But Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, who has previously ruled out a cease-fire, said Thursday: “We are advancing ... Nothing will stop us.” He vowed to destroy Hamas rule in the Gaza Strip.

An airstrike Thursday smashed a residential building to rubble in the Bureij refugee camp several miles south of Gaza City.

One boy, his face covered in blood, cried as workers dug him out of the dirt and wreckage. Others rushed wounded men and women, covered in dust, away on stretchers or wrapped in blankets. At a nearby hospital, doctors tried to stanch the flow of blood from the head of a child laid out on the floor.

At least 15 people were killed, Gaza’s Civil Defense spokesperson said, and residents said dozens more were believed buried. The strike took place in the southern zone where Israel has told residents of the north to flee, but which has also faced repeated bombardment.

Blinken’s visit will unfold as 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.”

A flurry of heavy explosions raised clouds of smoke over Gaza City on Thursday. Al Jazeera television, which continues to broadcast from the city, said Israeli airstrikes were hitting an area of apartment towers in the Tel al-Hawa neighborhood.

The barrage hit around 100 meters (yards) from Al-Quds Hospital, the Palestinian Red Crescent Society said in post on X. It said there were deaths and injuries but gave no more details.

There was no immediate comment by the Israeli military on the strikes. Israel says it targets Hamas fighters and infrastructure and that the group endangers civilians by operating among them and in tunnels under civilian areas.

BLINKEN’S NEW FORAY

The U.S. has pledged unwavering support for Israel after Hamas militants killed hundreds of men, women and children on Oct. 7 and took some 240 people captive.

But the Biden administration has pushed for Israel to let more aid into Gaza amid growing alarm in the region over the destruction and humanitarian crisis in the tiny Mediterranean enclave.

More than 3,700 Palestinian children have been killed in 25 days of fighting — more than six times the 560 children that the U.N. has reported killed in 19 months of war in Ukraine as of Oct. 8. Bombardment

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has driven more than half the territory's 2.3 million people from their homes. Food, water and fuel are running low under Israel's siege, and overwhelmed hospitals warn they are on the verge of collapse.

Israel has allowed more than 260 trucks carrying food and medicine through the crossing, but aid workers say it's not nearly enough. Israeli authorities have refused to allow fuel in, saying Hamas is hoarding fuel for military use and would steal new supplies.

White House national security spokesman John Kirby said the U.S. was not advocating for a general cease-fire but a "temporary, localized" pause.

In a sign that Israel might be feeling the international pressure, the military put out a late-night statement, in English, insisting it did not want civilians to be harmed.

"I want to make something very clear," military spokesman Brig. Gen. Daniel Hagari said in a recorded video. "Israel is at war with Hamas. Israel is not at war with the civilians in Gaza."

Israel and the U.S. seem to have no clear plan for what would come next if Hamas rule in Gaza is brought down — a key question on Blinken's agenda on his upcoming visit, according to the State Department.

Earlier in the week, Blinken suggested that the Palestinian Authority govern Gaza. Hamas drove the authority's forces out of Gaza in its 2007 takeover of the territory. The authority now holds limited powers in some parts of the Israeli-occupied West Bank.

MOVING ON GAZA CITY

Military officials said Israeli forces had completely encircled Gaza City, a densely packed cluster of neighborhoods that Israel says is the center of Hamas military infrastructure and includes a vast network of underground tunnels, bunkers and command centers.

Israeli forces are "fighting in a built-up, dense, complex area," said the military's chief of staff, Herzi Halevy.

Hagari said Israeli forces were in "face to face" battles with militants, calling in airstrikes and shelling when needed. He said they were inflicting heavy losses on Hamas fighters and destroying their infrastructure with engineering equipment.

Casualties on both sides are expected to rise as Israeli troops advance toward the dense residential neighborhoods of Gaza City.

On Thursday, Israeli planes dropped leaflets warning residents to immediately evacuate the Shati refugee camp, which borders Gaza City's center.

"Time is up," the leaflets read, warning that strikes "with crushing force" against Hamas fighters were coming.

Hundreds of thousands of Palestinians remain in the path of fighting in northern Gaza, despite Israel's repeated calls for them to evacuate. Many have crowded into U.N. facilities, hoping for safety.

Four U.N. schools-turned-shelter in northern Gaza and Bureij were hit in the past day, killing 24 people, according to Philippe Lazzarini, general-secretary of the U.N. agency for Palestinian refugees, known as UNRWA.

At least 9,061 Palestinians have been killed in the war, mostly women and minors, and more than 32,000 people have been wounded, the Gaza Health Ministry said Thursday, without providing a breakdown between civilians and fighters. The death toll 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.

Nineteen Israeli soldiers have been killed in Gaza since the start of the ground operation. A suspected militant shot to death an Israeli reserve soldier driving near a West Bank settlement Thursday, the military and medics said.

Rocket fire from Gaza into Israel, and daily skirmishes between Israel and Lebanon's Hezbollah militants, have disrupted life for millions of Israelis and forced an estimated 250,000 to evacuate border towns.

Rockets fired from Lebanon injured two people when they hit the northern Israeli town of Kiryat Shmona, medical services said. Hamas said earlier on Thursday it fired 12 rockets from Lebanon.

Hezbollah attacked Israeli positions in the north with drones, mortar fire and suicide drones. The Israeli military said it retaliated with warplanes and helicopter gunships. Four Lebanese civilians were killed, state media there said.

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Four Palestinians, including three teenagers, were shot dead Thursday in different parts of the occupied West Bank, the Palestinian Health Ministry said. More than 130 Palestinians have been killed in the West Bank since the start of the war, mainly in violent protests and gunbattles during Israeli arrest raids.

MORE DEPARTURES FROM GAZA

On Thursday, 342 Palestinians with foreign passports, 21 injured in the fighting and an additional 21 companions left Gaza through the Rafah crossing into Egypt, according to Wael Abu Omar, a spokesman for the Palestinian Crossings Authority.

At least 335 people with foreign passports, and 76 injured and their companions, were evacuated Wednesday, he said.

U.S. officials said 79 Americans were among those who have gotten out. 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.

Jeffery and Keath reported from Cairo. Najib Jobain in Rafah, Gaza Strip; Kareem Chehayeb in Beirut; and Amy Teibel in Jerusalem contributed to this report.

Full AP coverage: <https://apnews.com/hub/israel-hamas-war>.

Eric Trump testifies he wasn't aware of dad's financial statements, but emails show some involvement

By JENNIFER PELTZ and MICHAEL R. SISAK Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — Eric Trump, one of two sons entrusted to run Donald Trump's real estate empire, swore Thursday that he was never involved with financial statements that New York state lawyers say fraudulently puffed up the ex-president's wealth and the worth of the family business.

But when shown a decade-old email asking him for information for one of his dad's financial statements, the irritated son strove to clarify.

"We're a major organization, a massive real estate organization — yes, I'm fairly sure I understand that we have financial statements. Absolutely," Eric Trump testified at the family's and company's civil fraud trial. But the Trump Organization executive vice president insisted: "I had no involvement and never worked on my father's statement of financial condition."

Though another Trump Organization executive has testified that Eric Trump was on a video call about his father's financial statement as recently as 2021, the son said he couldn't remember it.

"I'm on a thousand calls a day," he said.

Eric Trump followed brother and fellow Trump Organization Executive Vice President Donald Trump Jr. to the stand on a closely watched and sometimes fractious day in the trial. The day ended with Judge Arthur Engoron suggesting he might expand a gag order, after defense lawyers again criticized his law clerk's role in the case.

Early in the trial, Engoron barred participants in the case from smearing his staff after Donald Trump maligned the clerk on social media. The former president has been fined twice, a total of \$15,000, for what the judge said were violations.

Trump's lawyers have repeatedly complained about the clerk passing notes to the judge during testimony, a practice the attorneys suggest is inappropriate and unfair to them. Engoron says he has an "absolutely unfettered right" to the clerk's advice.

When the defense complained again Thursday, with Eric Trump watching quietly from the witness stand, a sometimes table-pounding Engoron said he might expand the gag order to include attorneys if anyone refers to a member of his staff again.

The former president, his adult sons and other defendants deny wrongdoing in the case, brought by New York Attorney General Letitia James. She accuses them of inflating the ex-president's net worth on his annual "statement of financial condition" documents, which were given to banks, insurers and others

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to secure loans and make deals.

"So sad to see my sons being PERSECUTED in a political Witch Hunt," the Republican 2024 presidential front-runner wrote on his Truth Social platform Thursday. James and Engoron are Democrats.

Donald Trump is slated to testify Monday, followed by his daughter Ivanka on Wednesday. An appeals court late Thursday denied her request to delay her testimony.

Eric Trump will return to the witness stand Friday.

His role at the family business got attention earlier in the trial, when an appraiser testified that the scion took an active interest a decade ago in sizing up the value of the Trump National Golf Club and Seven Springs estate, both in New York's suburban Westchester County. According to the lawsuit, Donald Trump's financial statements went on to list the properties at estimated values over twice the appraiser's rough numbers.

Eric Trump testified that he hardly remembered the appraiser's name, let alone the appraisals.

As he started his testimony, he said he "never had anything to do with the statement of financial condition," didn't believe he'd ever seen one, "was not personally aware" of the document and "didn't know anything about it, really, until this case came into fruition."

"It's not what I did for the company," said the son, who has said he focuses on building and operating properties.

State lawyer Andrew Amer then showed him 2013 emails from then-Trump Organization controller Jeffrey McConney.

In one, McConney told Eric Trump — then in a different role at the company — that he was "working on your father's statement of financial condition" and needed information on one of the company's properties.

In another message, McConney said he was "working on the notes to Mr. Trump's annual financial statement" and asked Eric Trump and others for an update on recent major construction work.

"Yes, I know Jeff McConney does financial statements for my father," Eric Trump said, shifting back in his chair. Soon after, he sprang into his answer about the "massive real estate organization," his voice rising as he spoke.

Emails and documents indicated he had answered McConney's requests. But when asked to concede that he was actually "very familiar" with the financial statements, Eric Trump cast the messages as just answering an accounting colleague's request for a property description.

"I just don't think it would have registered" that they were for the financial statement, he said.

Donald Trump Jr., for his part, testified that he dealt with the financial statements only in passing, while relying on assurances from company finance executives and an outside accounting firm that the information was accurate.

During his second day on the witness stand Thursday, he said that despite James' allegations, he still believed his father's financial statements were "materially accurate." The former president has said that the documents, if anything, lowballed his wealth.

Trump Jr. also revealed that gaming giant Bally's recently paid the Trump Organization \$60 million to buy the right to operate a public golf course in New York City. The terms of the lease transfer for the former Trump Golf Links Ferry Point in the Bronx hadn't previously been disclosed.

Outside the courthouse, Trump Jr. told reporters he thought his testimony went "really well, if we were actually dealing with logic and reason, the way business is conducted."

"Unfortunately, the attorney general has brought forth a case that is purely a political persecution," he said. "I think it's a truly scary precedent for New York — for me, for example, before even having a day in court, I'm apparently guilty of fraud for relying on my accountants to do, wait for it: accounting."

Following an Israeli airstrike, crowded Gaza hospital struggles to treat wounded children

By JULIA FRANKEL and WAFAA SHURAFI Associated Press

BUREIJ REFUGEE CAMP, Gaza Strip (AP) — The gray film covering the faces of children rushed to Al-Aqsa Hospital in central Gaza Thursday made it hard to distinguish between the living and the dead.

After two Israeli airstrikes flattened an entire block of apartment buildings in the Bureij refugee camp and damaged two U.N. schools-turned-shelters, rubble-covered Palestinians big and small arrived at a hospital too packed to take them.

Tiny, motionless bodies lay flat against the hospital's hard floor. A small boy bled out onto the tiles as medics tried to staunch the flow from his head. A baby lay next to him with an oxygen mask strapped on — covered in ash, his chest struggled to rise and fall. Their father sat beside them.

"Here they are, America! Here they are, Israel!" he screamed. "They are children. Our children die every day."

More than 3,700 Palestinian children and minors have been killed in just under a month of fighting, and bombings have driven more than half the territory's 2.3 million people from their homes, while food, water and fuel run low.

As Israeli troops encircle Gaza City and press ahead with a ground offensive, the death toll is expected to grow.

The war was triggered by the Hamas militant group's brutal cross-border attack on Oct. 7, which killed some 1,400 people in Israel and took some 240 others hostage. More than 9,000 Palestinians in Gaza have been killed since then, according to the Health Ministry in Hamas-ruled Gaza. It is the fifth and by far deadliest war between the two enemies.

It was not immediately clear why Israel targeted Bureij, which is located in central Gaza in an area where Israel has urged people to go to stay safe from heavy fighting further north.

The army said that airstrikes across Gaza had targeted Hamas military command centers hidden in civilian areas. But its statement did not mention Bureij specifically. Israel accuses Hamas of using civilians as human shields.

The Bureij strikes Thursday killed at least 15, Gaza's Civil Defense said. It said dozens of others were believed to be buried in the rubble.

Paramedics and first-responders have struggled to evacuate the injured and the dead due to crippled infrastructure and fuel shortages. Instead, casualties flow into hospitals in the arms of relatives, neighbors or anyone able to transport the wounded.

In Bureij, which is home to an estimated 46,000 people, Palestinians hacked at the rubble, searching for survivors. A young girl found under the deluge was carried into the emergency room. With her foot bloody and her face covered in ash, she insisted to medics she was fine.

Listen to the last new Beatles song with John, Paul, George, Ringo and AI tech: 'Now and Then'

By MARIA SHERMAN AP Music Writer

LOS ANGELES (AP) — The final Beatles recording is here.

Titled "Now and Then," the almost impossible-to-believe track is four minutes and eight seconds of the first and only original Beatles recording of the 21st century. There's a countdown, then acoustic guitar strumming and piano bleed into the unmistakable vocal tone of John Lennon in the song's introduction: "I know it's true / It's all because of you / And if I make it through / It's all because of you."

More than four decades since Lennon's murder and two since George Harrison's death, the very last Beatles song has been released as a double A-side single with "Love Me Do," the band's 1962 debut single.

"Now and Then" comes from the same batch of unreleased demos written by Lennon in the 1970s, which were given to his former bandmates by Yoko Ono. They used the tape to construct the songs "Free

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As a Bird" and "Real Love," released in the mid-1990s. But there were technical limitations to finishing "Now and Then."

On Wednesday, a short film titled "The Beatles — Now And Then — The Last Beatles Song" was released, detailing the creation of the track. On the original tape, Lennon's voice was hidden; the piano was "hard to hear," as Paul McCartney describes it. "And in those days, of course, we didn't have the technology to do the separation."

That changed in 2022, when the band — now a duo — was able to utilize the same technical restoration methods that separated the Beatles' voices from background sounds during the making of director Peter Jackson's 2021 documentary series, "The Beatles: Get Back." And so, they were able to isolate Lennon's voice from the original cassette and complete "Now and Then" using machine learning.

When the song was first announced in June, McCartney described artificial intelligence technology as "kind of scary but exciting," adding: "We will just have to see where that leads."

"To still be working on Beatles' music in 2023 — wow," he said in "The Beatles — Now And Then — The Last Beatles Song." "We're actually messing around with state-of-the-art technology, which is something the Beatles would've been very interested in."

"The rumors were that we just made it up," Ringo Starr told The Associated Press of Lennon's contributions to the forthcoming track in September. "Like we would do that anyway."

"This is the last track, ever, that you'll get the four Beatles on the track. John, Paul, George, and Ringo," he continued.

McCartney and Starr built the track from Lennon's demo, adding guitar parts George Harrison wrote in the 1995 sessions and a slide guitar solo in his signature style. McCartney and Starr tracked their bass and drum contributions. A string arrangement was written with the help of Giles Martin, son of the late Beatles producer George Martin — a clever recall to the classic ambitiousness of "Strawberry Fields," or "Yesterday," or "I Am the Walrus." Those musicians couldn't be told they were contributing to the last ever Beatles track, so McCartney played it off like a solo endeavor.

On Friday, an official music video for "Now and Then," directed by Jackson, will premiere on the Beatles' YouTube channel. It was created using footage McCartney and Starr took of themselves performing, 14 hours of "long forgotten film shot during the 1995 recording sessions, including several hours of Paul, George and Ringo working on 'Now and Then,'" Jackson said in a statement.

It also uses previously unseen home movie footage provided by Lennon's son Sean and Olivia Harrison, George's wife, and "a few precious seconds of The Beatles performing in their leather suits, the earliest known film of The Beatles and never seen before," provided by Pete Best, the band's original drummer.

"The result is pretty nutty and provided the video with much needed balance between the sad and the funny," said Jackson.

Federal agents search home of a top fundraiser for New York City Mayor Eric Adams

By JAKE OFFENHARTZ and MICHAEL BALSAMO Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — Federal agents on Thursday raided the home of a top fundraiser and longtime confidante to New York City Mayor Eric Adams, who abruptly ditched a planned White House meeting and flew home from Washington.

Agents searched the Brooklyn home of Brianna Suggs, a law enforcement official told The Associated Press. A spokesperson for the FBI confirmed that a court-authorized law enforcement action had been carried out at the address, but declined to comment further.

Vito Pitta, an attorney for the Adams campaign, said the mayor was not contacted as part of the inquiry. "The campaign has always held itself to the highest standards," Pitta added. "The campaign will of course comply with any inquiries, as appropriate."

Suggs, who did not respond to a request for comment, is a campaign consultant to Adams who raised money for his election effort and also lobbied his administration on behalf of a real estate client.

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News of the raid came shortly after Adams abruptly canceled a string of planned meetings in Washington, D.C., including a morning sit-down with senior White House officials to discuss the migrant crisis. Early on Thursday, Adams had shared video of himself aboard a plane, touting the importance of the meetings. Less than two hours later, a spokesperson said he would be returning to New York to "deal with a matter," without offering further details.

Several people, some wearing FBI windbreakers, were seen entering Suggs' home. They made multiple trips into the house and removed at least one box, according to one of Suggs' neighbors, Christopher Burwell.

Nicholas Biase, a spokesperson for the federal prosecutor's office in Manhattan, declined to comment.

The meeting with senior White House staff — which included the mayors of Denver and Chicago — proceeded without Adams in attendance. A spokesperson for City Hall declined to comment on the cancellation, deferring comment on the raid to the Adams campaign.

Suggs, 25, has worked for Adams since 2017, when she joined his staff in the Brooklyn Borough president's office as a teenager, reporting directly to her godmother, Ingrid Lewis-Martin, a longtime Adams ally who now serves as the mayor's chief advisor.

When Adams, a Democrat, ran for mayor in 2021, Suggs served as a chief fundraiser and director of logistics, helping to organize events and solicit money from donors. Records show she has been paid more than \$150,000 for her work on his previous campaign and his current reelection bid.

While collecting paychecks from the campaign in 2021, Suggs simultaneously started her own lobbying firm, Brianna Suggs & Associates Inc. Lobbying records list only one client, a real estate group seeking to take over a city-owned mall in Manhattan's Chinatown.

Good government groups have previously cast scrutiny on her role as a mayoral fundraiser and a lobbyist for real estate clients with interests before the city.

At the time, a spokesperson for Suggs, Jordan Barowitz, defended her dual roles, which some campaign finance experts said did not violate any city laws.

Barowitz did not respond to a request for comment Thursday.

Suggs is the latest Adams associate — and one of several people involved in his fundraising activity — to face legal trouble in recent months. In July, six people were charged in a straw donor conspiracy scheme to divert tens of thousands of dollars to Adams' campaign.

The former city buildings commissioner under Adams, Eric Ulrich, was also charged in September for using his position to dole out favors, including access to the mayor, in exchange for cash and other bribes. Ulrich and his six co-defendants have pleaded not guilty.

Adams has distanced himself from both cases, which were brought in state court and did not directly implicate his campaign or administration.

Minnesota justices appear skeptical that states should decide Trump's eligibility for the ballot

By CHRISTINE FERNANDO and NICHOLAS RICCARDI Associated Press

ST. PAUL, Minn. (AP) — Minnesota Supreme Court justices appeared skeptical Thursday that states have the authority to block former President Donald Trump from the ballot, with some suggesting that Congress is best positioned to decide whether his role in the 2021 U.S. Capitol attack should prevent him from running.

Justices sharply questioned an attorney representing Minnesota voters who had sued to keep Trump, the early front-runner for the 2024 Republican presidential nomination, off the state ballot under the rarely used "insurrection" clause of the U.S. Constitution. Citing Congress' role in certifying presidential electors and its ability to impeach, several justices said it seemed that questions of eligibility should be settled there.

"And those all seem to suggest there is a fundamental role for Congress to play and not the states because of that," Chief Justice Natalie E. Hudson said. "It's that interrelation that I think is troubling, that suggests that this is a national matter for Congress to decide."

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The oral arguments before the state Supreme Court were unfolding during an unprecedented week, as courts in two states were debating questions that even the nation's highest court has never settled — the meaning of the insurrection clause in the Civil War-era 14th Amendment and whether states are even allowed to decide the matter. At stake is whether Trump will be allowed on the ballot in states where lawsuits are challenging his eligibility.

The Minnesota lawsuit and another in Colorado, where a similar hearing is playing out, are among several filed around the country to bar Trump from state ballots in 2024 over his role in the Jan. 6, 2021, Capitol attack, which was intended to halt Congress' certification of Democrat Joe Biden's 2020 win. The Colorado and Minnesota cases are furthest along, putting one or both on an expected path to the U.S. Supreme Court.

Minnesota's went directly to the state Supreme Court, where five of the seven justices heard the arguments on Thursday after two recused themselves. The justices consistently questioned whether it was appropriate for states to determine a candidate's eligibility to run for president. Hudson also said she was concerned about the possibility "for just chaos" if multiple states decided the issue differently.

She said even if the court had the authority to keep Trump off the ballot, "Should we is the question that concerns me the most."

The former president is dominating the Republican presidential primary as voting in the first caucus and primary states rapidly approaches.

An attorney representing Trump, Nicholas Nelson, said states' roles in determining candidates' eligibility for president was limited to what he called "basic processing requirements," such as determining whether they meet the age requirement.

He addressed the chief justice's concern about the potential for chaos that could result from states deciding differently on the issue.

"Petitioners would like this to be a one-off case, but we are a 50-state democracy," he said.

The question of whether Trump should be barred from the ballot under the insurrection section of the 14th Amendment should not even be before the court, he said, calling it a political question.

"There's nothing for the courts to decide about the eligibility question," Nelson told the justices.

Trump's team asked the court to dismiss the lawsuit.

The central argument in the Minnesota and Colorado cases is the same — that Section Three of the 14th Amendment bars from office anyone 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 want the court to order an evidentiary hearing, which would mean further proceedings and delay a final resolution, something Trump's legal team opposes.

A core issue in the cases is how to define an insurrection under the amendment, a question that was debated at some length during Thursday's arguments in Minnesota.

In their filing with the court, attorneys for the Minnesota voters argued that the storming of the Capitol on Jan. 6 met the definition of an "insurrection or a rebellion" because it was a violent, coordinated effort to prevent Congress from certifying the winner of the 2020 presidential race.

Trump's lawyers acknowledged in their filings that the question of whether he "is suited to hold the Presidency has been the defining political controversy of our national life" for the last several years. But they came to a different conclusion about how to define the assault on the Capitol, arguing in an earlier court filing that "as awful as the melee was, and as disturbing as the rioters' actions were, it was not a war upon the United States."

On Thursday, Nelson told the justices, "It did not reach the scale and scope of what would be regarded as an insurrection."

The justices themselves seemed to be wrestling with the question: "Insurrection might be in the eye of the beholder, so it depends on who's doing the beholding," Hudson said.

Trump's lawyers noted that the former president has never been charged in any court with insurrec-

tion — although he does face state and federal criminal charges for his attempts to overturn his loss to Biden. Trump has criticized the cases as a form of “election interference” intended to prevent a rematch with Biden.

Some of the main arguments put forward by Trump’s attorneys 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 section of the 14th Amendment dealing with insurrection 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 earlier this week, 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.

It also was raised Thursday in arguments before Minnesota’s high court, with one justice calling it “weird” that the word president was not included in Section Three.

In Colorado on Thursday, Trump’s attorneys continued to argue that the attack was not an insurrection and that Trump was not responsible for it. They called multiple witnesses who attended Trump’s speech at a rally shortly before the attack who described a happy environment and said they had no interest in violence.

Republican Rep. Ken Buck, who announced his retirement from Congress on Wednesday due partly to Republicans amplifying Trump’s lies that the 2020 election was stolen, testified that the House Jan. 6 committee’s report on the attack was a “political” document because the committee consisted of Democrats and two Republicans aligned with them on the Jan. 6 response.

Trump’s case will continue Friday with a law professor arguing that Section Three doesn’t apply to the former president.

Ex-gang leader pleads not guilty in 1996 Tupac Shakur killing in Vegas and judge appoints lawyers

By KEN RITTER Associated Press

LAS VEGAS (AP) — A former Southern California street gang leader pleaded not guilty Thursday to murder in the 1996 killing of rap music icon Tupac Shakur in Las Vegas — a charge prompted by his own descriptions in recent years about orchestrating the deadly drive-by shooting.

Duane Keith “Keffe D” Davis is the only person still alive who was in the vehicle from which shots were fired and the only person ever charged with a crime in the case. In court on Thursday, Davis stood in shackles as he awaited proceedings and waved to his wife, son and daughter in the packed spectator gallery.

“Not guilty,” Davis said when Clark County District Court Judge Tierra Jones asked for his plea.

The judge told Davis that prosecutors are not seeking the death penalty in the case, which could put Davis in prison for the rest of his life if he is convicted. Jones also named county special public defenders Robert Arroyo and Charles Cano to represent Davis at taxpayer expense, after Davis lost his bid to hire private defense attorney Ross Goodman.

Goodman two weeks ago said prosecutors lack witnesses and key evidence, including a gun or vehicle, for the killing committed 27 years ago. Outside the courtroom on Thursday, Goodman said Davis was still trying to hire him. Davis’ family members declined to comment.

Clark County District Attorney Steve Wolfson told reporters that he and a panel of prosecutors decided the case against Davis was “not the kind of case that should proceed with the asking of the death penalty.” He didn’t specify reasons for that decision.

Wolfson also declined to respond to Goodman’s criticism of the evidence, saying that a jury will weigh the results of the police investigation.

In court, Davis wore dark-blue jail garb and answered several questions, telling the judge that he attended “a year in college,” wasn’t under the influence of drugs, medication or alcohol, and he understood he is charged with murder. The judge set his next court date for Tuesday to schedule the trial.

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Davis, 60, is originally from Compton, California. He was arrested Sept. 29 outside a home in suburban Henderson where Las Vegas police served a search warrant July 17, drawing renewed attention to one of hip-hop music's most enduring mysteries. Davis remains jailed without bail, did not testify before the grand jury that indicted him, and declined from jail to speak with The Associated Press.

The indictment alleges Davis obtained and provided a gun to someone in the back seat of a Cadillac before the car-to-car gunfire that mortally wounded Shakur and wounded rap music mogul Marion "Suge" Knight at an intersection just off the Las Vegas Strip. Shakur died a week later. He was 25.

Knight, now 58, is in prison in California, serving a 28-year sentence for the death of a Compton businessman in 2015. He has not responded to messages through his attorneys seeking comment about Davis' arrest.

Prosecutors allege that Shakur's killing in Las Vegas came out of competition between East Coast members of a Bloods gang sect and West Coast groups of a Crips sect, including Davis, for dominance in a musical genre dubbed "gangsta rap."

The grand jury was told the Sept. 7, 1996 shooting in Las Vegas was retaliation for a brawl hours earlier at a Las Vegas Strip casino involving Shakur and Davis' nephew, Orlando "Baby Lane" Anderson.

Prosecutors told a grand jury that Davis implicated himself in the killing in multiple interviews and a 2019 tell-all memoir that described his life leading a Crips sect in Compton. Davis has said he obtained a .40-caliber handgun and handed it to Anderson, a member of Davis' gang, in the back seat of a Cadillac, though he didn't identify Anderson as the shooter.

Anderson, then 22, denied involvement in Shakur's killing and died two years later in a shooting in his hometown of Compton. The other back seat passenger and the driver of the Cadillac are also dead.

In his book, Davis wrote that he told authorities in 2010 what he knew of the killings of Shakur and gang rival Notorious B.I.G, whose legal name is Christopher Wallace, to protect himself and 48 of his Southside Compton Crips gang associates from prosecution and the possibility of life sentences in prison.

Wallace, also known as Biggie Smalls, was shot and killed in Los Angeles in March 1997, six months after Shakur's death.

Shakur is largely considered one of the most influential and versatile rappers of all time. He had five No. 1 albums, was nominated for six Grammy Awards, was inducted into the Rock & Roll Hall of Fame in 2017, and received a posthumous star this year on the Hollywood Walk of Fame.

Former Memphis police officer pleads guilty to federal charges in Tyre Nichols' death

By JONATHAN MATTISE and TRAVIS LOLLER Associated Press

MEMPHIS, Tenn. (AP) — A former Memphis police officer pleaded guilty Thursday in the fatal beating of Tyre Nichols in exchange for prosecutors recommending a 15-year sentence, becoming the first of five officers charged in the case to admit guilt.

Desmond Mills Jr. entered his plea during a hearing at the Memphis federal courthouse as part of a larger agreement under which he will also plead guilty to related charges in state court. It wasn't immediately clear if any of the other officers would follow suit. Attorneys for three of the officers declined to comment and William Massey, the lawyer for Emmitt Martin, said in a text message that they "will stay the course" with the former officer's criminal defense.

Mills pleaded guilty to federal charges of excessive force and obstruction of justice and agreed to cooperate with prosecutors. The final sentencing decision rests with the judge. Mills remains free on bail ahead of his May 22 sentencing hearing.

Nichols' mother, RowVaughn Wells, shook as she described hearing how five large men beat her skinny son.

"This one today was very difficult for me because this was really the first time I actually heard somebody tell and say what they actually did to my son," she told reporters outside the courthouse. "So, this was very difficult. But I'm hoping that Mr. Mills, it was his conscience that allowed him to make this plea

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agreement, and not because of his lawyers telling him it was the right thing to do.”

Caught on police video, the beating of Nichols in January was one in a string of violent encounters between police and Black people that sparked protests and renewed debate about police brutality and the need for police reform in the U.S. The five former officers who were charged also are Black.

Mills and four other former Memphis Police Department officers were charged in federal court with using excessive force, failing to intervene, deliberate indifference and conspiring to lie, as well as obstruction of justice after they were caught on camera punching, kicking and beating Nichols on Jan. 7. He died three days later.

The five — Mills, Martin, Tadarrius Bean, Demetrius Haley and Justin Smith — pleaded not guilty to second-degree murder and other charges in state court. Mills is the first to agree to plead guilty.

Nichols’ mother and her husband said the possibility of 15 years in prison is “a start.” Nichols’ stepfather, Rodney Wells, noted that Mills has a family, with three children 6 years old and younger.

“Fifteen years is a long time with no parole,” Rodney Wells said at the news conference. “That’s going to affect his family, that’s going to affect him.”

Blake Ballin, Mills’ defense attorney, told reporters that Mills “understands he did something wrong and he’s taking responsibility for it.” Ballin added that there’s “overwhelming evidence of the guilt of people involved here,” and if authorities need Mills to testify at a possible trial, he will.

Shelby County District Attorney Steve Mulroy said Mills’ cooperation “probably would incentivize” the other officers to consider plea deals too. Mills will also cooperate in the U.S. Department of Justice’s investigation into the Memphis Police Department, which Mulroy said should lead to systemic reform.

Mulroy said the defendants hold “different levels of responsibility” in Nichols’ death and that Mills “is not the worst of the five” officers charged.

Ben Crump, the attorney for Nichols’ family, said Mills’ decision continues the “sea change” witnessed after George Floyd’s death, when the Minneapolis police chief testified during former Officer Derek Chauvin’s murder trial that he had violated departmental policy, values and principles.

“The precedent that’s being set now — police officers tell the truth, even if that means piercing the blue veil,” Crump told reporters.

The plea agreement sets out Mills’ role in the fatal beating, detailing how he pepper-sprayed Nichols three times before pulling out a baton and yelling, “I’m about to baton the (expletive) out of you.” He repeatedly struck Nichols, who was on the ground and surrounded by officers, never giving him an opportunity to comply with the command, “give us your hands!”

After the beating, Mills and the other officers failed to tell the responding medics that they had beaten Nichols, instead saying he was on drugs. Meanwhile, among themselves they discussed “taking turns hitting Nichols, hitting Nichols with straight haymakers, and everybody rocking Nichols. During these conversations, the officers discussed hitting Nichols to make him fall and observed that when Nichols did not fall from these blows, they believed they were ‘about to kill’ him,” according to the plea agreement.

Martin used hand signals to indicate to Mills that his body camera was still recording. Mills removed the camera and placed it on the back of a patrol car.

Mills told supervisors at the scene that he knew Nichols was in bad shape and he “expressed concerns about Nichols’ survival,” according to the agreement. When the five officers spoke later, they discussed what the body camera recording might show and conspired to mislead investigators. That included agreeing not to report that Martin had repeatedly struck Nichols in the head.

After Nichols’ death, all five officers were fired from the department and the crime-suppression team they were part of was disbanded. The four remaining officers have a May 6 trial date in federal court. A trial has not yet been set in state court.

The officers said they pulled Nichols over because he was driving recklessly, but Police Chief Cerelyn “CJ” Davis said no evidence was found to support that allegation. Nichols ran from officers, who tried to restrain him. He pleaded for his mother as he was pummeled just steps from his home.

An autopsy report showed Nichols died from blows to the head, and that the manner of death was homicide. The report described brain injuries, cuts and bruises to the head and other parts of the body.

As more Palestinians with foreign citizenship leave Gaza, some families are left in the lurch

By NAJIB JOBAIN and ISABEL DEBRE Associated Press

RAFAH, Gaza Strip (AP) — Dozens of Palestinians with foreign passports crossed through the war-torn Gaza Strip's only exit for the second straight day Thursday, escaping Israel's suffocating siege into the empty Egyptian desert. But the evacuation rush left families divided by citizenship status in painful limbo.

Nizar, a 41-year-old aid worker from Gaza City, gently shook his children awake at dawn and drove to Gaza's southern Rafah crossing with his wife, 8-month-old son and 6-year-old daughter, Zainab — a dangerous road trip even from where they'd sought refuge in central Gaza.

The bombardment didn't stop and they didn't know what awaited them at the border. All they knew was that the quirk of history that led to Zainab's birth in San Francisco gave her American citizenship and the family its only ticket out of a war that has ravaged Gaza, killed thousands of Palestinians and given his once bubbly daughter panic attacks and nightmares.

Nizar, who declined to give his last name for fear that it could hurt his chances of getting out, jumped up when he heard Hamas authorities call Zainab's name from the loudspeaker at the crowded Rafah terminal. But border officials quickly told him that U.S. citizens were the only ones allowed to evacuate and that the rest of his family couldn't cross into Egypt. Many families, they said, had been separated for this reason.

"It's just total confusion, nobody understands what is happening," Nizar said. "There are just tons of families who are very confused and unable to join their relatives and leave."

Even as the weeks of heated negotiations between Israel, Hamas and Egypt over the evacuation of foreign nationals at the crossing bore fruit Wednesday for the first time since the war started, the continuing chaos and heavy military restrictions reflected the difficulty of diplomacy over Rafah — now the only way in or out of Gaza for civilians.

The U.S. embassy in Israel didn't immediately respond to a request for comment on the issue of families being separated at the border. Secretary of State Antony Blinken was set to visit Israel on Friday to discuss the conflict.

The United States has publicly blamed Hamas for the delay in reopening Rafah, while neighboring Egypt, wary of receiving an influx of Palestinian refugees, has blamed Israel for repeatedly bombing the crossing and imposing tight controls. On Thursday, an Israeli bomb landed near the Rafah terminal, killing and wounding several people.

"A bomb came down and almost exploded everything," Jammal Qaoud, an American citizen, said from the border. "I have a heart condition and I could collapse at any time."

"I'm just trying to get to the other side and be safe," he added. Qaoud, who didn't face the divided family citizenship issue, eventually made it into Egypt, one of several hundred people to pass through the crossing Thursday.

The list of those who would be allowed to leave that was distributed to dual nationals trapped in Gaza on Thursday included scores of Americans, as well as citizens from a handful of other countries ranging from Switzerland to Sri Lanka.

How the names landed on that list and in that order remained a mystery. Palestinians struggled to get answers.

Jason Shawa, a Seattle-born translator whose wife and daughters don't have American passports and weren't on the list, said the entire process was bewildering. When he finally reached a U.S. State Department employee by phone Thursday for answers, the man on the line couldn't fathom that Shawa was even calling from Gaza.

"He was so shocked he didn't even know what to say," Shawa said. "It's like we take a back seat because we're not Americans — (because) we're brown Americans."

More wounded Palestinians were also expected to cross Rafah for treatment in Egypt on Thursday after nearly 80 sick and seriously injured patients were evacuated to hospitals the day before. Foreign staff from international aid organizations also were evacuated Wednesday.

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As the day wore on and heat baked the expanse of sand and concrete, the crowd grew, even as many, including Nizar, Zainab and their family, headed back into the war zone.

Ward Abu Shaaban, a pregnant 28-year-old American citizen who spent years in Houston, kept waiting at the gate Thursday even though border officers told her that her husband, who doesn't have a foreign passport, would not be able to join her and their 3-year-old daughter into Egypt.

"I don't care that I'm on the list, I cannot go without my husband, I will not leave my husband," Abu Shaaban said, the panic rising in her voice as she watched authorities call out name after name.

Then, later Thursday afternoon, she heard her own.

Palestinians at the crossing with the family said that after hours of discussions, Abu Shaaban and her husband made the wrenching decision to separate.

Abu Shaaban and her toddler daughter handed over their travel documents and strode across the border, into whatever awaited them in self-exile. Her husband, a 31-year-old electrician from Gaza City, walked the other way alone.

Vaping by high school students dropped this year, says US report

By MIKE STOBBE and MATTHEW PERRONE Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — Fewer high school students are vaping this year, the government reported Thursday.

In a survey, 10% of high school students said they had used electronic cigarettes in the previous month, down from 14% last year.

Use of any tobacco product — including cigarettes and cigars — also fell among high schoolers, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention report.

"A lot of good news, I'd say," said Kenneth Michael Cummings, a University of South Carolina researcher who was not involved in the CDC study.

Among middle school student, about 5% said they used e-cigarettes. That did not significantly change from last year's survey.

This year's survey involved more than 22,000 students who filled out an online questionnaire last spring. The agency considers the annual survey to be its best measure of youth smoking trends.

Why the drop among high schoolers? Health officials believe a number of factors could be helping, including efforts to raise prices and limit sales to kids by raising the legal age to 21.

"It's encouraging to see this substantial decrease in e-cigarette use among high schoolers within the past year, which is a win for public health," said Brian King, the Food and Drug Administrations tobacco center director.

The FDA has authorized a few tobacco-flavored e-cigarettes intended to help adult smokers cut back but has struggled to stop sales of illegal products.

Other key findings in the report:

- Among students who currently use e-cigarettes, about a quarter said they use them every day.
- About 1 in 10 middle and high school students said they recently had used a tobacco product. That translates to 2.8 million U.S. kids.
- E-cigarettes were the most commonly used kind of tobacco product, and disposable ones were the most popular with teens.
- Nearly 90% of the students who vape used flavored products, with fruit and candy flavors topping the list.

In 2020, FDA regulators banned those teen-preferred flavors from reusable e-cigarettes like Juul and Vuse, which are now only sold in menthol and tobacco. But the flavor restriction didn't apply to disposable products, and companies like Elf Bar and Esco Bar quickly stepped in to fill the gap.

The growing variety in flavors like gummy bear and watermelon has been almost entirely driven by cheap, disposable devices imported from China, which the FDA considers illegal. Those products now account for more than half of U.S. vaping sales, according to government figures.

In the latest survey, about 56% of teens who vape said they used Elf Bar, trailed by Esco Bar and Vuse, which is a reusable e-cigarette made by R.J. Reynolds. Juul, the brand widely blamed for sparking the

recent spike in teen vaping, was the fourth most popular brand, used by 16% of teens.

The FDA tried to block imports of both Elf Bar and Esco Bar in May, but the products remain widely available. Elf Bar has thwarted customs officials by changing its brand name, among other steps designed to avoid detection

On Thursday, the FDA announced another round of fines against 20 stores selling Elf Bar products. The agency has sent more than 500 warning letters to retailers and manufacturers of unauthorized e-cigarettes over the past year, but those citations are not legally binding and are sometimes ignored.

In the latest report, the CDC highlighted one worrisome but puzzling finding. There was a slight increase in middle schools students who said they had used at least one tobacco product in the past month, while that rate fell among high school students. Usually those move in tandem, said Kurt Ribisl, a University of North Carolina researcher. He and Cummings cautioned against making too much of the finding, saying it might be a one-year blip.

The US sanctions more foreign firms in a bid to choke off Russia's supplies for its war in Ukraine

By FATIMA HUSSEIN Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — The United States on Thursday imposed a new round of sanctions on 130 firms and people from Turkey, China and the United Arab Emirates in an effort to choke off Russia's access to tools and equipment that support its invasion of Ukraine.

The sanctions imposed by the Treasury Department's Office of Foreign Assets Control target third-party firms and people alleged to assist Moscow in procuring equipment needed on the battlefield, including suppliers and shippers. In addition, the State Department imposed diplomatic sanctions targeting Russian energy production and its metals and mining sector.

Thursday's sanctions targets include Turkish national Berk Turken and his firms, which are alleged to have ties to Russian intelligence. The Treasury Department said Turken's network arranged payments and shipping details designed to bypass sanctions and move goods from Turkey to Russia.

A series of United Arab Emirates firms alleged to have shipped aviation equipment, machines for data reception and more also were sanctioned. And UAE-based ARX Financial Engineering Ltd. was sanctioned for allegedly being involved in finding ways for Russian rubles to be sent from sanctioned Russian bank VTB Bank and converted to U.S. dollars.

Turken and a representative from ARX were not available for comment on Thursday.

Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen said Russia "is dependent on willing third-country individuals and entities to resupply its military and perpetuate its heinous war against Ukraine and we will not hesitate in holding them accountable."

"Today's actions demonstrate our further resolve in continuing to disrupt every link of Russian military supply chain, and target outside actors who would seek to support Russia's war effort," she said in a statement.

Secretary of State Antony Blinken said the State Department sanctions were imposed on people involved in sanctions evasion, among other things. "Our actions today also target Russia's future energy capabilities, which will limit Moscow's ability to funnel future revenues toward its destructive aims," Blinken said.

The latest sanctions build on the thousands of financial penalties imposed on Russian infrastructure and its officials, banks and oligarchs.

Along with imposing individual sanctions, the U.S. and allies have frozen Russian Central Bank funds, restricted Russian banks' access to SWIFT — the dominant system for global financial transactions — and imposed a \$60-per-barrel price cap on Russian oil and diesel.

And after nearly two years of war, the allied nations are still aiming at new targets for financial penalties that block, freeze and seize access to international funds.

Russian President Vladimir Putin asserted the attack on Ukraine was needed to protect civilians in eastern Ukraine — a false claim the U.S. had predicted he would make as a pretext for an invasion. He accused

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the U.S. and its allies of ignoring Russia's demand to prevent Ukraine from joining NATO and offer Moscow security guarantees.

Hold the olive oil! Prices of some basic European foodstuffs keep skyrocketing

By RAF CASERT Associated Press

BRUSSELS (AP) — These days, think twice before you lavishly ladle olive oil onto your pasta, salad or crusty bread.

Olive oil, a daily staple of Mediterranean cuisine and the life of many a salad throughout Europe, is experiencing a staggering rise in price. It's a prime example of how food still outruns overall inflation in the European Union.

Olive oil has increased by about 75% since January 2021, dwarfing overall annual inflation that has already been considered unusually high over the past few years and even stood at 11.5% in October last year. And much of the food inflation has come over the past two years alone.

In Spain, the world's biggest olive oil producer, prices jumped 53% in August compared to the previous year and a massive 115% since August 2021.

Apart from olive oil, "potato prices were also on a staggering rise," according to EU statistical agency Eurostat. "Since January 2021, prices for potatoes increased by 53% in September 2023.

And if high- and middle-income families can shrug off such increases relatively easily, it becomes an ever increasing burden for poorer families, many of which have been unable to even match an increase of their wages to the overall inflation index.

"By contrast," said the European Trade Union Confederation, or ETUC, "nominal wages have increased by 11% in the EU," making sure that gap keeps on increasing.

"Wages are still failing to keep up with the cost of the most basic food stuffs, including for workers in the agriculture sector itself, forcing more and more working people to rely on foodbanks," said Esther Lynch, the union's general-secretary.

Annual inflation fell sharply to 2.9% in October, its lowest in more than two years, but food inflation still stood at 7.5%.

Grocery prices have risen more sharply in Europe than in other advanced economies — from the U.S. to Japan — driven by higher energy and labor costs and the impact of Russia's war in Ukraine. That is even though costs for food commodities have fallen for months.

Even if ETUC blames profiteering of big agroindustry in times of crisis, the olive oil sector has faced its own challenges.

In Spain, for example, farmers and experts primarily blame the nearly two-year drought, higher temperatures affecting flowering and inflation affecting fertilizer prices. Spain's Agriculture Ministry said that it expects olive oil production for the 2023-24 campaign to be nearly 35% down on average production for the past four years.

Netanyahu has sidestepped accountability for failing to prevent Hamas attack, instead blaming others

By TIA GOLDENBERG Associated Press

A growing list of Israeli officials have accepted responsibility for failing to prevent Hamas' brutal attack on Israeli communities during the Oct. 7 incursion that triggered the current Israel-Hamas war. Conspicuously absent from that roll call is Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu.

Following the horrific assault, which saw the deadliest day for Israelis since the country was established 75 years ago, Netanyahu has repeatedly sidestepped accountability. He has instead blamed others, in what critics say shows a leader thinking more about his own political survival than soothing and steering a traumatized nation.

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"Netanyahu is fighting a personal battle of survival and that takes precedence over fighting Israel's war against Hamas," said Netanyahu biographer and journalist Anshel Pfeffer. "As part of that battle, he's prepared to malign those who are now commanding Israel's army and intelligence services."

When hundreds of Hamas militants broke down Israel's seemingly impenetrable security systems and stormed through its communities, Israel's vaunted security forces were caught off guard. Some 1,400 people were killed and it took hours for soldiers to arrive. The war has killed more than 9,000 Palestinians, according to Palestinian health officials, and ravaged many parts of the Gaza Strip.

The attack also shattered a widely-held belief among Israeli military, intelligence and political leaders that Hamas was uninterested in a new conflict and that Israel's military power served as a deterrent.

Israel's top security brass, including the military chief of staff, the defense minister and the head of the domestic security agency Shin Bet, came forward and accepted responsibility for the blunder in the days after the attack.

Netanyahu, however, has not taken outright responsibility for the missteps that led up the horrific attack, despite serving as prime minister for 13 of the past 14 years. He says there will be time for investigations — after the war.

"This debacle will be investigated. Everyone will have to give answers, including me," Netanyahu said, two and half weeks after the attack. But he has brushed off criticism and rejected suggestions that he should resign.

"The only thing that I intend to have resign is Hamas. We're going to resign them to the dustbin of history," he told reporters last weekend. "That's my responsibility."

Netanyahu, a polarizing figure in Israel, has also faced criticism over his response to the crisis.

He has been accused of failing to unite the nation with any resounding, uplifting speech or act. Many Israelis have pointed to U.S. President Joe Biden, who visited Israel in the days after the attack, as having better fulfilled that role.

Netanyahu was criticized for waiting many days to visit with the families of the more than 240 people believed kidnapped by Hamas who mainly came from liberal-leaning communal farms that tend not to vote for Netanyahu. The economy is spiraling, and Israelis bemoan the slow government response to address the urgent needs of 250,000 displaced Israelis.

But the biggest uproar came over the weekend, when in a late night tweet, Netanyahu pointedly blamed his security chiefs for the debacle, saying he never received any warning from them about Hamas' intentions and that, on the contrary, he was guided by their advice that Hamas was deterred.

Netanyahu's new wartime governing partner slammed it. "During war, leadership must act responsibly," Benny Gantz, a former military chief of staff, posted on X, formerly Twitter, calling on Netanyahu to take back his words.

Netanyahu deleted the tweet and later apologized, saying it "should not have been said."

But critics say the damage has been done. Idit Shafran Gittleman, a senior researcher at Israel's Institute for National Security Studies, said the tweet came at a time when faith in Israel's security services is at a nadir.

"There is harm to the security brass but also harm to the faith of soldiers on the ground," who see their prime minister focused on things other than winning the war.

Clashes between Netanyahu and his security chiefs aren't new. Shafran Gittleman pointed to his apparent refusal this year to accept their warnings that a planned overhaul of the country's judiciary threatened state security. Scores of senior reservists and fighter pilots, key pillars of the military, had threatened to stop serving if the overhaul continued, though they have rushed back to duty since Oct. 7.

Netanyahu's allies and the core of his nationalist base say the Israeli leader is facing unfair and poorly timed criticism by the same figures in the media and in the public who have long opposed him.

"Either we wait until a public inquiry that will determine who is to blame and for now we focus on victory over Hamas, or already now everyone blames everyone and Netanyahu also has the right to respond," Shimon Riklin, a journalist close to Netanyahu, posted on X.

The attack and its aftermath have undeniably posed the biggest challenge to Netanyahu's lengthy tenure

and will likely forever stain his legacy. It has shattered his carefully manicured image as a strong leader with burnished security credentials who has worked tirelessly to protect Israel from its myriad threats.

Opinion polls show support for Netanyahu's Likud Party has tanked, the public views him as significantly less fit to rule than his main political opponent, Gantz, and his current coalition has nowhere near the support needed to govern were elections held today.

This is also not the first time Netanyahu has shirked blame for a crisis on his watch. He has dismissed a corruption trial as part of a media-orchestrated witch-hunt against him.

And last year, while testifying before an inquiry into the deaths of 45 people at a stampede at a Jewish pilgrimage site, Netanyahu said he was unaware of the issues that may have led to the trampling. "You can't take responsibility for what you don't know," he said.

Noam Tibon, a former military general who was outspoken against the judicial overhaul and rescued his son and his family from the Hamas attack, said the country needed unity to win the war but that Netanyahu was sowing division.

"Every Israeli needs to ask, 'Do I believe that Netanyahu can lead Israel to victory in this war?'"

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 regionwide 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.

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" 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 member of Bahrain's Parliament 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.

"Israeli acts of escalation are in contradiction with international humanitarian law and common human values, Morocco's Foreign Ministry said in a Thursday statement that did not mention normalization. It accused Israel of targeting civilians, noted an airstrike on the Jabaliya refugee camp, and condemned the international community — particularly "influential countries" and the United Nations Security Council — for not bringing an end to the war.

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 wait-

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ing 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.

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.

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"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."

Nikki Haley wants to be the GOP's Trump alternative. Ron DeSantis and others are trying to stop her

By THOMAS BEAUMONT and STEVE PEOPLES Associated Press

CEDAR RAPIDS, Iowa (AP) — At a recent closed-door meeting of roughly 60 millionaires and billionaires, one of the Republican Party's most influential donors stood in the well of Dallas' historic Old Parkland debate chamber and praised Nikki Haley's presidential candidacy.

But Paul Singer deliberately stopped short of endorsing the former U.N. ambassador and South Carolina governor. The New York hedge fund executive instead spoke highly of Haley's Republican rivals as well, naming Florida Gov. Ron DeSantis and South Carolina Sen. Tim Scott. He even praised aspects of Donald Trump's presidency, despite Singer's strong preference — like that of others in the room — to move past the former president.

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The moment, described by two people who were inside the meeting last month and spoke on the condition of anonymity to discuss private deliberations, captures the conundrum facing the many Republican leaders eager to coalesce behind a clear Trump alternative.

While DeSantis has struggled in recent months, Haley has been rising with donors and voters thanks in part to strong debate performances and the campaign's increased focus on foreign policy after Hamas' Oct. 7 attack on Israel. In many ways, Haley presents exactly what key Republican donors say they are seeking: an experienced conservative leader and foreign policy hawk whose profile as a woman of color — she is the daughter of Indian immigrants — could help the GOP broaden its appeal in the general election against Democratic President Joe Biden.

But just over 10 weeks before Iowa's caucuses launch the GOP nomination calendar, none of the would-be Trump alternatives has broken out. And his grip on the 2024 nomination is as strong as ever.

"There was a lot of donor support for Ron DeSantis at the start, but I think many donors today have stayed on the sidelines because either they fear retribution from Trump or they believe that Trump is inevitable," said Marc Short, a longtime senior adviser to former Vice President Mike Pence, who ended his presidential campaign on Saturday.

A Des Moines Register poll published Monday shows Haley tied with DeSantis for second in Iowa, which hold the first-in-the-nation GOP caucuses on Jan. 15. Both candidates are at 16%. That's 27 percentage points behind Trump, whose support was virtually unchanged since August in spite of several criminal indictments and fears that he might lose again to Biden.

Haley and DeSantis are in an increasingly expensive battle against each other as they head into the third Republican primary debate next week. Trump will skip the prime-time event, as he has the first two debates. Some super political action committees allied with Haley and DeSantis have spent more than \$2.5 million combined over the past week running attack ads against each other that are largely focused on China, according to tracking firm AdImpact.

Neither Haley nor DeSantis is currently devoting any advertising dollars to criticizing Trump.

Still, Haley, 51, is showing signs of momentum.

She has won over new donors in recent weeks, including former Illinois Gov. Bruce Rauner, a businessman and philanthropist who had contributed to DeSantis' campaign for governor but now says Haley has the "best chance to win the general election."

Haley has clear strengths as a candidate.

In both debates so far, she memorably cut down entrepreneur Vivek Ramaswamy on foreign policy issues and quickly rebutted attacks. She has never lost an election, having entered the 2010 primary for South Carolina governor as an underdog before defeating three better-known candidates. As the sole woman among the GOP's presidential candidates, Haley often references her own struggles with pregnancy to discuss her opposition to abortion, an issue that some Republicans fret puts them opposite a majority of voters nationally.

Rauner said Haley's foreign policy credentials and her strong relationship with Israel elevates her over the rest of Trump's would-be challengers and helps him raise money for her.

"She's a tough person who understands the international dynamics better than anyone in the race. She was a phenomenal ally for Israel when she was at the U.N.," Rauner said. "And I think the tragedy in Israel — it's absolutely horrible, and unfortunately it's going to get worse — she's uniquely positioned to make a difference," he said.

Haley is also facing more criticism from people usually content to focus on Trump.

Democratic National Committee Chairman Jaime Harrison, who is also from South Carolina, posted Monday that Haley was "a dangerous, out of touch MAGA extremist governor who was a complete disaster for our state." Harrison wrote on X, formerly known as Twitter, referring to Trump's "Make America Great Again" slogan.

Gov. Gavin Newsom, D-Calif., singled out Haley when asked during a recent interview which Republican he believes would be stronger than Trump in the general election. Newsom pointed to Haley's first debate

performance and “the conventional wisdom” that suggests she could do better than Trump among key demographics, such as suburban women.

Trump, who has long focused his attacks on DeSantis, spent more time belittling Haley during an appearance Sunday in Sioux City, Iowa, referring to her repeatedly as “a highly overrated person.”

But some of the GOP’s most influential financiers have been reluctant to commit to her, even after expressing concerns about DeSantis, who was initially thought to be the strongest Trump alternative.

Singer, the New York finance executive, was among the attendees at the Dallas conference known as the American Opportunity Alliance. Representatives of DeSantis and Haley were invited to present to the group.

Singer has not donated any money directly to Haley nor to her super PAC despite his eagerness to identify and support a clear Trump alternative, according to people familiar with his thinking who spoke on condition of anonymity to share private discussions.

Chicago hedge-fund billionaire Ken Griffin was a prominent booster of DeSantis before the governor ran for president but has criticized him in recent months. Griffin referred to Haley in October as a “rock star,” according to Business Insider magazine. But he has not yet signed onto her campaign either, according to friends and fundraisers familiar with Griffin’s thinking who also spoke on condition of anonymity.

DeSantis’ team remains bullish about his prospects, dismissing reports that his candidacy has stalled out and investing heavily in an Iowa comeback.

Polling suggests that DeSantis remains competitive in the fight for second place. In recent days, however, DeSantis’ allies have directed significant resources into ads taking on Haley, indicating that they see her rise as a direct threat to his ambitions.

New York-based Republican donor Eric Levine has been calling for Trump opponents to unite behind someone for much of the last year. While he likes Haley’s muscular foreign policy and her political appeal, he recently decided to support Scott, the South Carolina senator.

“We need to winnow it down to two or three,” Levine said of the GOP primary field, adding that Scott should leave the race if he does not finish at least third in Iowa. “Once you get to Iowa, then you figure out who’s the Trump alternative. Iowa and New Hampshire have to define that. After New Hampshire, or Iowa, you’ve got to be one person — maybe two.”

Haley has held 40 events in Iowa and appears to be attracting prospective caucusgoers, if nowhere near the crowds that routinely turn out for Trump.

Donna Valiga, a 72-year-old self-described former “Trump girl,” was among 200 people who came to see Haley at an event center in Cedar Rapids. She said she loved Haley’s suggestion in a television interview that Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu “finish them,” as a reaction to the Hamas attack against Israel.

“I see her as being very direct. She’s got the experience and it shows. You know exactly what she’s going to do,” Valiga said. “She’s heard people say ‘Death to Israel. Death to America.’ I think she possesses the depth of knowledge and passion we need.”

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, Texas was certainly due.

Nathan Eovaldi pitched six gritty innings, Mitch Garver broke a scoreless tie with an RBI single in the

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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 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

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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

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Series championship. The Diamondbacks won their only title in 2001.

Today in History: November 3

Bill Clinton becomes 42nd president with defeat of George H.W. Bush

By The Associated Press undefined

Today is Friday, Nov. 3, the 307th day of 2023. There are 58 days left in the year.

On Nov. 3, 1992, Democrat Bill Clinton was elected the 42nd president of the United States, defeating President George H.W. Bush.

On this date:

In 1839, the first Opium War between China and Britain broke out.

In 1908, Republican William Howard Taft was elected president, outpolling Democrat William Jennings Bryan.

In 1911, the Chevrolet Motor Car Co. was founded in Detroit by Louis Chevrolet and William C. Durant.

In 1961, President John F. Kennedy established the U.S. Agency for International Development.

In 1970, Salvador Allende (ah-YEN'-day) was inaugurated as president of Chile.

In 1976, the horror movie "Carrie," adapted from the Stephen King novel and starring Sissy Spacek, was released by United Artists.

In 1979, five Communist Workers Party members were killed in a clash with heavily armed Ku Klux Klansmen and neo-Nazis during an anti-Klan protest in Greensboro, North Carolina.

In 1986, the Iran-Contra affair came to light as Ash-Shiraa, a pro-Syrian Lebanese magazine, first broke the story of U.S. arms sales to Iran.

In 1994, Susan Smith of Union, South Carolina, was arrested for drowning her two young sons, Michael and Alex, nine days after claiming the children had been abducted by a Black carjacker.

In 1997, the Supreme Court let stand California's groundbreaking Proposition 209, which banned race and gender preference in hiring and school admissions.

In 2012, the lights went back on in lower Manhattan to the relief of residents who had been plunged into darkness for nearly five days by Superstorm Sandy.

In 2014, 13 years after the 9/11 terrorist attack, a new 1,776-foot skyscraper at the World Trade Center site opened for business, marking an emotional milestone for both New Yorkers and the nation.

In 2017, Netflix said it was cutting all ties with Kevin Spacey after a series of allegations of sexual harassment and assault, and that it would not be a part of any further production of "House of Cards" that included him.

In 2020, Democrat Joe Biden won the presidency, though his victory would not be known for more than three days as counting continued in battleground states; Republican President Donald Trump would refuse to concede, falsely claiming that he was a victim of widespread voter fraud.

In 2021, after serving more than seven years in an Indonesian prison for killing her mother at a luxury resort on the island of Bali, Heather Mack of Chicago was indicted on murder conspiracy charges in the United States and taken into federal custody on her arrival at O'Hare International Airport.

In 2022, a Manhattan judge said he would appoint an independent monitor "to ensure there is no further fraud" at former President Donald Trump's company.

Today's Birthdays: Actor Lois Smith is 93. Former Massachusetts Gov. Michael S. Dukakis is 90. Actor Shadoe Stevens is 77. Singer Lulu is 75. "Vogue" editor-in-chief Anna Wintour is 74. Comedian-actor Roseanne Barr is 71. Actor Kate Capshaw is 70. Comedian Dennis Miller is 70. Actor Kathy Kinney is 70. Singer Adam Ant is 69. Sports commentator and former quarterback Phil Simms is 68. Director-screenwriter Gary Ross is 67. Actor Dolph Lundgren is 66. Rock musician C.J. Pierce (Drowning Pool) is 51. Actor Francois Battiste (TV: "Ten Days in the Valley") is 47. Olympic gold medal figure skater Evgeni Plushenko is 41. Actor Julie Berman is 40. Actor Antonia Thomas (TV: "The Good Doctor") is 37. Alternative rock singer/songwriter Courtney Barnett is 36. TV personality and model Kendall Jenner (TV: "Keeping Up with the Kardashians") is 28.