

Groton Daily Independent

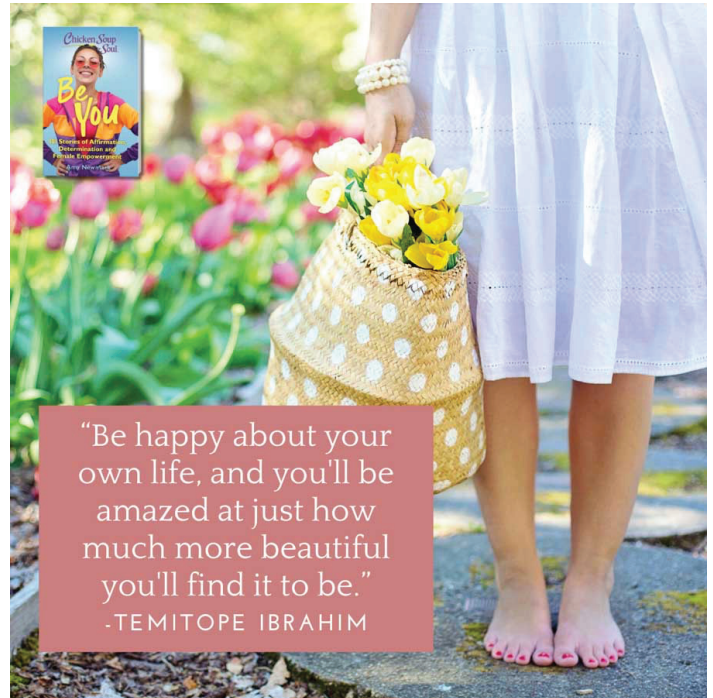
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Wednesday, March 20

School Breakfast: Cereal.
School Lunch: Pizza crunchers, green beans.
Senior Menu: Breaded pork cutlets, creamy noodles, broccoli/cauliflower blend, frosted brownie, fruit, whole wheat bread.
Emmanuel Lutheran: Luther League, 5:30 p.m.; Soup Supper, 6 p.m. (Luther League host); Lenten worship, 7 p.m.
St. John's Lutheran: Confirmation, 3:45 p.m.; Lent Service, 7 p.m.
United Methodist: Communion coffee hour, 9:30 a.m.; Confirmation, 6 p.m.; Lent Bible Study, 7 p.m.; Groton Ad Council, 7 p.m.

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



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

Thursday, March 21

School Breakfast: Breakfast pizza.
School Lunch: Chicken strips, fries.
Senior Menu: Ranch chicken breast, long grain wild rice, vegetable capri blend, acini depepi fruit salad, whole wheat bread.

Friday, March 22

School Breakfast: Stuffed bagels.
School Lunch: Cheese sticks, peas.
Senior Menu: Tuna noodle hot dish with peas, California blend vegetables, Swedish apple square, whole wheat bread.

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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1440

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Brazilian federal police have indicted former President Jair Bolsonaro over allegations he falsified his COVID-19 vaccination data in the country's public health database in December 2022 to falsely indicate that he, his daughter, and close associates had received the vaccine. He also faces charges of criminal association for allegedly conspiring with his aides to enter the false data.

Hong Kong lawmakers unanimously passed a national security law yesterday strengthening punishments for offenses tied to dissent and espionage. The law, effective Saturday, will expand the city's ability to crack down on activists and journalists, many jailed following the 2019 antigovernment protests.

British consumer products giant Unilever will spin off its ice cream division by the end of 2025 as part of a broader restructuring, which will see 7,500 jobs cut for a savings of \$870M over three years. The company owns some of the highest-profile ice cream brands in the world, including Ben & Jerry's, Breyers, and Magnum. Shares in the company closed up 3% on the news.

Sports, Entertainment, & Culture

Blink-182, SZA, and Tyler, the Creator among headliners tapped to perform at 2024 Lollapalooza in Chicago (Aug. 1-4); see full festival lineup.

"Taylor Swift: The Eras Tour" becomes Disney+'s most-streamed music film three days after its release on the streaming service. NFL star Travis Kelcein talks to host "Are You Smarter Than a Fifth Grader?" reboot.

NCAA women's basketball tournament kicks off tonight with "First Four" matchups. ESPN announces \$7.8B deal to maintain broadcasting rights for the College Football Playoff through 2031. Russian and Belarusian athletes barred from 2024 Paris Olympics opening ceremonies.

Science & Technology

Google's DeepMind unveils TacticAI, an AI-powered model capable of providing strategic suggestions for soccer, including accurately predicting the outcome of corner kicks. Nvidia announces the world's most powerful chip for AI applications.

World Meteorological Organization releases annual global climate assessment, finds March 2023 to February 2024 was the warmest 12-month period in 174 years of record keeping.

Protein found in human sweat helps protect against Lyme disease, new study suggests; finding may lead to new preventive treatments for the condition that affects half a million Americans annually.

Business & Markets

US stock markets close higher (S&P 500 +0.6%, Dow +0.8%, Nasdaq +0.4%); Federal Reserve is expected to keep interest rates steady today. Nordstrom shares close up 9% following report of its founding family looking to take the US retailer private.

Bank of Japan raises interest rates for first time in 17 years, bringing rates to a range of 0% to 0.1%; move ends an eight-year era of negative interest rates. Chinese property giant Evergrande's unit Hengda Real Estate and founder fined \$590M for allegedly inflating revenues by \$78B in 2019-20.

Philanthropist MacKenzie Scott announces donation of \$640M to 361 small nonprofits. Microsoft hires DeepMind cofounder Mustafa Suleyman to run consumer AI division.

Politics & World Affairs

US Supreme Court clears Texas to implement law allowing local officials to arrest and deport migrants; court's order in effect while issue plays out in appeals court. Congressional leaders agree on Department of Homeland Security funding, one of multiple bills needed to avoid partial government shutdown Saturday.

Businessman Bernie Moreno wins Ohio Republican primary to challenge Sen. Sherrod Brown (D) in November. Former White House adviser Peter Navarro begins four-month prison sentence following conviction for contempt of Congress. Former President Donald Trump sues ABC over alleged defamation.

Vatican criticized by legal analysts after Pope Francis issued four secret decrees during trial over Vatican's failed \$380M investment in London property; decrees allow prosecutors to wiretap and detain suspects without a warrant.

Renewable energy production, summer employment discussed at City Council meeting

How will Groton deal with renewable energy produced in town?

The City Council approved a resolution Tuesday to adopt an interconnection process and requirements for individuals wanting to co-generate electricity.

The city gets its main supply of electricity from the Western Area Power Administration, with remain peak power being purchased from Heartland Consumer Power District.

Questions come in, though, if residents begin adding renewable energy sources like solar panels onto their homes, said Kelly Dybdahl, customer relations manager with Heartland Energy. The city, as a utility provider, is obligated to connect to these systems as long as they abide by federal regulations.

If a resident with renewable energy at their property were to produce more energy than they consume, the city would have to buy back that energy, he said. However, because the city currently is contracted to purchase electricity above what they receive through WAPA from Heartland, that would violate the contract between Groton and Heartland.

The resolution would solve that issue, he said, along with providing a pathway for the city to handle interconnection agreements should they come forward.

"This is just a way that you guys would have the right procedures to handle them fairly, handle them safely," Dybdahl said.

The home owner would need to have certain insurance to put a system in, and it can't be something just put together in a garage, he said.

This is not common here in South Dakota, Dybdahl said, but the Groton Finance Officer was approached by a company out of Utah that has reached out to other South Dakota cities to inquire about the interconnection and co-generation process. It is not clear if that company is representing anyone specifically in Groton.

The interconnection process before the council is in place in a number of other cities that contract with Heartland Energy, Dybdahl said. Having a document like this in place at least covers the city's utility arm if the issue should come up.

"Basically it protects you guys and us," Mayor Scott Hanlon asked, with confirmation from Dybdahl.

City Attorney Drew Johnson said he has reviewed the interconnection process and saw no issue with it.

The council approved the resolution to adopt the interconnection process with a unanimous vote.

More added to summer staff

More than 30 people were hired for various summer positions.

Kami Lipp and Tricia Keith will continue as swimming pool co-managers for the year, Lipp with 13 years of experience and Keith with 12 years of experience. Karla Pasteur will be substitute co-manager with 12 years of experience, and Cody Swanson will be assistant part time swimming pool manager with eight years of experience.

Other summer worker positions hired include:

- Kelli Hanson as lifeguard with 12 years of experience
- Tanae Lipp as lifeguard with six years of experience
- Aspen Johnson as lifeguard with four years of experience
- Emma Schinkel as lifeguard with three years of experience
- Gretchen Dinger, Faith Traphagen and Emma Kutter as lifeguards with two years of experience each
- Anna Fjeldheim, Hannah Sandness, Easten Ekern, Jerica Locke, Carly Gilbert, Jayden Schwan, Laila Roberts, Talli Wright and Mia Crank as lifeguards with one year of experience each
- Avery Crank, Emerlee Jones, Ashlynn Warrington and Addison Hoffman as lifeguards with no years of experience with the city

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- Rebecca Padfield as baseball concessions manager with eight years of experience
 - Ryan Groeblichhoff as baseball groundskeeper with two years of experience
 - Braxton Imrie as baseball groundskeeper with one year of experience
 - Nicholas Groeblichhoff as baseball groundskeeper with no years of experience with the city
 - Leah Jones as baseball gatekeeper with one year of experience
 - Addison Hoffman (who was also hired as a lifeguard) as baseball gatekeeper with no years of experience with the city
 - Brian Gravatt as cemetery maintenance worker with nine years of experience
 - Aaron Severson as public works laborer with eight years of experience
- Summer salaries were set through an ordinance finalized at last week's council meeting.

More items from Tuesday's City Council meeting:

- The spring city-wide cleanup has been scheduled for April 27 through May 3. Pickups will be available by appointment from April 29 through May 3. "It will be an opportunity for people to get rid of things we haven't been able to get rid of," said Mayor Scott Hanlon.
- The city will accept bids for non-alcoholic beverages to be sold at the Groton Baseball Complex and Groton Swimming Pool for the 2024, 2025 and 2026 seasons. The contract would include carbonated soft drinks and non-carbonated soft drinks, juices, water, tea and enhanced isotonic drinks. Coolers and vending machines must be provided, according to the advertisement for bid. Proposals are due to City Hall by 5 p.m. April 15 in sealed envelopes marked "BID." Contracts will be awarded at the April 16 City Council meeting.
- A special event alcoholic beverage license was approved for a private graduation event on May 4 at the community center. The malt beverage license was requested by Groton resident Susan Fjeldheim.
- Malt beverage licenses were renewed for MJ's Sinclair, Ken's Food Fair and Dollar General for 2024-2025.

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A large crowd was on hand Tuesday night at the Bristol Community Center as the Groton Area School Board held its second of third meeting about the opt-out proposal. The third meeting will be held Monday, March 25, 6 p.m., at the Groton Community Center. The event was livestreamed on GDILIVE.COM and is archived under School Board. (Photo by Paul Kosel)

Meade County Fatal Crash

What: UTV fatal crash

Where: Forest Service Road 226, 30 miles Southwest of Sturgis, SD

When: 7:48 p.m., Monday, March 18, 2024

Driver 1: Female, 37, minor injuries

Vehicle 1: 2021 Polaris General XP

Seatbelt Use: Yes

Helmet Use: No

Passenger 1: Female, 30, fatal injuries

Seatbelt Use: Yes

Helmet Use: No

Meade County, S.D.- A passenger in a UTV suffered fatal injuries yesterday in a single-vehicle crash near Sturgis, SD.

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

Preliminary crash information indicates a single UTV had left the roadway and struck a tree. A female passenger in the UTV was found deceased when emergency personnel arrived. The driver of the UTV was taken to a nearby hospital for treatment of her injuries.

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

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

Lyman County Fatal Crash

What: Two vehicle fatal crash
Where: I-90, Mile marker 247, 2 miles west of Reliance, SD
When: 7:43 p.m., Monday, March 18, 2024

Driver 1: Male, 38, fatal injuries
Vehicle 1: 2005 Ford F-350
Seat Belt Use: Under investigation

Driver 2: Male, 59, fatal injuries
Vehicle 2: 2024 Kenworth T680 Semi-truck
Seat Belt Use: Under investigation

Lyman County, S.D.- A 38-year-old man and 59-year-old man died Monday evening in a two-vehicle crash in Lyman County.

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

Preliminary crash information indicates a Ford F-350 was traveling westbound in the eastbound lanes of SD I-90 near Reliance. At the same time, a semi-truck was traveling eastbound in the eastbound lanes of I-90. The vehicles crashed head-on. The driver of the F-350 received fatal injuries. The driver of the semi-truck was transported to a Chamberlain hospital where he was pronounced deceased.

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

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

The Life of Gregory Verne McCullough March 9, 1942 - March 16, 2024



Greg McCullough, 82 of Fargo, formerly Lidgerwood, ND passed away Saturday, March 16, 2024 at Sanford Hospital on Broadway, Fargo. Visitation will be Friday, March 22, 2024 from 9:30 -11:00 a.m. followed by a memorial service at 11:00 a.m. at Holy Cross Lutheran Church, Lidgerwood, ND. *The service will be live-streamed. If there are technical issues it will be available to view later that day.

Greg was born on March 9, 1942, in Aberdeen, SD to Beverly (Erdmann) and Verne McCullough. He was baptized and confirmed in St. John's Lutheran Church in Groton, SD, where he grew up and attended country school and then Groton High School until he graduated in 1960. Greg then attended and completed the first 5-year pharmacy program offered by South Dakota State University in Brookings, SD, graduating in 1965.

Greg and Sue were married in Brookings on December 17, 1964 and were blessed with 59 years of marriage.

After Greg's graduation they moved to Dubuque, IA, where Greg worked for Hartig Drug Company. They lived there for 1 1/2 years, at which time Hartig's transferred Greg to their Oelwein, IA, store. Greg and Sue lived there for 1 1/2 years. They moved to Lidgerwood in January of 1968 and Greg started a 37-year career as owner-pharmacist of Lidgerwood Drug.

They were members of Holy Cross for all of those years. Greg and Sue have two children: Kevin and Brenda.

Greg was always supportive of community projects and church activities. His favorite sport was hunting with his dogs, his son and many friends around Lidgerwood.

The healthcare of the community of Lidgerwood was incredibly important to him. He retired in 2006.

In 2021, Greg started dialysis, so they moved to Fargo. Greg approached his healthcare issues like he did everything in life - head on.

Greg is survived by his wife, Sue; children and grandchildren, Kevin (Carmen), Austin and Ethan; Brenda Clark (Stephen), Kathryn and Sean; brothers, David (Patsy), Gene (Georgia) and numerous nieces and nephews and many friends.

For those who wish to give a memorial, the family plans to support Lidgerwood community projects.



SOUTH DAKOTA SEARCHLIGHT

<https://southdakotasearchlight.com>

Pipeline survey law, carbon as a public commodity argued at state Supreme Court

Landowners say carbon stored underground doesn't count as public good

BY: JOHN HULT - MARCH 19, 2024 8:57 PM

Summit Carbons Solutions would move something of value from one place to another for a fee, and as such is entitled to survey private land and use eminent domain for its proposed pipeline.

Either that, or Summit would merely move its own product to be buried underground, thereby making it ineligible to conduct surveys and use eminent domain.

Questions that will define where the carbon dioxide pipeline company lands, legally speaking, between those two polarities are now in the hands of the South Dakota Supreme Court.

The justices heard oral arguments on the controversial pipeline project Tuesday on the Aberdeen campus of Northern State University in Brown County, one of the counties through which the pipeline would pass.

The \$8 billion Summit pipeline would collect the CO₂ that would otherwise be emitted from 57 ethanol plants in multiple states and transport it to North Dakota for underground storage. Carbon dioxide in the atmosphere contributes to climate change, and federal tax credits are available to encourage its sequestration.

Not all landowners along the route are interested in taking Summit's money in exchange for access to their property, though. They've argued in public forums, at the state Capitol and in courtrooms that Summit ought not be allowed to use eminent domain – the legal mechanism by which it would be allowed to use private property regardless of the owner's feelings about it – to build its pipeline.

Tuesday's Supreme Court challenge from landowners folded several landowner lawsuits into one to decide three questions:

Is the state's law allowing pre-project access for surveys constitutional?

Is carbon gas a commodity?

Does Summit qualify as a "common carrier" of a commodity?

If the high court rules for landowners on the last two questions, Summit would be unable to use eminent domain to force the construction of its pipeline.

If the court says "no" on the first, state law might need to be adjusted, though it's unclear how. The law in question was already amended this legislative session through House Bill 1185, which was signed this month by Gov. Kristi Noem.

It requires \$500 and advance notice to landowners before a pipeline company is allowed to survey property, and affords the right to challenge survey access in court. That rewritten version of the law is set to take effect on July 1.

Landowners: Carbon is waste, not a commodity

Brian Jorde, the lawyer for the landowners, told the justices that South Dakota's survey law is baldly unconstitutional in the face of a 2021 ruling from the U.S. Supreme Court called *Cedar Point Nursery v. Hassid*.

Chief Justice John Roberts wrote in that case that letting labor unions onto farmland in the interest of organizing constituted a "taking" of private property, inasmuch as it forced the farmland's owner to let someone do something with their property it otherwise would not.

Under the U.S. Constitution, property can't be taken without "just compensation."

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In that case, union organizers showed up a few times a week for specified periods of time, and the owners had to let them, per California law.

In light of that set of facts, Jorde argued, the survey law adjusted through the passage of HB 1185 is an even broader swipe at property rights.

Under the survey law's current language – the language being challenged by the landowner lawsuit – a company that applies for a siting permit and issues a 30-day notice is allowed to send representatives to survey land, drill and collect soil samples and return to the property as often as they'd like.

Justice Mark Salter challenged Jorde on that issue, noting that Cedar Point involved a state law and a specific set of facts wholly unrelated to eminent domain.

On the eminent domain question, Jorde told the justices that only a "common carrier" of commodities is allowed to use the survey law. His clients do not believe Summit fits the bill.

According to its agreements, Jorde said, the carbon becomes Summit's property the moment it enters the pipeline, and therefore no longer comports with laws used for things like the construction of rail lines that transport corn or soybeans.

Justice Janine Kern challenged that argument.

"They're saying, 'We're advertising to potential customers. We're holding this open season, where we're reserving future pipeline capacity, and we're holding ourselves out to the general public,'" Kern said. "Isn't that sufficient?"

Jorde disagreed. The carbon itself isn't a commodity, he said, at least not in the way Summit plans to use it. He said no court in the nation has pondered whether pumping a "commodity" underground, rather than using it, changes its status as a commodity.

Summit, he argues, is a "private, for-profit carrier," that aims to transport something it owns to somewhere it will do nothing for the public.

As such, he said, it ought not be protected by the survey access law in the first place.

"The test isn't 'Can carbon dioxide somewhere on planet earth be used for pop?'" he said, referring to the potential use of carbon for fizzy beverages. "It's 'What are you transporting it for? You are claiming you're a common carrier, you tell us how the CO2 that you're moving is a commodity.'"

Summit: Carbon market proves commodity status

Summit lawyer Bret Dublinske told the justices there is a market for CO2, underground or otherwise.

"This carbon has a value, whether it's tradable as credits, or whether it's the federal government's willingness to pay for that to happen through tax credits," Dublinske said. He conceded that no court has addressed the question of whether underground storage changes a commodity to something else for purposes of eminent domain.

But the CO2 doesn't disappear from the market because it's buried underground, he said.

"This is, in fact, moving in commerce," Dublinske said.

When it comes to Summit's ownership of the CO2, Dublinske called that argument a "red herring," meaning a distraction.

"If I am extracting oil, or if I am growing wheat, and I'm providing the railcar the pipeline to move that, there is nobody other than me in that transaction," he said. "That is not true here. (Summit) doesn't create any carbon dioxide, it doesn't have any carbon dioxide of its own. There is an agreement to ship the carbon dioxide created by the ethanol plants for the benefit of the ethanol plants."

He also said ethanol plants pay a fee to connect to the pipeline – something Jorde would later call "new information" that wasn't part of the court record. But Dublinske said the existence of such a fee clearly points to its project as a transporter of a commodity, regardless of which company has title to the CO2.

As for the pipeline law dubbed unconstitutional by the landowners, Dublinske said that a constitutional challenge is a high bar. That pipeline surveys would be characterized as an invasive taking of land, he argued, is predicated on the notion that surveys are unconnected to the longer-term process of staking an eminent domain claim. Eminent domain would ultimately result in a landowner receiving their legally

required compensation for the “taking” of their property.

Without surveys, he said, no such claim can be staked.

“This is for an underground pipeline,” Dublinske said. “It isn’t useful, necessarily, for its intended purpose, unless you can, in some cases, figure out what’s going on below the soil.”

Justice Kern asked Dublinske if Summit is amenable to offering a copy of its agreements with ethanol companies to the high court for review. It did not object to a private review at the trial court level, he said, and would offer it to the justices, as well.

Summit has objected to adding the agreements to public court files, or to allowing the landowners to review them. Dublinske said there are commercial secrets embedded in them.

The justices gave Summit 10 days to offer those agreements under seal. Jorde requested that the agreements be reviewable by his team, as well.

“Otherwise, there could be an opinion referencing evidence that was never part of the record,” Jorde said. Chief Justice Steven Jensen said the justices would consider the matter and decide later.

“If we think we need further supplemental briefing or argument, we’ll let the parties know,” Jensen said.

Rapid City moves forward with climate funding that state shunned, seeking up to \$50 million

BY: MAKENZIE HUBER - MARCH 19, 2024 4:00 PM

After the state declined to seek federal grant money to reduce greenhouse gases and other air pollution last year, Rapid City was the only city in South Dakota to apply for the money.

Now, the second largest city in the state has worked through its \$1 million planning grant and will apply for an implementation grant of up to \$50 million to invest in more energy efficient systems and potentially pilot renewable energy programs. The entire grant pool through the Environmental Protection Agency for implementation is \$4.6 billion nationwide.

The \$1 million planning grant was spent on contracting a company to analyze Rapid City’s greenhouse gas emissions and prepare a report, efforts to gain feedback, supplies and a portion of the sustainability department’s salaries.

Monday night, the Rapid City Council authorized the city’s sustainability program to apply for the implementation grant by April 1. However, the council amended its agenda item to only authorize the application, leaving the ability to accept any potential grant funds up in the air.

Lysann Zeller, Rapid City’s program development manager for sustainability and stewardship, told councilors that the EPA plans to award implementation grants in the fall.

The 2022 Inflation Reduction Act allocated Climate Pollution Reduction funding for state and municipal government projects that reduce greenhouse gas emissions and help mitigate climate change. Greenhouse gases such as carbon dioxide and methane trap heat in the atmosphere. Getting to “net zero” greenhouse gas emission requires reducing energy consumption, which can be done through energy efficiency upgrades, and switching to renewable energy sources.

Rapid City’s plan currently focuses on city, school and nonprofit improvements, and it does not seek to regulate private business or residential emissions.

Some council members were hesitant to sign off on the application. Councilor Kevin Maher said some of the items in the plan “are just unrealistic.”

There’s also concern that the plan might cost more than what the grant provides. Councilor Bill Evans dismissed that concern.

“I believe the council already has a failsafe, because we’re not allowed to spend money that the council

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hasn't approved, so if it hasn't been previously approved it wouldn't go through anyhow," Evans said.

Zeller said the city wouldn't be beholden to the plan as it's drafted now, and that Rapid City has time to polish it and get more feedback. The city must provide a comprehensive climate action plan by August 2025.

Zeller spoke to South Dakota Searchlight after the council meeting. She said some concerns about the plan stem from a "misunderstanding" among some utility providers that the EPA would mandate items listed in the plan.

"That'd be entirely up to our city council or other people in the community," Zeller said. "I don't expect many of these things will be mandated in the near future, but the plan gives us information and ideas if we do want to move forward."

The draft, which was submitted to the EPA on March 1, analyzes Rapid City's energy use and greenhouse gas emissions. Electricity, which primarily burns fossil fuels, Zeller said, accounts for half of the city's greenhouse gas emissions – including residential, commercial and industrial emissions. Transportation, including vehicles, accounts for a quarter of emissions.

Based on the greenhouse gas inventory, using 2021 data, the city's per capita greenhouse gas emissions stand at 19.66 metric tons of carbon dioxide equivalent, which is above the national average of 14.9, according to 2022 data from the global carbon budget.

"We have high greenhouse gas emissions in the U.S., particularly high in South Dakota because of our electricity source as well as the fact that we all drive to go anywhere since we're such a rural state," Zeller said.

The plan's "short list of ideas" includes efforts to increase energy efficiency in specific public and non-profit buildings, update lighting to energy efficient LEDs and invest in renewable energy pilot projects. According to a preliminary budget released in late February, the plan could cost over \$37 million, with nearly \$16 million of the money spent on emergency efficiency improvements for Rapid City area school buildings serving primarily low-income students (improving all Rapid City schools would cost over \$37 million alone). The plan includes an amount to be determined for staffing, inflation and other indirect costs.

Many of the Rapid City Area Schools facilities are decades old.

"RCAS has a lot of old facilities and a lot to gain from making energy efficiency improvements not only to improve costs but improve working conditions for teachers and learning conditions for students," Zeller told South Dakota Searchlight. "It's a no brainer — low hanging fruit for the community."

The plan also includes upgrading sports field lighting to LEDs across the city and investing in renewable energy programs, such as a South Dakota Mines campus pilot focusing on rooftop solar and geothermal energy and another program installing solar panels on the city's water reclamation facility. Owned and operated by the city, the system could offset the facility's electricity use and sell excess generation to the local energy grid, according to the report.

"The objective of this initial priority community climate resiliency plan was not necessarily to determine what's feasible," Zeller said. "It was simply to collect ideas from a variety of stakeholders and get input from different folks."

State Supreme Court considers whether local boards have to explain their decisions

Developer, Turner County argue circuit court failed to address need for evidence – or lack thereof

BY: JOHN HULT - MARCH 19, 2024 3:31 PM

When Turner County commissioners refused to allow a developer to rezone land from ag to lakefront residential in the summer of 2022, they did so without saying why.

There was no recording of the meetings at which two separate votes took place, and commissioners later told the developer they needn't say why.

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When Circuit Judge David Knoff overturned that decision the following year, he also did so without considering the why.

Instead, he ruled, the commission was wrong because it shouldn't have been debating the question anyway. The land is on a lake, Knoff said, so under his reading of county zoning rules, the commission didn't have the discretion to say no – an argument the developer hadn't made in open court or legal briefs.

That sequence of events led the justices to grapple on Tuesday with this question: Is a county zoning board – or any local board that makes a call someone might not like – required to explain itself?

County: Reasoning not required

Turner County appealed to the state Supreme Court, arguing that Knoff shouldn't have overturned the board, and that his authority is limited to determining if commissioners followed the rules.

At oral arguments Tuesday on the campus of Northern State University in Aberdeen, lawyers for the county and developer agreed that the judge's ruling was insufficient, in part because it didn't address the evidence in the case or the need for it.

The county argues it's not required to produce additional proof of its reasoning in the zoning dispute; the developer argues that a lack of evidence hamstringing any effort to call a county's decisions into question.

Under South Dakota law, a county commission can't make a decision "arbitrarily," which essentially means for reasons unrelated to the law, such as a personal dislike for a rezoning applicant.

The law also suggests, however, that absent evidence of arbitrariness, an elected or appointed body is assumed to have acted properly. Since the burden to prove arbitrariness falls to the person or entity that appeals a decision, the absence of evidence creates an all-but-impossible burden for those who seek to challenge a governing body's choices.

For Ron Parsons Jr., the lawyer for Turner County, requiring a record of any decision on the off chance it becomes a legal dispute would create an "incredible burden" of its own.

"I would suggest it would be unwise for this court to place a burden like that on all of our local boards," said Parsons.

Justice Scott Myren pushed Parsons on that point. The county didn't create a record of its meetings on the matter or its reasoning. If courts are to assume a county commission acted properly in the absence of evidence and are limited to deciding if a defensible reason for a vote exists, Myren asked, "it's almost encouraging commissions to leave a blank record."

"Can we properly perform the function (of review), as limited as it is, when we have nothing to review?" Myren said.

"Unless there's going to be a rule that every agency has to record every meeting they have and set forth all the reasons for everything they did on all the hundreds of thousands of decisions they make, that's where we're left," Parsons said.

Developer: Decision to deny was arbitrary

Drew Hurd, the lawyer for MRose Development Company, agreed that Judge Knoff's decision ought to be overturned, but he argued that there is enough evidence of arbitrary decision making to justify sending the rezoning issue back to the county commission.

The developer testified in Turner County Court that commissioners declined to offer a reason. Another man testified that a county commissioner told him that he'd made his vote based on how he felt a now-deceased former owner of the land would've wanted.

That's not within the scope of legal reasons for accepting or denying a zoning petition, Hurd said.

"I think the appropriate way to do it is to remand (the case) straight to the board after finding that their decision was arbitrary," Hurd said.

The issue of the rezoning proposal's relative popularity was explored during Tuesday's hearing, as well. While there are no recordings of the board meetings, there was testimony in court that several people showed up to voice their objections to the development.

Chief Justice Steven Jensen noted that the high court has ruled in other matters that a proposal's relative popularity alone can't justify a decision.

"Is this the same situation in terms of arbitrariness? Where they're just looking at, 'Hey, there's a whole bunch of people over here that don't like this idea. We're not even going to look at whether this is a good idea, and we're just going to deny it?'"

Parsons said a popularity measure ought not be the standard in this sort of case.

"That would mean the unpopularity of an idea would give it legal teeth, that the more unpopular it is, the more likely you can have a court impose it," he said.

He also noted that the planning commission did produce recommendations on the zoning issue, but "not all of it is in the record."

Near the end of the arguments, Myren again pressed Parsons on how someone displeased with the zoning board's decision is to present evidence without a record of the why behind the vote.

Parsons suggested that the incomplete record is nonetheless enough to conclude that the board didn't act arbitrarily. Proof of an abuse of discretion, he said, needs to be stronger than a hearsay statement about the former owner's purported wishes and its alleged impact on the vote of a single commissioner.

"If there's any reasonable basis to explain something, then it's not arbitrary," he said.

Trump, GOP-led states argue presidential immunity claim to Supreme Court

South Dakota attorney general among signers of amicus brief

BY: JACOB FISCHLER AND ASHLEY MURRAY - MARCH 19, 2024 6:05 PM

Former President Donald Trump renewed his call to the U.S. Supreme Court on Tuesday to dismiss charges against him, asserting that presidents enjoy near-total immunity from criminal prosecution.

In addition, as a deadline loomed for briefs in the case, 18 Republican-led states filed an amicus brief Tuesday urging the Supreme Court to reverse the lower courts and grant Trump blanket immunity. Oral arguments before the high court on the immunity question are scheduled for April 25, and federal district court proceedings have been halted until the Supreme Court issues a ruling.

Trump's lawyers, led by D. John Sauer of St. Louis, in a 52-page brief argued that a strong executive with virtually no criminal liability from the judicial system was intended by the framers of the Constitution and part of a "234-year unbroken tradition" of not prosecuting presidents for action taken while in office.

The justices should weigh that tradition and dismiss the federal charges accusing Trump — now the presumptive presidential nominee of the Republican Party — of conspiring to overturn his reelection loss in 2020, they wrote.

U.S. Department of Justice special counsel Jack Smith oversaw an investigation into Trump that led to the criminal charges that the president spearheaded a multipart conspiracy trying to avoid leaving office.

But Trump's attorneys have argued that those charges should be dismissed under a doctrine of "absolute presidential immunity," which they said presidents must have to properly exercise their powers.

"The President cannot function, and the Presidency itself cannot retain its vital independence, if the President faces criminal prosecution for official acts once he leaves office," the attorneys wrote in the brief's opening paragraph.

That view is in line with how framers of the Constitution saw the presidency, they said.

"Even if some level of Presidential malfeasance, not present in this case at all, were to escape punishment, that risk is inherent in the Constitution's design," Trump's attorneys wrote.

"The Founders viewed protecting the independence of the Presidency as well worth the risk that some Presidents might evade punishment in marginal cases. They were unwilling to burn the Presidency itself to the ground to get at every single alleged malefactor."

Impeachment

The only exception to absolute immunity is a president who is impeached by the House and convicted in the Senate, Trump's lawyers said.

Trump was twice impeached by the House while in office, but acquitted in two Senate trials that required a two-thirds vote for conviction. A majority of senators — with seven Republicans joining all Democrats — voted to convict him in 2021 on charges similar to those he faces in criminal court related to his efforts to subvert the 2020 election results.

Trump's lawyers argued, as they have in previous filings, that federal courts should never be able to review the conduct of presidents who haven't been convicted in an impeachment trial.

They asked the court to reject an argument that another exception to presidential immunity could be made for criminal charges stemming from a president's desire to stay in power.

"Because virtually all first-term Presidents' official actions carry some, at least partial, motivation to be re-elected, this exception to immunity would swiftly engulf the rule," they wrote.

Prosecuting or not prosecuting a president is inherently a political act, Trump's attorneys said.

"This observation applies to former Presidents as well — and it applies most of all to a former President who is the leading candidate to replace the incumbent who is prosecuting him," they wrote.

Trump has amassed enough delegates to win his party's nomination and face President Joe Biden in a fall rematch of the 2020 election.

A Feb. 6 decision by the D.C. Circuit Court of Appeals upholding a lower court's ruling against Trump noted that the charges allege criminal action that emanated from an effort to unlawfully retain the presidency.

Trump appealed that decision to the Supreme Court.

Red states line up behind Trump

Attorneys general from Alabama, Florida, Idaho, Indiana, Iowa, Kansas, Louisiana, Mississippi, Missouri, Montana, Nebraska, North Dakota, Oklahoma, South Carolina, South Dakota, Texas, Utah and West Virginia signed a brief to the court filed Tuesday, accusing the government's timing of the 2020 election interference case as politically motivated.

"After waiting 30 months to indict President Trump, the Special Counsel has demanded extreme expedition from every court at every stage of the case. His only stated reason, the 'public interest,' is so thin it's almost transparent," the attorneys general wrote.

In the 54-page amicus brief, the state officials allege that the prosecution's "failure to explain its extraordinary haste suggests one troubling answer: That the timing of the prosecution is designed to inflict maximum damage on President Biden's political opponent before the November 2024 election."

The attorneys general argued that the threat of liability could distort a president's decision-making and lead to a worse job performance, citing several cases, including 1997's Clinton v. Jones.

The attorneys general, led by Alabama Attorney General Steve Marshall, further accuse the lower courts of "mistreatment" of concerns over opening the proverbial "floodgates" for future partisan prosecutions. Marshall has taken a lead role in advancing a string of legal arguments surrounding election rules likely to boost Trump.

"The court below also underestimated the risk of 'a torrent of politically motivated prosecutions' on the ground that 'this is the first time since the Founding that a former President has been federally indicted,'" the attorneys general wrote, citing the appeals court.

"Glaringly absent is the fact this case is the second of two federal prosecutions against President Trump, who also faces two state prosecutions. How can the 'risk' possibly 'appear slight'?"

The state officials pointed to state and civil cases against Trump in Georgia and New York as evidence that the 2020 election interference case "is not the only one to raise concerns of partisanship."

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Another view, from Ohio, Alaska and Wyoming

Another brief, signed by only three Republican attorneys general, called on the court to assert a more complex legal standard that would still provide broad immunity on a sliding scale.

The three Republican attorneys general told the U.S. Supreme Court that the justices should take a broad view of presidential immunity when the court hears Trump's attempt to dismiss criminal charges related to his efforts to overturn the 2020 election.

Ohio Attorney General Dave Yost led a brief to the court that was also signed by Alaska Attorney General Treg R. Taylor and Wyoming Attorney General Bridget Hill. The Republicans argued not for absolute immunity, but a two-part test that would still allow for broad immunity.

Arguing more about legal theory than the specifics of Trump's case, Yost, Taylor and Hill said the judiciary must balance the need for a president to exercise wide discretion in executing the office's powers with the need for accountability of a rogue executive.

"Very broad, but not limitless, presidential immunity is dictated by our constitutional structure," they wrote.

The three attorneys general proposed a two-part test to settle a claim of presidential immunity.

First, the courts should determine how closely the alleged acts are tied to the president's core constitutional duty, they said. As an example, they said presidents should be given more latitude in conducting foreign affairs than in investigating a political rival because conducting foreign affairs is a central constitutional duty.

Courts should also determine the "urgency of the situation surrounding" alleged crimes by a president, they said. For example, a president seizing property of political opponents should be considered differently than a president seizing property during a war.

The attorneys general did not say how courts should decide Trump's case, suggesting instead the Supreme Court simply announce that it is adopting the two-part test and leave the trial court responsible for determining how to apply it to the facts of the case.

A Supreme Court-sanctioned test would help the trial court conduct unprecedented proceedings and could also give the public confidence that the trial was nonpolitical, they said.

Other arguments

Several other interested parties submitted briefs Tuesday, the last day for so-called friend-of-the-court briefs in Trump's case before the high court.

Senate Republicans' campaign arm, the National Republican Senatorial Committee, led by Montana's Steve Daines, wrote that the court should adopt the absolute immunity standard, worrying that a decision otherwise would create a cycle of political prosecutions for every future president.

"The D.C. Circuit opinion is akin to a loaded gun lying on the table that future prosecutors can now wield against Presidents (and former Presidents) of all political persuasions," the NRSC wrote. "The D.C. Circuit seems to believe that partisan actors will be able to resist the temptation to use that weapon against their political enemies; anyone who pays the slightest attention to American politics knows better."

Mark Meadows, Trump's White House chief of staff during the 2020 election and his subsequent efforts to overturn the results, also wrote to the court to ask that a decision in the case reinforce the legal principle giving lower federal officials immunity from state prosecution.

Meadows, a former U.S. House member from North Carolina, is among Trump's co-defendants on state charges in Georgia related to the effort to overturn the 2020 election.

A 'deeply divided' Congress took no major action on civil rights in 2023, report finds

BY: ARIANA FIGUEROA - MARCH 19, 2024 4:27 PM

WASHINGTON — Last year, neither chamber in Congress passed any meaningful civil rights legislation, according to an analysis of legislative and voting records of the first session of the 118th Congress by a coalition of civil rights groups.

The Leadership Conference on Civil and Human Rights' Voting Record report found the lack of congressional action on civil rights legislation "is, in large part, due to a deeply divided Congress lacking in bipartisan support for civil rights legislation."

"This is one of the few first sessions of a Congress in recent history in which neither chamber passed meaningful civil rights legislation as scored by our Voting Record," according to the report, which has tracked civil rights legislation since 1969. The votes of every member of the House and Senate on bills deemed important by the conference are scored in the report.

In the current Congress, the House is controlled by Republicans, 219-213, and Democrats voting with independents have a slim majority in the Senate. Vice President Kamala Harris often has to travel to the U.S. Capitol to cast the tie-breaking vote in the Senate.

Those narrow majorities make it tough to pass legislation, the report notes.

"It comes as our democracy faces a consequential year and amidst ongoing attacks on the hard-won rights and protections — and the diversity and inclusion policies and programs — that make us a more cohesive, effective, and fair society for everyone," according to the report.

The Voting Record looked at nine House and 34 Senate votes from January to December 2023.

"Our Voting Record found very clearly that with democracy under attack, Congress has been more divided than the country," Maya Wiley, president and CEO of The Leadership Conference on Civil and Human Rights, said in a statement Tuesday. "Congress is gridlocked because too many lawmakers are failing to protect our fundamental rights and freedoms."

The last time Congress passed civil rights legislation that was signed into law was in 2022 — for example, the Emmett Till Antilynching Act of 2022 that makes lynching a federal crime. The bill was named after 14-year-old Emmett Till, who was kidnapped and murdered in Mississippi by two white men in 1955.

A major civil rights piece of legislation that Congress has tried and failed to pass is restoration of a section of the Voting Rights Act, named after the late Georgia U.S. Rep. John Lewis, a civil rights icon and champion of voting rights. A hurdle is the Senate, which requires a 60-vote threshold to advance a bill.

The report noted that while Congress has made little progress in passing civil rights legislation this session, the Senate has confirmed a significant number of diverse judges, particularly women and people of color, to the bench.

"In the Senate, faced with a filibuster and limited time on the legislative calendar, Senate leadership prioritized the president's nominees — leading to confirmation of highly qualified and diverse federal judges, but limiting the public's exposure to debates on important civil and human rights issues on the national stage," according to the report.

As for the new judges, "the beneficial impact on our legal system, including when it comes to the interpretation of civil and human rights laws and principles, will be felt for decades to come," the conference report continued.

More than two-thirds of the Biden administration's picks for federal judges have been women and people of color, according to a Pew Research Center analysis of statistics from the Federal Judicial Center in November.

The report also raised concerns about legislation passed in the House that would roll back rights in the House, although the bills have not been taken up in the Senate and their future there is unclear.

Some of those bills include H.R.5, the Parents Bill of Rights Act of 2023, that codifies federal education law to give parents and legal guardians access to school curriculum and access to school library books; H.R. 734, the Protection of Women and Girls in Sports Act, that bans transgender students from girls'

sports; and H.R. 2, the Secure the Border Act, to reinstate Trump-era immigration policies.

"With the second session of the 118th Congress under way, we do not anticipate drastic changes in the legislative landscape," according to the report. "We certainly expect that the Senate will continue to prioritize the confirmation of federal judges."

Medication abortion rates grew 10% over the last few years, report shows

BY: ELISHA BROWN - MARCH 19, 2024 3:15 PM

Researchers found that 63% of all abortions provided in the U.S. last year were medication abortions. There were an estimated 1,026,690 abortions — the most in over a decade — performed in the formal health care system in 2023, according to a report released Tuesday by the Guttmacher Institute, a reproductive health research organization.

The data provides a quantitative look at abortion care the first full year after the U.S. Supreme Court's *Dobbs v. Jackson Women's Health Organization* ruling in June 2022.

Medication abortions increased by 10% from 2020 to 2023. About 642,700 medication abortions were provided in the country last year, the data shows.

"Improved access to medication abortion is a positive development, but it is not a panacea," said Rachel Jones, Guttmacher principal research scientist, in a news release. "As abortion restrictions proliferate post-*Dobbs*, medication abortion may be the most viable option — or the only option — for some people, even if they would have preferred in-person procedural care."

The findings were published one week before the U.S. Supreme Court is set to hear arguments in a pivotal lawsuit that could severely limit access to medication abortion.

Alliance for Hippocratic Medicine, an anti-abortion rights group, and other doctors who oppose abortion are asking the court to restrict access to mifepristone, one of two drugs used to terminate pregnancies. The Biden administration is urging the justices to maintain the U.S. Food and Drug Administration's current regulations on mifepristone.

"As our latest data emphasize, more than three out of five abortion patients in the United States use medication abortion," said Amy Friedrich-Karnik, Guttmacher's director of federal policy.

"Reinstating outdated and medically unnecessary restrictions on the provision of mifepristone would negatively impact people's lives and decrease abortion access across the country," Friedrich-Karnik said.

Most states without near-total bans saw upticks in abortions.

Despite the patchwork of abortion laws in the nation — 14 states have near-total bans, while Arizona, Florida, Georgia, Nebraska, the Carolinas and Utah restrict abortion after 18 weeks' gestation or earlier — Americans terminated pregnancies at the highest number and rate seen in a decade, according to a policy analysis by Isaac Maddow-Zimet, a data scientist, and Candace Gibson, director of state policy at Guttmacher.

The rate was 15.7 abortions per 1,000 women of reproductive age last year. Over 160,000 people traveled out of state in 2023 to seek abortion care, the report stated.

According to Maddow-Zimet and Gibson, several factors likely contributed to the increase in abortions last year, including the rise of telehealth, financial support from abortion funds and shield laws in 22 states and Washington, D.C., that protect providers and patients from out-of-state investigations or prosecutions concerning reproductive health.

"This increase in abortions does not diminish the impact of *Dobbs* on people's lives," Maddow-Zimet and Gibson wrote. "Instead, the data provide important evidence that people will continue to seek abortion care in spite of the policy barriers that anti-abortion policymakers impose."

States that share borders with states that enacted bans post-*Dobbs* saw a 37% increase in abortions between 2020 and 2023. Illinois had the highest total surge with 38,010 more abortions than in 2020,

a 72% increase over three years. New Mexico (15,090 more abortions, 257% increase) Virginia (14,190 more abortions, 76% increase) and North Carolina (12,970 more abortions, 41% increase) followed suit.

The Guttmacher Institute classified the following states as border states in the current abortion policy landscape: Colorado, Florida, Georgia, Iowa, Illinois, Kansas, Michigan, Minnesota, North Carolina, New Mexico, Ohio, South Carolina and Virginia.

Almost every state without a near-total ban saw increases in abortion. But Arizona, Georgia, Indiana and Wisconsin all saw declines. Arizona has a 15-week ban, Georgia has a six-week ban, while near-total bans were in effect in Indiana and Wisconsin at certain periods in 2023.

Noem signs bills including abortion video mandate, petition signature withdrawal process

BY: SEARCHLIGHT STAFF - MARCH 19, 2024 1:00 PM

Gov. Kristi Noem signed dozens of bills into law during the past several days, including two related to abortion.

One bill requires the production of a video and other materials explaining the state's abortion ban. Another one allows people to withdraw their signatures from ballot-question petitions, such as one currently circulating that would reinstate abortion rights.

South Dakota's abortion ban was written in 2005 and triggered by the U.S. Supreme Court's decision to overturn the constitutional right to an abortion in 2022. The ban includes one exception for abortions necessary to preserve the life of the mother.

The meaning of the exception is a topic of debate. During the recently concluded state legislative session, for example, an OB-GYN testified that an induced labor resulting in complications and the death of a baby could be deemed an abortion under the state's current law.

An attempt to amend the language of the law failed last year. This year's bill says the state Department of Health must produce a video and materials describing:

The state's abortion law and acts that do and do not constitute an abortion.

The most common medical conditions that threaten the life or health of a pregnant woman.

The generally accepted standards of care applicable to the treatment of a pregnant woman experiencing life-threatening or health-threatening medical conditions.

The criteria that a practitioner, exercising reasonable medical judgment, might use in determining the best course of treatment for a pregnant woman experiencing life-threatening or health-threatening medical conditions and for her unborn child.

The bill also requires the department to consult on the video and materials with the state attorney general and "stakeholders having medical and legal expertise."

The other abortion-related bill, which would allow people to withdraw their signatures from ballot-question petitions, was supported by anti-abortion legislators. They want to block a potential citizen-initiated ballot measure to restore abortion rights.

Backers of that initiative have said they have enough signatures from registered voters to place the measure on the Nov. 5 ballot, but they have not yet turned in the signatures.

The 2024 legislative session concluded earlier this month, except for one day next Monday to consider vetoes. Noem has not issued any vetoes yet.

More bills signed into law

Following are summaries of some other bills recently signed by Noem.

SB 80 provides \$2 million to the state Department of Human Services for technology grants to elderly care providers.

SB 170 provides \$5.75 million to the Department of Corrections to expand the health care services areas

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at the women's prison in Pierre.

SB 209 provides \$5 million to the state Department of Health for telemedicine grants to assisted living centers and nursing homes.

HB 1093 provides \$6 million to the state Department of Social Services to help LifeScape in Sioux Falls construct a facility with a specialty rehabilitation pediatric hospital, a specialty school for children under 21, an intermediate health care facility for children under 21, and outpatient rehabilitation pediatric services.

HB 1098 waives the fee for homeless people to obtain a copy of their birth certificate.

HB 1131 waives fees for homeless people to obtain nondriver identification cards.

SB 43 establishes procedures for the imposition of fines and probation against medical cannabis establishments, increases the allowable fee for a medical cannabis establishment registration certificate, and directs the Department of Health to promulgate rules to increase the fee for a registration certificate.

SB 89 adjusts the required waiting period on a notice to vacate from 30 to 15 days for "at will" tenants.

SB 90 removes the requirement that landlords issue a non-binding three-day "notice to quit" on tenants before starting an eviction proceeding in court.

SB 191 requires parolees and probationers to get additional sign-offs from a health care practitioner to get a medical cannabis card.

SB 208 requires the Governor's Office of Economic Development to biannually report to the Legislature the name and amount of grants from the Future Fund (which is under the control of the governor and funded by a tax on employers), plus the location of the recipients, the research or economic development purpose being funded, the measures used to determine the economic impact, and the number of jobs created or retained.

HB 1039 makes the state responsible for the legal defense fees of inmates who commit crimes behind prison walls, rather than the county where the prison is located.

HB 1118 requires the state treasurer to seek permission from the Legislature to increase the office's budget for finding unclaimed property owners.

SB 6 puts drug dealers who knowingly sell fentanyl to someone who later dies of an overdose in line for longer sentences.

SB 47 increases the amount paid to counties for diversion programs that keep juvenile offenders out of the justice system.

SB 49 provides \$10 million from remaining American Rescue Plan Act funding for water and sewer infrastructure at the proposed site of a future men's prison in rural Lincoln County, and also moves about \$226 million into a construction fund to prepare for the project.

SB 71 removes a prohibition on the ability of law enforcement and various governmental entities to inspect, search, seize, prosecute, or impose disciplinary action on cannabis dispensaries, cultivation facilities, manufacturing facilities, and testing facilities.

SB 168 provides \$5 million to the Office of the Attorney General for grants to organizations that assist children who have been abused or neglected, victims of domestic violence and victims of sexual assault.

SB 203 allows holders of enhanced concealed carry permits to carry a concealed pistol at a school with the permission of the principal or "other person who has general control and supervision of the building or grounds."

HB 1061 appropriates \$4.28 million to the Emergency and Disaster Fund, to cover not only emergency and disaster responses within the state but also Gov. Kristi Noem's latest deployment of National Guard troops to assist Texas at the nation's southern border.

HB 1092 raises the 911 surcharge on phone lines from \$1.25 to \$2.

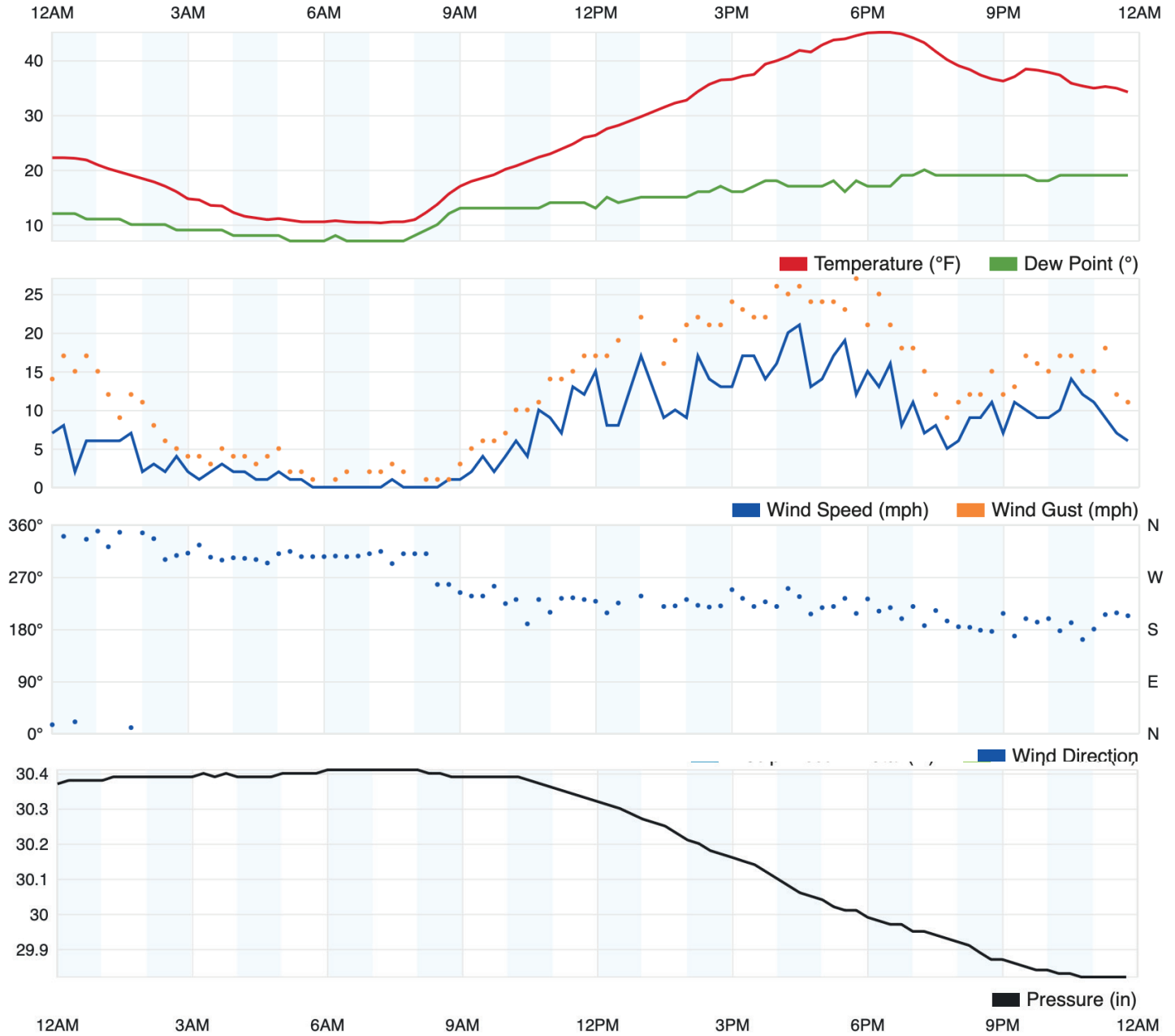
HB 1125 bans the widely available, hemp-derived "diet weed" products that induce highs similar to marijuana.

HB 1195 provides authority for a court to order offenders convicted of vehicular homicide to pay restitution to a victim's children until age 18.

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Yesterday's Groton Weather Graphs



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Today



Mostly Sunny

High: 50 °F

Tonight



Partly Cloudy

Low: 16 °F

Wednesday



Mostly Sunny

High: 31 °F

Wednesday
Night



Snow Likely

Low: 18 °F

Thursday



Snow

High: 32 °F



Accumulation Potential Late Today - Thursday

March 20, 2024
3:50 AM

What

An east-west band of moderate to heavy snowfall traveling west to east along the ND/SD state line into western MN

When

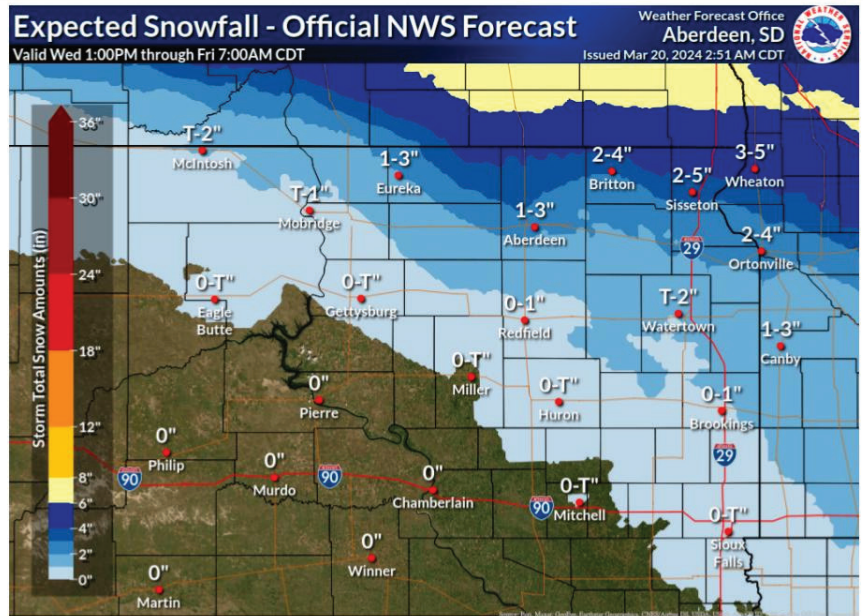
Light snow will develop later today, but the heaviest snow will fall Thursday afternoon into Thursday evening over southern ND, far northeast SD and into west-central MN

Uncertainty

Models have trended this band north, however that's not to say that it can't still shift back south. Any slight shift will have significant consequences with regards to "who gets what"

Impacts

Be prepared to modify travel plans due to hazardous travel conditions expected within the vicinity of this moderate-heavy snow band



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

National Weather Service
Aberdeen, SD

A system will generate an east to west band of snow as it moves from west to east Thursday. Any slight shift north or south of this system will result in a dramatic change to who gets what. If you plan travel in these areas, stay aware of any changes to the forecast.

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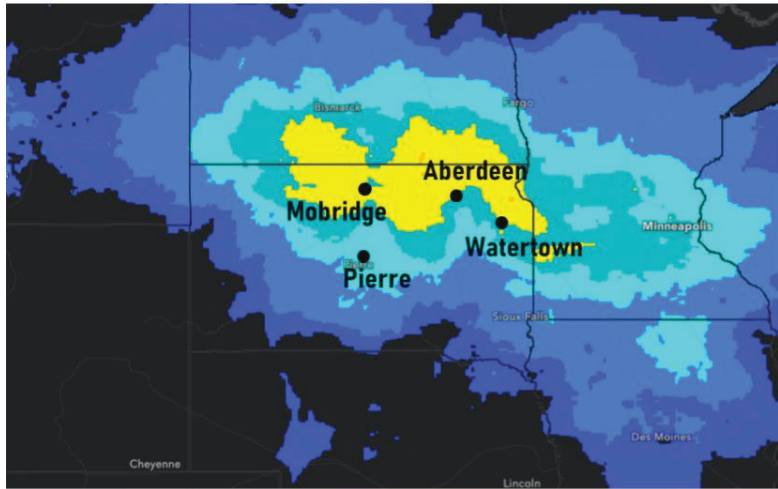
Winter Storm Sat Night into Early Next Week?

March 19, 2024

3:49 PM

Likelihood of at least Moderate Impacts from 7pm Saturday (3/23) through 7pm Sunday (3/24)

Moderate Impacts: Expect disruptions to daily life. Hazardous driving conditions. Use extra caution while driving.



What We Know

A low pressure system is expected to move through the Central Plains Sunday into early next week. As this occurs, **snow will spread across the Northern Plains Saturday night through next Monday.**

What We Don't Know

The exact track of the system and thus **the location of heaviest snowfall, what the snowfall amounts will be, and specific details on the timing of the snow.**

What You Can Do



Continue to monitor the latest forecast from reliable/reputable sources... especially if you have travel plans!

National Weather Service
Aberdeen, SD

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



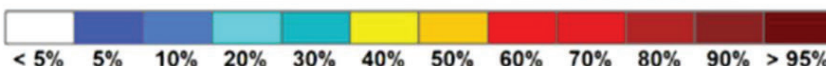
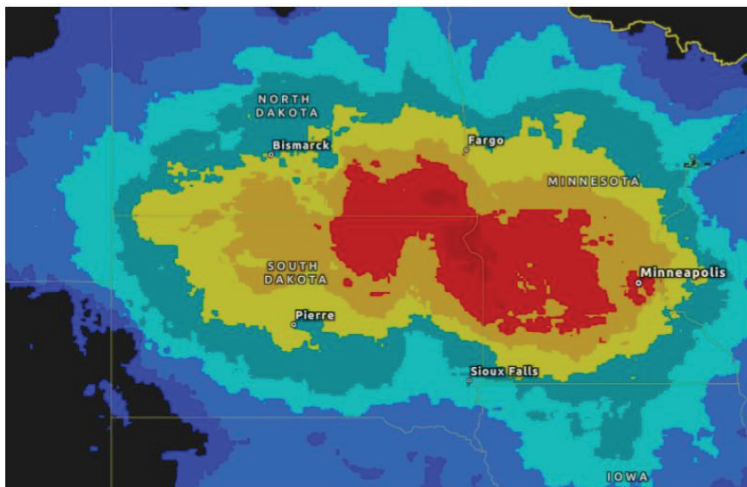
Winter Storm Sat Night into Early Next Week?

March 20, 2024

3:37 AM

Likelihood of at least Moderate Impacts from 1am Sunday (3/24) through 1am Monday (3/25)

Moderate Impacts: Expect disruptions to daily life. Hazardous driving conditions. Use extra caution while driving.



What We Know

A low pressure system is expected to move through the Central Plains Sunday into early next week. As this occurs, **snow will spread across the Northern Plains Saturday night through next Monday.**

What We Don't Know

The exact track of the system and thus **the location of heaviest snowfall, what the snowfall amounts will be, and specific details on the timing of the snow.**

What You Can Do



Continue to monitor the latest forecast from reliable/reputable sources... especially if you have travel plans!

National Weather Service
Aberdeen, SD

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

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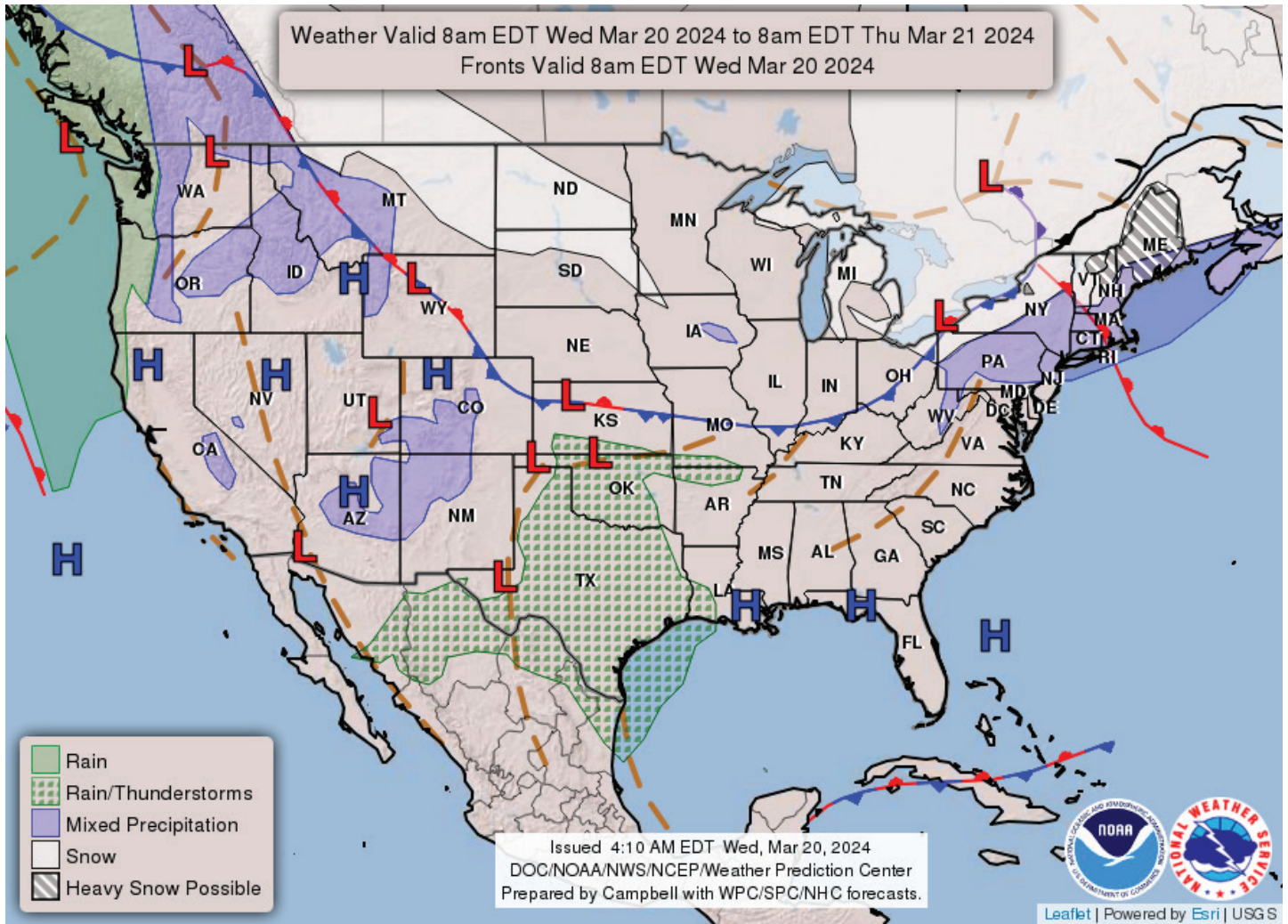
Yesterday's Groton Weather

High Temp: 52 °F at 3:53 PM
Low Temp: 27 °F at 2:46 AM
Wind: 23 mph at 3:23 PM
Precip: : 0.00

Day length: 12 hours, 11 minutes

Today's Info

Record High: 75 in 1910
Record Low: -6 in 1965
Average High: 44
Average Low: 21
Average Precip in March.: 0.52
Precip to date in March: 0.00
Average Precip to date: 1.69
Precip Year to Date: 0.07
Sunset Tonight: 7:46:57 pm
Sunrise Tomorrow: 7:30:24 am



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Today in Weather History

March 20, 1982: A winter storm dropped 10-20 inches of heavy wet snow across the northern two-thirds of South Dakota. Five persons were killed and eight others injured in indirect accidents. Downed power lines caused isolated power outages. A half dozen newborn calves died of exposure near Lemmon in Perkins County. Also, 5% of the pheasant population in Brown, Edmunds, and Faulk Counties were killed. The weight of the snow collapsed a canopy of a grocery store in McLaughlin, Corson County, tearing out part of the brick front and breaking windows in the store.

March 20, 2008: An upper-level disturbance coupled with an area of low pressure moving across the Central Plains brought widespread heavy snow from the late afternoon through the early morning hours to north-central and northeast South Dakota. Heavy snow of 6 to as much as 18 inches fell in this area resulting in school delays and cancelations along with treacherous travel conditions. Some snowfall amounts included: 6 inches at Bowdle, South Shore, and Bradley; 7 inches at Eureka, Chelsea, Bristol, and Pollock; 8 inches near Hosmer, Osaka, and Roscoe; 9 inches at Victor; 10 inches at Westport and Ipswich. Locations with a foot or more of snowfall included: 12 inches at Columbia, Milbank, and Waubay; 13 inches at Sisseton and Webster; 14 inches at Big Stone City; 15 inches at Summit; 16 inches at Roy Lake; 18 inches at Wilmot and Pickerel Lake State Park.

1924 - A late winter storm in Oklahoma produced nearly a foot of snow at Oklahoma City and at Tulsa. (David Ludlum)

1948: The city of Juneau received 31 inches of snow in 24 hours, a record for the Alaska Capitol. (20th - 21st)

Also, on this day, an F3 tornado tracked through Tinker Air Force Base in Oklahoma City, OK just before 10 pm destroying 54 aircraft, including 17 transport planes valued at \$500,000 apiece. The total damage amounted to more than \$10 million, a record for the state that stood until the massive tornado outbreak of 5/3/1999. Major Ernest W. Fawbush and Captain Robert C. Miller were ordered to see if operationally forecasting tornadoes were possible. The tornado prompted the first attempt at tornado forecasting. Forecasters at Tinker believed conditions were again favorable for tornadoes and issued the first recorded tornado forecast. Five days later, on 3/25 at 6 pm, a forecasted tornado occurred, crossing the prepared base, and the damage was minimized. The successful, albeit somewhat lucky forecast, paved the way for tornado forecasts to be issued by the U.S. Weather Bureau after a lengthy ban.

1984 - A severe three day winter storm came to an end over the Central Plains. The storm produced up to twenty inches of snow in Colorado, Nebraska and Kansas, and left a thick coat of ice from eastern Kansas across northwestern Missouri into Iowa. (Storm Data)

1986: Great Britain recorded its highest wind gust ever as the summit of Scotland's Cairngorm Mountains, at 4,085 feet, had a gust of 172 mph.

1987 - A storm produced blizzard conditions in Wyoming and eastern Nebraska, and severe thunderstorms in central Nebraska. Snowfall totals ranged up to 12 inches at Glenrock WY and Chadron NE. Thunderstorms in central Nebraska produced wind gusts to 69 mph at Valentine, and wind gusts to 76 mph at Bartley. (Storm Data) (The National Weather Summary)

1988 - Squalls in the Great Lakes Region left up to eight inches of new snow on the ground in time for the official start of spring. Unseasonably warm weather prevailed in the western U.S. Seven cities reported new record high temperatures for the date, including Tucson AZ with a reading of 89 degrees. (Storm Data) (The National Weather Summary)

1989 - Snow and high winds created blizzard conditions in western Kansas to usher in the official start of the spring season. Thunderstorms produced severe weather from east Texas to Alabama and northwest Florida, with nearly fifty reports of large hail and damaging winds during the afternoon and evening hours. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1990 - The northeastern U.S. was in the midst of a snowstorm as spring officially began at 4 19 PM. Snowfall totals in the Green Mountains of Vermont ranged up to thirty inches, and up to 15 inches of snow was reported in the Catskills and Adirondacks of eastern New York State. Totals in eastern Pennsylvania

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ranged up to 12 inches at Armenia Mountain. The storm resulted in one death, and forty-nine injuries. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1998: A deadly tornado outbreak occurred over portions of the southeastern United States on this day. Particularly hard hit were rural areas outside of Gainesville, Georgia, where at least 12 people were killed during the early morning hours. The entire outbreak killed 14 people and produced 12 tornadoes across three states. The town of Stoneville, North Carolina, hard hit by the storms.

2005 - An F1 tornado hits South San Francisco. Trees are uprooted. At least twenty homes and twenty businesses are damaged, including the city's new fire station.

2006 - Grand Island, NE, receives 17.8 inches of snow in 24 hours, breaking the old local record for the most snowfall in a day by 4.8 inches. 29.7 inches in 48 hours also breaks a record.

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Daily Devotionals

Seeds of Hope

ACTIVE OR EFFECTIVE

To be active for God is one thing, but to be effective for God is another. Anyone can be active but not everyone will be effective.

Being "active" can be compared to "riding" a stationary bicycle: there is a lot of motion but no movement. Or, we can compare it to spending an hour in a rocking chair going back and forth: you end up in the same place having gone nowhere.

To be an effective Christian means that we are making a positive, nourishing, helpful impact on the world with our lives. It means that we are living lives that are making a difference in the lives of others - a difference that can be seen, a difference that can be felt, and a difference that will bring others to Jesus Christ as their Savior and Lord.

We begin this life of effectiveness by giving our life to God through the work of Christ. When we give our lives to Him, He will accept us as we are and cleanse us from all unrighteousness. And when He cleanses us, He will fill us with power that comes from His Holy Spirit abiding with us. When He fills us with His Spirit, He can use us.

There are many things we can do, but only one thing we must do. Paul said, "Present your bodies to God!" God has pleasing and perfect plans for all of us to do His work effectively. But first, we must "present" ourselves to Him.

Prayer: Lord of our lives, help us to understand how much You want us to work with You in reclaiming Your world. May we present all that we are to You, now! In Jesus' Name, Amen.

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



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

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WINNING NUMBERS

MEGA MILLIONS

WINNING NUMBERS: 03.19.24

24 46 49 62 66 7

MegaPlier: 2x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:

\$977,000,000

NEXT DRAW: 2 Days 17 Hrs 14 Mins 11 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

LOTTO AMERICA

WINNING NUMBERS: 03.18.24

19 23 24 31 44 2

All Star Bonus: 3x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:

\$2,300,000

NEXT DRAW: 16 Hrs 29 Mins 11 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

LUCKY FOR LIFE

WINNING NUMBERS: 03.19.24

2 5 19 26 38 6

TOP PRIZE:

\$7,000/week

NEXT DRAW: 16 Hrs 44 Mins 11 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

DAKOTA CASH

WINNING NUMBERS: 03.16.24

2 15 17 21 24

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:

\$24,000

NEXT DRAW: 16 Hrs 44 Mins 11 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

POWERBALL

DOUBLE PLAY

WINNING NUMBERS: 03.18.24

11 44 55 63 68 17

TOP PRIZE:

\$10,000,000

NEXT DRAW: 17 Hrs 13 Mins 11 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

POWERBALL

WINNING NUMBERS: 03.18.24

10 17 20 39 44 16

Power Play: 3x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:

\$687,000,000

NEXT DRAW: 17 Hrs 13 Mins 11 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

News from the Associated Press

Man to plead guilty in eagle 'killing spree' on reservation to sell feathers on black market

By MATTHEW BROWN and AMY BETH HANSON Associated Press

A Washington state man accused of helping kill thousands of birds is expected to plead guilty Wednesday to shooting eagles on an American Indian reservation in Montana and selling their feathers and body parts on the black market.

The prosecution over golden and bald eagles killed on the Flathead Indian Reservation underscores the persistence of a thriving illegal trade in eagle feathers despite a law enforcement crackdown in the 2010s that netted dozens of criminal indictments across the U.S. West and Midwest.

A grand jury indictment last December quotes defendant Travis John Branson saying in a January 2021 text that he was going on a "killing spree" to obtain eagle tails. Branson and a second defendant, Simon Paul, killed approximately 3,600 birds, including eagles on the Flathead reservation and elsewhere, according to the indictment. Federal authorities have not disclosed how all the birds were killed, nor where else the killings happened.

Branson, of Cusick, Washington, sold an unidentified purchaser two sets of golden eagle tail feathers — highly prized among many Native American tribes — for \$650 in March 2021, according to court documents.

Less than two weeks later, law enforcement stopped Branson on the reservation and found in his vehicle the feet and feathers of a golden eagle he had shot near Polson, Montana, according to filings that included a photo of the bird's severed feet with their massive talons. The bird's carcass had been "cleaned" by the second defendant, Simon Paul, and was found in a nearby field, prosecutors wrote.

Multiple phones seized by authorities during the stop yielded photos and text messages that described "the shooting, killing and ultimate selling of bald and golden eagles throughout the United States," prosecutors said.

Feathers and other parts of eagles are illegal to sell but widely used by Native Americans in ceremonies and during powwows.

Branson, who remained free following the indictment, reached a deal with prosecutors last month to plead guilty to four counts: conspiracy, wildlife trafficking and two counts of trafficking in federally protected bald and golden eagles.

Branson could not be reached for comment before Wednesday's hearing in Missoula. His public defender declined comment while the case is pending.

Paul of St. Ignatius, Montana, remains at large. A federal judge issued an arrest warrant for Paul when he did not show up for an initial court hearing in December.

The indictment described Branson and Paul trafficking golden and bald eagles or their parts on at least 11 occasions between December 2020 and the stop of Branson by law enforcement on March 13, 2021.

But court filings suggest the illegal activity went on much longer. They outline a conspiracy that began in 2015 and involved other people who killed eagles on the Flathead Reservation but have not been publicly identified.

In a 2016 text message quoted by prosecutors, Branson appeared to acknowledge that shipping eagles internationally was illegal, adding, "I just get em for 99 cents...price of a bullet."

In another text exchange, Branson was negotiating an eagle feather sale when he allegedly wrote, "I don't get em for free though....out hear (sic) committing felonies," according to the court filings.

He faces up to five years in prison and a \$250,000 at sentencing on most serious charge, conspiracy. Under the plea deal, lawyers for the U.S. Attorney's Office in Montana said they would seek to dismiss additional trafficking charges and would recommend a sentencing guideline reduction that could lessen the severity of Branson's punishment.

The criminal case comes almost a decade after a multi-state U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service trafficking

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investigation dubbed "Operation Dakota Flyer" led to charges against 35 defendants and the recovery of more than 150 eagles, 100 hawks and owls and 20 species of other protected birds that were seized or bought by authorities in undercover purchases, according to federal officials.

Federally recognized tribes can apply for permits with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to take a bald or golden eagle for religious purposes, and enrolled tribal members can apply for feathers and other bird parts from the National Eagle Repository in Colorado and non-government repositories in Oklahoma and Phoenix. There's a yearslong backlog of requests at the National Repository and researchers say the high demand is fueling the black market for eagle parts.

All systems go this time as Iowa State heads into March Madness with its hard-nosed defensive team

By ERIC OLSON AP Sports Writer

Iowa State will make the short trip to Nebraska for the first and second rounds of the NCAA Tournament in a lot better frame of mind than the Cyclones team that traveled to North Carolina a year ago.

This team blew out Houston in the Big 12 Tournament championship game over the weekend and earned a No. 2 NCAA seed, matching the highest in program history. On Monday the Cyclones landed No. 4 in the AP Top 25, their best late-season ranking ever.

All systems are go, unlike last year when they went in as a No. 6 seed and off losses in nine of their previous 13 games. They failed to make a field goal the first 10 minutes against Pittsburgh, shot 23% for the game and lost 59-41.

"It was definitely a learning lesson for us," said Tre King, one of three returning starters from that team.

Don't expect the 2024 Cyclones (27-7) to lay an egg again when they play 15th-seeded Summit League champion South Dakota State (22-12) in an East Region opener Thursday night in Omaha.

"Our guys know what's at stake," third-year coach T.J. Otzelberger said. "They know when you get to this time of the year and you're fortunate enough to be playing meaningful basketball, how lucky we all are, and we're going to make the most of the opportunity."

It's what the Cyclones have been doing all season. They've won two of three against Big 12 bully Houston and lost back-to-back games just once after being picked seventh in the 14-team league in the preseason coaches' poll.

They developed into a vintage Otzelberger squad, built on a workmanlike offense and a smothering defense that, according to KenPom, is the nation's most efficient.

Four players average between 10.5 and 13.8 points, and eight different players have led the team in scoring. The Cyclones are middle-of-the-pack in the Big 12 in scoring as well as overall and 3-point field goal shooting percentage; they are near the bottom in free-throw shooting and rebounding.

Tamin Lipsey and UNLV transfer Keshon Gilbert lead a defense that forces 17.5 turnovers per game, averages 10.4 steals and is allowing opponents to shoot just 40%. ISU's defensive average of 61.3 points per game is fourth in the nation.

The emphasis on defense offsets the offensive shortcomings. Some 27% of the Cyclones' points are generated off turnovers.

In what shapes up to be a wide-open tournament, Baylor coach Scott Drew said, Iowa State "easily could win a national championship" if only because of its elite defense. Drew's Bears committed 13 turnovers and shot 39% in a 76-62 Big 12 semifinal loss to the Cyclones.

Otzelberger can't help but like the way his team is playing coming out of last weekend.

"You look at our team this year and the way we've been playing lately, it's been a group that's been very balanced across the board," he said. "A strength of our team is that a lot of guys can step up on a given night, and our guys take tremendous pride in making the right play."

The matchup against South Dakota State wouldn't be Otzelberger's first choice. He coached the Jack-rabbits from 2016-19, going 70-33 with two NCAA appearances. Many of the support staff members he hired are still there.

The SDSU campus is about a four-hour drive from Omaha, and Jackrabbits fans like to follow their team. Same goes for Iowa State fans, who took over the T-Mobile Center in Kansas City last weekend. Omaha is 2 1/2 hours from Ames.

"It's exciting, just knowing how close it is to Ames and knowing how our fans travel," King said. "We know it's going to be a fun environment and fun game. We're chomping at the bit to get ready and get going."

A wooden boat carrying dozens of Rohingya Muslim migrants capsizes off Indonesia's Aceh province

BANDA ACEH, Indonesia (AP) — A wooden boat carrying dozens of Rohingya Muslims capsized about 16 miles from the coastline of Kuala Bubon beach in Indonesia's northernmost province of Aceh on Wednesday.

Local fishermen from Kuala Bubon rescued six of the refugees and evacuated them to a temporary shelter. There were no immediate reports of casualties.

Last year, nearly 4,500 Rohingya — two-thirds of them women and children — fled their homeland of Myanmar and the refugee camps in neighboring Bangladesh by boat, the United Nations refugee agency reported. Of those, 569 died or went missing while crossing the Bay of Bengal and Andaman Sea, the highest death toll since 2014.

Returning safely to Myanmar is virtually impossible for the Rohingya because the military that attacked them overthrew Myanmar's democratically elected government in 2021. And no country is offering the Rohingya any large-scale resettlement opportunities.

The Latest | Palestinians mourn 28 killed in Israeli airstrikes on urban refugee camps in Gaza

By The Associated Press undefined

Mourners held funeral prayers Wednesday morning outside a hospital in central Gaza for 28 people killed in three separate Israeli airstrikes on urban refugee camps the previous night. Associated Press footage showed mourners praying over the bodies, which were wrapped in funeral shrouds, before the bodies were taken away in donkey carts for burial.

As fighting rages on in Gaza, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu says he is determined to carry out a Rafah ground offensive, despite United States President Joe Biden's misgivings.

Earlier, Qatari officials said they were "cautiously optimistic" after talks with Israel's intelligence chief in Doha aimed at trying to reach a cease-fire. But, Qatari Foreign Ministry spokesperson Majed al-Ansari said Tuesday, an Israeli ground operation in Rafah would set back any talks.

At least 31,819 Palestinians have been killed, according to Gaza's Health Ministry, which doesn't differentiate between civilians and combatants in its count but says women and children make up two-thirds of the dead. A United Nations food agency warned that "famine is imminent" in northern Gaza.

Palestinian militants killed some 1,200 people in the surprise Oct. 7 attack out of Gaza that triggered the war, and abducted another 250 people. Hamas is still believed to be holding some 100 people hostage, as well as the remains of 30 others.

Currently:

- Jared Kushner, Trump's son-in-law, praises "very valuable" potential of Gaza's "waterfront property."
- Heavy fighting rages around Gaza's biggest hospital as Israel raids it for a second day.
- Netanyahu agrees to send Israeli officials to Washington to discuss a prospective Rafah operation.
- Gaza and Haiti are on the brink of famine, experts say.
- Find more of AP's coverage at <https://apnews.com/hub/israel-hamas-war>

Here's the latest:

MOURNERS PRAY OVER 28 KILLED IN ISRAELI AIRSTRIKES

DEIR AL-BALAH, Gaza Strip — Mourners held funeral prayers Wednesday morning outside a hospital in central Gaza for 28 people killed in three separate Israeli airstrikes on urban refugee camps.

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Associated Press footage showed mourners praying over the bodies, which were wrapped in funeral shrouds, before the bodies were taken away in donkey carts for burial.

Nineteen people, including five women and nine children, were killed when a strike flattened a family home late Tuesday in the urban Nuseirat refugee camp. Another person was killed in a separate strike in the camp. A strike in the nearby Bureij camp killed eight people, including three women.

The dead were brought to the Al-Aqsa Martyrs' Hospital, the main medical facility in central Gaza. An Associated Press reporter saw the bodies and their names in hospital records.

Nuseirat and Bureij are among several dense, built-up refugee camps in Gaza that date back to 1948, when an estimated 700,000 Palestinians fled or were driven from their homes in what is now Israel during the war surrounding its creation. Refugees and their descendants make up a majority of Gaza's population of 2.3 million.

7 dead after South Korean tanker capsizes off Japan, 2 still missing

By MARI YAMAGUCHI Associated Press

TOKYO (AP) — A South Korean tanker capsized off an island in southwestern Japan on Wednesday, authorities said, killing seven people on board. One crew member survived, and the fate of three others was unknown.

The Japan Coast Guard said it received a distress call from the chemical tanker Keoyoung Sun, saying that it was tilting while seeking refuge from the weather near Japan's Mutsure Island, about 1,000 kilometers (620 miles) from Tokyo in southwestern Japan.

The ship was completely capsized by the time rescuers arrived at the scene. Footage on Japan's NHK television showed the ship lying upside down, a rough sea washing over its red underside.

The ship was carrying 11 crew, of whom nine have been found, authorities said. The one crew member confirmed alive was from Indonesia, while the coast guard is still searching for two more. Another person found was in unknown condition, officials said.

The ship was en route from the Japanese port of Himeji to Ulsan in South Korea from, according to NHK. Its captain was South Korean, and its crew included another South Korean national, a Chinese national and eight Indonesians, according to the coast guard.

The tanker was carrying 980 tons of acrylic acid, officials said. No leak has been detected, and officials are studying what environmental protection measures may be needed in case there is a leak.

Acrylic acid is used in plastics, resin and coatings and can irritate the skin, eyes and mucous membranes, according to the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency.

No other details, including how the ship capsized, were immediately known.

Bruce Springsteen returns to the stage in Phoenix after health issues postponed his 2023 world tour

By ROSS D. FRANKLIN Associated Press

PHOENIX (AP) — Bruce Springsteen and the E Street Band returned to the stage Tuesday evening at the Footprint Center in Phoenix in a triumphant reboot of the Boss' postponed 2023 world tour.

In September Springsteen, 74, announced his tour would be delayed until 2024, citing doctor's advice as he recovered from peptic ulcer disease.

"The Boss" arrived on stage to an audience chorus of "Bruuuuce!" Wearing dark jeans and a rolled up red plaid flannel shirt, he had the energy of a man half his age. His signature "One, two, three, four" was the only thing that separated most songs, showing no signs of his illness from the previous year. Once he shouted, "Good evening, Arizona" the show was off and running.

Springsteen spoke to the crowd briefly about his illness prior to playing his final song "I'll See You In My Dreams" solo on stage. "Phoenix, first I want to apologize if there was any discomfort because we had to move the show last time. . . . I hope we didn't inconvenience you too much."

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The 29-song show came in just under three hours, but "The Boss" hardly broke a sweat while showing off a strong voice, all the while dancing, tearing into guitar solos, playing the harmonica and even ripping his shirt open near the end of the show.

On stage with Springsteen was the legendary E Street Band which features drummer Max Weinberg, bassist Garry Tallent, keyboardists Roy Bittan and Charlie Giordano, guitarists Stevie Van Zandt and Nils Lofgren, saxophonist Jake Clemons — nephew of original and still missed sax man Clarence Clemons who died in 2011 — guitarist and violin player Soozie Tyrell, a full horn and brass section and four backup vocalists. The only missing member of the band was Springsteen's wife, singer and guitarist Patti Scialfa.

Springsteen performed most of the hits in his vast collection, minus "Born In The U.S.A.," but he added covers "Nightshift" by the Commodores, "Because The Night" by Patti Smith Group, and a surprise: "Twist and Shout" by The Beatles. Fans went wild for "No Surrender," "Born To Run," "Rosalita," "Dancing In The Dark," "Glory Days" and "Tenth Avenue Freeze-Out" that left the rocker grinning from ear-to-ear as he conducted fans singing along like his own chorus.

This year has been particularly challenging for Springsteen. In addition to his health issues, in January his mother, Adele Ann Springsteen, a fan favorite who could frequently be seen dancing at his shows, died. She was 98.

Two days after her death, Springsteen performed at the 2024 MusiCares Person of the Year event, which honored Jon Bon Jovi for his musical achievements and philanthropic efforts.

The 2024 edition of the tour kicked off in Phoenix and ends Nov. 22 in Vancouver, Canada. It hits 17 countries across 52 dates, including a special performance on Sept. 15 where Springsteen will headline the Sea.Hear.Now Festival in his hometown of Asbury Park, New Jersey.

Texas' migrant arrest law is back on hold after briefly taking effect

By VALERIE GONZALEZ Associated Press

McALLEN, Texas (AP) — Texas' plans to arrest migrants suspected of entering the U.S. illegally were again on hold Wednesday after setting off uncertainty along the border and anger from Mexico flared during a brief few hours that the law was allowed to take effect.

A late-night order Tuesday from a 5th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals panel temporarily put on hold — again — Texas' dramatic state expansion into border enforcement. Earlier in the day, the U.S. Supreme Court had cleared the way for the strict immigration law, dealing a victory to Republican Gov. Greg Abbott and encouraging GOP lawmakers in other states that are pushing for similar measures.

But later in a 2-1 order, an appeals court panel continued the legal seesaw surrounding the Texas law, again putting it on pause ahead of oral arguments that were scheduled for Wednesday. It was not clear how quickly the next decision might come.

During the short time the law was in effect Tuesday, Texas authorities did not announce that any arrests had been made or say whether it was being actively enforced. Along the border in Kinney County, Sheriff Brad Coe embraced the arrest powers but said deputies would need probable cause.

"It is unlikely that observers will see an overnight change," said Coe, whose county covers a stretch of border near Del Rio that until recently had been the busiest corridor for illegal crossings but has quieted considerably.

The Supreme Court did not rule on the merits of the law. It instead kicked back to the lower appeals court a challenge led by the Justice Department, which has argued that Texas is overstepping the federal government's immigration authority.

The latest appeals court order included no explanation from the panel. But it had the effect of restoring an injunction issued in February by U.S. District Judge David Ezra, who rebuked the law on multiple fronts. His 114-page opinion brushed off Republicans' claims of an "invasion" along the southern border due to record-high illegal crossings. Ezra, an appointee of former President Ronald Reagan, also warned that the law could hamper U.S. foreign relations.

Under the Texas law, once defendants are in custody on illegal entry charges, they can agree to a

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judge's order to leave the U.S. or face prosecution. On Tuesday, Mexico's Foreign Affairs Secretary said in a sharply worded statement that it would refuse to take anyone back who is ordered to cross the border.

"Mexico reiterates the legitimate right to protect the rights of its nationals in the United States and to determine its own policies regarding entry into its territory," the government said.

The impact extends far beyond the Texas border. Republican legislators wrote the law so that it applies in all of the state's 254 counties, although Steve McCraw, the director of the Texas Department of Public Safety, has said he expects it will mostly be enforced near the border.

Other GOP-led states are already looking to follow Texas' path. In Iowa, the state House on Tuesday gave final approval to a bill that would also give its state law enforcement the power to arrest people who are in the U.S. illegally and have previously been denied entry into the country.

It now goes to Republican Gov. Kim Reynolds. If signed, it would take effect in July.

"The federal government has abdicated its responsibilities and states can and must act," Republican Iowa state Rep. Steven Holt said.

In Texas, El Paso County Judge Ricardo Samaniego, the top county executive, said immigration enforcement should remain a federal, not state, responsibility, echoing the Biden administration's view. He said heightened law enforcement presence in the city of El Paso during a previous migrant surge brought high-speed chases and traffic stops based on assumptions that passengers were in the country illegally.

"We had accidents, we had injuries, we got a little glimpse of what would happen if the state begins to control what happens in respect to immigration," Samaniego said.

Skylor Hearn, executive director of the Sheriffs' Association of Texas, said sheriffs' offices have been training since last year.

"If a county chooses to take it on themselves, they are choosing for their taxpayers to take it on themselves as well," Hearn said. "As long as the federal government is willing to do its part that it is supposed to be doing, it is ideal for them to take possession and custody of these people."

Daniel Morales, an associate professor of law at the University of Houston Law Center, said the Texas law "will be a mess, very clearly, to enforce."

"It's very clear that Greg Abbott wants to enforce the law so he can get lots of photo ops and opportunities, but it's gonna take a lot of state resources to implement. And I don't know, in fact, how much appetite and capacity for that the state government actually has," Morales said. Texas will find enforcement is "difficult and taxing," he said.

Arrests for illegal crossings fell by half in January from a record-high of 250,000 in December, with sharp declines in Texas. Arrests in the Border Patrol's Del Rio sector, the focus of Abbott's enforcement, fell 76% from December. Rio Grande Valley, the busiest corridor for illegal crossings for much of the last decade, recorded its fewest arrests since June 2020.

Tucson, Arizona, has been the busiest corridor in recent months, followed by San Diego in January, but reasons for sudden shifts are often complicated and are dictated by smuggling organizations.

When President Joe Biden visited the Rio Grande Valley for his second trip to the border as president last month, administration officials credited Mexico for heightened enforcement on that part of the border for the drop in arrests. They said conditions were more challenging for Mexican law enforcement in Sonora, the state that lies south of Arizona.

During the Israel-Hamas war, Jews will soon celebrate Purim — one of their most joyous holidays

By DAVID CRARY Associated Press

Purim is widely depicted as the most thoroughly joyful of Jewish holidays — highlighted by celebrations that include costumes, skits, noisemakers and varying degrees of rowdiness.

It celebrates the biblical story of how a plot to exterminate Jews in Persia was thwarted, and thus is embraced as an affirmation of Jewish survival throughout history. For many Jews, it will have extra significance this year during a war in Gaza triggered by the Oct. 7 attacks on Israel in which Hamas killed

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1,200 people and took about 250 others hostage.

WHEN IS PURIM?

Purim is celebrated on the 14th day of the Hebrew month of Adar. This year, that means Purim begins on Saturday night and continues through Sunday. In most of Jerusalem, the holiday is celebrated one day later, from Sunday evening until Monday.

WHAT'S THE STORY THAT INSPIRED PURIM?

Here's an account from the Union for Reform Judaism:

"The main communal celebration involves a public reading — usually in the synagogue — of the Book of Esther, which tells the holiday's story: Under the rule of King Ahashverosh, Haman, the king's adviser, plots to exterminate all the Jews of Persia. His plan is foiled by Queen Esther and her cousin Mordechai, who ultimately save the Jews of Persia from destruction. The reading typically is a rowdy affair, punctuated by booing and noisemaking when Haman's name is read aloud. ...

Over the centuries, Haman has come to symbolize every anti-Semite in every land where Jews were oppressed. The significance of Purim lies not so much in how it began, but in what it has become: a thankful and joyous affirmation of Jewish survival."

WHAT'S UP WITH COSTUMES THIS YEAR?

Citing the war against Hamas, Israel's Education Ministry has warned students not to come to school in costumes "that may cause fear, panic or injury."

This includes costumes depicting Yahya Sinwar, the Hamas leader in Gaza.

Ahead of the holiday, Israel police have also seized thousands of lifelike toy guns and grenades as part of "Operation Dangerous Toys."

The ministry said the directive was issued "in the shadow of the war and in accordance with the security reality and the characteristics of the current period."

Many cities in Israel have canceled traditional Purim parades, citing the war in Gaza.

SOMETIMES A DARK SIDE TO THE HOLIDAY

As with other holidays of other faiths, Purim has sometimes been used as a date to wreak high-profile acts of violence.

On Purim in 1994, Baruch Goldstein, an American Israeli settler, killed 29 Palestinian Muslims kneeling in prayer at the Cave of the Patriarchs in the West Bank city of Hebron.

Two years later, in the nine days leading up to Purim, about 60 people died in a series of bombings blamed on Palestinian militants. In the deadliest of those attacks, on the eve of Purim, a suicide bomber detonated a bomb outside a Tel Aviv shopping mall. Thirteen Israelis were killed, including five children in Purim costumes.

WHAT HAVE RABBIS BEEN SAYING AHEAD OF PURIM?

There have been sharply different tones sounded by rabbis this year in remarks related to Purim.

For example, Israel's chief Sephardic rabbi, Yitzhak Yosef, evoked a goal of crushing Hamas as he recently issued a ruling on how Israeli soldiers stationed in Gaza should celebrate Purim.

"May it be God's will that he will uproot them (Hamas) and destroy them and make them perish soon in our days," the ruling said.

A different tone — evoking the loss of more than 30,000 Palestinian lives in Israel-Hamas war — was sounded by two New York City rabbis in a March 7 opinion piece in *The Forward*, an online news publication serving an American Jewish audience.

"This year, let us put down the noise makers, lower our voices, or find other ways to conclude this story with sobriety," wrote Rabbis Amichai Lau-Lavie and Rachel Timoner. "Let it serve as a moment of reflection on our impulse for revenge, on the grave responsibility that comes with holding power and on the moral consequences of failing to honor human life in the name of self-defense."

Among the ways Purim could be observed this year, the rabbis wrote, would be through charitable donations to organizations trying to meet the humanitarian needs of both Israelis and Gazans.

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The first woman to run for president in years inspires hope in Senegal

By BABACAR DIONE and JESSICA DONATI Associated Press

DAKAR, Senegal (AP) — Senegal's only female presidential candidate may stand little to no chance of winning in Sunday's election, but activists say her presence alone is helping to advance a decadeslong campaign to achieve gender equality in the West African nation.

Anta Babacar Ngom, a 40-year-old business executive, is a voice for both women and young people — groups hit hard by the country's economic troubles, widespread unemployment and rising prices. She has promised to create millions of jobs and a bank for women to support their economic independence.

"Our country has enormous potential. The natural resources are there, and they can be developed," she told The Associated Press in a recent interview. "The young girls I meet ask for my support. They do so because they know that when a woman comes to power, she will put an end to their suffering. I'm not going to forget them."

Few expect Ngom to emerge among the leading candidates for the presidency, but activists say the fact that a woman has made it to the presidential race for the first time in years reflects how women are inching ahead in the struggle for equality.

"We have to be there, even if we don't stand a chance," said Selly Ba, an activist and sociologist. "We don't stand a chance in these elections. But it's important that we have women candidates, women who are in the race."

Ngom is the first female candidate to run for president in over a decade, reflecting how progress has been frustratingly slow in the minds of activists who say there has been a reversal among young people toward more traditional views of the roles of women in society.

The divided views over evolving traditional values and norms are emerging on social media. Popular accounts, often Senegalese posting from abroad where there is more freedom to speak out, debate taboo topics like sex before marriage and whether polygamy is fair.

One TikTok user, who goes by the name Ngo Keïta, plays the role of a popular agony aunt, posting clips in Wolof, the language spoken most widely in Senegal. One clip with over 2 million views describes a bitter feud between a woman and her husband in a polygamous marriage, and invites followers to comment.

Ngo Keïta did not respond to a written request for comment from the AP.

Some young women in Senegal are returning to the traditional notion of marriage, said Marième Wone Ly, the first woman to lead a political party in Senegal over two decades ago.

"We have to be very careful. There is a certain regression," she said, referring to how erroneous interpretations of Islam can act against the forces of progress toward equality. "We've gone backwards a bit despite parity."

Through the 1990s, Senegalese women mobilized through grassroots organizations. The country appointed its first female prime minister in 2001, and in 2010 a law that required all political parties to introduce gender parity in electoral lists helped to drive up female participation in politics.

"Women's rights have evolved at the political level over the last 10 years and particularly since the gender parity law came into force," said Bousso Sambe, a former parliamentarian, adding that women have yet to systemically take advantage of the law.

In 2012, two women ran for president, and while they earned less than 1% of the vote each, analysts say their participation was important. Women in Senegal now make up more than 40% of parliament, one of the highest levels of representation in Africa.

"It's crucial to strike a balance between modern evolution and respect for our customs. Women must be able to express themselves without hindrance, while preserving our cultural identity and valuing the traditional values that have shaped our society," Ngom told the AP.

Ngom — who runs her family's food company — has made the economy a focus of her campaign, which most analysts agree is a key concern for the population. Economic hardship has driven thousands of Senegalese to attempt dangerous journeys in search of a better life in the West.

Ngom's supporters say they are proud to back a female candidate and hopeful for a change with the next government.

"Our children are dying at sea because of unemployment and job insecurity. Unemployment is endemic. Women are tired," activist Aicha Ba said at a recent rally in support of Ngom.

Sentencing continues for deputies who tortured 2 Black men in racist assault

By MICHAEL GOLDBERG and EMILY WAGSTER PETTUS Associated Press

JACKSON, Miss. (AP) — Sentencing continues Wednesday for white former law enforcement officers in Mississippi who pleaded guilty last year to breaking into a home without a warrant and torturing two Black men with a stun gun, a sex toy and other objects.

Daniel Opdyke, 28, and Christian Dedmon, 29, are set to appear separately before U.S. District Judge Tom Lee. They face lengthy prison terms.

On Tuesday, Lee gave a nearly 20-year prison sentence to 31-year-old Hunter Elward and a 17.5-year sentence to 46-year-old Jeffrey Middleton. They, like Opdyke and Dedmon, worked as Rankin County sheriff's deputies during the attack.

Another former deputy, Brett McAlpin, 53, and a former Richland police officer, Joshua Hartfield, 32, are set for sentencing Thursday.

The former officers admitted months ago that they tortured Michael Corey Jenkins and Eddie Terrell Parker. Elward admitted to shoving a gun into Jenkins' mouth and firing in a "mock execution" that went awry.

In a statement Tuesday, Attorney General Merrick Garland condemned the "heinous attack on citizens they had sworn an oath to protect."

Before Lee sentenced Elward and Middleton, he called their actions "egregious and despicable."

The terror began Jan. 24, 2023, with a racist call for extrajudicial violence when a white person in Rankin County complained to McAlpin that two Black men were staying with a white woman at a house in Braxton. McAlpin told Dedmon, who texted a group of white deputies so willing to use excessive force they called themselves "The Goon Squad."

Once inside, they handcuffed Jenkins and his friend Parker and poured milk, alcohol and chocolate syrup over their faces. They forced them to strip naked and shower together to conceal the mess. They mocked the victims with racial slurs and shocked them with stun guns. Dedmon assaulted them with a sex toy.

After Elward shot Jenkins in the mouth, they devised a coverup that included planting drugs and a gun. False charges stood against Jenkins and Parker for months. Jenkins suffered a lacerated tongue and broken jaw.

The majority-white Rankin County is just east of the state capital, Jackson, home to one of the highest percentages of Black residents of any major U.S. city.

The officers warned Jenkins and Parker to "stay out of Rankin County and go back to Jackson or 'their side' of the Pearl River," court documents say, referencing an area with higher concentrations of Black residents.

Dedmon is also set to be sentenced for the leading role he played in an assault on a white man that occurred before Jenkins and Parker were tortured. For the first time Tuesday, prosecutors identified the victim as Alan Schmidt and read a statement from him detailing what happened to him on Dec. 4, 2022.

During a traffic stop that night, Schmidt said Rankin County deputies accused him of possessing stolen property. They handcuffed him, pulled him from his vehicle and beat him until he "started to see spots." Dedmon fired his gun into the air and forced Schmidt to his knees, the statement said.

Dedmon shoved a gun against Schmidt's temple and tried to insert his genitals into the man's mouth, as Elward watched, and Dedmon grabbed Schmidt's genitals during the ordeal as the man screamed, Schmidt said. The assault didn't stop until the officers took Schmidt to jail.

"What sick individual does this? He has so much power over us already, so to act this way, he must be truly sick in this head," Schmidt wrote in his statement.

Last March, months before federal prosecutors announced charges in August, an investigation by The

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Associated Press linked some of the deputies to at least four violent encounters with Black men since 2019 that left two dead and another with lasting injuries.

Elward and Middleton were emotional as they apologized in court. Elward's attorney, Joe Hollomon, said his client first witnessed Rankin County deputies turn a blind eye to misconduct in 2017.

"Hunter (Elward) was initiated into a culture of corruption at the Rankin County Sheriff's Office," Hollomon said.

For months, Rankin County Sheriff Bryan Bailey, whose deputies committed the crimes, said little about the episode. After the officers pleaded guilty in August, Bailey said the officers had gone rogue and promised to change the department. Jenkins and Parker have called for his resignation, and they have filed a \$400 million civil lawsuit against the department.

Joel Scott scores 23 as Colorado State routs Virginia 67-42 to cap Day 1 of March Madness

By MITCH STACY AP Sports Writer

DAYTON, Ohio (AP) — Joel Scott scored a season-high 23 points and had 11 rebounds as Colorado State won an NCAA Tournament game for the first time in 11 years, blowing out Virginia 67-42 in the First Four on Tuesday night.

Nique Clifford added 17 points and 10 rebounds for the Rams (25-10), who advance as a No. 10 seed to play seventh-seeded Texas in Charlotte, North Carolina, on Thursday.

"I'll tell you what, hard to imagine tonight going any better for us," Colorado State coach Niko Medved said. "Just a terrific performance, really, on both ends of the floor, from the opening tip."

Reece Beekman had 15 points on 4-of-16 shooting for Virginia, which hasn't won an NCAA Tournament game since it won the national title in 2019. That stretch includes two first-round losses as a No. 4 seed.

The Cavaliers' ugly performance ignited more debate about whether they should have made the tournament field. Although Virginia finished third in the Atlantic Coast Conference, it had just two Quad 1 wins and struggled offensively all season.

"It is a hard tournament to qualify (for), and you want to be playing your best when you get into it," said Virginia coach Tony Bennett, whose 500th career game at the school was among the low points of his 15 stellar seasons. "And obviously, we did not do that."

Colorado State dominated the boards and the Cavaliers couldn't keep up, shooting 25% for the game. The Rams shot 55%, out-rebounded the Cavaliers 43-24 and scored 36 points in the paint.

"(We) took away their strengths that they're really good at," Clifford said. "And then we didn't let them take us out of our game plan. We stuck to what we do and just were confident in it."

Virginia finished with the second-fewest points by an ACC team in the NCAA Tournament, trailing only Bennett's 2017 Cavaliers squad, which lost 65-39 to Florida in the second round.

Virginia shot terribly from the beginning, with Colorado State building a 27-14 lead at the break.

The Cavaliers hit 5 of 29 shots — 17% — in the first half, failing to get a basket in the last 9:20. Beekman was 1 of 9, while Scott had 10 points for the Rams at the break.

"Of course, we weren't hitting shots, and then they used a lot of the clock as well, to get their good shots," Beekman said. "So kind of broke us down. I feel like they were just never rushed throughout the game. Credit them for that."

The Rams scored the first eight points of the second half before Virginia got another basket.

SWAMPED

The highlight for Virginia was a 4-2 lead at the 15:23 mark of the first half. It was pretty much downhill from there. Colorado State built on its halftime lead with another surge. The Cavaliers got within 15 points with about 10 minutes left, but a 3-pointer by Patrick Cartier on the Rams' next possession helped them pull away again.

Isaac McKneely finished 2 of 13 from the field for the Cavaliers, and Jacob Groves was 1 of 8. Their baskets were the Cavs' only 3-pointers as Virginia went 3 of 17 beyond the arc.

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"They did miss some good looks, but I also thought we did a really good job of challenging shooters," Medved said. "I thought we did a good job of closing out and making it difficult on those guys."

Medved made his second NCAA Tournament appearance in six seasons with the Rams. Virginia has been to March Madness 10 times in Bennett's 15 years.

"That's an incredible program, one that I have an unbelievable amount of respect for," Medved said. "And so I didn't see this coming this way tonight at all."

FEAST, THEN FAMINE

Virginia's last NCAA Tournament victory was 85-77 in overtime over Texas Tech in the 2019 national title game. Since then, the Cavaliers have lost in the first round to 13 seeds Ohio (2012) and Furman (last year).

The year before its national title, Virginia was a No. 1 seed but was stunned by 16th-seeded Maryland-Baltimore County.

PLAYING LOOSE

Scott, a graduate transfer who played four years at Black Hills State in South Dakota, had his best game at Colorado State. He averaged 12.9 points per game during the season.

"Honestly, I think it was just more enjoying the moment. We're on a big stage. Very cool experience," Scott said. "Not everyone gets to do this. And so it's more just enjoying the moment, having fun with it."

UP NEXT

Colorado State will play Texas at 6:50 p.m. EDT on Thursday.

How Texas' plans to arrest migrants for illegal entry would work

By VALERIE GONZALEZ Associated Press

McALLEN, Texas (AP) — A law that would allow Texas law enforcement to arrest migrants suspected of illegally entering the U.S. is back on hold.

The 5th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals late Tuesday issued an order preventing its enforcement, just hours after the Supreme Court allowed the strict new immigration law to take effect.

The Justice Department is challenging the law, saying Texas is overstepping the federal government's immigration authority. Texas argues it has a right to take action over what the governor has described as an "invasion" of migrants on the border.

Here's what to know:

WHO CAN BE ARRESTED?

The law would allow any Texas law enforcement officer to arrest people suspected of entering the country illegally. Once in custody, migrants could either agree to a Texas judge's order to leave the U.S. or be prosecuted on misdemeanor charges of illegal entry. Migrants who don't leave could face arrest again under more serious felony charges.

Arresting officers must have probable cause, which could include witnessing the illegal entry or seeing it on video.

The law cannot be enforced against people lawfully present in the U.S., including those who were granted asylum or who are enrolled in the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals program.

Critics, including Mexico President Andrés Manuel López Obrador, fear the law could lead to racial profiling and family separation. American Civil Liberties Union affiliates in Texas and some neighboring states issued a travel advisory a day after Gov. Greg Abbott signed the law. The advisory warns of a possible threat to civil and constitutional rights when passing through Texas.

Abbott has rejected concerns over profiling. While signing the bill, he said troopers and National Guard members at the border can see migrants crossing illegally "with their own eyes."

WHERE WOULD THE LAW BE ENFORCED?

The law can be enforced in any of Texas' 254 counties, including those hundreds of miles from the border.

But Republican state Rep. David Spiller, the law's author, has said he expects the vast majority of arrests would occur within 50 miles (80 kilometers) of the U.S.-Mexico border. Texas' state police chief has expressed similar expectations.

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Some places are off-limits. Arrests cannot be made in public and private schools; places of worship; or hospitals and other health care facilities, including those where sexual assault forensic examinations are conducted.

It is unclear where migrants ordered to leave might go. The law says they are to be sent to ports of entry along the U.S.-Mexico border, even if they are not Mexican citizens. However, Mexico's government said Tuesday it would not accept the return of any migrants to its territory from the state of Texas.

IS THE LAW CONSTITUTIONAL?

The Supreme Court's decision did not address the constitutionality of the law.

The Justice Department, legal experts and immigrant rights groups have said it is a clear conflict with the U.S. government's authority to regulate immigration.

U.S. District Judge David Ezra, an appointee of former President Ronald Reagan, agreed in a 114-page order. He added that the law could hamper U.S. foreign relations and treaty obligations.

Opponents have called the measure the most dramatic attempt by a state to police immigration since a 2010 Arizona law — denounced by critics as the "Show Me Your Papers" bill — that was largely struck down by the U.S. Supreme Court. Ezra cited the Supreme Court's 2012 Arizona ruling in his decision.

Texas has argued that the law mirrors federal law instead of conflicting with it.

WHAT IS HAPPENING ON THE BORDER?

Arrests for illegal crossings along the southern border fell by half in January from record highs in December. Border Patrol officials attributed the shift to seasonal declines and heightened enforcement by the U.S. and its allies. The federal government has not yet released numbers for February.

Texas has charged thousands of migrants with trespassing on private property under a more limited operation that began in 2021.

Tensions remain between Texas and the Biden administration. In the border city of Eagle Pass, Texas, National Guard members have prevented Border Patrol agents from accessing a riverfront park.

Other Republican governors have expressed support for Abbott, who has said the federal government is not doing enough to enforce immigration laws. Other measures implemented by Texas include a floating barrier in the Rio Grande and razor wire along the border.

Anticipation and anger on Texas border as strict immigration law again on hold

By VALERIE GONZALEZ Associated Press

McALLEN, Texas (AP) — A federal appeals court late Tuesday again prevented Texas from arresting and deporting migrants accused of entering the U.S. illegally, hours after the law briefly took effect.

Before a divided U.S. Supreme Court earlier let the state law take effect while a legal challenge plays out, some sheriffs were ready to relish an unprecedented state expansion into border enforcement, while others were reluctant.

Texas was silent in the hours after the ruling on whether and when state troopers or Texas National Guard soldiers — who have the most interaction with migrants — would begin enforcement.

Hours later, an order by the 5th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals put the law again on hold. By a 2-1 order, a panel of the appeals court lifted that pause ahead of arguments before the court on Wednesday.

Mexico's Foreign Affairs Secretary said in a sharply worded statement that it would refuse to take anyone back who is ordered to leave the country under the state law and that it "categorically rejects" any state or local government enforcement of immigration laws.

"Mexico reiterates the legitimate right to protect the rights of its nationals in the United States and to determine its own policies regarding entry into its territory," the government said.

Kinney County Sheriff Brad Coe, who has largely embraced Texas Gov. Greg Abbott's multibillion-dollar border enforcement effort, said he was "prepared to proceed with prosecutions" but officers would need "probable cause" to make arrests. His county covers a stretch of border near Del Rio that was recently the busiest corridor for illegal crossings but quieted considerably.

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"It is unlikely that observers will see an overnight change," Coe said.

El Paso County Judge Ricardo Samaniego, the top county executive, said immigration enforcement should remain a federal, not state, responsibility, echoing the Biden administration's view. He said heightened law enforcement presence in the city of El Paso during a previous migrant surge brought high-speed chases and traffic stops based on assumptions that passengers were in the country illegally.

"We had accidents, we had injuries, we got a little glimpse of what would happen if the state begins to control what happens in respect to immigration," Samaniego said.

The impact extends far beyond the Texas border. Republican legislators wrote the law so that it applies in all of the state's 254 counties, although Steve McCraw, the director of the Texas Department of Public Safety, has said he expects it will mostly be enforced near the border.

Other GOP-states far from the border are also already looking to follow Texas' path. In Iowa, the state House on Tuesday gave final approval to a bill that would also give its state law enforcement the power to arrest people who are in the U.S. illegally and have previously been denied entry into the country.

It now goes to Republican Gov. Kim Reynolds. If signed, it would take effect in July.

"The federal government has abdicated its responsibilities and states can and must act," said Rep. Steven Holt, a Republican from Denison.

Skylor Hearn, executive director of the Sheriffs' Association of Texas, said sheriffs' offices have been training since last year.

"If a county chooses to take it on themselves, they are choosing for their taxpayers to take it on themselves as well," Hearn said. "As long as the federal government is willing to do its part that it is supposed to be doing, it is ideal for them to take possession and custody of these people."

There was no immediate rush on the border and no word of arrests, but news of the ruling spread rapidly and triggered alarm among migrant advocates.

"Terrible, late-breaking news, my friends!" Carlos Eduardo Espina said on his TikTok account with more than 8 million followers, many of them migrants in transit. He said the law would sow confusion and promised "know-your-rights" instructions on how to respond to police questioning.

Daniel Morales, an associate professor of law at the University of Houston Law Center, said the Texas law "will be a mess, very clearly, to enforce."

"It's very clear that Greg Abbott wants to enforce the law so he can get lots of photo ops and opportunities, but it's gonna take a lot of state resources to implement. And I don't know, in fact, how much appetite and capacity for that the state government actually has," Morales said. Texas will find enforcement is "difficult and taxing," he said.

Arrests for illegal crossings fell by half in January from a record-high of 250,000 in December, with sharp declines in Texas. Arrests in the Border Patrol's Del Rio sector, the focus of Abbott's enforcement, fell 76% from December. Rio Grande Valley, the busiest corridor for illegal crossings for much of the last decade, recorded its fewest arrests since June 2020.

Tucson, Arizona, has been the busiest corridor in recent months, followed by San Diego in January, but reasons for sudden shifts are often complicated and are dictated by smuggling organizations.

When President Joe Biden visited the Rio Grande Valley for his second trip to the border as president last month, administration officials credited Mexico for heightened enforcement on that part of the border for the drop in arrests. They said conditions were more challenging for Mexican law enforcement in Sonora, the state that lies south of Arizona.

Election misinformation is a problem in any language. But some gets more attention than others

By DAVID KLEPPER Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Warnings about deepfakes and disinformation fueled by artificial intelligence. Concerns about campaigns and candidates using social media to spread lies about elections. Fears that

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tech companies will fail to address these issues as their platforms are used to undermine democracy ahead of pivotal elections.

Those are the worries facing elections in the U.S., where most voters speak English. But for languages like Spanish, or in dozens of nations where English isn't the dominant language, there are even fewer safeguards in place to protect voters and democracy against the corrosive effects of election misinformation. It's a problem getting renewed attention in an election year in which more people than ever will go to the polls.

Tech companies have faced intense political pressure in countries like the U.S. and places like the European Union to show they're serious about tackling the baseless claims, hate speech and authoritarian propaganda that pollutes their sites. But critics say they've been less responsive to similar concerns from smaller countries or from voters who speak other languages, reflecting a longtime bias toward English, the U.S. and other western democracies.

Recent changes at tech firms — content moderator layoffs and decisions to rollback some misinformation policies — have only compounded the situation, even as new technologies like artificial intelligence make it easier than ever to craft lifelike audio and video that can fool voters.

These gaps have opened up opportunities for candidates, political parties or foreign adversaries looking to create electoral chaos by targeting non-English speakers — whether they are Latinos in the U.S., or one of the millions of voters in India, for instance, who speak a non-English language.

"If there's a significant population that speaks another language, you can bet there's going to be disinformation targeting them," said Randy Abreu, an attorney at the U.S.-based National Hispanic Media Council, which created the Spanish Language Disinformation Coalition to track and identify disinformation targeting Latino voters in the U.S. "The power of artificial intelligence is now making this an even more frightening reality."

Many of the big tech companies regularly tout their efforts to safeguard elections, and not just in the U.S. and E.U. This month Meta is launching a service on WhatsApp that will allow users to flag possible AI deepfakes for action by fact-checkers. The service will work in four languages — English, Hindi, Tamil and Telugu.

Meta says it has teams monitoring for misinformation in dozens of languages, and the company has announced other election-year policies for AI that will apply globally, including required labels for deepfakes as well as labels for political ads created using AI. But those rules have not taken effect and the company hasn't said when they will begin enforcement.

The laws governing social media platforms vary by nation, and critics of tech companies say they have been faster to address concerns about misinformation in the U.S. and the E.U., which has recently enacted new laws designed to address the problem. Other nations all-too often get a "cookie cutter" response from tech companies that falls short, according to an analysis published this month by the Mozilla Foundation.

The study looked at 200 different policy announcements from Meta, TikTok, X and Google (the owner of YouTube) and found that nearly two-thirds were focused on the U.S. or E.U. Actions in those jurisdictions were also more likely to involve meaningful investments of staff and resources, the foundation found, while new policies in other nations were more likely to rely on partnerships with fact-checking organizations and media literacy campaigns.

Odanga Madung, a Nairobi, Kenya-based researcher who conducted Mozilla's study, said it became clear that the platforms' focus on the U.S. and E.U. comes at the expense of the rest of the world.

"It's a glaring travesty that platforms blatantly favor the U.S. and Europe with excessive policy coddling and protections, while systematically neglecting" other regions, Madung said.

This lack of focus on other regions and languages will increase the risk that election misinformation could mislead voters and impact the results of elections. Around the globe, the claims are already circulating.

Within the U.S., voters whose primary language is something other than English are already facing a wave of misleading and baseless claims, Abreu said. Claims targeting Spanish speakers, for instance, include posts that overstate the extent of voter fraud or contain false information about casting a ballot

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or registering to vote.

Disinformation about elections has surged in Africa ahead of recent elections, according to a study this month from the Africa Center for Strategic Studies which identified dozens of recent disinformation campaigns — a four-fold increase from 2022. The false claims included baseless allegations about candidates, false information about voting and narratives that seem designed to undermine support for the United States and United Nations.

The center determined that some of the campaigns were mounted by groups allied with the Kremlin, while others were spearheaded by domestic political groups.

India, the world's largest democracy, boasts more than a dozen languages each with more than 10 million native speakers. It also has more than 300 million Facebook users and nearly half a billion WhatsApp users, the most of any nation.

Fact-checking organizations have emerged as the front line of defense against viral misinformation about elections. The country will hold elections later this spring and already voters going online to find out about the candidates and issues are awash in false and misleading claims.

Among the latest: video of a politician's speech that was carefully edited to remove key lines; years-old photos of political rallies passed off as new; and a fake election calendar that provided the wrong dates for voting.

A lack of significant steps by tech companies has forced groups that advocate for voters and free elections to band together, said Ritu Kapur, co-founder and managing director of The Quint, an online publication that recently joined with several other outlets and Google to create a new fact-checking effort known as Shakti.

"Mis- and disinformation is proliferating at an alarming pace, aided by technology and fueled and funded by those who stand to gain by it," Kapur said. "The only way to combat the malaise is to join forces."

Biden casts the election as prom night for the voters who 'brung me to the dance'

By JOSH BOAK Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — When President Joe Biden talks to his supporters, he can make the presidential election sound like a high school prom.

"You guys brought me to the dance in 2020," he told Irish Americans on a campaign call Friday, suggesting these are the voters who got him where he is today, on the verge of his last waltz in politics.

But those aren't the only devoted dance partners for Biden (who claims to have two left feet).

Look who else he says brought him to the dance: Black Americans. Unions. Bigwig donors. Environmentalists. Jewish Americans. Teachers. And, obviously, his Delaware-based campaign staff.

"These are the folks, as that saying goes up in Claymont, who 'brung me to the dance,'" he said in a February visit to his campaign headquarters in Wilmington, Delaware, just 15 minutes south of Claymont, where he attended high school.

He told the United Auto Workers in Michigan that same month that they "brung me to the dance ... and I never left you." He said the same to donors in Virginia last September, adding, "I wouldn't be here without you."

Biden's grateful shout-outs to a wide array of dance-floor besties are meant to make different blocs of voters feel important to the cause. But they also speak more seriously to the conflicting coalitions that the president and presumptive Republican nominee Donald Trump need to assemble to win in November.

The Biden campaign says the president's statements show his ability to bond with a vast group of voters. Trump's campaign argues they're a sign the Democrat is struggling to keep his coalition together.

"The president's secret weapon has always been his ability to connect with people," said Biden campaign spokesman Kevin Munoz. "Donald Trump has spent his entire political career dividing Americans."

Trump's campaign maintains that it is siphoning support away from Biden.

"Joe Biden no longer has a base, as key Democrat constituencies such as African Americans, Hispanic

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Americans and women are supporting President Trump," said Karoline Leavitt, the Trump campaign's press secretary.

While recent surveys suggest that some nonwhite voters aren't willing to commit to a Biden vote right now, that doesn't mean large majorities of those groups are decisively swinging toward Trump. And with more than six months until the general election, there is plenty of room for movement in the polls.

To win a second term, Biden needs to reassemble the winning coalition of college graduates, union households, younger voters and Black and Hispanic Americans who helped him in 2020.

But Biden has relatively weak polling among many groups. He entered the White House with near universal approval among Democrats, yet only 74% of people within his own party approved of his performance last month, according to a survey by The Associated Press-NORC Center for Public Affairs.

Over the course of his presidency, approval among Black adults has tumbled from 94% at the start to 58% in February. A mere 38% of Hispanic adults approve of him now, down from 70% in January 2021. And just 35% of those under the age of 45 approve of him now, down from 63% in January 2021. Those low readings have generated concerns about Biden's chances in November.

Hence, his interest in convincing members of various constituencies that they hold the very key to his reelection because of their shared values. He wants to merge his election year story with their own.

To Irish Americans, Biden said the election is about preserving "honesty, decency, dignity, equality." Tapping into his ancestry, he told them, "Irish Americans have always stepped up in that fight. For real. That's who we are."

He told the auto workers in Michigan: "Unions are growing — the single biggest reason why the economy is growing — because you are the best workers in the world. That's not hyperbole. No, you really are."

Trump, for his part, has a fervent base of supporters who follow him to rallies, often decked out in gear that bears his name and visage. He honors the loyalties of some — such as the Jan. 6, 2021, rioters who were convicted of crimes and are labeled at Trump's events as "hostages." In 2016, he declared his love of the "poorly educated."

So far, election results show his base has been deep but comparatively narrow. AP VoteCast found that nearly 9 in 10 in 2020 were white, and almost two-thirds were older than 50. Trump has won the Electoral College once, but he has never won more than 46.8% of the national popular vote and has previously tried to frighten "suburban housewives" into supporting him.

Trump often deploys the word "love," which is sometimes a compliment, sometimes the start of an insult and sometimes a comment on his own track record. But it's usually geared toward his base.

"I love Alabama, but they understand we don't have to be there," he said at a Saturday rally in Ohio. "We have to be in places that are a little closer than that."

"I love California — one of the most beautiful places," he said of the Democratic-controlled state at the same rally. "They're destroying it. They're destroying California."

But if Biden is about trying to show some love to his base, Trump is intent on telling supporters that they love him.

"You love the job I did for four years," Trump told rallygoers.

Biden impeachment inquiry is at a crossroads. As Hunter Biden declines to appear, GOP eyes next move

By LISA MASCARO AP Congressional Correspondent

WASHINGTON (AP) — The House impeachment inquiry into President Joe Biden has hit a crossroads, lacking the political appetite from within Republican ranks to go forward with an actual impeachment, but facing political pressure to deliver after months of work.

The Republican chairman of the House Oversight Committee, James Comer, has signaled an interest in another direction. He is stopping short of drawing up articles of impeachment against the president, but eying criminal referrals of Biden family wrongdoing to the Justice Department for possible prosecution.

With the panel's star witness, Hunter Biden, not expected to appear for Wednesday's public hearing

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after having testified privately last month, Comer telegraphed what was coming next.

"If he does not show up, then it's not going to end well for the Bidens," Comer said over the weekend on Fox News.

He said, "There's going to be multiple criminal referrals."

It's the start of a potential wind-down for the lengthy GOP-led probe that was launched after Republicans seized control of the House in January, eager to hold Biden to the high bar of impeachment that twice reprimanded Donald Trump during his presidency.

As Trump and Biden face another likely rematch this November, Comer is weighing whether to keep the impeachment inquiry going through Hunter Biden's often complicated business dealings and his storied, but troubled life, or wrap up work even if that falls short of a historic presidential impeachment.

The White House has called the inquiry a "charade" and told Republicans to "move on."

Wednesday's hearing will delve deeper into Hunter Biden's business dealings as Republicans seek testimony from Jason Galanis, who is serving a lengthy federal prison sentence in Alabama for fraud schemes and is expected to appear remotely, and Tony Bobulinski, a one-time business associate of Hunter Biden who took his claims against the family public during the first Trump-Biden presidential debate in 2020.

The Democrats have called witness Lev Parnas to testify, relying on the convicted businessman who was central to Trump's first impeachment as a Rudy Giuliani associate working to dig up political dirt on Joe Biden ahead of the 2020 election. Parnas has since played a key role in dispelling the House GOP's main claim of bribery against the Bidens as simply not true.

"Who better than Lev Parnas himself — Rudy Giuliani's right-hand man on the original mission to smear Joe Biden — to tell the story of how this campaign of lies and slander works?" said Rep. Jamie Raskin of Maryland, the top Democrat on the Oversight Committee, in a statement.

Raskin said Parnas can "debunk the bogus claims at the heart of the impeachment probe and, in the process, explain how the GOP ended up in this degraded and embarrassing place."

So far, the impeachment inquiry's public hearings have often devolved into all-day spectacles as scores of lawmakers take their turn grilling the witnesses.

Hunter Biden, who is facing firearm and tax charges in separate matters, testified behind closed doors last month in a committee deposition that filled more than 200 pages but left Comer's panel without the hard evidence it was seeking of wrongdoing by the president or his son.

The committee asserts that the Bidens traded on the family name, an influence-peddling scheme that seeks to link a handful of phone calls or dinner or lunch meetings between Joe Biden, when he was vice president, and Hunter Biden and his business associates.

But their slim majority narrowed by early retirements, House Republicans may not have enough support within their ranks to pursue articles of impeachment against President Biden, especially since Democrats would likely vote against any such charges.

Instead, Comer has been looking into potential criminal referrals to the Justice Department, which would likely be symbolic, but could open the door to prosecutions in a future administration.

It's unclear who would exactly be charged, and over what offenses, and Comer has also discussed drafting ethics-related legislation to tighten influence peddling or foreign lobbying among officials.

A House committee spokesperson said that the impeachment inquiry is ongoing without a predetermined outcome. The committee will issue a final report with its recommendations once the inquiry has concluded.

Galanis, who was initially interviewed by the committee last month from prison, has told the panel that he expected to make "billions" with Hunter Biden and other associates, using the Biden family name in their foreign business dealings.

He has told the panel of a particular time when Hunter Biden put his dad on speakerphone for a brief minute-long chat during a birthday party at a New York restaurant for the 1-year-old child with potential foreign business partners. He acknowledged that he unsuccessfully sought a pardon in the final days of the Trump presidency.

Hunter Biden, in his own deposition to the panel, said he met Galanis for about 30 minutes 10 years ago.

Bobulinski who has gone public with his allegations has told the panel in his interview that he met briefly with Joe Biden when he was vice president through Hunter Biden.

The Democratic witness, Parnas, had been a central figure in Trump's first impeachment over withholding aid to Ukraine. He helped Giuliani with the false claims that Joe Biden, as vice president, had intervened in the firing of a Ukrainian prosecutor as a favor to Hunter Biden's work on the board of the Ukrainian energy firm Burisma. Western allies also wanted the prosecutor fired over allegations of corruption.

Last summer, Senate Republicans released unverified claims from an FBI informant who disclosed more such details, including allegations of payments to the Bidens that became central to the House GOP probe. At the time, Parnas sent Comer a lengthy letter dispelling those claims, saying it was all talk and the money was not paid to the Bidens.

The now former FBI informant Alexander Smirnov was arrested last month and pleaded not guilty to charges that he fabricated the bribery allegations.

Several probes target Brazil's Bolsonaro, but his COVID decisions are catching up to him first

By ELÉONORE HUGHES and MAURICIO SAVARESE Associated Press

RIO DE JANEIRO (AP) — As Brazilian President Jair Bolsonaro's term wound down in the final days of December 2022, he had decided to skip the ritual of handing over the presidential sash to his successor, and instead made plans to travel abroad.

But there was a problem, according to a Federal Police indictment unveiled Tuesday: Bolsonaro didn't have the necessary vaccination certificate required by U.S. authorities.

So Bolsonaro turned to his aide-de-camp, Mauro Cid, and asked him to insert false data into the public health system to make it appear as though he and his 12-year-old daughter had received the COVID-19 vaccine, according to the indictment.

Cid told police he tasked someone with the carrying out the deed, then printed out the certificates inside the presidential palace on Dec. 22 and hand-delivered them to Bolsonaro, according to detective Fábio Alvarez Shor, who signed the indictment.

It is Bolsonaro's first indictment since leaving office, and tampering with public records in Brazil is no trifling matter; should the prosecutor-general's office decide to use the indictment to file charges at the Supreme Court, the 68-year-old politician could spend up to 12 years behind bars or as little as two years, according to legal analyst Zilan Costa. A separate indictment for criminal association carries a maximum jail time of four years, he said.

Bolsonaro, who didn't comment on Tuesday, previously denied any wrongdoing during questioning in May 2023.

In addition to the allegation Bolsonaro falsified records, another ongoing investigation seeks to determine whether he tried to sneak two sets of expensive diamond jewelry into Brazil and prevent them from being incorporated into the presidency's public collection. Police are also probing his alleged involvement in the Jan. 8, 2023 uprising in the capital, soon after Lula took power. It resembled the U.S. Capitol riot in Washington two years prior and sought to restore Bolsonaro to power. Commanders who served under Bolsonaro have told police the former leader presented them with a plan for him to remain in power after he lost his 2022 reelection bid.

But it is his actions during the COVID-19 pandemic — which he called "a measly cold" as he brazenly flouted health restrictions and encouraged Brazilians to follow his example — that may have caught up with him first. After vaccines became available, he dismissed them as unnecessary, despite Brazil registering one of the highest death tolls in the world, and repeatedly said he would not receive a jab himself.

His administration ignored several offers from pharmaceutical company Pfizer to sell Brazil tens of millions of shots in 2020, and he openly criticized a move by Sao Paulo state's governor to buy vaccines from Chinese company Sinovac when no other doses at hand.

Bolsonaro wasn't the only one indicted on Tuesday: Cid and 15 others were accused of involvement in

the scheme to falsify records for themselves and others.

"The former president never ordered or knew that any of his advisors had produced vaccination certificates with ideologically false content," three of Bolsonaro's lawyers said in a statement released late Tuesday. "When he entered the U.S. at the end of December 2022, he was not asked for a vaccination certificate since, as President of the Republic, he was exempt from this requirement."

Shor, the police detective, wrote in his indictment he is awaiting information from the U.S. Justice Department to "clarify whether those under investigation did make use of the false vaccination certificates upon their arrival and stay in American territory." If so, further charges could be leveled against Bolsonaro, Shor wrote without specifying in which country.

His indictment shed new light on a Senate committee inquiry that ended in October 2021 with a recommendation for nine criminal charges against Bolsonaro, alleging that he mismanaged the pandemic. Then prosecutor-general Augusto Aras, who was widely seen as a Bolsonaro ally, declined to move the case forward.

Brazilian media reported that Aras' successor, Paulo Gonet, met lawmakers Tuesday night to discuss the possibility of filing charges.

Bolsonaro retains staunch allegiance among his political base, as shown by an outpouring of support last month, when an estimated 185,000 people clogged Sao Paulo's main boulevard to decry what they — and the former president — characterize as political persecution.

The indictment will not turn off his backers and will only confirm his detractors' suspicions, said Carlos Melo, a political science professor at Insper University in Sao Paulo.

"It is definitely worse for him in courts," Melo said. "He could be entering a trend of convictions, and then arrest."

Brazil's top electoral court has already ruled Bolsonaro ineligible to run for office until 2030, on the grounds that he abused his power during the 2022 campaign and cast unfounded doubts on the country's electronic voting system.

After losing the October 2022 election, he never conceded defeat. And with a fresh vaccination certificate in hand, according to the police indictment, he decamped for south Florida.

Powell may provide hints of whether Federal Reserve is edging close to rate cuts

By CHRISTOPHER RUGABER AP Economics Writer

WASHINGTON (AP) — Two weeks ago, Chair Jerome Powell suggested that the Federal Reserve was "not far" from gaining the confidence it needed that inflation was headed sustainably toward its 2% target level, which would allow it to start cutting its benchmark interest rate.

It was a tantalizing suggestion, because a cut in the Fed's key rate has typically boosted the economy by reducing the cost of lending, from mortgages to business loans. It might also benefit President Joe Biden's re-election bid, which is facing widespread public unhappiness over price levels across the economy.

Since then, though, the latest inflation measures have turned out to be hotter than expected: A government report showed that consumer prices jumped from January to February by much more than is consistent with the Fed's target. A second report showed that wholesale inflation also came in surprisingly high — a possible sign of inflation pressures in the pipeline that could cause consumer price increases to stay elevated in the coming months.

A key question for Powell and the 18 other officials on the Fed's interest-rate-setting committee is how — or whether — those figures have altered their timetable for cutting rates. Powell will surely be pressed on the topic at a news conference Wednesday after the Fed ends its latest two-day meeting. The central bank's policymakers will also issue their updated quarterly projections for how they foresee the economy and interest rates changing in the months and years ahead.

Their previous such projections in December showed that the officials expected to cut their benchmark rate three times this year, up from a previous forecast of two cuts. Most economists think the latest quar-

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terly projections will again show that the policymakers expect to cut rates three times in 2024, though there's a possibility they could reduce the expected number to two. Economists generally envision the first rate cut coming in June.

On Wednesday, the Fed is considered sure to keep its short-term rate, now at a 23-year high of nearly 5.4%, unchanged for a fifth straight time. And it may not yet be entirely clear to Fed officials whether they have kept rates high enough for long enough to fully tame inflation.

Consumer inflation, measured year over year, has tumbled from a peak of 9.1% in June 2022 to 3.2%. Yet it's remained stuck above 3%. And in the first two months of 2024, the costs of services such as rents, hotels and hospital stayed high, suggesting that high borrowing rates aren't sufficiently slowing inflation in the economy's vast service sector.

While the Fed's rate hikes typically make borrowing more expensive for homes, cars, appliances and other costly goods, they have much less effect on services spending, which doesn't usually involve loans. With the economy still healthy, there is no compelling reason for the Fed to cut rates until it feels inflation is sustainably under control.

At the same time, the central bank faces a competing concern: If it waits too long to cut rates, a long period of high borrowing costs could seriously weaken the economy and even tip it into a recession.

Powell warned of such an outcome when he testified to the Senate Banking Committee this month. He said the Fed was becoming more confident that inflation is continuing to slow, even if not in a straight line.

"When we do get that confidence, and we're not far from it," he said, "it'll be appropriate to begin" rate reductions "so that we don't drive the economy into recession."

Despite widespread evidence of a sturdy economy, there are signs that it could weaken in the coming months. Americans slowed their spending at retailers in January and February, for example. The unemployment rate has reached 3.9% — still a healthy level, but up from a half-century low last year of 3.4%. And much of the hiring in recent months has occurred in government, health care and private education, with many other industries barely adding any jobs.

Like the Fed, other major central banks are keeping rates high to ensure they have a firm handle on consumer price spikes. In Europe, pressure is building to lower borrowing costs as inflation drops and economic growth stalls. The European Central Bank's leader hinted this month that a possible rate cut wouldn't come until June, while the Bank of England isn't expected to open the door to any imminent cut when it meets Thursday.

Japan's central bank, by contrast, is moving in the opposite direction: On Tuesday, it raised its benchmark rate for the first time in 17 years, in response to rising wages and inflation finally nearing its 2% target. The Bank of Japan was the last major central bank to lift its key rate out of negative territory, ending an unusual period that had led to negative rates in many European countries as well as in Japan.

Key questions as Trump hurtles toward deadline to pay \$454 million fraud penalty

By MICHAEL R. SISAK Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — Donald Trump is hurtling toward a critical deadline in his most costly legal battle to date. If the former president doesn't come up with a financial guarantee by Monday, New York's attorney general can start the process of collecting on the more than \$454 million Trump owes the state in a civil fraud lawsuit.

Trump's lawyers are trying to stop that from happening. They have asked a court to put collection efforts on hold while he appeals the verdict.

The presumptive Republican presidential nominee tried getting a bond for the full amount, which would have stopped the clock on collection during his appeal and ensured the state got its money if he were to lose.

But more than 30 underwriters said no, Trump's lawyers told the court. They said getting a bond for

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such a large sum is "a practical impossibility."

That's raised the possibility that New York Attorney General Letitia James could start trying to enforce the judgment as soon as Monday.

Here's a look at what that might look like, and what it would mean for Trump's business empire.

COULD NEW YORK REALLY SEIZE TRUMP'S ASSETS?

Yes. If Trump isn't able to pay, the state "could levy and sell his assets, lien his real property and garnish anyone who owes him money," Syracuse University Law Professor Gregory Germain said.

Potential targets could include properties such as his Trump Tower penthouse, Wall Street office building and golf courses. James' office could also seek court permission to drain Trump's bank accounts and investment portfolios, or sell off other assets like his planes, helicopters — or even his golf carts.

Seizing assets is a common legal tactic when someone can't access enough cash to pay a civil penalty.

In a famous example, O.J. Simpson's Heisman Trophy was seized and sold at auction to cover part of a \$33.5 million wrongful death judgment. More recently, a city commissioner in Miami, Florida, fought to keep his home after a federal judge ordered it seized and auctioned off to help pay a \$63.5 million judgment in a political retaliation case.

New York state seized three moving trucks in 1999 to help satisfy a \$250,000 judgment against a company that ripped off customers. In 2006, the state seized a \$342,000 investment account to cover part of a \$2 million judgment against operators of illegal tire dumps.

COULD IT HAPPEN SOON?

Not likely. State officials can't just padlock Trump Tower. Any attempt to collect would be done through such legal actions as liens and foreclosures. But the state could lay groundwork by subpoenaing Trump for information about his assets.

James, a Democrat, recently told ABC that if Trump can't pay, her office "will ask the judge to seize his assets."

WHY DOES TRUMP OWE THIS MONEY?

The state, through James' office, sued Trump in 2022, alleging he had committed fraud for years by inflating his wealth on financial statements given to banks and insurance companies in connection with various business deals.

In February, after a 2½-month trial, Judge Arthur Engoron ordered Trump to pay \$355 million plus interest, saying, "The frauds found here leap off the page and shock the conscience."

Trump denies any attempt to deceive banks or anyone else about his wealth. He has said the judge's decision and the lawsuit itself were politically motivated attempts to keep him from reclaiming the White House in 2024.

He has also argued that it is unfair to make him sell off assets or spend huge amounts buying a bond when the case is still being appealed, though a court requiring an appeal bond is fairly common in New York and other jurisdictions.

Asked Tuesday if he's confident he can pay, Trump lashed out at what he deemed "a rigged trial by a crooked judge and a crooked attorney general."

"We have a lot of cash and we have a great company, but they want to take it away or at least take the cash element away. Billions of dollars in value, billions of dollars in properties. But they'd like to take the cash away so I can't use it on the campaign," Trump said after voting in Florida's Republican primary.

"We'll see how the courts rule on it," he said.

COULD TRUMP PAY IF HE WANTED?

Trump says he is worth several billion dollars, but much of it is tied up in his real estate holdings.

He reported having about \$294 million in cash or cash equivalents like stocks on his most recent publicly available financial statement, but that document is outdated, covering the fiscal year ending June 30, 2021. It's also one of the documents Engoron deemed fraudulent for exaggerating Trump's wealth.

Since then, Trump has netted nearly \$187 million from selling the lease on his Washington, D.C., hotel and the rights to manage a New York City golf course. His current cash position is unclear. During his civil

fraud trial, he said he had more than \$400 million in cash, but that is unverified.

Trump has other legal bills. In January, a jury ordered him to pay \$83.3 million for defaming writer E. Jean Carroll after she accused him of sexual assault. Trump secured a \$91.6 million bond this month to guarantee that judgment while he appeals.

Trump's lawyers said freeing up cash by offloading some of Trump's properties in a "fire sale" would result in massive, irrecoverable losses.

ARE THERE OTHER WAYS TRUMP COULD RAISE THE MONEY?

Trump could receive a financial windfall from a looming deal to put his social media company, Trump Media & Technology Group, on the stock market under the symbol DJT.

If the deal is approved at a shareholder meeting Friday, Trump would own at least 58% of the shares in the company, which runs his Truth Social platform. Depending on share price, that could be worth several billion dollars, though he might not be able to turn the stock into cash immediately.

Meanwhile, the amount Trump owes is increasing by nearly \$112,000 each day due to interest. As of Tuesday, he owed the state nearly \$457 million.

To obtain a bond, Trump's lawyers said they would be required to post collateral covering 120% of the judgment.

Last month, Trump's lawyers proposed posting a \$100 million bond, but a judge in the state's mid-level appeals court said he had to pay the full amount. Trump has appealed that decision.

COULD TRUMP DECLARE BANKRUPTCY?

Under federal bankruptcy law, enforcement of the judgment would be paused if he personally declared bankruptcy. However, he would still be personally liable if just his company, the Trump Organization, or other entities were to declare bankruptcy.

Trump has repeatedly bragged that he has never, personally, declared bankruptcy, although several of his previous companies have.

"If he can't post a bond or meet the appellate division's bonding requirements, then I would expect him to file bankruptcy to take advantage of the automatic stay on collection," law professor Germain said.

"But that's a couple of chess moves away, so we will just have to see what happens."

North Korea claims progress in developing a hypersonic missile designed to strike distant US targets

By HYUNG-JIN KIM Associated Press

SEOUL, South Korea (AP) — North Korea successfully tested a solid-fuel engine for its new-type intermediate-range hypersonic missile, state media reported Wednesday, claiming a progress in efforts to develop a more powerful, agile missile designed to strike faraway U.S. targets in the region.

A hypersonic missile is among an array of high-tech weapons systems that North Korean leader Kim Jong Un publicly vowed to introduce in 2021 to cope with what he called deepening U.S. hostility. Outside experts say Kim wants a modernized weapons arsenal to wrest U.S. concessions like sanctions relief when diplomacy resumes.

On Tuesday, Kim guided the ground jet test of the multi-stage solid-fuel engine for the hypersonic missile at the North's northwestern rocket launch facility, the official Korean Central News Agency reported.

It cited Kim as saying the strategic value of the new missile with an intermediate-range is as important as intercontinental ballistic missiles targeting the U.S. mainland and that "enemies know better about it." It said that a timetable for completing the development of the new weapons system was "set through the great success in the important test."

Intermediate-range missiles possessed or pursued by North Korea are the weapons systems primarily aimed at attacking the U.S. Pacific territory of Guam, home to U.S. military bases. Those missile can also reach Alaska, and with a range adjustment they can be used to strike closer targets like U.S. military installations in Japan's Okinawa island, experts say.

In recent years, North Korea has been pushing to develop more weapons with built-in solid propellants,

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which make launches harder to detect than liquid-propellant missiles that must be fueled before liftoffs and cannot last long. The North's pursuit of hypersonic weapons is also meant to defeat U.S. and South Korean missile defense systems, but it's unclear the North's hypersonic vehicles proved their desired speed and maneuverability during tests in recent years, analysts say.

In January, North Korea said it flight-tested a new solid-fuel intermediate-range ballistic missile tipped with a hypersonic, maneuverable warhead, in a likely reference to the missile mentioned in Wednesday's KCNA dispatch. In November, North Korea said it had tested engine tests for an intermediate-range missile but didn't say whether it's designed to carry a hypersonic warhead.

While the North's missile test in January was likely related to the development of its first-stage rocket, this week's engine test appeared focused on the development of its second-stage rocket in part of the North's efforts to increase the weapon's flying speed, said Chang Young-keun, a missile expert at South Korea's Research Institute for National Strategy.

Chang said the latest engine test suggests North Korea could soon test-launch the new hypersonic missile.

After short-range tests with hypersonic weapons, North Korea would want to increase their ranges with maneuverable hypersonic warheads, Lee Choon Geun, an honorary research fellow at South Korea's Science and Technology Policy Institute, said. He said the capacities of the new missile can be assessed when it's test-flighted.

On Monday, South Korea, the U.S. and Japan said they detected the multiple ballistic missile test-launches by North Korea in what was the country's first missile firings in about a month. The North said Tuesday it performed a live-fire drill of what it called nuclear-capable "super-large" multiple rocket launchers designed to target South Korea's capital, Seoul. South Korea's military later said it views the North Korean weapons system tested as a ballistic missile.

North Korea has been engaging in a provocative run of missile tests since 2022. The U.S. and South Korea militaries have responded by expanding their bilateral exercises and trilateral drills involving Japan. Observers say North Korea will likely intensify its run of missile tests ahead of the U.S. presidential election in November.

Biden and Trump notch more wins Tuesday as primary voters urge them to keep up the fight

By MICHELLE L. PRICE, JONATHAN J. COOPER and PATRICK ORSAGOS Associated Press

TEMPE, Arizona (AP) — As Joe Biden and Donald Trump moved closer to a November rematch, primary voters around the country on Tuesday urged their favored candidate to keep up the fight and worried about what might happen if their side loses this fall.

There was little suspense about Tuesday's results as both candidates are already their parties' presumptive nominees. Trump easily won Republican primaries in Arizona, Florida, Illinois, Kansas and Ohio. Biden did the same except in Florida, where Democrats had canceled their primary and opted to award all 224 of their delegates to Biden.

Instead, the primaries and key downballot races became a reflection of the national political mood. With many Americans unenthusiastic about 2024's choice for the White House, both Biden and Trump's campaigns are working to fire up their bases by tearing into each other and warning of the perils of the opponent.

Those who did turn out to vote Tuesday seemed to hear that.

Pat Shackelford, an 84-year-old caregiver in Mesa, Arizona, said she voted for Trump in Arizona's primary to send the former president a message.

"I wanted to encourage him that the fight has been worthwhile, that more of us are behind him than maybe the media tells you," Shackelford said.

Jamie and Cassandra Neal, sisters who both live in Phoenix, said they were unenthusiastic Biden supporters until they saw the vigor the president brought to his State of the Union speech. It fired them up for the coming election.

"Beforehand it was like, 'Well, he's the only decent one there,'" said Cassandra Neal, 42. "After his ad-

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dress it was like, 'OK, let's do it!'"

Jamie Neal, 45, said Biden had been "way too nice" before and needed to match Trump, whom she described as "vicious."

"I hate to say it, sometimes you need to equal the lowness to get the person out," she said. "Sometimes you have to fight fire with fire."

In Ohio's Republican Senate primary, Trump-backed businessman Bernie Moreno defeated two challengers, Ohio Secretary of State Frank LaRose and Matt Dolan, whose family owns the Cleveland Guardians baseball team.

Moreno and Trump appeared together Saturday at a rally where Trump praised his endorsed candidate as a "warrior" and ramped up his dark rhetoric, saying that were he not to be elected, "it's going to be a bloodbath for the country." His campaign insists he was referring to the auto industry and not the country as a whole.

In the final days of the campaign, The Associated Press reported on Thursday that in 2008, someone with access to Moreno's work email account created a profile on an adult website seeking "Men for 1-on-1 sex." The AP could not definitively confirm that it was created by Moreno himself. Moreno's lawyer said a former intern created the account and provided a statement from the intern, Dan Ricci, who said he created the account as "part of a juvenile prank."

Questions about the profile have circulated in GOP circles for the past month, sparking frustration among senior Republican operatives about Moreno's potential vulnerability in a general election, according to seven people who are directly familiar with conversations about how to address the matter. They requested anonymity to avoid running afoul of Trump and his allies.

Trump and Biden have for weeks been focused on the general election, aiming their campaigns lately on states that could be competitive in November rather than merely those holding primaries.

Trump, a Florida voter, cast his ballot at a recreation center in Palm Beach on Tuesday and told reporters, "I voted for Donald Trump."

Trump and Biden are running on their records in office and casting the other as a threat to America. Trump, 77, portrays the 81-year-old Biden as mentally unfit. The president has described his Republican rival as a threat to democracy after his attempt to overturn the 2020 election results and his praise of foreign strongmen.

Those themes were evident Tuesday at some polling locations.

"President Biden, I don't think he knows how to tie his shoes anymore," said Trump supporter Linda Bennet, a resident of Palm Beach Gardens, Florida, not far from the former president's Mar-a-Lago resort.

Even as she echoed Trump's arguments about Biden, she criticized Trump's rhetoric and "the way he composes himself" as "not presidential at all." But she said the former president is "a man of his word," and she said the country, especially the economy, felt stronger to her under Trump's leadership.

In Columbus, Ohio, Democrat Brenda Woodfolk voted for Biden and shared the president's framing of the choice this fall.

"It's scary," she said of the prospect that Trump could be in the Oval Office again. "Trump wants to be a dictator, talking about making America white again and all this kind of crap. There's too much hate going on."

Bennet and Woodfolk agreed that immigration is one of their top concerns, though they offered different takes on why.

"This border thing is out of control," said Bennet, the Republican voter. "I think it's the government's plot or plan to bring these people in to change the whole dynamic for their benefit, so I'm pretty peeved."

Woodfolk, the Democrat, said she doesn't mind immigrants "sharing" opportunities in the U.S. but worried it comes at the expense of "people who've been here all their lives."

Trump and Republicans have hammered Biden on the influx of migrants crossing the U.S.-Mexico border in recent years, seeking to capitalize on the issue well beyond border states. Biden has ratcheted up a counteroffensive in recent weeks after Senate Republicans killed a migration compromise they had nego-

tiated with the White House, withholding their support only after Trump said he opposed the deal. Biden has used the circumstances to argue that Trump and Republicans have no interest in solving the issue but instead want to inflame voters in an election year.

For the last year, Trump has coupled his campaign with his legal challenges, including dozens of criminal counts and civil cases in which he faces more than \$500 million in fines.

His first criminal trial was scheduled to start Monday in New York on allegations he falsified business records to cover up hush money payments. But a judge delayed the trial for 30 days after the recent disclosure of new evidence that Trump's lawyers said they needed time to review.

Speaking outside his polling place with a voter's sticker affixed to his lapel, Trump insisted the cases against him were political and defended himself against criticism of his attacks a day earlier on Jewish Democrats, in which he alleged they hate Israel and their own religion. Democratic leaders on Tuesday criticized his comments as promoting antisemitic tropes about having divided loyalties.

Standing next to him was former first lady Melania Trump, who didn't have on a sticker. She has rarely appeared in public with Trump since he launched his third bid for the White House.

Asked if she would campaign with him, she replied: "Stay tuned."

Trump favorites Moreno, Merrin win GOP primaries to face two vulnerable Ohio Democrats this fall

By JULIE CARR SMYTH Associated Press

COLUMBUS, Ohio (AP) — Things went former President Donald Trump's way on Tuesday in a pair of high-profile elections in Ohio that could determine Republicans' chances of picking up critical seats this fall and expanding their power in Washington.

In the bruising and expensive primary to face Democratic Sen. Sherrod Brown this fall, voters chose Trump-backed Cleveland businessman Bernie Moreno over state Sen. Matt Dolan and Ohio Secretary of State Frank LaRose. In northwest Ohio, state Rep. Derek Merrin prevailed over former state Rep. Craig Riedel a day after Trump endorsed him. Merrin will face longtime U.S. Rep. Marcy Kaptur in November's general election.

Both Brown and Kaptur are considered among the year's most vulnerable Democrats, amid Ohio's tack to the political right in recent years. With Democrats holding a narrow voting majority in the Senate and Republicans maintaining a thin margin in the U.S. House, both races have already drawn outsized attention from national party leaders.

Moreno used his acceptance speech in Cleveland to shower praise on Trump, as well as to commend Dolan and LaRose on campaigns well run. He called on the party to unify to defeat Brown.

"We have an opportunity now to retire the old commie, and send him to a retirement home and save this country, because that's what we're going to do," Moreno told a cheering crowd.

He called Brown President Joe Biden's "absolute enabler" in the Senate and liberal Sen. Elizabeth Warren's "lapdog."

Brown responded to the news on X: "The choice ahead of Ohio is clear: Bernie Moreno has spent his career and campaign putting himself first, and would do the same if elected. I'll always work for Ohio."

The general election fight is expected to be fierce in a state that has trended Republican in recent years. With Democrats holding a tenuous 51-49 voting majority in the Senate but defending more seats than Republicans, Brown's seat is a top GOP target. He is the lone Democrat holding a non-judicial statewide office in Ohio, a state that has moved steadily to the right during the Trump era.

In a move that drew bipartisan rebukes, Senate Majority PAC, an independent group aligned with Majority Leader Chuck Schumer, spent \$2.7 million to elevate Moreno's primary bid, with the idea that he would be the weakest against Brown this fall.

Brown is expected to make abortion rights a cornerstone of his campaign. In the aftermath of the Supreme Court's 2022 decision overturning the constitutional right to an abortion, Ohioans strongly supported a state constitutional amendment last year to protect access to the procedure.

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Moreno, a former luxury car dealer and blockchain entrepreneur, weathered controversy late in the campaign.

The Associated Press reported last week that in 2008, someone with access to Moreno's work email account created a profile on an adult website seeking "Men for 1-on-1 sex." The AP could not definitively confirm that it was created by Moreno himself. Moreno's lawyer said a former intern created the account and provided a statement from the intern, Dan Ricci, who said he created the account as "part of a juvenile prank."

Questions about the profile have circulated in GOP circles for the past month, sparking frustration among senior Republican operatives about Moreno's potential vulnerability in a general election, according to seven people who are directly familiar with conversations about how to address the matter. They requested anonymity to avoid running afoul of Trump and his allies.

Moreno, a native of Bogota, Colombia, who partially funded his own campaign, rode to victory after casting himself as a political outsider, who — like Trump — would go to Washington to shake things up. He and allied political action committees pilloried Dolan and LaRose as "career politicians."

As LaRose struggled for a lane after failing to win Trump's endorsement, Dolan worked to consolidate the party's non-Trump faction in his corner in the runup to Election Day. He was helped in that effort with endorsements from Gov. Mike DeWine and former U.S. Sen. Rob Portman, two of Ohio's most prominent establishment Republicans.

In his Tuesday concession speech, Dolan described not winning as a "gut punch" but thanked Portman and DeWine for their support.

"To have the quality of Rob Portman and the quality of Mike DeWine to look at this race and say they're willing to put their years of experience behind me, you know, it's a sad loss tonight," he told the crowd in Cleveland. "But it's a personal pride that Rob and Mike DeWine reached out for me."

LaRose, a former state senator and Green Beret elected twice statewide, raised more in grassroots donations of \$200 or less than either of his rivals. He loaned himself \$250,000, compared to \$4.2 million Moreno loaned his own campaign and a whopping \$9 million Dolan loaned his.

"I knew that this was going to be a difficult right from the beginning, but I'm not somebody that ever backs down from a challenge," he said. "And so we put our heart and soul into this fight, and I have no regrets."

Both Moreno and Dolan also competed in the 2022 Senate race, a messy and crowded contest won by Trump-backed memoirist and venture capitalist JD Vance. Moreno dropped out of the primary at Trump's behest; Dolan finished third. Vance went on to win the general election that year against Democratic U.S. Rep. Tim Ryan.

In Ohio's 9th Congressional District held by Kaptur, the longest-serving woman in Congress, Trump's endorsement of Merrin on Monday was the final twist for a months-long roller coaster ride of a contest. The race included swift entries and exits, candidate gaffes and bouncing endorsements. At one point, Vance, House Speaker Mike Johnson and Rep. Jim Jordan, a vocal Trump ally, were aligned with three competing campaigns.

Things settled down when Trump-aligned candidate J.R. Majewski, who lost badly to Kaptur in 2022, abruptly left the race earlier this month amid pushback for remarks he made disparaging Special Olympics athletes.

That left three candidates in the race: Merrin, backed by Johnson — and, as of Monday, Trump; Riedel, backed by Jordan; and former Napoleon Mayor Steve Lankenau.

Merrin, 37, is a term-limited fourth-term state representative who led an intraparty rebellion in the Ohio House last year after losing a bitter battle for speaker. He joined the congressional race on the filing deadline after audio that surfaced of Riedel criticizing Trump began raising concerns inside the party about Riedel's electability.

Riedel, 57, was among candidates who lost the nomination to Majewski in 2022. He raised more than \$1.1 million headed into primary day, the highest of any candidate and some 10 times more than Merrin. But Merrin has benefited from help from national Republicans, with the Congressional Leadership Fund spending more than \$750,000 on his behalf.

Mississippi 'Goon Squad' deputies get yearslong sentences for racist torture of 2 Black men

By MICHAEL GOLDBERG Associated Press/Report for America

JACKSON, Miss. (AP) — Michael Corey Jenkins and Eddie Terrell Parker sat on the front row of a packed courtroom Tuesday and watched as a federal judge handed down yearslong sentences to two of the white former Mississippi law enforcement officers who tortured the two Black men last year in a brutal attack that began on the basis of race.

After a neighbor complained about them staying in a white woman's home, the Black men were tortured by people who had sworn an oath to serve and protect them.

Hunter Elward, 31, was sentenced to about 20 years in prison, while Jeffrey Middleton, the 46-year-old leader of the so-called "Goon Squad" that abused the men, was given a 17.5-year prison sentence. Four other former law enforcement officers who admitted to torturing Jenkins and Parker are set to be sentenced later this week — two on Wednesday and two on Thursday.

Before sentencing Elward and Middleton separately, U.S. District Judge Tom Lee called the former deputies' actions "egregious and despicable" and said a "sentence at the top of the guidelines range" was justified.

The terror began on Jan. 24, 2023, with a racist call for extrajudicial violence when a white person phoned Rankin County Deputy Brett McAlpin and complained that two Black men were staying with a white woman in Braxton. McAlpin told Deputy Christian Dedmon, who texted a group of white deputies so willing to use excessive force they called themselves "The Goon Squad."

The group of six burst into a Rankin County home without a warrant and assaulted Jenkins and Parker with stun guns, a sex toy and other objects. Elward admitted to shoving a gun into Jenkins' mouth and firing in a "mock execution" that went awry.

Once inside, they handcuffed Jenkins and his friend Parker and poured milk, alcohol and chocolate syrup over their faces. They forced them to strip naked and shower together to conceal the mess. They mocked the victims with racial slurs and shocked them with stun guns.

After Elward shot Jenkins in the mouth, they devised a coverup that included planting drugs and a gun. False charges stood against Jenkins and Parker for months.

Prosecutors said Middleton told the other officers they had to stay quiet and that he "didn't have a problem killing somebody."

Last March, months before federal prosecutors announced charges in August, an investigation by The Associated Press linked some of the deputies to at least four violent encounters with Black men since 2019 that left two dead and another with lasting injuries.

Jenkins suffered a lacerated tongue and broken jaw. He is a musician, and his injuries have prevented him from singing as he used to. He also said he has trouble speaking and eating. Parker said he relives the episode in his nightmares.

Both victims had called for the "stiffest of sentences." Their attorney, Malik Shabazz, said they were too traumatized to speak in court, and he read statements on their behalf.

"I am hurt. I am broken," Jenkins wrote in his statement. "They tried to take my manhood from me. They did some unimaginable things to me, and the effects will linger for the rest of my life."

Elward said before being sentenced that he wouldn't make excuses. He turned to address Jenkins and Parker and looked at them directly.

"I don't want to get too personal. I see you every night, and I can't go back and do what's right," Elward said. "I am so sorry for what I did."

Parker then stood up and said, "I forgive you."

Elward's attorney, Joe Hollomon, said his client first witnessed Rankin County deputies turn a blind eye to misconduct in 2017 and that he had been "initiated into a culture of corruption at the Rankin County Sheriff's Office."

Middleton's lawyer, Carlos Tanner, urged the judge to give his client a shorter sentence, saying Middleton had committed fewer violent acts.

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In his apology, Middleton said he tarnished the reputations of Rankin County, law enforcement and his family.

"I will never forgive myself for failing to protect innocent victims and my family," Middleton said.

When Middleton spoke, he did not look at the victims or their families.

Lee disagreed with Tanner, pointing to statements from Elward and another co-defendant, Daniel Opdyke.

Opdyke submitted a memorandum to the court saying that his "downfall" was the day Middleton, who was a lieutenant, took an interest in him and inserted him into the Goon Squad. The judge also said Elward, like Opdyke, traced his own involvement in the 2023 attack to Middleton and McAlpin and a "culture of violence" perpetuated by the Goon Squad.

"It may be true that you had less hands-on involvement in the torture of Mr. Parker and Mr. Jenkins," Lee told Middleton. "But, there's no doubt that you and McAlpin are at least as culpable as any of your co-defendants for the attacks on these victims."

Elward was also sentenced for his role in an assault on a white man that took place weeks before Jenkins and Parker were tortured. For the first time Tuesday, prosecutors identified the victim as Alan Schmidt and read a statement from him detailing what happened to him on Dec. 4, 2022.

During a traffic stop that night, Schmidt said Rankin County deputies accused him of possessing stolen property. They pulled him from the car and beat him. Then, Dedmon forced him to his knees and tried to insert his genitals into Schmidt's mouth, as Elward watched.

"I pray every day that I can forgive them one day and hopefully forget the humiliation and the evil physical and sexual assault that I endured," Schmidt wrote. "I know that I'm not their only victim, and I pray for each victim that has crossed paths with the Goon Squad members."

The officers charged with torturing Parker and Jenkins include Elward, Middleton, McAlpin, Dedmon and Opdyke of the Rankin County Sheriff's Office and Joshua Hartfield, a Richland police officer. They have pleaded guilty to numerous federal and state charges.

The majority-white Rankin County is just east of the state capital, Jackson, home to one of the highest percentages of Black residents of any major U.S. city.

The officers warned Jenkins and Parker to "stay out of Rankin County and go back to Jackson or 'their side' of the Pearl River," court documents say, referencing an area with higher concentrations of Black residents.

For months, Rankin County Sheriff Bryan Bailey, whose deputies committed the crimes, said little about the episode. After the officers pleaded guilty in August, Bailey said the officers had gone rogue and promised to change the department. Jenkins and Parker have called for his resignation, and they have filed a \$400 million civil lawsuit against the department.

Heavy fighting rages around Gaza's biggest hospital as Israel raids it for a second day

By WAFAA SHURAF and SAMY MAGDY Associated Press

RAFAH, Gaza Strip (AP) — Explosions and shootings shook the Gaza Strip's biggest hospital and surrounding neighborhoods as Israeli forces stormed through the facility for a second day Tuesday. The military said it had killed 50 Hamas militants in the hospital, but it could not be independently confirmed that the dead were combatants.

The raid was a new blow to the Shifa medical complex, which had only partially resumed operations after a destructive Israeli raid in November. Thousands of Palestinian patients, medical staff and displaced people were trapped inside the sprawling complex Tuesday as heavy fighting between troops and Hamas fighters raged in nearby districts.

"It's very hard right now. There's heavy bombardment in the area of Shifa, and buildings are being hit. The sound of tank and artillery fire is continuous," Emy Shaheen, who lives near the hospital, said in a voice message with repeated booms of shelling audible in the background. She said a large fire had been raging for hours near the hospital.

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The Israeli military said it raided Shifa early Monday because Hamas fighters had grouped in the hospital and were directing attacks from inside.

The claim could not be confirmed, and the Hamas media office said all those killed in the assault were civilians. But the surge in fighting in Gaza City underscored Hamas' continued presence in northern Gaza months after Israeli ground troops claimed they largely had control over the area.

Israel launched its offensive in Gaza vowing to destroy Hamas after the group's Oct. 7 attack on southern Israel. More than 31,800 Palestinians have been killed in the bombardment and offensive since. Much of northern Gaza has been leveled, and an international authority on hunger crises warned on Monday that 70% of the people there were experiencing catastrophic hunger and that famine was imminent.

The mayhem in the north came as Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu repeated his determination to invade Gaza's southernmost town, Rafah – one of the last major towns not targeted by a ground assault.

A day earlier, in their first phone call in a month, U.S. President Joe Biden urged Netanyahu not to carry out a Rafah operation, urging "an alternative approach" to more precisely target Hamas fighters there.

The United States, Israel's closest ally, has expressed concern over attacking Rafah because some 1.4 million people from across Gaza have crowded into the area. U.N. officials have warned of a massive death toll and the potential collapse of the humanitarian aid effort if troops moved into Rafah.

Netanyahu agreed to send a team of Israeli officials to Washington to discuss Rafah with Biden administration officials.

But on Tuesday, he told a parliamentary committee that while he would listen to U.S. proposals "out of respect" to Biden, "we are determined to complete the elimination of these (Hamas) battalions in Rafah, and there is no way to do this without a ground incursion."

Airstrikes in Rafah overnight destroyed an apartment and several houses, killing at least 15 people, including six women and children, hospital officials said.

NEW SHIFA SIEGE

The army last raided Shifa Hospital in November after claiming that Hamas maintained an elaborate command center within and beneath the facility. The military revealed a tunnel leading to some underground rooms, as well as weapons it said were found inside the hospital. However, the evidence fell short of the earlier claims, and critics accused the army of recklessly endangering the lives of civilians.

The hospital, which is the heart of Gaza's health system, was severely damaged in the assault and has only been able to resume limited operations since. Gaza officials say some 30,000 displaced people were taking refuge in the compound when the new Israeli assault began.

The raid came before dawn Monday when tanks surrounded the facility and troops stormed into multiple buildings.

The military on Tuesday said two of its soldiers had been killed in the operation. It said Tuesday that 300 suspects were detained, including dozens it accused of being fighters from Hamas and the smaller Palestinian militant group Islamic Jihad. Some patients were evacuated to nearby Ahli Hospital, said Mahmoud Bassal, civil defense spokesperson.

Abdel-Hady Sayed, who has been sheltering in the Shifa hospital, said troops had rounded up dozens in the hospital's yard, blindfolding, handcuffing, and ordering them to strip their clothes before some were taken away.

He said those inside, especially men, were afraid to follow Israeli calls to evacuate the hospital. "They tell you to get out, it's a safe corridor and once they see you they arrest you," he said. "All are afraid here. The world should do something to stop them."

The military has identified one person killed in the raid — Faiq Mabhouh, a senior officer in Gaza's police force, which is under the Hamas-led government but distinct from the militant group's armed fighting wing. The military said he was hiding in Shifa with weapons, but the Gaza government said he was in charge of protecting aid distribution in the north.

The raid prompted heavy fighting for blocks around Shifa. Hamas' military wing said it struck two Israeli armored vehicles and a group of soldiers with rockets in the vicinity of the hospital.

Emergency services received multiple calls for help from people whose buildings had been bombed in the streets around Shifa, but rescue teams could not go to the scene because of the fighting, Bassal said.

Kareem al-Shawwa, a Palestinian living about a kilometer (less than a mile) from the hospital, said the past 24 hours had been "terrifying," with explosions and heavy exchanges of fire. He said Israeli troops had told residents to evacuate the area, but he and his family were too afraid of getting arrested or caught in the fighting to leave their home.

Israel accuses Hamas of using hospitals and other civilian facilities to shield its fighters, and the Israeli military has raided several hospitals since the start of the war.

The Gaza Health Ministry said Monday that at least 31,726 Palestinians have been killed in Israel's offensive. The ministry doesn't differentiate between civilians and combatants in its count, but it says women and children make up two-thirds of the dead.

Palestinian militants killed some 1,200 people in Hamas' Oct. 7 attack into southern Israel that triggered the war and took another 250 people hostage. Hamas is still believed to be holding about 100 captives, as well as the remains of 30 others, after most of the rest were freed during a cease-fire last year.

Trump suggests he'd support a national ban on abortions around 15 weeks of pregnancy

By MICHELLE L. PRICE Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — Donald Trump suggested Tuesday that he'd support a national ban on abortions around 15 weeks of pregnancy, voicing for the first time support for a specific limit on the procedure.

The Republican former president has taken credit for striking down a federally guaranteed right to abortion by appointing three U.S. Supreme Court justices who voted to overturn *Roe v. Wade*. As he seeks the White House a third time, Trump has refrained from embracing any specific limit on the procedure, warning it could backfire politically and instead suggesting he would "negotiate" a policy on abortion that would include exceptions for cases of rape, incest and to protect the life of the mother.

But in a radio interview Tuesday, Trump criticized Democrats for not endorsing a ban that would limit abortions in states that still allow the procedure.

"We're going to come up with a time — and maybe we could bring the country together on that issue," Trump said while calling into the "Sid & Friends in the Morning" show on WABC.

Trump went on to say: "The number of weeks now, people are agreeing on 15. And I'm thinking in terms of that. And it'll come out to something that's very reasonable. But people are really, even hard-liners are agreeing, seems to be, 15 weeks seems to be a number that people are agreeing at."

At the same time, Trump seemed to suggest reluctance to a federal ban.

"Everybody agrees — you've heard this for years — all the legal scholars on both sides agree: It's a state issue. It shouldn't be a federal issue, it's a state issue," he said.

Last month, Trump's campaign dismissed reports that he privately had expressed for a ban on abortion after 16 weeks of pregnancy, calling the report "fake news." The campaign did not offer details on Trump's plans, only saying he planned to "negotiate a deal" on abortion.

Later Tuesday, after casting his ballot in Florida's Republican presidential primary, Trump was asked by a reporter about a ban on abortions at 16 weeks and said, "We'll be talking about that soon."

Abortion rights have been a galvanizing issue for voters in recent years, and Democrats and President Joe Biden's campaign are preparing to spotlight the issue as a clear split from Trump in the 2024 election.

Polling has consistently shown that most Americans believe abortion should be legal through the initial stages of pregnancy. About half of U.S. adults said abortions should be permitted at the 15-week mark, according to an Associated Press-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research poll conducted last June.

Alabama lawmakers approve absentee ballot, anti-diversity, equity and inclusion bills

By KIM CHANDLER Associated Press

MONTGOMERY, Ala. (AP) — Alabama lawmakers on Tuesday gave final approval to a bill that would outlaw paid assistance with absentee ballot applications and another that would restrict diversity, equity and inclusion programs at universities and state agencies.

Republicans had named the bills as priorities for the legislative session. The Senate, in votes divided along party lines, agreed to changes made by the House of Representatives. The two bills now go to Gov. Kay Ivey for her signature.

A spokeswoman for Ivey did not immediately respond to a text message seeking comment.

The absentee voting bill would make it a misdemeanor to distribute a pre-filled absentee ballot application to a voter or return another voter's completed application. It would become a felony to give, or receive, a payment or gift "for distributing, ordering, requesting, collecting, completing, prefilling, obtaining, or delivering a voter's absentee ballot application."

Republicans said it is needed to combat voter fraud through "ballot harvesting," a term for the collection of multiple absentee ballots. Democrats argued that there is no proof that ballot harvesting exists and called it an attempt to suppress voting by absentee ballot.

"Any person can still get anyone's help with applications, but no part of that application can be pre-filled. That's all," Republican Sen. Garlan Gudger, the bill's sponsor, said. "There's a lot of pressure when some people say, 'I want you to vote this way,' and give them an application. You can't do that. You have to have it blank," Gudger said.

Democrats and several advocacy groups said the legislation is aimed at trying to make it harder for people vote by absentee ballot.

"It's just another voter suppression. It's just a means of suppressing certain people from having the ability and right to access to the free flowing of the vote," Senate Minority Leader Bobby Singleton said.

Jerome Dees, Alabama policy director for the Southern Poverty Law Center Action Fund, said in a statement that the "cruel legislation aims to criminalize the charitable acts of good Samaritans across the state, whether from neighbors, church members, nursing home staffers, or prison chaplains."

Republican lawmakers across the country have pushed initiatives that would restrict diversity, equity and inclusion efforts, also known as DEI. The Alabama legislation would prohibit universities, K-12 school systems and state agencies from sponsoring DEI programs, defined under the bill as classes, training, programs and events where attendance is based on a person's race, sex, gender identity, ethnicity, national origin or sexual orientation.

The bill sparked lengthy debate in the House of Representatives earlier this month.

Republicans said they are trying to guard against programs that "deepen divisions," but Black Democrats called it an effort to roll back affirmative action programs that welcome and encourage diversity.

The bill says schools, universities and state agencies cannot require students, employees and contractors to attend classes and training sessions "that advocates for or requires assent" to what the bill lists as eight "divisive concepts." The list of banned concepts includes that "any individual should accept, acknowledge, affirm, or assent to a sense of guilt, complicity, or a need to apologize on the basis of his or her race, color, religion, sex, ethnicity, or national origin."

The bill also would attempt to prohibit transgender people on college campuses from using multiple occupancy restrooms that correspond with their current gender identity.

The legislation says colleges and universities "shall ensure that every multiple occupancy restroom be designated for use by individuals based" on the sex that a person was assigned at birth. It is unclear how the requirement would be enforced.

Gaza and Haiti are on the brink of famine, experts say. Here's what that means

By JONEL ALECCIA AP Health Writer

Catastrophic hunger is so dire in two world hotspots that famine is imminent in northern Gaza and approaching in Haiti, with hundreds of thousands of people in both places struggling to avoid starvation.

That's according to food security experts and aid groups, who are warning about the toll from hunger caused by the war between Israel and Hamas in Gaza and the crisis in Haiti caused by criminal gangs attacking the country's key government institutions.

In Gaza, virtually every resident is struggling to get enough food and 1.1 million people — half the population — are expected to face the highest level of severe hunger in coming weeks, according to a report from the Integrated Food Security Phase Classification, an agency that monitors hunger globally. On Monday, the group warned that famine could occur in Gaza any time between mid-March and May without an end to hostilities and immediate access to essential supplies and services.

In Haiti, about 1.4 million people are on the verge of famine and more than 4 million need help accessing food, aid groups say.

But what does it mean for a region to fall into famine? And how could it happen in these places so fast? Here's what you need to know:

WHAT IS FAMINE?

The IPC, a group of 15 global organizations and charities, was developed in 2004 during the famine in Somalia. The group uses a five-tier scale to monitor access to food and levels of hunger.

Famine is the top tier, Phase 5, "the absolute inaccessibility of food to an entire population or sub-group of a population, potentially causing death in the short term."

It occurs when 20% of households have an extreme lack of food, 30% of children suffer from acute malnutrition and at least two adults or four children per every 10,000 people die daily because of outright starvation or the interaction of malnutrition and disease.

That top level follows the Phase 3 "crisis" and Phase 4 "emergency" levels of food need. Worldwide, nearly 158 million people face crisis hunger situations or worse, according to the IPC.

While the depth of the food crises in both places is new, the underlying conditions are not, said Tobias Stillman, director of technical services and innovation at the aid group Action Against Hunger, via email.

Even before the war, 80% of Gazans relied on humanitarian aid and nearly half of all households didn't have enough food, he said. In Haiti, millions were already coping with emergency levels of hunger and crisis levels of food need.

"When families and entire nations live so close to the brink, it is all too easy for conflict or other shocks to push them into catastrophe," Stillman said.

WHAT ARE HUNGER, MALNUTRITION AND STARVATION?

Hunger is the informal term for the feeling that occurs "when our bodies need or expect food," Stillman said. Aid groups say hunger occurs when people can't afford or physically obtain sufficient nutrition for an extended period of time.

Malnutrition is a medical condition that occurs when people don't get the right calories to grow and function properly, leading to health problems. The deadliest form of malnutrition is severe acute malnutrition, which occurs when children are too thin for their height.

"This can happen suddenly, caused by a severe hunger crisis, or it can occur over time," Stillman said.

Starvation is not a technical term, but it describes extreme suffering or death caused by lack of food.

Death from starvation can come "surprisingly quickly," Stillman said. Without food, the body uses carbohydrates and fats first, then turns to breaking down protein, including muscle and vital organs. The body begins to shut down functions, including digestion, which make it harder to absorb any nutrients that are available. People suffer from extreme fatigue and become listless as the body tries to conserve energy.

Without specialized treatment, organs stop functioning and the body's defenses can't fight infection.

Many times, people without food die of common infections. If that doesn't happen, vital organs shut down and the heart stops.

WHO IS MOST VULNERABLE?

Children younger than 5, pregnant and breastfeeding women, the elderly and people with underlying health conditions are most at risk from malnutrition. In acute crises like that seen in Gaza, malnutrition affects the youngest children first, experts said.

WHAT HAPPENS IF FAMINE IS DECLARED?

A declaration of famine would be made by top United Nations officials based on the IPC criteria. Such a declaration carries no binding obligations on U.N. members or states, but serves to focus global attention on the problem.

Polygamous sect member pleads guilty in scheme to orchestrate sexual acts involving children

By JACQUES BILLEAUD Associated Press

PHOENIX (AP) — A businessman pleaded guilty Tuesday to conspiring with the leader of an offshoot polygamous sect near the Arizona-Utah border to transport underage girls across state lines, making him the first man to be convicted in what authorities say was a scheme to orchestrate sexual acts involving children.

Moroni Johnson, who faces 10 years to life in prison, acknowledged that he participated in a scheme to transport four girls under the age of 18 for sexual activity. Authorities say the conspiracy between the 53-year-old Johnson and the sect's leader, self-proclaimed prophet Samuel Bateman, occurred over a three-year period ending in September 2022.

Authorities say Bateman had created a sprawling network spanning at least four states as he tried to start an offshoot of the Fundamentalist Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints, which historically has been based in the neighboring communities of Colorado City, Arizona, and Hildale, Utah. He and his followers practice polygamy, a legacy of the early teachings of the mainstream Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints, which abandoned the practice in 1890 and now strictly prohibits it. Bateman and his followers believe polygamy brings exaltation in heaven.

The FBI said Bateman had taken more than 20 wives, including 10 girls under the age of 18. Bateman is accused of giving wives as gifts to his male followers and claiming to do so on orders from the "Heavenly Father." Investigators say Bateman traveled extensively between Arizona, Utah, Colorado and Nebraska and had sex with minor girls on a regular basis. Some of the sexual activity involving Bateman was recorded and transmitted across state lines via electronic devices.

The FBI said Bateman demanded that his followers confess publicly for any indiscretions and shared those confessions widely. He claimed the punishments, which ranged from a time out to public shaming and sexual activity, came from the Lord, the federal law enforcement agency said. Authorities said Johnson was pressured by Bateman to give up three of his wives as atonement because Johnson wasn't treating Bateman as a prophet.

Bateman was arrested in August 2022 by state police in Flagstaff after someone spotted small fingers in a door gap on an enclosed trailer. Authorities found three girls — between the ages of 11 and 14 — in the trailer, which had a makeshift toilet, a sofa, camping chairs and no ventilation.

Bateman posted bond, but he was arrested again in the next month and charged with obstructing justice in a federal investigation into whether children were being transported across state lines for sexual activity.

At the time of the second arrest, authorities removed nine children from Bateman's home in Colorado City and placed them in foster care. Eight of the children later escaped from foster care. The FBI alleged that three of Bateman's adult wives played a part in getting them out of Arizona. The girls were later found hundreds of miles away in Washington state in a vehicle driven by one of the adult wives.

Bateman has pleaded not guilty to state and federal charges, including conspiracy to transport a minor

for sexual activity, conspiracy to commit tampering in an official proceeding and conspiracy to commit kidnapping of the girls who were placed in state child welfare agency after his arrest. Myles Schneider, an attorney representing Bateman, didn't immediately return a call seeking comment on behalf of his client.

Bateman was ordered jailed until the resolution of his trial, now scheduled for Sept. 10.

Earlier this year, four of Bateman's adult wives each pleaded guilty to a charge of conspiracy to commit tampering with an official proceeding, acknowledging that they witnessed Bateman engage in sexual acts with his child brides and that also they participated in the plot to kidnap the eight girls from state custody.

Charges also are pending against four other women identified as Bateman's wives and two of his male followers, both of whom are charged with using a means of interstate commerce to persuade or coerce a minor to engage in sexual activity, among other charges. The four women and two men have pleaded not guilty to the charges.

California tribe that lost 90% of land during Gold Rush to get site to serve as gateway to redwoods

By JULIE WATSON Associated Press

California's Yurok Tribe, which had 90% of its territory taken from it during the Gold Rush of the mid-1800s, will be getting a slice of its land back to serve as a new gateway to Redwood National and State Parks visited by 1 million people a year.

The Yurok will be the first Native people to manage tribal land with the National Park Service under a historic memorandum of understanding signed Tuesday by the tribe, Redwood National and State Parks and the nonprofit Save the Redwoods League.

The agreement "starts the process of changing the narrative about how, by whom and for whom we steward natural lands," Sam Hodder, president and CEO of Save the Redwoods League, said in a statement.

The tribe will take ownership in 2026 of 125 acres (50 hectares) near the tiny Northern California community of Orick in Humboldt County after restoration of a local tributary, Prairie Creek, is complete under the deal. The site will introduce visitors to Yurok customs, culture and history, the tribe said.

The area is home to the world's tallest trees — some reaching more than 350 feet (105 meters). It's about a mile (1.6 kilometers) from the Pacific coast and adjacent to the Redwood National and State Parks, which includes one national park and three California state parks totaling nearly 132,000 acres (53,400 hectares).

The return of the land — named 'O Rew in the Yurok Language — more than a century after it was stolen from California's largest tribe — is proof of the "sheer will and perseverance of the Yurok people," said Rosie Clayburn, the tribe's cultural resources director. "We kind of don't give up."

For the tribe, redwoods are considered living beings and traditionally only fallen trees have been used to build their homes and canoes.

"As the original stewards of this land, we look forward to working together with the Redwood National and State Parks to manage it," Clayburn said. "This is work that we've always done, and continued to fight for, but I feel like the rest of world is catching up right now and starting to see that Native people know how to manage this land the best."

The property is at the heart of the tribe's ancestral land and was taken in the 1800s to exploit its old-growth redwoods and other natural resources, the tribe said. Save the Redwoods League bought the property in 2013 and began working with the tribe and others to restore it.

Much of the property was paved over by a lumber operation that worked there for 50 years and also buried Prairie Creek, where salmon would swim upstream from the Pacific to spawn.

A growing Land Back movement has been returning Indigenous homelands to the descendants of those who lived there for millennia before European settlers arrived. That has seen Native American tribes taking a greater role in restoring rivers and lands to how they were before they were expropriated.

Last week, a 2.2-acre (.9-hectare) parking lot was returned to the Ohlone people where they established the first human settlement beside San Francisco Bay 5,700 years ago. In 2022, more than 500 acres (200 hectares) of redwood forest on the Lost Coast were returned the InterTribal Sinkiyone Wilderness Council,

a group of 10 tribes.

The 'O Rew property represents just a tiny fraction of the more than 500,000 acres of the ancestral land of the Yurok, whose reservation straddles the lower 44 miles (70 kilometers) of the Klamath River. The Yurok tribe is also helping lead efforts in the largest dam removal project in U.S. history along the California-Oregon border to restore the Klamath and boost the salmon population.

Plans for 'O Rew include a traditional Yurok village of redwood plank houses and a sweat house. There also will be a new visitor and cultural center displaying scores of sacred artefacts from deerskins to baskets that have been returned to the tribe from university and museum collections, Clayburn said.

The center, which will include information on the redwoods and forest restoration, also will serve as a hub for the tribe to carry out their traditions, she said.

It will add more than a mile (1.6 kilometers) of new trails, including a new segment of the California Coastal Trail, with interpretive exhibits. The trails will connect to many of the existing trails inside the parks, including to popular old-growth redwood groves.

The tribe had already been restoring salmon habitat for three years on the property, building a meandering stream channel, two connected ponds and about 20 acres (8 hectares) of floodplain while dismantling a defunct mill site. Crews also planted more than 50,000 native plants, including grass-like slough sedge, black cottonwood and coast redwood trees.

Coordinating stewardship throughout the entire watershed with the National Park Service and California State Parks is key to restoring these fish runs, the tribe said.

Salmon were once abundant in rivers and streams running through these redwood forests, But dams, logging, development and drought — due in part to climate change — have destroyed the waterways and threatened many of these species. Last year recreational and commercial king salmon fishing seasons were closed along much of the West Coast due to near-record low numbers of the iconic fish returning to their spawning grounds.

Thousands of juvenile coho and chinook salmon and steelhead have already returned to Prairie Creek along with red-legged frogs, northwestern salamanders, waterfowl and other species.

Redwoods National Park Superintendent Steve Mietz praised the restoration of the area and its return to the tribe, saying it is "healing the land while healing the relationships among all the people who inhabit this magnificent forest."

As electric vehicle sales slow, US relaxes plans for stricter auto emissions standards for a while

By TOM KRISHER and MATTHEW DALY Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — The Biden administration this week is expected to announce new automobile emissions standards that relax proposed tailpipe limits for three years but eventually reach the same strict standards set out by the Environmental Protection Agency.

The changes come as sales of zero-tailpipe emissions electric vehicles, which are needed to meet the standards, have begun to slow. The auto industry has cited lower sales growth in objecting to the EPA's preferred standards unveiled last April as part of the most ambitious plan ever to cut planet-warming emissions from passenger vehicles.

The EPA suggested that under its preferred alternative, the industry could meet the limits if 67% of new vehicle sales are electric by 2032.

But during a public comment period on the standards for 2027 through 2032, the auto industry called the benchmarks unworkable with EV sales slowing as consumers worry about cost, range and a lack of publicly available charging stations.

Three people with knowledge of the standards say the Biden EPA will pick an alternative that slows implementation from 2027 through 2029, but ramps up to reach the level the EPA preferred from 2030 to 2032. The alternative will have other unspecified modifications that help the auto industry meet the

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standards, one of the people said.

The people, two from the auto industry and one from the government, didn't want to be identified because the new standards haven't been made public by the EPA.

The changes appear aimed at addressing strong industry opposition to the accelerated ramp-up of EVs, along with public reluctance to fully embrace the new technology. There is also a legitimate threat of legal challenges before conservative courts.

The Supreme Court, with a 6-3 conservative majority, has increasingly reined in the powers of federal agencies, including the EPA, in recent years. The justices have restricted the EPA's authority to fight air and water pollution — including a landmark 2022 ruling that limited the EPA's authority to regulate carbon dioxide emissions from power plants that contribute to global warming.

Biden has made fighting climate change a hallmark of his presidency and is seeking to slash carbon dioxide emissions from gasoline-powered vehicles, which make up the largest single source of U.S. greenhouse gas emissions.

At the same time, Biden needs cooperation from the auto industry and political support from auto workers, a key political voting bloc. The United Auto Workers union, which has endorsed Biden, has said it favors the transition to electric vehicles but wants to make sure jobs are preserved and that industry pays top wages to workers who build the EVs and batteries.

White House press secretary Karine Jean-Pierre said Tuesday that White House officials "don't have any concerns" about the EPA rule, which could be announced as soon as Wednesday.

"We know, with these types of things, it takes time," she told reporters on Air Force One as Biden traveled to Nevada. "But we're still going to stay committed to our (climate) goals."

Generally, environmental groups have been optimistic about the new EPA plan.

Manish Bapna, president of Natural Resources Defense Council, told reporters last week that he expects the rule will significantly cut carbon emissions from cars and light-duty trucks, which are the source of one-fifth of the nation's greenhouse gas emissions.

"Based on what we hear, there's no reason to doubt that the climate rules for cars and light-duty trucks are going to cut well over 90% of the carbon pollution from new cars, SUVs and pickup trucks" over the next few decades, Bapna said. "That's huge."

Between 2027 and 2055, the EPA rule "will prevent more than 7 billion tons of climate wrecking carbon emissions. That's more than the nation generates in a year. It's absolutely essential, real, concrete progress," Bapna said.

"EPA's clean car standards will put the pedal to the metal as the U.S. races to achieve cleaner, healthier air for everyone," said Amanda Leland, executive director of Environmental Defense Fund, another environmental group.

"Strong clean car standards help provide cleaner air and a safer climate, thousands of dollars in cost savings for our families and hundreds of thousands of new jobs in U.S. manufacturing," Leland said.

Luke Tonachel, an automobile expert with the Natural Resources Defense Council, said the new clean-car standards will encourage the auto industry to "continue investing, as it's already starting to do, over the long-term period" in EV and zero-emission vehicles. The rule also will send a signal to infrastructure providers and utilities to keep building out the charging infrastructure," he said.

But Dan Becker at the Center for Biological Diversity, said he fears loopholes will let the industry continue to sell gas burners. He also is afraid the industry will get off with doing little during the first three years of the standards, which could be undone if Donald Trump is elected president.

"The bottom line is that the administration is caving to pressure from big oil, big auto and the dealers to stall progress on EVs and now allow more pollution from cars," Becker said.

At a Detroit-area rally in September, Trump insisted Biden's embrace of electric vehicles — a key component of his clean-energy agenda — would ultimately lead to lost jobs.

Republicans and some in the industry have said the rule would require that 67% of new vehicle sales be electric by 2032, forcing people to buy cars, trucks and SUVs that they aren't yet ready to accept.

But EPA Administrator Michael Regan has said the new rule is a performance standard that leaves it to

industry to come up with solutions.

U.S. electric vehicle sales grew 47% last year to a record 1.19 million as EV market share rose from 5.8% in 2022 to 7.6%. But EV sales growth slowed toward the end of the year. In December, they rose 34%.

The Alliance for Auto Innovation, a large industry trade group, said in a news release that the ramp up to 67% initially proposed by the EPA is too fast for the industry to achieve. The EPA's pace of EV adoption is faster than President Joe Biden's goal of electric vehicles being half of U.S. new vehicle sales by 2030, the group said.

"Where we are (or aren't) in 2032 is unclear at this point," the group said. "But moderating the pace of EV adoption in 2027, 2028, 2029 and 2030 would be the right call because it prioritizes more reasonable and achievable electrification targets in the next few (very critical) years."

The EPA's preferred standards would take carbon dioxide emissions from 186 grams per mile in 2026 to 82 in 2032, a 56% reduction. The limits would reach 111 grams per mile by 2029.

But under the alternative that environmental groups expect the EPA to adopt, the standards would be eased in the first three years, reaching 132 grams by 2029 but still hitting 82 in 2032.

Peter Navarro is 1st Trump White House official to serve prison time related to Jan. 6 attack

By ADRIANA GOMEZ LICON and ALANNA DURKIN RICHER Associated Press

MIAMI (AP) — Former White House adviser Peter Navarro reported to prison Tuesday for a contempt of Congress conviction, becoming the first senior Trump administration official to be locked up for a crime related to the Jan. 6, 2021, Capitol attack.

Navarro was sentenced to four months in prison for defying a subpoena for documents and a deposition from the House committee that investigated the riot by supporters of then-President Donald Trump.

Navarro was defiant in remarks to reporters before he headed to the federal prison in Miami, calling his conviction the "partisan weaponization of the judicial system."

He has maintained that he couldn't cooperate with the committee because Trump had invoked executive privilege. But courts have rejected that argument, finding Navarro couldn't prove Trump had actually invoked it.

"When I walk in that prison today, the justice system — such as it is — will have done a crippling blow to the constitutional separation of powers and executive privilege," Navarro told reporters Tuesday.

After voting in Florida on Tuesday, Trump was asked about Navarro.

"He's a good man. He was treated very unfairly," Trump said, calling him a "great patriot" and praising his job negotiating trade with China. "The Biden administration treated him very, very badly. It's a shame, but that's the way it is."

Navarro, who served as a White House trade adviser under Trump, was subpoenaed by the committee over his promotion of false claims of voter fraud in the 2020 election in the run-up to the Capitol attack.

Navarro had asked to stay free while he appealed his conviction to give the courts time to consider his challenge. But Washington's federal appeals court denied his bid to stave off his sentence, finding his appeal wasn't likely to reverse his conviction.

And Supreme Court Chief Justice John Roberts on Monday also refused to step in, saying in a written order that he has "no basis to disagree" with the appeals court. Roberts said his finding doesn't affect the eventual outcome of Navarro's appeal.

Navarro was the second Trump aide convicted of contempt of Congress charges. Former White House adviser Steve Bannon previously received a four-month sentence but a different judge allowed him to stay free pending appeal.

The House committee spent 18 months investigating the insurrection, interviewing over 1,000 witnesses, holding 10 hearings and obtaining more than 1 million pages of documents. In its final report, the panel ultimately concluded that Trump criminally engaged in a "multi-part conspiracy" to overturn the election results and failed to act to stop his supporters from storming the Capitol.

Special counsel Jack Smith has separately charged Trump with conspiring to overturn his election loss to President Joe Biden. That case is on hold while the Supreme Court weighs Trump's claim that he is immune from prosecution. The high court is scheduled to hear arguments on the matter next month.

Trump asks Supreme Court to dismiss case charging him with plotting to overturn 2020 election

By ERIC TUCKER Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Lawyers for Donald Trump urged the U.S. Supreme Court on Tuesday to dismiss an indictment charging the former president with conspiring to overturn the results of the 2020 election, renewing their arguments that he is immune from prosecution for official acts taken in the White House.

Lower courts have already twice rejected the immunity claims, but Trump's lawyers will get a fresh chance to press their case before the Supreme Court when the justices hear arguments on April 25. The high court's decision to consider the matter has left the criminal case on hold pending the outcome of the appeal, making it unclear whether special counsel Jack Smith will be able to put the ex-president on trial before November's election.

In a brief filed Tuesday, Trump's lawyers repeated many of the same arguments that judges have already turned aside, asserting that a president "cannot function, and the Presidency itself cannot retain its vital independence, if the President faces criminal prosecution for official acts once he leaves office."

"A denial of criminal immunity would incapacitate every future President with de facto blackmail and extortion while in office, and condemn him to years of post-office trauma at the hands of political opponents," the lawyers wrote. "The threat of future prosecution and imprisonment would become a political cudgel to influence the most sensitive and controversial Presidential decisions, taking away the strength, authority, and decisiveness of the Presidency."

Smith's team has said ex-presidents do not enjoy absolute immunity and that, in any event, the steps Trump is accused of taking in his failed but frantic effort to remain in power after he lost to Democrat Joe Biden would not count as official presidential acts.

U.S. District Judge Tanya Chutkan, who is presiding over the case, and a three-judge federal appeals panel in Washington have both agreed with Smith, but the case — once scheduled for trial on March 4 — has been effectively frozen for months as the appeal continues to wind through the courts.

Trump's lawyers also told the justices that in the event they don't accept the immunity arguments, they should send the case back to Chutkan for additional "fact-finding." Such a move would result in even lengthier delays before a trial could be scheduled.

Trump's position was supported in separate briefs filed Tuesday with the Supreme Court, including one from 18 Republican-led states.

The case is one of four state and federal criminal prosecutions that Trump is facing as he seeks to reclaim the White House. He and his lawyers have sought to delay the cases from proceeding to trial, a strategy that to date has yielded some success for the ex-president.

Of those four, only one — a case in New York charging Trump in connection with hush money payments meant to suppress claims of an extramarital sexual encounter — is on track to start in the next several months. The judge in that case delayed the trial last week until at least mid-April as he seeks answers about a last-minute evidence dump that the former president's lawyers said has hampered their ability to prepare their defense.

Brazil's Bolsonaro is indicted for 1st time over alleged falsification of his vaccination status

By MAURICIO SAVARESE Associated Press

SAO PAULO (AP) — Former Brazilian President Jair Bolsonaro was formally accused Tuesday of falsifying his COVID-19 vaccination status, marking the first indictment for the embattled far-right leader, with more

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allegations potentially in store.

The federal police indictment released by the Supreme Court alleged that Bolsonaro and 16 others inserted false information into a public health database to make it appear as though the then-president, his 12-year-old daughter and several others in his circle had received the COVID-19 vaccine.

Police detective Fábio Alvarez Shor, who signed the indictment, said in his report that Bolsonaro and his aides changed their vaccination records in order to "issue their respective (vaccination) certificates and use them to cheat current health restrictions."

"The investigation found several false insertions between November 2021 and December 2022, and also many actions of using fraudulent documents," Shor added.

The detective said in the indictment that Bolsonaro's aide-de-camp, Mauro Cid, told investigators the former president asked him to insert the false data into the system for both himself and his daughter. Cid also said he delivered the vaccination certificates to Bolsonaro personally.

During the pandemic, Bolsonaro was one of the few world leaders who railed against the vaccine. He openly flouted health restrictions and encouraged other Brazilians to follow his example. His administration ignored several offers from pharmaceutical company Pfizer to sell Brazil tens of millions of shots in 2020, and he openly criticized a move by Sao Paulo state's governor to buy vaccines from Chinese company Sinovac when no other doses were available.

Brazil's prosecutor-general's office will have the final say on whether to use the indictment to file charges against Bolsonaro at the Supreme Court. The case stems from one of several investigations targeting Bolsonaro, who governed from 2019 to 2022.

Bolsonaro's lawyer, Fábio Wajngarten, called his client's indictment "absurd" and said he did not have access to it.

"When he was president, he was completely exempted from showing any kind of certificate on his trips. This is political persecution and an attempt to void the enormous political capital that has only grown," Wajngarten said.

The former president denied any wrongdoing during questioning in May 2023.

Gleisi Hoffmann, chairwoman of the Workers' Party, whose candidate defeated Bolsonaro, celebrated his indictment on social media. She said she hopes the former president stands trial in many other cases, including for his alleged attempt to sneak \$3 million in diamond jewelry into the country and the sale of two luxury watches he received as gifts from Saudi Arabia while in office.

"He has lied until this day about his nefarious administration, but now he will have to face the truth in the courts. The federal police's indictment sent to prosecutors is just the first of several," Hoffmann said. "What is up now, Big Coward? Are you going to face this or run away to Miami?"

Brazil's Supreme Court has already seized Bolsonaro's passport.

Police accuse Bolsonaro and his aides of tampering with the health ministry's database shortly before he traveled to the U.S. in December 2022, two months after he lost his reelection bid to Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva.

Bolsonaro needed a certificate of vaccination to enter the U.S., where he remained for the final days of his term and the first months of Lula's term. The former president has repeatedly said he has never taken a COVID-19 vaccine.

If convicted for falsifying health data, the 68-year-old politician could spend up to 12 years behind bars or as little as two years, according to legal analyst Zilan Costa. The maximum jail time for a charge of criminal association is four years, he said.

"What Bolsonaro will argue in this case is whether he did insert the data or enable others to do it, or not. And that is plain and simple: Either you have the evidence or you don't. It is a very serious crime with a very harsh sentence for those convicted," Costa told The Associated Press.

Shor also said he is awaiting information from the U.S. Justice Department to "clarify whether those under investigation did make use of the false vaccination certificates upon their arrival and stay in American territory."

If so, further charges could be leveled against Bolsonaro, Shor wrote without specifying in which country.

The indictment sheds new light on a Senate committee inquiry that ended in October 2021 with a recommendation for nine criminal charges against Bolsonaro alleging that he mismanaged the pandemic. Then prosecutor-general Augusto Aras, who was widely seen as a Bolsonaro ally, declined to move the case forward.

Brazilian media reported that Aras' successor, Paulo Gonet, was scheduled to meet lawmakers later Tuesday to discuss the possibility of filing charges.

Bolsonaro retains staunch allegiance among his political base, as shown by an outpouring of support last month, when an estimated 185,000 people clogged Sao Paulo's main boulevard to decry what they — and the former president — characterize as political persecution.

The indictment will not turn off his backers and will only confirm his detractors' suspicions, said Carlos Melo, a political science professor at Insper University in Sao Paulo.

"It is definitely worse for him in courts," Melo said. "He could be entering a trend of convictions, and then arrest."

Brazil's top electoral court has already ruled Bolsonaro ineligible to run for office until 2030, on the grounds that he abused his power during the 2022 campaign and cast unfounded doubts on the country's electronic voting system.

Another investigation relates to his alleged involvement in the Jan. 8, 2023, uprising in the capital of Brasilia, soon after Lula took power. The uprising resembled the U.S. Capitol riot in Washington two years prior. Bolsonaro has denied wrongdoing in both cases.

Shor wrote that the indictment will be folded into the investigation of Jan. 8, which is being overseen by Supreme Court Justice Alexandre de Moraes. That justice authorized the unsealing of the indictment.

IOC excludes Russian and Belarusian athletes from taking part in the Paris Olympics opening ceremony

By GRAHAM DUNBAR AP Sports Writer

GENEVA (AP) — Russian and Belarusian athletes will not be allowed to take part in the traditional parade at the opening ceremony at the Paris Olympics, the IOC said Tuesday.

The opening ceremony on July 26 will see thousands of athletes travel on boats down the River Seine for several miles (kilometers) toward the Eiffel Tower, instead of the normal parade of teams inside a stadium.

The International Olympic Committee said athletes from Russia and Belarus who are approved to compete at the Olympics as neutrals will have a chance only "to experience the event" — likely watching from near the river.

The IOC decision follows the International Paralympic Committee which two weeks ago announced a ban for its Paris opening ceremony on Aug. 28.

Russia and Belarus are barred from team sports at the Olympics because of the war in Ukraine and the IOC has laid out a two-step vetting procedure for individual athletes from those countries to be granted neutral status. Those athletes must first be approved by the governing body of their individual sport and then by an IOC-appointed review panel.

Neutral athletes must not have publicly supported the invasion of Ukraine, or be affiliated with military or state security agencies. It is unclear if membership of a Russian military sports club, such as CSKA, will be a reason for denying neutral status.

The IOC said Tuesday it expects about 36 neutral athletes with Russian passports and 22 with Belarusian passports to qualify for the Paris Games.

A decision on whether those athletes will be allowed to take part in the Aug. 11 closing ceremony will be taken "at a later stage," the IOC said.

Any medals won by neutral athletes will not be counted as a collective group in the overall medals table.

The IOC also revealed details of the replacement flag in jade green that will be used for neutral athletes at medal ceremonies, where a specially written anthem without lyrics will be played.

In another source of tension between Olympic leaders and Russian sport, the IOC decided Tuesday that

the International Boxing Association led by Kremlin-backed Umar Kremlev will not be involved in organizing bouts for the 2028 Los Angeles Olympics.

The IOC also threatened to remove boxing from the Los Angeles program in what seemed like a challenge to national federations worldwide to distance themselves from the IBA and Kremlev.

The IOC withdrew its recognition of the IBA last year and the body was not allowed to take part in organizing boxing at the previous Tokyo Olympics or in Paris. But Kremlev has further riled the IOC with confrontational comments and support for the rival Friendship Games scheduled in Russia in September.

"If we do not have a new boxing body to work in partnership with the IOC, we will not be in a position to have boxing at the program of (Los Angeles)," the Olympic body said.

LEAVING RUSSIA

Two Russians athletes who have changed national-team eligibility to different countries got those moves approved by the IOC.

Swimmer Anastasiia Kirpichnikova, a two-time European silver medalist in distance freestyle events, is eligible to represent France at the Olympics, and Greco-Roman wrestler Aleksandr Komarov can compete for Serbia. He won the European championship this year.

GUATEMALA RESTORED

The IOC eased a suspension imposed 18 months ago on the national Olympic body of Guatemala because of alleged government interference.

The IOC cited "the interest of the athletes" as a reason for provisionally lifting the ban, which should clear the way for Guatemalan athletes to compete in Paris with their flag, anthem and team name.

The president of Guatemala, Bernardo Arévalo, came to Switzerland for talks with the IOC last month.

Mackenzie Scott donates \$640 million, more than doubling her planned gifts to nonprofit applicants

By THALIA BEATY Associated Press

Billionaire philanthropist and author Mackenzie Scott announced Tuesday she is giving \$640 million to 361 small nonprofits that responded to an open call for applications.

Yield Giving's first round of donations is more than double what Scott had initially pledged to give away through the application process. Since she began giving away billions in 2019, Scott and her team have researched and selected organizations without an application process and provided them with large, unrestricted gifts.

In a brief note on her website, Scott wrote she was grateful to Lever for Change, the organization that managed the open call, and the evaluators for "their roles in creating this pathway to support for people working to improve access to foundational resources in their communities. They are vital agents of change."

The increase in both the award amount and the number of organizations who were selected is "a pleasant surprise," said Elisha Smith Arrillaga, vice president at The Center for Effective Philanthropy. She is interested to learn more about the applicants' experience of the process and whether Scott continues to use this process going forward.

Some 6,353 nonprofits applied to the \$1 million grants when applications opened.

"The donor team decided to expand the awardee pool and the award amount," said Lever for Change, which specializes in running philanthropic prize awards.

The 279 nonprofits that received top scores from an external review panel were awarded \$2 million, while 82 organizations in a second tier received \$1 million each.

Competitions like Scott's open call can help organizations who do not have connections with a specific funder get considered, said Renee Karibi-Whyte, senior vice president, Rockefeller Philanthropy Advisors.

"One of the best things about prize philanthropy is that it surfaces people and organizations and institutions that otherwise wouldn't have access to the people in the power centers and the funding," she said. Her organization also advises funders who run competitive grants or philanthropic prize competitions to phase the application to diminish the burden of applying on any organization that is eliminated early.

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Megan Peterson, executive director of the Minnesota-based nonprofit, Gender Justice, said the application was a rare opportunity to get noticed by Scott.

"Having seen the types of work that she has supported in the past, we did feel like, 'Oh, if only she knew that we were out here racking up wins,'" said Peterson.

Her organization has won lawsuits recently around access to emergency contraception and the rights of trans youth to play sports. They plan to use the funds to expand their work into North Dakota. Peterson said the funds must be used for tax exempt purposes but otherwise come with no restrictions or reporting requirements — just like Scott's previous grants.

"I think she's really helping to set a new path for philanthropy broadly, which is with that philosophy of: Find people doing good work and give them resources and then get out of the way," Peterson said of Scott. "I am grateful for not just the support individually, but the way in which I think she is having an impact on philanthropy broadly."

The open call asked for applications from nonprofits who are community-led with missions "to advance the voices and opportunities of individuals and families of meager or modest means," Yield Giving said on its website. Only nonprofits with annual budgets between \$1 and \$5 million were eligible to apply.

The awardees were selected through a multilayer process, where applicants scored fellow applicants and then the top organizations were reviewed by a panel of outside experts.

Scott has given away \$16.5 billion from the fortune she came into after divorcing Amazon founder Jeff Bezos. Initially, she publicized the gifts in online blog posts, sometimes naming the organizations and sometimes not. She launched a database of her giving in December 2022, under the name Yield Giving.

In an essay reflecting on the website, she wrote, "Information from other people — other givers, my team, the nonprofit teams I've been giving to — has been enormously helpful to me. If more information about these gifts can be helpful to anyone, I want to share it."

Smith Arrillaga, of CEP, said it was important that Scott is, "continuing to honor her commitment in terms of giving away her wealth, even though she's thinking, changing and tweaking the 'how' of how it's done and she's still trying to go with the spirit of what she committed to."

Pro-Trump attorney released from custody after promising to turn herself in on Michigan warrant

By LINDSAY WHITEHURST and NICHOLAS RICCARDI Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — A Michigan attorney who unsuccessfully sued to overturn former President Donald Trump's 2020 loss in that state was released from custody in Washington, D.C., on Tuesday after promising to drive back home and turn herself in on an outstanding warrant.

Stefanie Lambert was released from a Washington courtroom after her attorney Kevin Irving said she was "willing and ready" to return to Michigan and face a warrant issued by a judge earlier this month.

"I don't think it's something she is running away from," Irving said.

Lambert faces felony charges of improperly accessing voting equipment in a search for evidence of a conspiracy to steal the 2020 election from Trump. A Michigan judge issued a bench warrant for Lambert after she missed a March 7 hearing in the case.

Lambert's arrest late Monday came after she appeared in federal court in Washington in another legal matter connected to the election conspiracy theories she and other Trump allies have promulgated. She was in court defending her leaking of internal emails from Dominion Voting Systems that she obtained through discovery while acting as an attorney for a prominent election denier accused of defaming the company.

U.S. Marshals arrested Lambert on the Michigan warrant after the separate Dominion hearing ended.

Prosecutors asked that Lambert be held and said Michigan authorities were ready to pick her up, but District of Columbia Superior Court Judge Heide Herrmann ordered Lambert released on an unsecured \$10,000 bond.

Clad in a black suit with her hands cuffed in front of her, Lambert stood silently during her court appearance. Her attorney said she thought her Michigan case had been continued and that she had planned to

be in court there next week.

"She plans to leave today, to get in her car and go up there today," Irving said.

Russia says it will evacuate 9,000 children from a border region being targeted by Ukraine

By The Associated Press undefined

Russia plans to evacuate about 9,000 children from a border region because it is being shelled continuously by Ukraine, an official said Tuesday, reflecting Kyiv's increasing focus on striking targets behind a front line that has barely shifted in recent months.

The children will be moved from the Belgorod region farther east, away from the Ukraine border, said the region's governor, Vyacheslav Gladkov.

The announcement came a day after Russian President Vladimir Putin said the Kremlin wants to create a buffer zone to help protect border regions from long-range Ukrainian strikes and cross-border raids more than two years into the war.

Ukraine has increasingly used its long-range firepower to hit oil refineries and depots deep inside Russia and has sought to unsettle the Russian border regions, putting political pressure on Putin.

In addition, Ukraine-based Russian opponents of Putin and the Kremlin have launched cross-border raids. Putin discussed the cross-border incursions during a meeting Tuesday with top officials of the Federal Security Service, the FSB.

Civilian areas of Belgorod have been battered in the fighting. According to Gladkov, 16 people died and 98 were injured over the last week alone. On Saturday, he ordered the closure of shopping malls through Monday and schools through Tuesday because of the security situation.

The planned evacuation of children is one of the biggest publicly announced in the Belgorod region since the war began in February 2022. About 1,000 people, including children and their families, were evacuated to other Russian regions last June, and there have been other sporadic reports of evacuations over the past year.

It was unclear whether adults would be accompanying the children under the latest evacuation order. If so, the total number of evacuees could be much higher.

Roughly 600 people were in temporary accommodation Monday after being evacuated from their homes, Gladkov said.

Three people were wounded Tuesday in an aerial attack from Ukraine on the Belgorod region, Gladkov said, including a 14-year-old who had part of a limb amputated. His mother was also seriously hurt in the attack, he said.

The previous day, four members of the same family died in an attack on the Belgorod village of Nikol'skoe, according to Gladkov. A grandmother, mother, her partner and 17-year-old son were killed after a missile struck their house, he said.

It has not been possible to independently verify either side's battlefield claims.

Ukraine doesn't usually comment directly about strikes on Russian soil. But Ukrainian Foreign Minister Dmytro Kuleba said Tuesday that any military action there was "the direct consequence of the illegal and unprovoked aggression of Russia against Ukraine" when the Kremlin's forces launched their full-scale invasion.

Two Ukrainian drones were shot down over Belgorod and another over the neighboring Voronezh region overnight, the Russian defense ministry said. It gave no details of any damage or injuries.

Meanwhile, Russia used S-300 missiles to attack the city of Selydove in the eastern Donetsk region of Ukraine overnight. Four people were wounded and houses and cars were damaged, the regional prosecutor's office said.

On Monday, Russian attacks in the Donetsk region killed one person and wounded another, according to Vadym Filashkin, the regional governor.

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy urged Ukraine's Western partners on Tuesday to quickly sup-

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ply more air defense systems and illustrated the scale of the challenge Kyiv's forces face. He said so far this month, Russia has used 130 missiles of various types, more than 320 Shahed drones and nearly 900 guided air bombs to target various regions of Ukraine.

Ukraine has ramped up its defense production and plans to reach levels unseen since the country gained independence during the 1991 collapse of the Soviet Union, according to Zelenskyy. But it still relies heavily on Western support, which has waned in recent months.

Kuleba, the foreign minister, said European countries are expanding their military output and purchases to provide more help while additional U.S. support is stuck in Congress.

"It helps us to fill the gap that has been created by the delay in the U.S. decisions," he said of the European push. "It doesn't solve the problem entirely but it helps to sustain the pressure" on Russia.

Meanwhile Tuesday, Adm. Alexander Moiseyev was presented as the new acting head of the Russian navy during a ceremony at a naval base in Kronstadt, in the Gulf of Finland. Russian media reported last week that the previous navy chief, Adm. Nikolai Yevmenov, had been fired and replaced with Moiseyev, the commander of the navy's northern fleet.

Yevmenov's replacement followed a series of successful attacks by Ukrainian drones and missiles on the Russian Black Sea fleet that have forced Moscow to limit its naval operations in the region.

Purdue's Edey, Tennessee's Knecht, UNC's Davis headline the AP men's college All-America teams

By AARON BEARD AP Basketball Writer

For the second straight year, Purdue's Zach Edey is the unanimous headliner for The Associated Press men's college basketball All-America team.

The 7-foot-4, 300-pound senior topped all 62 ballots from AP Top 25 poll voters in results released Tuesday. The reigning AP national player of the year claimed all 58 votes last year.

Tennessee's Dalton Knecht and North Carolina's RJ Davis joined Edey (310 points) in a clear top trio. Knecht (298) was a first-team pick on 56 ballots, Davis (296) on 55 and both appeared among the top 10 players on every ballot.

Houston's Jamal Shead and Tristen Newton of reigning NCAA champion Connecticut rounded out the first team.

Edey leads the country in scoring at 24.4 points and ranks third in rebounding (11.7). Named the AP's Big Ten player of the year for a second straight time, Edey has the chance to be the first player to repeat as AP national player of the year since another 7-4 star: Virginia's Ralph Sampson in 1981, 1982 and 1983.

Edey became Purdue's career scoring leader during a loss to Wisconsin in the Big Ten Tournament.

"The thing here is, at the end of the day, he won't take credit for himself," teammate Braden Smith said. "He'll always point to us and say he got here because of us and we were helping him. Awesome accomplishment for him."

Knecht, a 6-6 transfer from Northern Colorado, is the AP's Southeastern Conference player of the year. He is only the fourth Volunteer to earn first-team honors, joining Grant Williams (2019), Dale Ellis (1983) and Bernard King (1977) after averaging 21.1 points to help the Volunteers win their first SEC regular-season crown since 2008.

"His journey is one that you kind of read about, like fairy-tale type deals," Vols associate head coach Justin Gainey said. "Just to see him get to this point and achieve what he's achieved, it's amazing. But it goes to his hard work, his work ethic, his mindset, his confidence and belief in himself."

Davis, a 6-0 guard, led was named the AP player of the year for the Atlantic Coast Conference after averaging a league-best 21.4 points. He is UNC's first first-team AP All-American since 2017.

"RJ has been our closer, and in (close games) it's a huge luxury to know you can put the ball in our guard's hands and he'll either make the right shot or make the right play," big man Armando Bacot said of Davis during the ACC Tournament.

Shead, a 6-1 senior, has been the floor leader for a Houston team that won the Big 12 regular-season

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crown in its first year in the rugged league. The honor for Shead, the AP player of the year in the Big 12, follows the Cougars having a first-team selection last year with guard Marcus Sasser.

Newton, a 6-5 graduate, has elevated his game to give UConn the look of a team that could become college basketball's first repeat champion since Florida in 2006 and 2007. With the departures of Final Four most outstanding player Adama Sanogo and Jordan Hawkins, Newton increased his scoring from 10.1 points last year to 15.2 points on the way to becoming the AP's player of the year in the Big East for the league champion.

Newton is UConn's first first-team AP All-American since Shabazz Napier in 2014.

SECOND TEAM

Marquette's Tyler Kolek headlined the second team and was the only other player to earn at least 10 first-team votes. The guard was an AP third-team All-American last season.

Alabama's Mark Sears joined Kolek in the backcourt of that second quintet, which boasts an imposing front line with Dayton's DaRon Holmes II (6-10), Duke's Kyle Filipowski (7-0) and Kansas' Hunter Dickinson (7-2) — a second-team selection in 2021 when he was at Michigan.

THIRD TEAM

San Diego State's Jaedon LeDee led the third-team selections, joined by Auburn's Johni Broome, Pac-12 player of the year Caleb Love of Arizona and Creighton's Baylor Scheierman.

The final spot went to Illinois' Terrence Shannon Jr. (54 points), the nation's No. 3 scorer at 23 points per game.

HONORABLE MENTION

Kentucky's Antonio Reeves and Kansas' Kevin McCullar Jr. finished right behind Shannon to stand as the leading vote-getters among players who didn't make the All-America teams.

Players earned honorable-mention status if they appeared on multiple voters' ballots. While 21 players qualified, Reeves (52), McCullar (52) and Providence's Devin Carter (36) were the only players to get more than 15 points in voting from that group.

The honorable-mention list also included Bacot, a preseason All-American pick who was a third-team All-American last year.

Trump is making the Jan. 6 attack a cornerstone of his bid for the White House

By LISA MASCARO, MARY CLARE JALONICK and JILL COLVIN Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Republican Donald Trump has launched his general election campaign not merely rewriting the history of the Jan. 6, 2021, Capitol attack, but positioning the violent siege and its failed attempt to overturn the 2020 election as a cornerstone of his bid to return to the White House.

At a weekend rally in Ohio, his first as the presumed Republican Party presidential nominee, Trump stood onstage, his hand raised in salute to the brim of his red MAGA hat, as a recorded chorus of prisoners in jail for their roles in the Jan. 6 attack sang the national anthem.

An announcer asked the crowd to please rise "for the horribly and unfairly treated January 6th hostages." And people did, and sang along.

"They were unbelievable patriots," Trump said as the recording ended.

Having previously vowed to pardon the rioters, he promised to help them "the first day we get into office."

Initially relegated to a fringe theory on the edges of the Republican Party, the revisionist history of Jan. 6, which Trump amplified during the early days of the GOP primary campaign to rouse his most devoted voters, remains a rally centerpiece even as he must appeal more broadly to a general election audience.

In heaping praise on the rioters, Trump is shifting blame for his own role in the run-up to the bloody mob siege and asking voters to absolve hundreds of them — and himself — over the deadliest attack on a seat of American power in 200 years.

At the same time, Trump's allies are installing 2020 election-deniers to the Republican National Commit-

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tee, further institutionalizing the lies that spurred the violence. That raises red flags about next year, when Congress will again be called upon to certify the vote.

And they're not alone. Republicans in Congress are embarking on a re-investigation of the Jan. 6, 2021, attack that seeks to shield Trump of wrongdoing while lawmakers are showcasing side theories about why thousands of his supporters descended on Capitol Hill in what became a brutal scene of hand-to-hand combat with police.

Five people died in the riot and its aftermath.

Taken together, it's what those who study authoritarian regimes warn is a classic case of what's called consolidation — where the state apparatus is being transformed around a singular figure, in this case Trump.

Jason Stanley, a philosophy professor at Yale, said in history the question comes up over and over again: How could people not have taken an authoritarian leader at his word about what was going to happen?

"Listen to Trump," he said.

"When a coup against the democratic regime happens and it's not punished, that is a very strong indicator of the end of the rule of law and the victory of that authoritarian movement," said Stanley, the author of "How Fascism Works."

"Americans have a hard time understanding that what happens in most of the world can happen here, too."

Trump is facing a four-count federal indictment over Jan. 6 — charges he conspired to defraud Americans over his 2020 election defeat and obstructed the official proceeding in Congress to certify the vote for Joe Biden. As the Supreme Court considers Trump's claim that he should be immune from prosecution, it's unclear when the case will go to trial, raising the possibility it might not be resolved until after the election.

The initial House Select Committee on Jan. 6 found that Trump criminally engaged in a "multi-part conspiracy" to overturn the lawful results of the 2020 presidential election and failed to act to stop his supporters from attacking the Capitol and beating police.

More than 1,200 people have been charged in the riot, including far-right Oath Keepers and Proud Boys extremists, with hundreds convicted. Trump lawyer Rudy Giuliani and attorney John Eastman face legal challenges over their work on the 2020 election.

Trump's campaign, in response to an inquiry from The Associated Press, pointed to the work from the House investigators who are trying to show inconsistencies in the Select Committee's probe and its star witness Cassidy Hutchinson, a former aide who had a front-row seat to inner workings at the White House.

Trump's national press secretary Karoline Leavitt said the Justice Department has spent more time prosecuting the former president and "targeting Americans for peacefully protesting on January 6th" than other criminals.

"President Trump will restore justice for all Americans who have been unfairly treated," she said.

Even as Republicans worry privately that Trump risks turning off women and independent voters he would need in the general election rematch against Biden, top aides have said there is only so much they can do as Trump is going to be Trump.

Over the weekend, Trump focused his attention on Liz Cheney, the former Republican congresswoman, who was vice chair of the Select Committee and personally secured Hutchinson's blockbuster 2022 testimony.

"She should go to Jail along with the rest of the Unselect Committee!" Trump posted on social media.

Cheney posted in response — "Hi Donald: you know these are lies" — as she has worked to dispel falsehoods about Jan. 6.

"If your response to Trump's assault on our democracy is to lie & cover up what he did, attack the brave men & women who came forward with the truth, and defend the criminals who violently assaulted the Capitol," she said in one post, "you need to rethink whose side you're on. Hint: It's not America's."

Many Republicans are willfully ignoring the issue, especially in Congress, despite lawmakers having run for their lives and taken shelter as the rioters stormed the Senate chamber and ransacked Capitol offices.

Senators who sharply criticized Trump after the Jan. 6 attack, like Republican Leader Mitch McConnell

and South Dakota's John Thune, the No. 2 Senate Republican, have now reluctantly endorsed him.

Others are still declining to endorse Trump, including Louisiana Sen. Bill Cassidy, who voted to convict Trump in his second impeachment on the charge of inciting the insurrection for the Jan. 6 attack. But the holdouts are in the minority.

Appearing on NBC's "Meet The Press," Cassidy would only say, "I plan to vote for a Republican for the presidency of the United States."

One Republican willing to speak out is Mike Pence, the former vice president, whom rioters shouted they wanted to "hang" that day as a makeshift gallows stood on the Capitol's West Front.

"I was there on January 6th. I have no doubt in my mind ... that some people were caught up in the moment," Pence said on CBS's "Face the Nation."

"But the assaults on police officers, ultimately an environment that claimed lives, is something that I think was tragic that day," Pence said. "And I'll never diminish it."

Sex trade to slavery: A UN agency says criminals reap \$236B a year in profits from forced labor

By JAMEY KEATEN Associated Press

GENEVA (AP) — Illegal profits from forced labor worldwide have risen to the "obscene" amount of \$236 billion per year, the U.N. labor agency reported Tuesday, with sexual exploitation to blame for three-fourths of the take from a business that deprives migrants of money they can send home, swipes jobs from legal workers, and allows the criminals behind it to dodge taxes.

The International Labor Organization said the tally for 2021, the most recent year covered in the painstaking international study, marked an increase of 37%, or \$64 billion, compared with its last estimate published a decade ago. That's a result of both more people being exploited and more cash generated from each victim, ILO said.

"\$236 billion. This is the obscene level of annual profit generated from forced labor in the world today," the first line of the report's introduction said. That figure represents earnings "effectively stolen from the pockets of workers" by those who coerce them to work, as well as money taken from remittances of migrants and lost tax revenue for governments.

ILO officials noted that such a sum equaled the economic output of EU member Croatia and eclipsed the annual revenues of tech giants like Microsoft and Samsung.

Forced labor can encourage corruption, strengthen criminal networks and incentivize further exploitation, ILO said.

Its director-general, Gilbert Houngbo, wants international cooperation to fight the racket.

"People in forced labor are subject to multiple forms of coercion, the deliberate and systematic withholding of wages being amongst the most common," he said in a statement. "Forced labor perpetuates cycles of poverty and exploitation and strikes at the heart of human dignity."

"We now know that the situation has only got worse," Houngbo added.

ILO defines forced labor as work that's imposed against the will of the employee and exacted under penalty — or the threat of one. It can happen at any phase of employment: during recruitment, in living conditions associated with work or by forcing people to stay in a job when they want to leave it.

On any given day in 2021, an estimated 27.6 million people were in forced labor — a 10% rise from five years earlier, ILO said. The Asia-Pacific region was home to more than half of those, while Africa, the Americas, and Europe-Central Asia each represented about 13% to 14%.

Some 85% of the people affected were working in "privately imposed forced labor," which can include slavery, serfdom, bonded labor, and activities like forms of begging where cash taken in goes to the benefit of someone else, ILO said. The rest were in forced labor imposed by government authorities — a practice not covered in the study.

Some critics have railed against "modern day slavery" in places like the prison system in the U.S. state

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of Alabama.

ILO experts said that government-imposed forced labor was excluded from the report because of a shortage of data about it — even if estimates show nearly 4 million people were affected by it.

“The ILO certainly decries instances of state imposed forced labor wherever they occur, and whether that’s in prison systems or the abuse of military conscription or other forms or manifestations of state and post forced labor,” said Scott Lyon, an ILO senior policy officer.

While the report said just over one-fourth of the victims worldwide were subject to sexual exploitation, it accounted for nearly \$173 billion in profits, or nearly three-quarters of the global total — a sign of the higher margins generated from selling sex.

Some 6.3 million people faced situations of forced commercial sexual exploitation on any given day three years ago — and nearly four in five of those victims were girls or women, ILO said. Children accounted for more than a quarter of the total cases.

Forced labor in industry trailed in a distant second, at \$35 billion, followed by services at nearly \$21 billion, agriculture at \$5 billion and domestic work at \$2.6 billion, the Geneva-based labor agency said.

Manuela Tomei, ILO’s assistant director-general for governance, told a conference launching the report in Brussels — where the European Union’s parliament is close to finalizing new rules aimed at cracking down on forced labor — that “no region is immune” to the practice of forced labor and all economic sectors are involved.

While countries including the United States were cited at the conference for efforts to fight forced labor, Tomei said the world was “far away” from U.N. goals to eradicate forced labor by 2030.

Valdis Dombrovskis, the executive vice-president of the European Commission, called the ILO findings “shocking and appalling.”

“Forced labor is the opposite of social justice,” he said. “Let me be very clear. Business must never be done at the expense of workers, dignity and labor rights.”

Today in History: March 20,

Lyle and Erik Menendez convicted of the murder of their parents

By The Associated Press undefined

Today in History

Today is Wednesday, March 20, the 80th day of 2024. There are 286 days left in the year.

Today’s Highlight in History:

On March 20, 1996, a jury in Los Angeles convicted Erik and Lyle Menendez of first-degree murder in the shotgun slayings of their wealthy parents. (They were sentenced to life in prison without the possibility of parole.)

On this date:

In 1413, England’s King Henry IV died; he was succeeded by Henry V.

In 1815, Napoleon Bonaparte returned to Paris after escaping his exile on Elba, beginning his “Hundred Days” rule.

In 1852, Harriet Beecher Stowe’s influential novel about slavery, “Uncle Tom’s Cabin,” was first published in book form after being serialized.

In 1854, the Republican Party of the United States was founded by slavery opponents at a schoolhouse in Ripon, Wisconsin.

In 1922, the decommissioned USS Jupiter, converted into the first U.S. Navy aircraft carrier, was recommissioned as the USS Langley.

In 1952, the U.S. Senate ratified, 66-10, a Security Treaty with Japan.

In 1969, John Lennon married Yoko Ono in Gibraltar.

In 1976, kidnapped newspaper heiress Patricia Hearst was convicted of armed robbery for her part in a San Francisco bank holdup carried out by the Symbionese Liberation Army. (Hearst was sentenced to

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seven years in prison; she was released after serving 22 months, and was pardoned in 2001 by President Bill Clinton.)

In 1995, in Tokyo, 12 people were killed, more than 5,500 others sickened when packages containing the deadly chemical sarin were leaked on five separate subway trains by Aum Shinrikyo (ohm shin-ree-kyoh) cult members.

In 2013, making his first visit to Israel since taking office, President Barack Obama affirmed Israel's sovereign right to defend itself from any threat and vowed to prevent Iran from obtaining nuclear weapons.

In 2014, President Barack Obama ordered economic sanctions against nearly two dozen members of Russian President Vladimir Putin's inner circle and a major bank that provided them support, raising the stakes in an East-West showdown over Ukraine.

In 2017, U.S. Supreme Court nominee Neil Gorsuch pledged to be independent or "hang up the robe" as the Senate began confirmation hearings on President Donald Trump's conservative pick for the nation's highest bench.

In 2018, in a phone call to Vladimir Putin, President Donald Trump offered congratulations on Putin's re-election victory; a senior official said Trump had been warned in briefing materials that he should not congratulate Putin.

In 2020, the governor of Illinois ordered residents to remain in their homes except for essential needs, joining similar efforts in California and New York to limit the spread of the coronavirus. Stocks tumbled again on Wall Street, ending their worst week since the 2008 financial crisis; the Dow fell more than 900 points to end the week with a 17% loss.

In 2022, Ukrainian authorities said Russia's military bombed an art school sheltering about 400 people in the port city of Mariupol, where refugees described how "battles took place over every street," weeks into a devastating siege.

In 2023, Russian President Vladimir Putin welcomed Chinese leader Xi Jinping to the Kremlin, sending a powerful message to Western leaders that their efforts to isolate Moscow over the fighting in Ukraine have fallen short.

Today's Birthdays: Actor Hal Linden is 93. Basketball Hall of Fame coach Pat Riley is 79. Country singer-musician Ranger Doug (Riders in the Sky) is 78. Hockey Hall of Famer Bobby Orr is 76. Blues singer-musician Marcia Ball is 75. Rock musician Carl Palmer (Emerson, Lake and Palmer) is 74. Rock musician Jimmie Vaughan is 73. Actor Amy Aquino is 67. Movie director Spike Lee is 67. Actor Theresa Russell is 67. Actor Vanessa Bell Calloway is 67. Actor Holly Hunter is 66. Rock musician Slim Jim Phantom (The Stray Cats) is 63. Actor-model-designer Kathy Ireland is 61. Actor David Thewlis is 61. Rock musician Adrian Oxaal (James) is 59. Actor Jessica Lundy is 58. Actor Liza Snyder is 56. Actor Michael Rapaport is 54. Actor Alexander Chaplin is 53. Actor Cedric Yarbrough is 51. Actor Paula Garcés is 50. Actor Bianca Lawson is 45. Comedian-actor Mikey Day is 44. Actor Nick Blood (TV: "Marvel's Agents of S.H.I.E.L.D.") is 42. Rock musician Nick Wheeler (The All-American Rejects) is 42. Actor Michael Cassidy is 41. Actor-singer Christy Carlson Romano is 40. Actor Ruby Rose is 38. Actor Barrett Doss is 35.