

# Groton Daily Independent

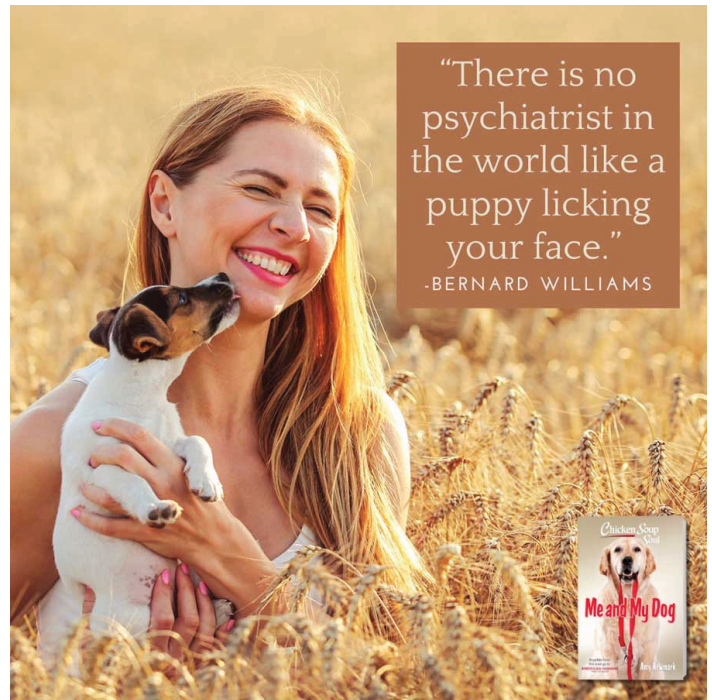
Saturday, March 23, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 271 ~ 1 of 67

- [1- Upcoming Events](#)
- [2- 1440 News Headlines](#)
- [3- Chamber Ad](#)
- [4- Prairie Mixed Bowling](#)
- [4- Service Notice: Nora Rix](#)
- [4- Kindergarten Roundup Screening](#)
- [5- GFP Seeking Comment on Draft Ring-Necked Pheasant Action Plan](#)
- [6- Names Released in Meade County Fatal Crash](#)
- [6- Names Released in Lyman County Fatal Crash](#)
- [7- Help Wanted ads](#)
- [8- Easter Baskets by Tina](#)
- [9- Drought Monitor](#)
- [10- South Dakota Average Gas Prices](#)
- [11- SD SearchLight: U.S. Senate debates spending package overnight as funding lapse begins](#)
- [12- SD SearchLight: Four SD grassland restoration projects awarded a total of \\$250,000 in federal funds](#)
- [13- SD SearchLight: Johnson votes yes as Congress rushes to approve \\$1.2 trillion spending package](#)
- [16- SD SearchLight: U.S. Supreme Court to hear oral arguments Tuesday on abortion pill limits](#)
- [17- SD SearchLight: Brutal era can be overcome by returning to core values, Times columnist tells SD audience](#)
- [19- Weather Pages](#)
- [24- Daily Devotional](#)
- [25- Subscription Form](#)
- [26- Lottery Numbers](#)
- [27- News from the Associated Press](#)

## Saturday, March 23

East River Destination Imagination Tournament at Webster  
Billy Shilhanek benefit at the Groton Legion, 3 p.m.  
Thrift Store open 10 a.m. to 3 p.m.  
Catholic: SEAS Confession, 3:45-4:15 p.m.; SEAS Mass, 4:30 p.m.  
Groton Lions Easter Egg Hunt, 10 a.m., Groton City Park  
Spring Vendor Fair, 10 a.m., GHS Gym  
Men's Bowling Tournament, 1 p.m., Jungle Lanes  
St. John's Lutheran: Questioning confirmands, 5 p.m.

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



## Sunday, March 24

Palm Sunday

Groton CM&A: Sunday School at 9:15 a.m., Worship Service at 10:30 a.m.; Easter Cantata entailed, "Because He Lives . . . Amen", 6:30 p.m.

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

First Presbyterian Church: Bible Study, 9:30 a.m.; Worship, 11 a.m.

Emmanuel Lutheran: Worship with communion, 9 a.m. (Palm procession by Sunday school), Choir, 6 p.m.

St. John's Lutheran: Worship with communion: St. John's at 9 a.m., Zion at 11 a.m.; Sunday school, 9:45 a.m.

United Methodist: Worship at Conde, 8:30 a.m., and at Groton, 10:30 a.m. with Sunday school singing; Coffee hour, 9:30 a.m.

**OPEN:** Recycling Trailer in Groton

The recycling trailer is located west of the city shop. It takes cardboard, papers and aluminum cans.

© 2024 Groton Daily Independent

# Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, March 23, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 271 ~ 2 of 67

# 1440

In partnership with **smartasset**<sup>™</sup>

## Funding Deal

Congressional lawmakers have avoided a partial government shut-down after passing a \$1.2T package of six spending bills to fund a group of federal agencies through the end of the fiscal year on Sept. 30. The bipartisan measure passed the House by a vote of 286-134 Friday, with the Senate following suit by a vote of 74-24 early Saturday, just hours after funding had technically expired.

The package (see details) provides funding for departments including defense, homeland security, and state, with over 70% of the funding going toward defense. The passage comes two weeks after Congress passed a first tranche of six bills to fund a different group of federal agencies, including agriculture and transportation. Under the two packages, the discretionary spending for fiscal year 2024 totals \$1.66T.

Separately, Rep. Marjorie Taylor Greene (R, GA-14), who opposed the funding bill, introduced a motion Friday to remove House Speaker Mike Johnson (R, LA-4) from the speakership, but stopped short of calling for a vote. It is the same procedural move that led to the ousting of former House Speaker Kevin McCarthy (R, CA-20) in October.

## Catherine, Princess of Wales, being treated for cancer.

Catherine announced via video Friday she is in the early stages of preventative chemotherapy but did not specify for what type of cancer. The news comes two months after Kensington Palace revealed the 42-year-old future queen and wife of Prince William underwent abdominal surgery for what was a non-cancerous condition at the time. King Charles, 75, was diagnosed with cancer last month.

## At least 60 killed in shooting at concert hall near Moscow.

Several people reportedly burst into the Crocus City Hall, a large music venue in a Moscow suburb, opening fire and causing explosions that set off a massive blaze Friday night. At least 100 people were rescued from the building's basement. Russian authorities reported at least 60 people were killed and over 100 wounded. The Islamic State group claimed responsibility for the attack.

## Russia launches aerial attack on Ukrainian power sources.

Russian forces targeted energy infrastructure across Ukraine Friday with more than 150 missiles and drones, considered to be the largest strike of its kind since the war began two years ago. Ukraine said it was able to intercept 92 of the missiles and drones. At least five people were killed, 15 others wounded, and 1 million people left without power.

## Trump's Truth Social to go public after securing merger vote.

Shareholders of Digital World Acquisition, a publicly traded shell company, approved a long-pending merger with Trump Media and Technology Group, which owns former President Donald Trump's Truth Social platform. Trump will own roughly 60% of the combined entity and see a potential windfall of \$3.5B. Shares of DWA closed down 14% following the news.

Separately, Trump claimed Friday he has roughly \$500M in cash, but does not want to use it to cover the full bond of a \$454M judgment in his New York civil business fraud case. He faces a Monday deadline to pay the bond.

## US-led Gaza cease-fire resolution rejected by UN Security Council.

Russia and China, which are among the five permanent members of the security council, vetoed the resolution, while the US, France, and the UK voted in favor. Among the nine nonpermanent members of the council, Algeria voted against the resolution and Guyana abstained. The resolution had called for a six-week cease-fire. All 15 members must vote in favor for a resolution to be adopted.

# Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, March 23, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 271 ~ 3 of 67

## Humankind(ness)

Today, we're sharing a story from reader Kevict Y. in Gilroy, California.

"This story is sort of a kindness sandwich. I was at the grocery store approaching a checkout counter with a full cart. There was an elderly gentleman who approached after me with only two items in his cart. I thought I was being kind by letting him go ahead of me since he had only two items. The real act of kindness happened when he gave the clerk a \$20 bill to pay toward my groceries! I was surprised and touched; so when I checked out, I selected the option on the credit card reader to donate toward families with hunger and applied the \$20 there. It was a great day."

## So much going on in Groton! Thank you for shopping locally!

### 2024 Groton Spring Vendor Fair

Stop and shop from a variety of Crafters and Vendors! Also enjoy some lunch while you shop! There will also be an Auction table & all proceeds will go to Make-A-Wish Foundation!

Where: Groton High School Gym  
502 N 2nd St. Groton, SD 57445

When: Saturday, March 23<sup>rd</sup> 2024

Time: 10:00am - 3:00pm



March 23, 2024



Spring Vendor Fair  
at the GHS Gym



Groton Lions Club Lunch  
starting at 11am

\$10 MEAL DEAL includes BBQ,  
Chips, Bottled Water & Dessert  
Beverages & individual items for sale as well!

GROTON LIONS CLUB ANNUAL

### EASTER EGG HUNT

Saturday, March 23rd @10am sharp!  
Groton City Park

3 age groups: 3 and under, 4-6 & 7-10

Your Lions Club Members will be filling &  
hiding nearly 1200 Easter eggs!

Alternate date is March 30th.



MARCH 23RD, 10AM-3PM

### EXTENDED SHOPPING HOURS!

COMMON CENTS  
Community Thrift Store



209 N MAIN ST.

- Eat
- Shop
- Buy

# GROTON

LOCAL

#57445

Chamber Of Commerce

WWW.GROTONCHAMBER.COM • FACEBOOK @GROTON.CHAMBER

# Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, March 23, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 271 ~ 4 of 67

## Groton Prairie Mixed Bowling League Week #18 Results

**Team Standings:** Shihtzus – 11, Coyotes – 11, Chipmunks- 10, Cheetahs – 7, Jackelopes – 6, Foxes – 3

**Men's High Games:** Mike Siegler – 230, Brad Waage – 224, John Sippel – 205

**Women's High Games:** Michelle Johnson – 177, Karen Spanier – 175, Sam Bahr – 167

**Men's High Series:** Mike Siegler – 569, John Sippel – 567, Brad Waage – 545

**Women's High Series:** Sam Bahr – 445, Vicki Walter – 444, Karen Spanier – 436

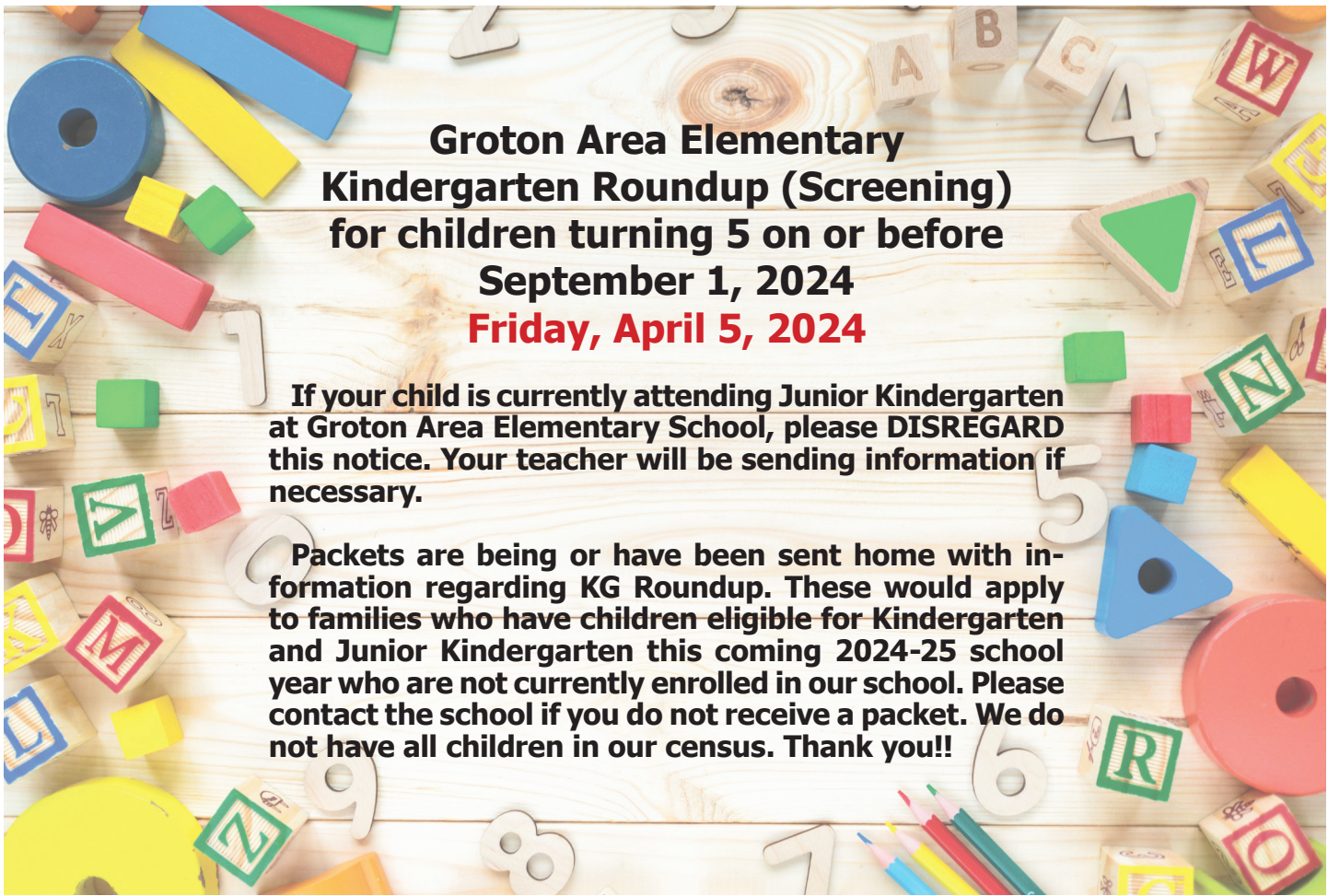
**Fun Game:** Most 8 Spares - Coyotes with 12!

## Service Notice: Nora Rix

Funeral services for Nora Rix, 93, of Groton will be 11:00 a.m., Thursday, March 28th at St. John's Lutheran Church, Groton. Rev. Jeremy Yeadon will officiate. Burial will follow in Union Cemetery under the direction of Paetznick-Garness Funeral Chapel, Groton.

Visitation will be held for one hour prior to services.

Nora passed away March 21, 2024 at Angelhaus in Aberdeen.



## Groton Area Elementary Kindergarten Roundup (Screening) for children turning 5 on or before September 1, 2024 Friday, April 5, 2024

**If your child is currently attending Junior Kindergarten at Groton Area Elementary School, please DISREGARD this notice. Your teacher will be sending information if necessary.**

**Packets are being or have been sent home with information regarding KG Roundup. These would apply to families who have children eligible for Kindergarten and Junior Kindergarten this coming 2024-25 school year who are not currently enrolled in our school. Please contact the school if you do not receive a packet. We do not have all children in our census. Thank you!!**

## GFP Seeking Comment on Draft Ring-Necked Pheasant Action Plan

PIERRE, S.D. – South Dakota Game, Fish and Parks (GFP) is seeking comments on a draft Ring-necked Pheasant Action plan.

The Ring-necked Pheasant Action plan, 2024-2028, is a document that will be used by GFP to guide ring-necked pheasant management in South Dakota through identified management objectives and measurable strategies to meet these management objectives. All individuals interested in ring-necked pheasant management in South Dakota may provide suggestions and comments on the Ring-necked Pheasant Action Plan until Monday, April 1.

The draft Ring-necked Pheasant Action plan can be found online at [gfp.sd.gov/management-plans](https://gfp.sd.gov/management-plans).

Written comments on the plan can be sent to 523 E. Capitol Ave., Pierre, S.D. 57501, or emailed to [WildInfo@state.sd.us](mailto:WildInfo@state.sd.us). Comments must be received by the deadline and include your full name and city of residence.



## Names Released in Meade County Fatal Crash

What: Utility Terrain Vehicle (UTV) fatal crash  
Where: Forest Service Road 226, 5 miles southwest of Piedmont, SD  
When: 7:48 p.m., Monday, March 18, 2024

Driver 1: Jamie Nicole Fletcher, 37-year-old female from Rapid City, SD, minor injuries  
Vehicle 1: 2021 Polaris General XP  
Seatbelt Use: Yes  
Helmet Use: No  
Passenger 1: Alicia Sharon Murray, 30-year-old female from Chocta, OK, fatal injuries  
Seatbelt Use: Yes  
Helmet Use: No

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

Preliminary crash information indicates a UTV driven by Jamie N. Fletcher had left the roadway and struck a tree. A female passenger in the UTV, Alicia S. Murray, was found deceased when emergency personnel arrived. Fletcher was taken to a nearby hospital for treatment of her injuries.

## Names Released in Lyman County Fatal Crash

What: Two vehicle fatal crash  
Where: I-90, Mile marker 245.2, 3 miles west of Reliance, SD  
When: 7:43 p.m., Monday, March 18, 2024

Driver 1: Ryan Keith Taylor, 38-year-old male from Fort Pierre, SD, fatal injuries  
Vehicle 1: 2005 Ford F-350  
Seat Belt Use: Under investigation

Driver 2: Daniel Carl Kirkpatrick, 59-year-old male from Chandler, MN, fatal injuries  
Vehicle 2: 2024 Kenworth T680 Semi-truck  
Seat Belt Use: Under investigation

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

Preliminary crash information indicates a Ford F-350 driven by Ryan K. Taylor was traveling westbound in the eastbound lanes of SD I-90 near Reliance. At the same time, a semi-truck driven by Daniel C. Kirkpatrick was traveling eastbound in the eastbound lanes of I-90. The vehicles crashed head-on. Taylor was pronounced deceased at the scene. Kirkpatrick 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.

## EMPLOYMENT

**Dairy Queen in Groton is hiring! If you're looking for a fun job with lots of variety, look no further! We're looking for energetic, smiling people – we provide free meals, uniforms, competitive wages, fun atmosphere and flexible scheduling. Part-time – day, evening, week-end shifts available. We will work with your schedule. Stop in today and pick up an application.**

.....

**Position available for full-time Public Works Laborer. Formal training and/or experience preferred. Salary negotiable DOE. Benefits include medical insurance, life insurance, and SD State Retirement. Please send application and resume to the City of Groton, PO Box 587, Groton, SD 57445, or email to [city.doug@nvc.net](mailto:city.doug@nvc.net). Applications will be accepted until 5pm on April 16, 2024. Full job description and application may be found at <https://www.grotonsd.gov/o/grotoncity/page/employment-options>. For more information, please call 605-397-8422. Equal opportunity employer.**

.....

# Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, March 23, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 271 ~ 8 of 67

## Easter Baskets by Tina ~ 605-397-7285



Only  
\$20  
each



Fire truck Easter basket with a light up cup three mystery eggs, a light up football, a space game, blue peeps bubbles and a blue fan



It has a blue speaker , pink bubbles a blue fan, and stress carrot a stuffed bunny with three clear Easter bunnies with jelly beans in side them



The stuff inside it a cup that lights up, a stuffed cow, a bow with a arrow toy, a shooter game, a blue peeps bubble and a green bubble fan



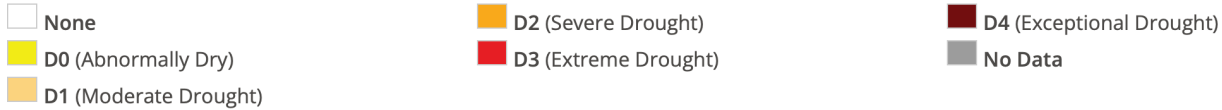
The stuff that's in this basket yellow peeps bubbles a duck puzzle, a stuffed bunny, four mystery colored Easter eggs with prize inside a jump rope, a cup that lights up on top and a pink fan with bubbles in it



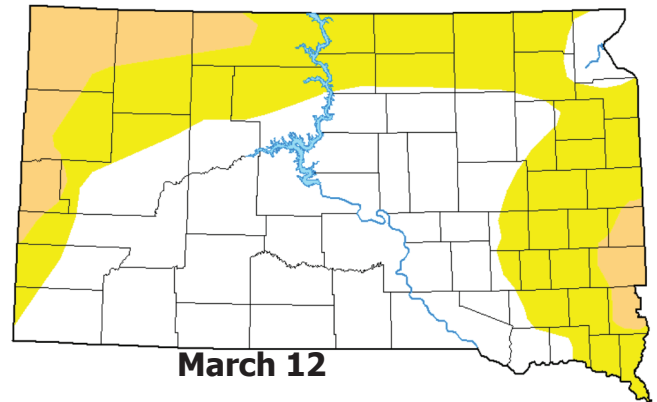
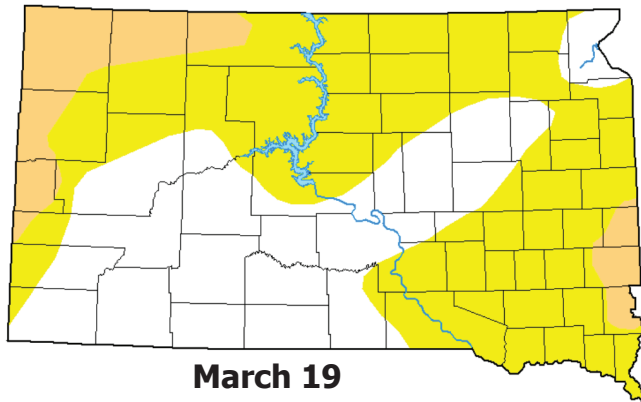
# Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, March 23, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 271 ~ 9 of 67

## Drought Classification



## Drought Monitor



Generally minor changes in the drought depiction were observed on the High Plains. Some increases in the coverage of abnormal dryness (D0) were noted on the Plains from central and southwestern Kansas northward into parts of South Dakota. Despite the Plains' pockets of dryness and drought, prospects for the winter wheat crop remained mostly favorable. In Kansas, 55% of the winter wheat was rated in good to excellent condition on March 17, with only 12% of the crop rated very poor to poor, according to the U.S. Department of Agriculture. Meanwhile, some drought reductions occurred in the Rockies of Colorado and Wyoming. In Colorado, March 13-15 snowfall totaled 12.9 inches in Colorado Springs. On the 14th, as rain changed to snow, Pueblo, Colorado, experienced its wettest day during March on record, with 1.53 inches (and 2.5 inches of snow). Previously, Pueblo's wettest day during March had been March 18, 1998, with 1.26 inches. During the mid-month event, numerous 3- to 5-foot snowfall totals were noted in the Colorado Rockies, with Aspen Springs in Gilpin County receiving 61.5 inches.

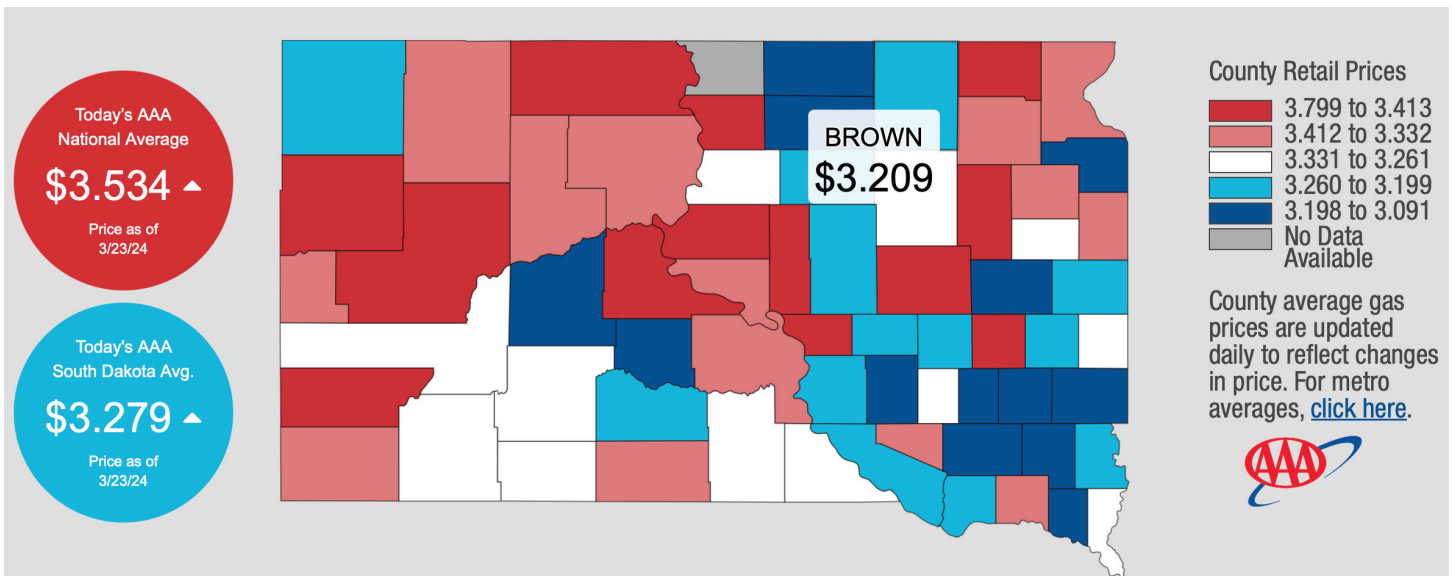
# Broton Daily Independent

Saturday, March 23, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 271 ~ 10 of 67

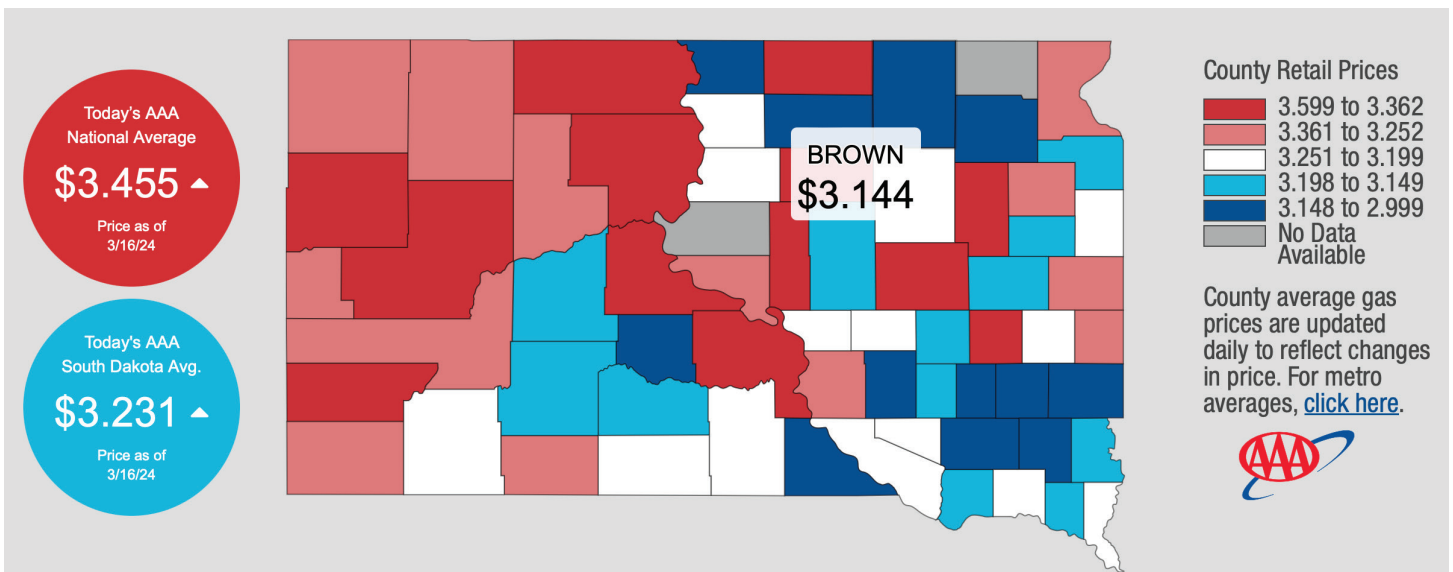
## South Dakota Average Gas Prices

	Regular	Mid-Grade	Premium	Diesel
Current Avg.	\$3.279	\$3.434	\$3.845	\$3.727
Yesterday Avg.	\$3.271	\$3.425	\$3.857	\$3.723
Week Ago Avg.	\$3.231	\$3.374	\$3.807	\$3.695
Month Ago Avg.	\$3.042	\$3.197	\$3.654	\$3.752
Year Ago Avg.	\$3.307	\$3.457	\$3.915	\$3.973

### This Week



### Two Weeks Ago





## SOUTH DAKOTA SEARCHLIGHT

<https://southdakotasearchlight.com>

### **U.S. Senate debates spending package overnight as funding lapse begins**

**Thune blames Democratic leaders for not allowing Republican amendment votes**

**BY: JENNIFER SHUTT - MARCH 22, 2024 11:29 PM**

WASHINGTON — Dozens of federal departments and agencies began a funding lapse early Saturday after the U.S. Senate failed to approve a \$1.2 trillion government spending package ahead of a Friday midnight deadline.

The stalemate affected major federal departments — Defense, Education, Health and Human Services, Homeland Security, Labor, State and Treasury.

It also included numerous smaller entities that no longer have approved government funding, including Congress, the Executive Office of the President, the judiciary and the Social Security Administration.

The brief pause in official appropriations isn't likely to have much effect, though, given that Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer set up votes on nine GOP proposals to the package just before midnight.

That will be followed by a final passage vote, but since the Senate often takes at least 15 minutes to hold one vote, it was expected to be a few hours before the bill cleared that chamber. President Joe Biden is expected to sign it into law.

"It's been a very long and difficult day, but we have just reached an agreement to complete the job of funding the government," Schumer, a New York Democrat, said.

The White House said in a statement early Saturday: "OMB has ceased shutdown preparations because there is a high degree of confidence that Congress will imminently pass the relevant appropriations and the President will sign the bill on Saturday. Because obligations of federal funds are incurred and tracked on a daily basis, agencies will not shut down and may continue their normal operations."

Wrapping up work on the 1,012-page spending package before Monday morning would mean relatively minor effects on the employees and programs within the six spending bills in the measure.

But those repercussions would have begun to increase in number and scope the longer the Senate went without approving the bill, and the executive branch would have had to begin shutting down many operations and sending non-exempt federal employees home.

The funding lapse wouldn't have affected any federal activities involving "the safety of human life or the protection of property."

#### **Votes on amendments sought; Thune blames Democrats**

The Senate's inability to pass the legislation on time came down to its complicated procedures that often require weeks to move a bill. Without the approval of all 100 senators, there was no way for that chamber's leaders to call the bill up for final passage on Friday evening.

Several conservative GOP senators had withheld their consent in order to secure votes on amendments to the package.

Making any changes to the bill, however, would require it to go back to the U.S. House for approval, a challenging task given the time crunch and the fact that chamber had already left for a two-week recess.

Senate Minority Whip John Thune, a South Dakota Republican, posted on social media before the votes that he believed any funding lapse would be the result of Democratic leaders not allowing GOP amendment votes.

"Taking a handful of votes on proposals that are related to this massive spending bill is not too much to ask," Thune wrote. "So make no mistake, if the government shuts down, it will be because of one thing and one thing only: Democrat leaders protecting vulnerable incumbents from taking hard votes."

The U.S. House voted 286-134 on Friday morning to approve the spending package that holds the final six government funding bills for the fiscal year that began back on Oct. 1.

Congress approved the other six spending bills in mid-March, after relying on a string of short-term stopgap spending measures to hold off a government shutdown while members waded through negotiations on spending levels and policy.

## **A brief history of shutdowns, 'funding gaps'**

The federal government has experienced more than a dozen funding lapses in recent decades, including the 34-day partial government shutdown that began in late December 2018 and lasted well into January.

There was a two-day funding lapse about a year before that in January 2018 and a 16-day government shutdown in October 2013, according to a report from the nonpartisan Congressional Research Service.

The other funding lapses, including the ones that dragged on long enough to warrant federal departments beginning their shutdown procedures, took place before the turn of the century.

"Although a shutdown may be the result of a funding gap, the two events should be distinguished," the CRS report explains. "This is because a funding gap may result in a total shutdown of all affected projects or activities in some instances but not others."

"For example, when funding gaps are of a short duration, agencies may not have enough time to complete a shutdown of affected projects and activities before funding is restored," the CRS report says. "In addition, the Office of Management and Budget has previously indicated that a shutdown of agency operations within the first day of the funding gap may be postponed if a resolution appears to be imminent."

## **Four SD grassland restoration projects awarded a total of \$250,000 in federal funds**

**BY: SEARCHLIGHT STAFF - MARCH 22, 2024 5:16 PM**

South Dakota is set to receive \$250,000 in federal funding for the implementation of four grassland restoration projects across the eastern part of the state.

On Friday, the Department of the Interior announced a nearly \$11 million investment to help restore U.S. habitats across 18 states. The funds are in support of President Joe Biden's America the Beautiful initiative, which aims to conserve and restore 30 percent of U.S. lands and waters by 2030.

Interior Secretary Deb Haaland said the funding will support "nature-based solutions."

"At a time when tackling the climate and biodiversity crises could not be more critical, these investments in clean water, clean air, wildlife habitat, cultural resources and open spaces will benefit people, wildlife and local economies for generations to come," Haaland said in a news release.

The four initiatives in South Dakota aim to conserve, restore and improve the biology and ecology of native prairies. All the projects will be administered by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

The funded projects are in the following areas:

Waubay Wildlife Management District, in northeastern South Dakota, \$111,735.

Sand Lake Wildlife Management District, also in the northeast, \$88,000.

Huron Wildlife Management District, in eastern South Dakota, \$42,000.

Lake Andes Wildlife Management District, in the southeast, \$8,265.

The \$11 million comes from the \$1.2 trillion Bipartisan Infrastructure Law passed in 2021. The law allocated funds toward a broad spectrum of priorities, including transportation, broadband internet expansion, water systems improvement, and environmental restoration.

## Johnson votes yes as Congress rushes to approve \$1.2 trillion spending package

BY: JENNIFER SHUTT - MARCH 22, 2024 12:02 PM

WASHINGTON — The U.S. House approved a broadly bipartisan \$1.2 trillion spending package Friday, sending the legislation to the Senate ahead of a midnight deadline.

Senators have just hours to clear the measure for President Joe Biden's signature, otherwise parts of the federal government will begin a funding lapse early Saturday.

Meeting that benchmark will require agreement from all 100 senators, which could happen after Democratic and Republican leaders brokered an agreement on amendment votes. None of those proposals, however, are likely to garner enough votes to be added to the bill, since that would require it to go back to the House, delaying enactment.

Once the Senate clears the bill, it will join the House on a two-week recess, before returning to Capitol Hill the week of April 8.

### Biden in support

Biden is expected to sign the 1,012-page government funding package, which includes the final six annual appropriations bills that were supposed to become law nearly six months ago before the Oct. 1 start of the fiscal year.

The White House budget office wrote in a statement of administration policy released Thursday the administration was pleased the bill "rejects the extreme spending cuts and harmful riders proposed by House Republicans."

"Instead, the bill expands access to affordable child care and supports early childhood education through Head Start, and includes critical investments in lifesaving cancer and Alzheimer's research at the National Institutes of Health," the statement says. "The bill also maintains important investments in mental health and substance use prevention and treatment."

Congress released the package just before 3 a.m. Thursday after months of negotiations on the spending levels and policy throughout the measure.

The bill includes funding for the departments of Defense, Education, Health and Human Services, Homeland Security, Labor, State and Treasury.

There is also spending for dozens of smaller entities, including Congress, the Executive Office of the President, the judiciary and the Social Security Administration.

### Bipartisan backing, including SD's Johnson

The House's 286-134 vote to approve the legislation (including a yes vote from South Dakota Republican Dusty Johnson) followed mostly bipartisan debate, though conservative Republicans railed against how much it would spend and the fact it didn't include more policy changes.

House Appropriations Chairwoman Kay Granger, a Texas Republican, said the package "strengthens our national security and funds critical defense efforts."

"This package also includes other key priorities," Granger said. "It continues our strong support of Israel, combats the flow of illegal drugs and fully funds medical research for cancer and chronic diseases."

Connecticut Democratic Rep. Rosa DeLauro, ranking member on the spending panel, said the bills didn't have everything either political party wanted, but said she was "satisfied that many of the extreme cuts and the policies proposed by House Republicans were rejected."

"This bill sides with the hard-working majority of Americans, it helps to lower the cost of living, it protects women's rights and access to reproductive health care, it reinforces America's global leadership and it helps our communities be safe and secure," DeLauro said.

# Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, March 23, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 271 ~ 14 of 67

## Conservatives object over immigration

Florida Republican Rep. Anna Paulina Luna was one of about a dozen conservatives who spoke out against the legislation, saying it didn't go far enough to address illegal immigration.

"What we are seeing right now at the border is a rise in crime," Luna said. "We are seeing these very communities being impacted by the rise in gang violence. And frankly, it's been disgusting to watch crony capitalists push the importation of cheap labor."

Luna then rebuked Tyson Foods over a federal investigation into whether the company, along with Perdue Farms, used immigrants without legal authorization to be in the country, including children as young as 13, to clean overnight.

## Military pay and Israel aid

The six-bill government funding package included increases in funding to federal departments and programs important to each of the political parties as well as ones that regularly garner bipartisan support, though many programs face cuts as well.

The Defense Department would receive \$824.5 billion, a \$27.75 billion increase above its current funding level. That boost would go to numerous initiatives and programs, including a 5.2% pay raise for troops and civilian employees that would be retroactive to Jan. 1, 2024.

Within that Defense funding bill, \$500 million would go to the Israeli Cooperative Missile Defense Program and \$300 million would go to the Ukraine Security Assistance Initiative.

House Defense Appropriations Subcommittee Chairman Ken Calvert of California, said voting against the package "is a vote for China, Russia, Iran, North Korea and Hamas."

"Every member must understand the impact of not passing this package," Calvert said. "The only other option will be a full-year continuing resolution, which will devastate our national security and put our country at risk."

## Election security

The Financial Services and General Government bill would slightly reduce funding for the Treasury Department while keeping funding for the Internal Revenue Service flat. Spending on the Election Assistance Commission would receive a minor cut while lawmakers provided \$55 million for Election Security grants.

Maryland Democratic Rep. Steny Hoyer, ranking member on the FSGG spending subcommittee, said the bill was a "responsible compromise."

That FSGG spending bill includes 17 pages of earmarks, also called community project funding or congressionally directed spending.

Among the projects is \$3 million for the Alaska Federal Lands History Project, secured by Republican Sen. Lisa Murkowski and nearly \$1.5 million for Economic and Business Development Training for Lobstering Communities, secured by Maine's Republican Sen. Susan Collins and independent Sen. Angus King.

## Immigration funding

The Homeland Security bill boosts funding for Customs and Border Protection by \$3 billion to \$19 billion and funding for Immigration and Customs Enforcement by \$1.1 billion to \$9.6 billion.

The Federal Emergency Management Agency, which is housed within DHS, would receive a funding cut of \$72.9 million, dropping its allocation to \$25.3 billion.

That funding bill holds 18 pages of earmarks including \$2.9 million for the Anderson County Emergency Operations Center in Tennessee, requested by GOP Rep. Chuck Fleischmann; \$5 million for the City of Daphne Main Street Utility Relocation Project in Alabama, requested by Republican Sen. Katie Britt; and \$3.5 million for the Williamsport Levee Flood Control Project in Pennsylvania, requested by Democratic Sen. John Fetterman and GOP Rep. Dan Meuser.

Homeland Security Appropriations Subcommittee Chairman David Joyce, an Ohio Republican, said the bill "ensures that men and women of the Department of Homeland Security, who work tirelessly on our

# Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, March 23, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 271 ~ 15 of 67

behalf, have the resources and tools they need.”

“It reflects strong Republican priorities, cuts wasteful spending and prioritizes securing the border,” Joyce said. “We cannot surrender this progress for a wasteful and harmful government shutdown.”

## Cuts for Labor, HHS, Education

The Labor-HHS-Education bill includes small but not insignificant spending reductions for all three departments funded in the bill, though some programs did receive increases.

The National Institutes of Health would receive a \$300 million increase to \$48.6 billion, while the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention would get \$4.5 million more for a funding level of \$9.2 billion.

The legislation has a \$1 billion increase in spending for child care and early learning programs. The Child Care and Development Block Grant would see its appropriation rise by \$725 million to a total of \$8.8 billion. The Head Start program’s funding would increase by \$275 million to \$12.3 billion.

That bill holds 103 pages of earmarks that would go to numerous programs, including HHS’ Administration for Children and Families, the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration and the Labor Department’s Employment and Training Administration.

## Legislative Branch boost

The Legislative Branch spending bill increases funding for the U.S. House by \$3.4 million to nearly \$1.9 billion and for the U.S. Senate by \$104.2 million to almost \$1.3 billion.

Joint congressional items — which include the Joint Economic Committee, Joint Committee on Taxation, Joint Congressional Committee on Inaugural Ceremonies, Office of the Attending Physician and Office of Congressional Accessibility Services — received an overall funding level of \$28 million, \$4.9 million more than the current appropriation.

The U.S. Capitol Police, which handles an increasing number of threats against members, would see its funding increase by \$56.9 million to \$791.5 million.

The nonpartisan Congressional Budget Office, which publicly releases information on how much legislation would cost if enacted, would see its funding level rise by \$6.8 million to \$70 million.

## Foreign aid

The State-Foreign Operations bill would appropriate nearly \$58.4 billion, a \$3.4 billion cut compared to current funding levels. The legislation blocks U.S. funding from going to the United Nations Relief and Works Agency through March 25, 2025 and zeroes out funding for the United Nations Commission of Inquiry against Israel.

The bill includes \$6.1 billion for the foreign military financing program with \$3.3 billion of that for Israel and \$300 million for Taiwan.

State-Foreign Operations Appropriations Chairman Mario Díaz-Balart, a Florida Republican, said the bill is a “dramatic improvement” from current law.

“This bill reduces spending, it re-prioritizes funding towards our vital national security interests and carries crucial limitations and smart policy changes to rein in the Biden administration,” Díaz-Balart said. “And if this bill were to fail, we are giving carte blanche to the Biden bureaucracy.”

## U.S. Supreme Court to hear oral arguments Tuesday on abortion pill limits

BY: JENNIFER SHUTT - MARCH 22, 2024 3:51 PM

WASHINGTON — The same U.S. Supreme Court that overturned the constitutional right to an abortion will hear oral arguments Tuesday over access to mifepristone, a pharmaceutical used in both medication abortion and miscarriage care.

The nine justices will then decide whether to leave access to the drug intact or require the U.S. Food and Drug Administration to revert prescribing instructions to what were in place before 2016.

The court decision will affect the entire country, including states that have sought to shore up access to reproductive rights following the Dobbs ruling less than two years ago.

The Supreme Court opinion, likely not to come until late spring, will land in the middle of a presidential campaign in which Democrats are elevating the question of reproductive rights. The debate is also likely to affect GOP efforts to grow their majority in the U.S. House and flip the Senate red.

### Trend toward medication abortion

Medication abortion, a two-drug regimen that uses mifepristone and misoprostol, was used in 63% of abortions in the United States during 2023, according to a report released earlier this month by the Guttmacher Institute.

The new data shows a continued trend away from procedural abortions and toward medication abortion, which is approved up to 10 weeks gestation, that has been steadily increasing since the FDA originally approved mifepristone in 2000.

Medication abortions accounted for about 6% of pregnancy terminations in 2001, rising to 24% in 2011, before reaching 53% in 2020, according to Guttmacher.

During the last calendar year, the report says there were 1,026,690 abortions throughout the country, with 642,700 of those being medication abortions.

The numbers may not represent the full picture, however.

"The medication abortion counts for 2023 do not include self-managed medication abortions that take place outside of the formal health care system or abortion medication mailed to people in states with total abortion bans," the Guttmacher report states. "While there are no comprehensive data on the number of self-managed medication abortions in the United States, evidence suggests they have been increasing in the past several years."

### Alliance Defending Freedom suit

The case about to go in front of the Supreme Court, Food and Drug Administration v. Alliance for Hippocratic Medicine, began in November 2022 when Alliance Defending Freedom sued the FDA on behalf of four anti-abortion medical organizations and four anti-abortion doctors.

In the original lawsuit and numerous briefs since then, ADF argued that mifepristone leads to problematic situations for doctors who have to assist patients with complications from medication abortions. They've also made claims about safety, which have been repeatedly refuted by major medical organizations.

The lawsuit had called for the judicial system to overturn the FDA's original 2000 approval of mifepristone, which U.S. District Court for the Northern District of Texas Judge Matthew Joseph Kacsmaryk essentially agreed with, in his April 2023 ruling.

The 5th Circuit Court of Appeals in New Orleans, Louisiana, heard oral arguments in the federal government's appeal of that ruling in May 2023 before issuing its decision a few months later in August.

That three-judge panel said mifepristone could stay on the market, but that when and how patients can access the drug should go back to what was in place before the FDA began making changes in 2016.



# Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, March 23, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 271 ~ 17 of 67

## Telehealth and prescriptions

That would lower the maximum gestational age for using mifepristone from 10 weeks to seven weeks as well as remove the option for patients to get the prescription via telehealth and have it mailed to their homes.

Only doctors would be able to prescribe mifepristone, not health care professionals authorized to prescribe pharmaceuticals, like physician's assistants or nurse practitioners.

Patients would have to go back to attending three, in-person doctor's appointments in order to complete the process.

The dosage of mifepristone and the second pharmaceutical used in medication abortions, misoprostol, were different before the changes began to take effect.

The lower courts' rulings never took effect and the appeals court's ruling will remain on hold until the Supreme Court issues its opinion in the case, likely this summer.

## Briefs filed

Dozens of organizations, attorneys general and lawmakers have filed briefs with the Supreme Court seeking to inform the justices' thinking in the case ahead of Tuesday's oral arguments.

More than 15 major medical organizations, including the American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists and the American Medical Association, sought to reinforce the FDA's determination that mifepristone is safe and effective in their brief.

"Restricting access to mifepristone will not only jeopardize health, but worsen racial and economic inequities and deprive women of the choices that are at the very core of individual autonomy and wellbeing," the medical organizations wrote.

They noted that "major adverse events occur in less than 0.32% of patients," and that the "risk of death is almost non-existent."

About 145 Members of Congress from 36 states urged the court to restrict access to mifepristone in a separate brief filed with the court.

"Since 2016, the FDA has only required adverse events reporting for deaths resulting from chemical abortion drugs; reporting is otherwise voluntary," the members of Congress wrote, making the argument that reports are not required for injuries or impairment. "This action was not only arbitrary and capricious, but it also raised safety concerns for women seeking chemical abortion drugs."

## Brutal era can be overcome by returning to core values, Times columnist tells SD audience

BY: BRAD JOHNSON - MARCH 22, 2024 9:45 AM

SIOUX FALLS — The United States is living in a "brutal era," New York Times columnist David Brooks told about 2,000 people Tuesday at Augustana University, but there is hope today's ugly politics and social turmoil will lead to a better world.

Brooks, who also is a PBS NewsHour commentator and book author, was the featured speaker at The Center for Western Studies' 27th Boe Forum on Public Affairs.

First he took the audience on a depressing, but not surprising, journey.

"The famous dates of our recent lives have been brutal dates," he said. "September 11, January 6, October 7. Sometimes it seems the forces of dehumanization are on the march."

It is tempting, he said, to crawl under the covers and curl up. He noted that 36% of Americans feel lonely "frequently or most of the time."

The number of Americans reporting they have no close friends has increased fourfold and the number not in romantic relationships has "gone up 30% since 2000." During the same period, there has been a 50% increase of Americans placing themselves in the lowest happiness category, and 45% of teenagers

# Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, March 23, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 271 ~ 18 of 67

say they are persistently hopeless or despondent.

"There is some sort of weird spiritual-relational crisis in this country," he said. "And my fear is it is affecting our politics."

"We have become a sadder nation," he said, and correspondingly, we've become a "meaner nation."

Just 20 years ago, he said, "more than two-thirds of Americans gave to charity. Now less than half of Americans do."

Unfortunately, "The meanness shows up in our politics. It bleeds over everything."

He added that Google statics show that the usage of the word bravery has dropped by 65% over the last seven years. Gratitude is down 58%; humbleness is down 55%.

"I think the cause and the result is that we are just not as kind to each other," he said.

Mistrust is a major problem. About 75% of people in 1950 believed government would do the right thing, he said. "Now it is down to 18%."

With a lack of trust in institutions, he said, "people began to doubt vaccines. They doubt election results. They doubt the media. They doubt the legal system. You don't get rule of law. You get rule breakers."

His dire statistics continued as he referred to a 2018 survey that said 71% of young adults said most people would take advantage of them if they had a chance, and 80% said people just look out for themselves most of the time.

He cited a recent South Dakota News Watch survey that said 68% of South Dakotans believe democracy is under attack and 39% strongly or somewhat agree that violence is acceptable to protect American democracy.

Only 20% were very confident in the election results and, in a prior poll, 80% said civility has gotten worse.

The causes of our current problems are deeper than politics, he said, but voters easily can solve the political problems.

"First," he said, "stop voting for politicians who make it worse."

Secondly, "Don't vote for candidates who lie incessantly."

Repairing the tears in society will take more work.

"We have a society in which people are no longer trained on how to treat each other with kindness and consideration," Brooks said.

Our education system is focused on helping students get good grades. That system, he said, has created a meritocracy system where students of wealthier families perform better academically.

Those students then attend the more elite colleges, marry people of similar education and wealth, and move to the same cities. They become the 20% who "control the cultural lights. They control the media."

Eventually, the other 80% become fed up and support the populist politicians.

Changing society requires a change in how we view others.

"Our everyday actions are how society gets rebuilt," he said. "And it is not naive to lead with trust. It is not naive to lead with curiosity. It is not naive to lead with genuineness. You will be betrayed. You will be hurt. But it is still worth it."

He spoke of a college football coach who said his mission was to create better people on and off the field.

"That's what good leaders do," Brooks said. "That's what good societies do. They try to nurture the atmosphere in which it is easier to be good. They set the norms, the standards and they instill the habits, and people in such an atmosphere are likely to treat each other well."

It is important, he said, to make other people feel respected.

"When you see an individual, any person in this room," Brooks said, "you see someone made in the image of God. You are looking into the face of God. What you see is somebody who has some piece of them that has no size, color and shape. That is their soul, and it gives them infinite value and dignity.

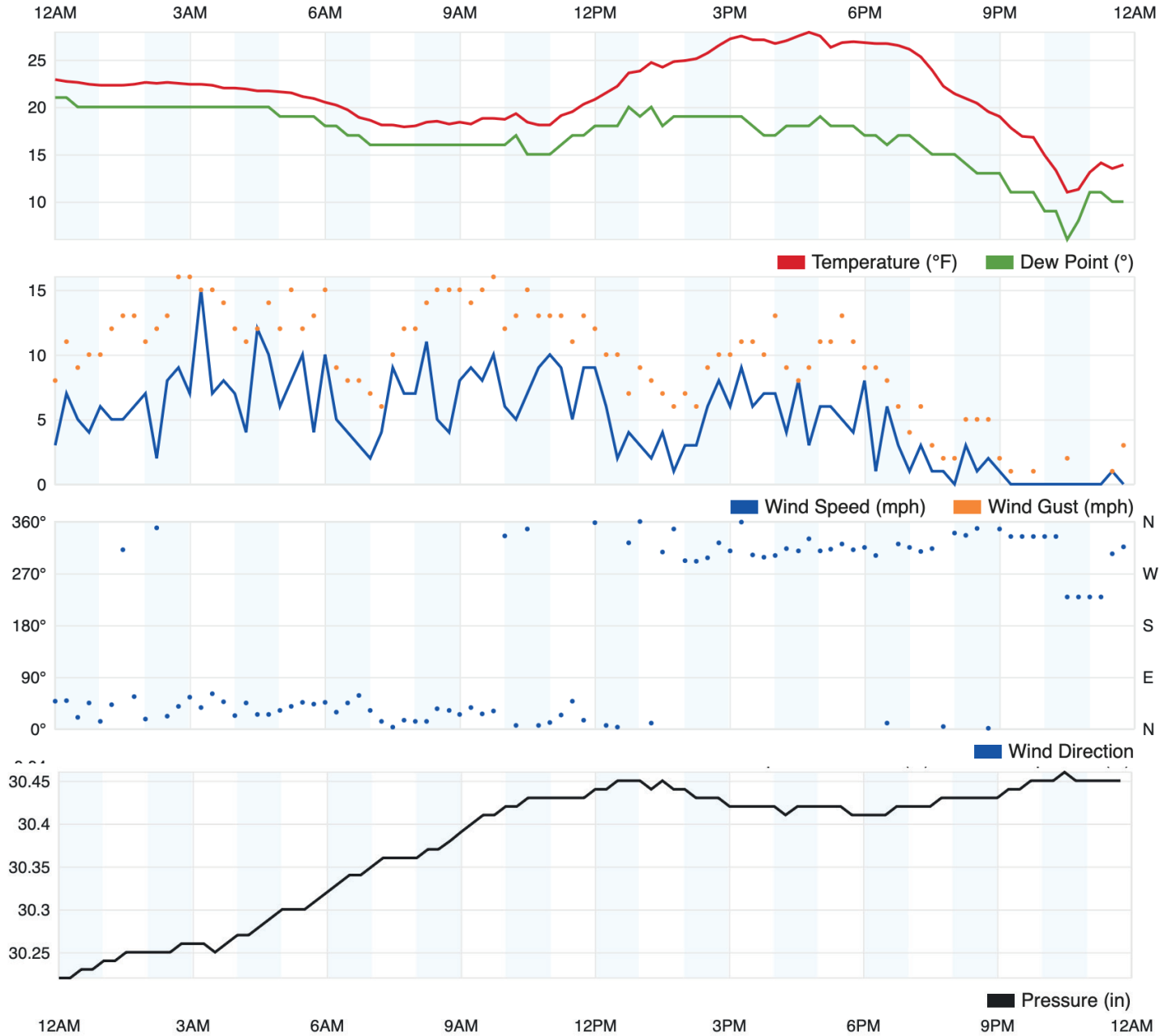
"You can be any religion, or an atheist," said Brooks. "But seeing someone with that much reverence and respect is a precondition for treating them well."

Building that trust and repairing society really comes down to the following, Brooks said: "being gentle, being trustworthy, being humble and being considerate.

# Groton Daily Independent

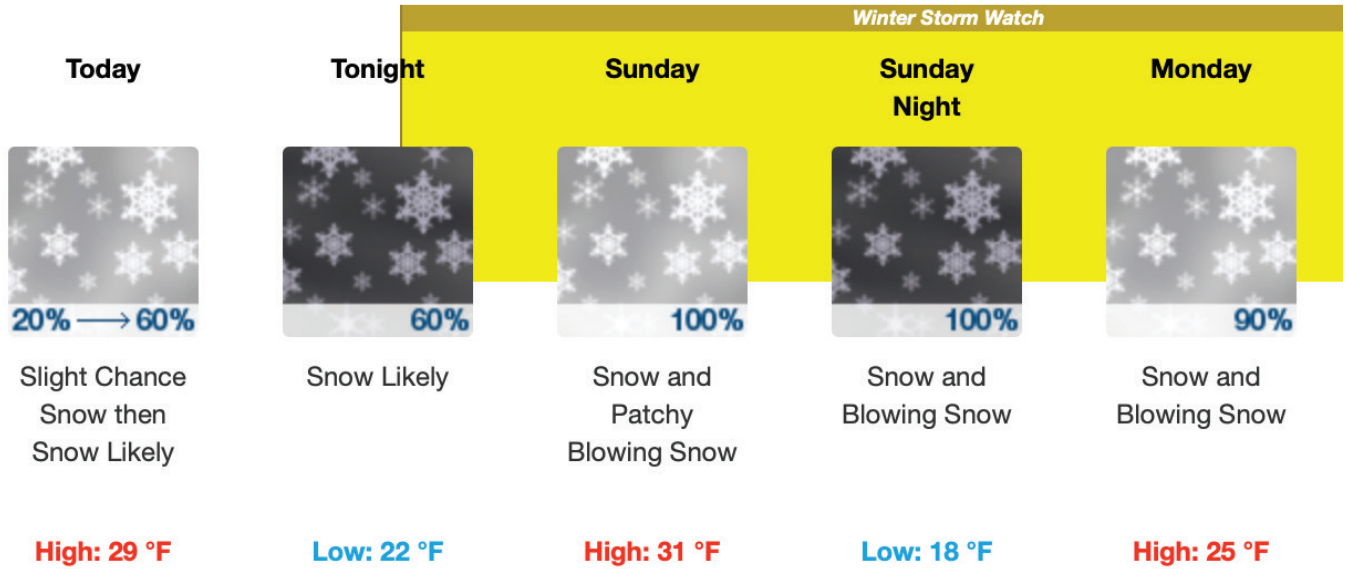
Saturday, March 23, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 271 ~ 19 of 67

## Yesterday's Groton Weather Graphs



# Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, March 23, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 271 ~ 20 of 67



## Strong Winter Storm Possible

March 22, 2024 4:09 PM

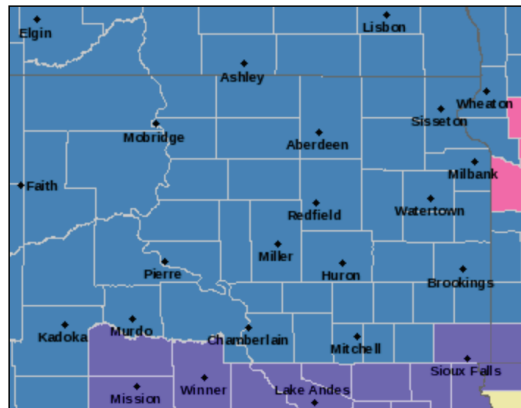
Winter Storm Watch now in effect

### Key Messages

- Confidence increasing for impactful winter storm system affecting the Northern Plains.
- **Heavy snow** in excess of **8 to 12+ inches** possible.
- Strong north to northeast winds may create significant impacts from blowing snow and low visibility.

### NEW Important Updates

- **Winter Storm Watch** in effect Saturday night through Monday night.



Last Map Update: Sat, Mar. 23, 2024 at 5:40:07 am CDT

[Watches, Warnings & Advisories](#)

[Zoom Out](#)

- Winter Storm Warning
- Winter Weather Advisory
- Winter Storm Watch
- Hazardous Weather Outlook

### Next Scheduled Weather Update

- Saturday morning.

Confidence is increasing for an impactful winter storm affecting the region. Snowfall amounts potentially from 8 to 12+ inches. Heavy snow in excess of 8 to 12+ inches is possible. Strong north to northeast winds may create significant impacts from blowing snow and low visibility.

# Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, March 23, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 271 ~ 21 of 67

## Winter Storm Watch URGENT - WINTER WEATHER MESSAGE National Weather Service Aberdeen SD 422 AM CDT Sat Mar 23 2024

McPherson-Brown-Edmunds-Faulk-Spink-Hyde-Hand-  
Including the cities of Eureka, Aberdeen, Ipswich, Faulkton, Redfield, Highmore, and Miller  
422 AM CDT Sat Mar 23 2024

...WINTER STORM WATCH NOW IN EFFECT FROM LATE TONIGHT THROUGH LATE MONDAY NIGHT...  
\* WHAT...Blizzard conditions possible. Total snow accumulations of 9 to 12 inches possible. Winds could gust as high as 50 mph.  
\* WHERE...Portions of central, north central and northeast South Dakota.  
\* WHEN...From late tonight through late Monday night.  
\* IMPACTS...Travel could be very difficult to impossible. Blowing snow could significantly reduce visibility. The hazardous conditions could impact the morning or evening commute.  
PRECAUTIONARY/PREPAREDNESS ACTIONS...  
Prepare for possible blizzard conditions. Continue to monitor the latest forecasts for updates on this situation.

## Significant Winter Storm Upcoming

March 22, 2024  
4:12 PM

Travel will likely become impossible Sunday night into Monday night for parts of the region

Saturday	Saturday Night	Sunday	Sunday Night	Monday	Monday Night	Tuesday
<p><b>Light snow moves in</b></p> <p>Accumulations of a dusting to 2"</p> <p>Southeast winds increase from west to east</p>	<p><b>Snow intensity increases late Saturday night into Sunday</b></p> <p>Winds turn to east-northeast and gust to 30-40 mph</p> <p>Blowing snow</p>	<p><b>Moderate to heavy snow east of the Missouri River</b></p> <p>North-northeast winds gusting between 35-55 mph</p> <p>Blowing snow</p> <p><b>Blizzard conditions?</b></p>	<p><b>Snow gradually diminishing from west to east through Tuesday</b></p> <p>Winds decreasing</p> <p>Lingering blowing snow</p> <p>*Despite improving weather - be aware travel may continue to be impacted</p>			
<b>Risk Levels</b>						
Little to None	Minor	Moderate	Major	Extreme		
National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration <small>U.S. Department of Commerce</small>				National Weather Service Aberdeen, SD		

The latest timeline with associated potential impacts. Sunday afternoon to Monday morning appears to be the worst of the storm at this time.

# Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, March 23, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 271 ~ 22 of 67

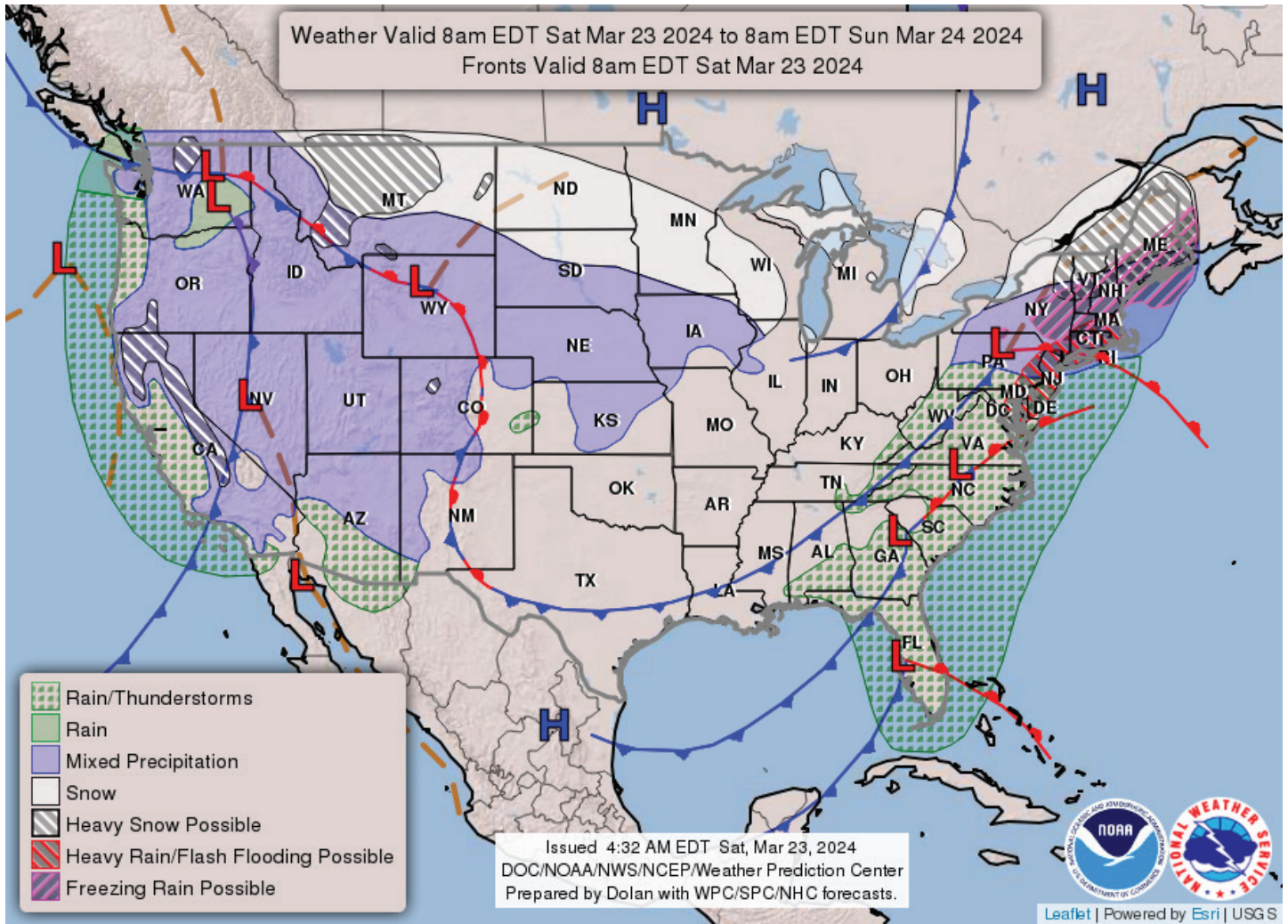
## Yesterday's Groton Weather

**High Temp: 28 °F at 4:49 PM**  
**Low Temp: 10 °F at 10:34 PM**  
**Wind: 17 mph at 9:33 AM**  
**Precip: : The moisture content was 0.42.**

Day length: 12 hours, 24 minutes

## Today's Info

Record High: 81 in 1963  
Record Low: -21 in 1899  
Average High: 46  
Average Low: 23  
Average Precip in March.: 0.61  
Precip to date in March: 0.42  
Average Precip to date: 1.78  
Precip Year to Date: 0.49  
Sunset Tonight: 7:50:52 pm  
Sunrise Tomorrow: 7:24:41 am



# Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, March 23, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 271 ~ 23 of 67

## Today in Weather History

March 23, 1987: Strong winds and heavy snow produced blizzard conditions across South Dakota March 23rd through the 25th. Snow amounts ranged from 6 to 19 inches. Snow totals included 19" at Winner (in Tripp County), 15" at Murdo (in Jones County), and 12" at Woonsocket (in Sanborn County) and Platte (in Charles Mix County). The wind piled the snow into drifts up to 10 feet deep. The heavy, wet snow broke power lines in several counties in the south-central and east-central parts of the state knocking out power for up to a few days.

March 23, 2011: A low-pressure system brought a variety of precipitation to central and eastern South Dakota and west central Minnesota on March 22nd and 23rd. Areas experienced rain, hail, sleet, snow and in some cases thundersnow. Click [HERE](#) for rain and snowfall totals.

1907: Today was the warmest March day ever recorded in Washington, DC with a maximum temperature of 93 degrees. Washington DC has seen three, 90 degrees days in March, all of which occurred in 1907.

1913: A significant tornado outbreak occurred in eastern Nebraska and western Iowa on this day. Seven estimated F2 or stronger tornadoes killed 168 people and caused extensive damage to the area on Easter Sunday.

1916 - Pocatello, ID, received a record 14.6 inches of snow in 24 hours. (The Weather Channel)

1987 - A blizzard raged across western Kansas, and the panhandle of Texas and Oklahoma. Pampa TX received 21 inches of snow, and winds gusted to 78 mph at Dodge City KS Altus OK. Governor Hayden declared forty-six counties in western Kansas a disaster area. In southwest Kansas, the storm was described as the worst in thirty years. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1988 - Thunderstorms developing along a strong cold front spawned tornadoes near Roberts ID and Bridger MT. Strong and gusty winds prevailed in the western U.S. Wind gusts in the southwest part of Reno NV reached 89 mph. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1989 - Charlotte and Wilmington, NC, reported rainfall records for the date as showers and thunderstorms prevailed in the southeastern U.S. Freezing rain glazed parts of North Carolina and southern Virginia. Gale force winds produced a heavy surf along the coast of North Carolina. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1990 - An upper level storm system produced heavy snow in the Lower Missouri Valley. Snowfall totals ranged up to nine inches at Kansas City MO, with eight inches reported at Falls City NE, Columbia MO and Saint Louis MO. Thunderstorms produced heavy snow in the Kansas City area during the evening rush hour. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

2007 - A trailer is thrown through a bowling alley as a tornado moves through Clovis, NM. About 100 homes and businesses are destroyed, at least three schools are damaged and telephone poles are snapped. Thirteen tornadoes struck a dozen communities along the New Mexico/Texas border. Two people were critically injured.

2011 - A series of tornados are spawned from severe thunderstorms in Pennsylvania. In Hempfield Township dozens of homes and a high school auditorium where students are rehearsing a play are severely damaged.

# Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, March 23, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 271 ~ 24 of 67

Daily Devotionals

## Seeds of Hope

### NOW OR NEVER

A soldier was assigned the responsibility of driving a senator from the airport to a military installation. Between the baggage claim area and the vehicle, he noticed an elderly lady struggling to pull her suitcase behind her. He immediately went to her rescue and pulled the bag until they met her waiting family. He then paused to help a young mother secure her child in a stroller. After that, he helped a man who was having a difficult time opening the door to the restroom.

Impressed, the senator asked, "How is it that you see so many people who need help and immediately go to their rescue?"

After a moment of silence, he replied quietly, "During my tour of duty in Vietnam, it was my job to clear minefields. I never knew if my next step would be my last. It was there that I learned to get the most out of every moment because, in life, it's now or never."

Paul summed it up this way: "Share each other's troubles and problems because if you do so, you will obey the law of Christ." We, as Christians, have a responsibility to God and to others who are faced with a difficult situation, to help them in their time of need. It can be as simple as opening a door or as complex as helping them through the loss of a loved one.

The size of the problem does not matter to God. What matters most to Him is the willingness of His children to help those in need.

Prayer: We pray, Lord, for eyes that see the needs of others, ears that hear the cries of others, hearts that are open to others, and hands that are willing to help others. In Jesus' Name, Amen.

Scripture For Today: Share each other's burdens, and in this way obey the law of Christ. Galatians 6:2



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



# Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, March 23, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 271 ~ 25 of 67

## The Groton Independent Printed & Mailed Weekly Edition

### Subscription Form

All prices listed include 6.5% Sales Tax

- Black & White ..... \$48.99/year
- Colored ..... \$79.88/year
- Colored ..... \$42.60/6 months
- E-Weekly\* ..... \$31.95/year

\* The E-Weekly is a PDF file emailed to you each week. It does not grant you access to the GDI/Video Archives.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Mailing Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_

State, Zip Code \_\_\_\_\_

E-mail \_\_\_\_\_

Phone Number \_\_\_\_\_

Mail Completed Form to:

Groton Independent

P.O. Box 34

Groton, SD 57445-0034

or scan and email to [paperpaul@grotonsd.net](mailto:paperpaul@grotonsd.net)

## Groton Daily Independent

[www.397news.com](http://www.397news.com)

### Subscription Form

This option will grant you access to the GDI/Video Archives.

- 1 Month ..... \$15.98
- 3 Months..... \$26.63
- 6 Months..... \$31.95
- 9 Months..... \$42.60
- 12 Months..... \$53.25

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Mailing Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_

State, Zip Code \_\_\_\_\_

Phone Number \_\_\_\_\_

The following will be used for your log-in information.

E-mail \_\_\_\_\_

Password \_\_\_\_\_

Pay with Paypal. Type the following into your browser window:

[paypal.me/paperpaul](https://paypal.me/paperpaul)



# Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, March 23, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 271 ~ 26 of 67



## WINNING NUMBERS

### MEGA MILLIONS

WINNING NUMBERS:  
03.22.24

3 8 31 35 44 16

MegaPlier: 3x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:  
**\$1,100,000,000**

NEXT DRAW:

PREVIOUS RESULTS

### LOTTO AMERICA

WINNING NUMBERS:  
03.20.24

3 16 29 44 50 7

All Star Bonus: 3x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:  
**\$2,350,000**

NEXT DRAW: 15 Hrs 57 Mins 50 Secs

PREVIOUS RESULTS

### LUCKY FOR LIFE

WINNING NUMBERS:  
03.22.24

18 27 34 35 43 16

TOP PRIZE:

**\$7,000/week**

NEXT DRAW: 16 Hrs 12 Mins 51 Secs

PREVIOUS RESULTS

### DAKOTA CASH

WINNING NUMBERS:  
03.20.24

6 9 10 11 35

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:  
**\$28,000**

NEXT DRAW: 16 Hrs 12 Mins 51 Secs

PREVIOUS RESULTS

### POWERBALL

DOUBLE PLAY

WINNING NUMBERS:  
03.20.24

7 9 10 26 43 24

TOP PRIZE:  
**\$10,000,000**

NEXT DRAW: 16 Hrs 41 Mins 51 Secs

PREVIOUS RESULTS

### POWERBALL

WINNING NUMBERS:  
03.20.24

13 22 27 54 66 9

Power Play: 2x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:  
**\$750,000,000**

NEXT DRAW: 16 Hrs 41 Mins 50 Secs

PREVIOUS RESULTS

## News from the Associated Press

### **Gonzaga relishes chance to host for first time in more than a decade but challenges await**

By CADEN FRANK Associated Press

SPOKANE, Wash. (AP) — It has been a long wait for No. 4 seed Gonzaga to get to host women's NCAA Tournament games again.

After rattling off 23 straight regular season wins, 21 by double figures, and maintaining a perfect regular season conference record there seemed to be little doubt the Zags would get the opportunity to host.

An unexpected 67-66 loss to Portland in the WCC tournament put having that home court advantage in doubt.

"That team out there against Portland isn't the team we are now, and it wasn't the team we have been. I think it was definitely an outlier for us," Gonzaga's Eliza Hollingsworth said.

Despite a little bit of uncertainty going into the tournament selections, Gonzaga earned that desired home court advantage for the first time in 11 years and will face 13th-seeded UC Irvine in the first round on Saturday.

On the other side of the bracket, No. 5 seed Utah will face 12th-seeded South Dakota State.

UC Irvine is back in the tournament for the first time since 1995, anchored by a defense that allows just 55 points per game. The Bulldogs score 81.2 points per game (10th in the nation) and have outscored opponents by a staggering 21.2 points per game.

"They don't have a lot of weaknesses that's for sure, a lot is going to have to go right for us," UC Irvine coach Tamara Inoue said. "We're not the biggest or the tallest out there but we've got that blue-collar work ethic and we won't step down to anybody."

Gonzaga will look to erase the memory of that Portland loss, while the Anteaters hope to ride the momentum of a Big West conference championship win, 53-39 over UC Davis.

"You can't have lapses in the big moments," Gonzaga coach Lisa Fortier said. "So, we're going to do our best to not have a repeat of that ever again, but certainly not tomorrow. I'm excited for the opportunity in front of our team, and I'm looking forward to what we can put together against Irvine tomorrow."

Utah just missed out on the opportunity to potentially host, but a late season home loss to Washington and getting knocked out by UCLA in the Pac-12 tournament quarterfinals ended those hopes for the Utes.

"Across the country there's no dispute that it (the Pac-12) is the toughest conference top to bottom," Utah coach Lynne Roberts said. "And it kind of hurt everyone's seeding because we all beat the crap out of each other for two months. Every weekend in the Pac-12 you're playing an NCAA-tournament caliber game, every single game is hard. We're battle-tested and ready."

South Dakota State won't be an easy task. The Jackrabbits have 21 straight games since losing to Gonzaga and Creighton in December. The Jackrabbits are making their third consecutive NCAA tournament appearance, the last time they were a twelve seed they knocked off 5th-seeded Miami in the 2016 tournament.

"I always say a team that knows who they are is hard to beat, and they definitely know who they are. They've got a few players who could play anywhere, they play the same no matter the score," said Roberts. "We know we have our hands full, that five and twelve seed mean nothing."

The Jackrabbits are led by Summit League player of the Year Brooklyn Meyer who averages 17 points per game, and they are no stranger to the tournament.

"This is our 12th run to this tournament, and it's special every time we get here but we want to continue to find ways to win games here and just grow as a program," South Dakota State coach Aaron Johnston said. "We want to be thought of as a team that advances in this tournament, and we get a chance to do that."

SDSU will have Alissa Pili to worry about. Pili is averaging 20.8 points and 6.5 rebounds per game while shooting 54.8% from the field. Pili was named third-team All-American along with All-Pac 12 honors.

"There's few things she can't do," Johnston. "We can't let her get comfortable, and we have to focus on doing that without forgetting about all of their other really good players."

## Wyoming governor vetoes abortion restrictions, signs transgender medical care ban for minors

By MEAD GRUVER Associated Press

CHEYENNE, Wyo. (AP) — Wyoming's governor on Friday vetoed a bill that would have erected significant barriers to abortion, should it remain legal in the state, and signed legislation banning gender-affirming care for minors.

The abortion bill rejected by Gov. Mark Gordon, a Republican, would have required facilities providing surgical abortions to be licensed as outpatient surgical centers, adding to their cost and the burdens they face to operate.

Women would have had to get ultrasounds no less than 48 hours before either a surgical or pill abortion to determine the fetus's gestational age and location and viability of the pregnancy.

Abortion is legal in Wyoming pending the outcome of a lawsuit challenging new laws to ban the procedure. The bill was aimed at the state's only full-service abortion clinic, Wellspring Health Access. The Casper facility opened in 2023 — almost a year later than planned after being badly burned in an arson attack by a woman who opposed abortion.

Gordon said in announcing the veto that the measure would have "properly regulated" clinics. But he said amendments added by lawmakers made it vulnerable to legal challenge.

"The state is closer than ever to a decision on the constitutionality of abortion in Wyoming," Gordon said in a statement, adding that the bill "had the potential to further delay the resolution of this critical issue for the unborn."

Most abortions at Wellspring are administered through pills but the clinic has been able to perform surgical abortions as well, according to clinic officials who opposed the bill.

The measure would have required abortions at any clinic to be provided only by a licensed physician who has admitting privileges at a hospital no more than 10 miles (16 kilometers) away.

The result would have been major new costs to renovate Wellspring to meet ambulatory surgical facility standards while getting "medically unnecessary" admitting privileges for its doctors, clinic founder Julie Burkhart said in an emailed statement. Women also faced added travel and time-off-work costs to meet the ultrasound requirement, Burkhart added.

She said the bill was meant to close down the clinic, which would hurt people who are in need of abortion services.

"Outlawing abortion will never serve as a vehicle for making this health care obsolete," she said.

Last year, the Wyoming Legislature passed — and Gordon signed into law — measures that restrict abortion in the state, including the first-in-the-U.S. explicit ban on abortion pills. Teton County District Judge Melissa Owens in Jackson has put the laws on hold while considering lawsuits against them filed by Wellspring and others.

At a hearing in December, Owens said she planned to issue a ruling rather than let the lawsuit go to trial. On Monday, however, she sent all major questions in the case to the state Supreme Court to consider instead.

Owens has shown sympathy for Wyoming's abortion-rights supporters. She has said they are likely to prevail, for example, with their argument that abortion is allowed under a 2012 state constitutional amendment, which states that competent adults have the right to make their own health care decisions.

Attorneys for Wyoming counter that the amendment — approved in response to the federal Affordable Care Act — was never intended to apply to abortion.

Wyoming's latest abortion bill faced a higher bar just to be debated in this year's legislative session, which ended March 8. Bills in the four-week session not related to the budget needed a two-thirds vote to be introduced.

"Those of us who stand for legislation like this, we know deep down that life has meaning beyond this floor," Sen. Dan Dockstader, a Republican from Afton, said in a debate before the bill passed the Senate on a 24-6 vote March 1.

The bill earlier cleared the state House with a 53-9 vote.

While rejecting the abortion bill, Gordon signed into law a measure that makes Wyoming the latest state to ban gender-affirming medical care for transgender minors, saying he supports the bill's protections for minors. He added, however, that he also thinks such legislation amounts to the government "straying into the personal affairs of families."

At least 24 states have adopted laws restricting or banning gender-affirming medical care for minors, and most of those states have been sued. A federal judge struck down Arkansas' ban as unconstitutional. In Idaho and Montana, judges' orders are in place temporarily blocking enforcement of the bans.

Wyoming lawmakers also passed bills this session enforcing parental rights in education. Gordon said the Legislature needs to "sort out its intentions" on parental rights.

## Spring snowfall in parts of northern US follows mild winter of canceled ski trips and festivals

By HEATHER HOLLINGSWORTH and TODD RICHMOND Associated Press

MADISON, Wis. (AP) — After a season with very little snow, a blast of snowy weather could dump a foot or more in some northern states, just as spring officially arrives.

Parts of Montana, the Dakotas, Minnesota, Illinois and Wisconsin are under winter weather advisories, with snow expected to start falling Thursday in some areas. Minnesota could see a foot of snow over the weekend, and parts of New England could also see 12 to 18 inches (30 to 45 centimeters) in the coming days.

"It seems like it is supposed to be in like a lion and out like a lamb," said Brian Hurley, a senior meteorologist with the National Weather Service's Weather Prediction Center. "Now it just seems like it was flipped for a lot of these areas: In like a lamb and out like a lion."

The spring follows a wild winter, with record heat in February allowing for golf in Wisconsin and outdoor food trucks in Minnesota.

The weather has been so unseasonably warm that many tulips in Pella, Iowa, bloomed in advance of the city's famed Tulip Time Festival in early May. Organizers plan to use hundreds of wooden tulips to supplement the blooms.

The Minnesota Ice Festival, which was supposed to include an ice carving competition, ice-skating rink and a record-setting 18,000 square foot (1,670 square meter) ice maze, had to be canceled.

"I barely even put on a jacket," said Minnesota Ice CEO Robbie Harrell, who canceled the event. "Born and raised here in Minnesota. I personally cannot ever remember such a brown winter. It is almost sad."

Now that his trees are budding with spring blooms, snow is coming.

"Let's get that curveball in there," he lamented. "We will get a little taste of winter."

It is one of the oddest years ever for Rachel Schindele, of Woodland Resort, which offers ice fishing packages at Devil's Lake in North Dakota.

"We definitely got on the ice later than we usually would," she said. "And we definitely had times when we weren't on the ice for safety reasons."

A native of the state, she has seen snow often in March and sometimes even in April. "So that part of it, getting snow itself, isn't strange," she said. "It is more the timing of the snow versus the rest of the year. This year our snow accumulation was pretty much nonexistent."

In Montana, business was down by 30% early in the season at the Whitefish Mountain Resort, said spokesman Chad Sokol. Conditions later improved, but some of the resorts at lower altitudes had mid-season closures.

"It was definitely a logistical challenge," Sokol said, adding that as the season comes to an end, the business shifts from out-of-town visitors to local season pass holders.

# Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, March 23, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 271 ~ 30 of 67

"I am sure," he said, "they will be coming in droves to catch this last storm."

Lutsen Mountains ski resort in northern Minnesota also was cheering the snow, posting on Facebook: "Get ready to dust off those skis and snowboards because Mother Nature has a treat in store for us!"

A mishmash of systems get the credit — or the blame, depending on who you ask — for this spring snowstorm.

The National Weather Service said a potent storm system rapidly strengthening over eastern Maine is already producing heavy snow. Forecasters are predicating that by Saturday, parts of Maine, as well as Vermont and New Hampshire, will be coated with at least 8 inches (20 centimeters) of snow.

Meanwhile, another system has already started spreading light to moderate snow from northeast Montana to the Dakotas, and is expected to expand into the Upper Midwest and Great Lakes by Friday. Another system will arrive on its heels, entering from the West Coast on Friday and spreading precipitation inland.

Additional heavy snow will continue into early next week across much of the northern Plains, the National Weather Service said.

In North Dakota, Huff-area farmer and rancher Kenny Graner began preparing on Tuesday for the snow that fell Wednesday night by making added space in barns and calf shelters to keep newborn calves dry — "probably one of the most important aspects in our industry," so the calves don't get wet and chilled, he said.

"We prepared. We were expecting the worst," Graner said. An inch (2.54 centimeters) of snow fell at his place. He'll keep the same preparations for a storm yet to come.

"We'd rather see rain in April and May than snowstorms in March," Graner said.

In Wisconsin, where record-setting warmth in February contributed to the first tornadoes the state has ever seen in that month, forecasts called for anywhere from 1 to 3 inches (2.5 to 7.6 centimeters) across southern parts of the state by Friday afternoon.

Madison, the state capital, braced for up to 5 inches (12.7 cm) and Milwaukee was set to get up to 6 inches (15.2 cm). Up to 5 inches (12.7 cm) was expected to fall on Lake Geneva, where organizers were forced to cut the city's annual winter ice festival short due to February's warm temperatures.

Grand Rapids, Michigan, expected to receive around 4 inches (10.2 cm). The storm was expected to just clip the Chicago area, with forecasts calling for rain and snow but little accumulation.

Temperatures won't be particularly cold, mostly in the 20s and 30s, said Hurley, of the Weather Prediction Center.

"Some of these areas are going to see maybe their heaviest snow of the season, if you call it a new season," he said. "We will call it the cool season."

## **Russia detains suspects in an attack that left at least 115 dead in a Moscow concert hall**

MOSCOW (AP) — Russian authorities detained 11 people, state media reported Saturday, after gunmen stormed a concert hall in Moscow in a grisly attack that left at least 115 people dead.

Russia's Investigative Committee said four of those detained were directly involved in the attack that left the sprawling shopping mall and music venue smoldering with a collapsed roof.

Russian agencies appeared to suggest the attack was linked to Ukraine even though the Islamic State group claimed responsibility in a statement. A U.S. intelligence official told The Associated Press that U.S. agencies had confirmed that that group was responsible for the attack.

The four suspects were stopped in the Bryansk region of western Russia, "not far from the border with Ukraine," Russia's Investigative Committee said. They planned to cross the border into Ukraine and "had contacts" there, state news agency Tass said, citing Russia's FSB. The head of the FSB briefed President Vladimir Putin on the arrests on Saturday, according to Tass.

The attack came just days after Putin cemented his grip on power in a highly orchestrated electoral landslide. The attack was the deadliest in Russia in years and came as the country's fight in Ukraine dragged into a third year.

# Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, March 23, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 271 ~ 31 of 67

Shortly after the attack, some Russian lawmakers pointed the finger at Ukraine. Mykhailo Podolyak, an adviser to Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy, denied any involvement.

"Ukraine has never resorted to the use of terrorist methods," he posted on X, formerly Twitter. "Everything in this war will be decided only on the battlefield."

Images shared by Russian state media Saturday showed a fleet of emergency vehicles still gathered outside the ruins of Crocus City Hall, which had a capacity of more than 6,000 people in Krasnogorsk, on Moscow's western edge.

Videos posted online showed gunmen in the venue shooting civilians at point-blank range. The roof of the theater, where crowds had gathered Friday for a performance by the Russian rock band Picnic, collapsed in the early hours of Saturday morning as firefighters spent hours fighting a fire that erupted during the attack.

In a statement posted by its Amaq news agency, the Islamic State's affiliate in Afghanistan said it had attacked a large gathering of "Christians" in Krasnogorsk. It was not immediately possible to verify the authenticity of the claim.

A U.S. intelligence official told the AP that U.S. intelligence agencies had gathered information in recent weeks that the IS branch was planning an attack in Moscow, and that U.S. officials had privately shared the intelligence earlier this month with Russian officials.

The official was briefed on the matter but was not authorized to publicly discuss the intelligence information and spoke to the AP on condition of anonymity.

Messages of outrage, shock and support for those affected have since streamed in from around the world.

On Friday, the U.N. Security Council condemned "the heinous and cowardly terrorist attack" and underlined the need for the perpetrators to be held accountable. U.N. Secretary-General Antonio Guterres also condemned the terrorist attack "in the strongest possible terms," his spokesman said.

Meanwhile, in Moscow itself, hundreds of people stood in line Saturday morning to donate blood and plasma, Russia's health ministry said.

Putin, who extended his grip on Russia for another six years in this week's presidential vote after a sweeping crackdown on dissent, had publicly denounced the Western warnings of a potential terrorist attack as an attempt to intimidate Russians. "All that resembles open blackmail and an attempt to frighten and destabilize our society," he said earlier this week.

In October 2015, a bomb planted by the Islamic State downed a Russian passenger plane over Sinai, killing all 224 people on board, most of them Russian vacation-goers returning from Egypt. The group, which operates mainly in Syria and Iraq but also in Afghanistan and Africa, also has claimed several attacks in Russia's volatile Caucasus and other regions in the past years. It recruited fighters from Russia and other parts of the former Soviet Union.

## Senate passes \$1.2 trillion funding package in early morning vote, ending threat of partial shutdown

By KEVIN FREKING and MARY CLARE JALONICK Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — The Senate passed a \$1.2 trillion package of spending bills in the early morning hours Saturday, a long overdue action nearly six months into the budget year that will push any threats of a government shutdown to the fall. The bill now goes to President Joe Biden to be signed into law.

The vote was 74-24. It came after funding had expired for the agencies at midnight, but the White House sent out a notice shortly after the deadline announcing the Office of Management and Budget had ceased shutdown preparations because there was a high degree of confidence that Congress would pass the legislation and the president would sign it on Saturday.

"Because obligations of federal funds are incurred and tracked on a daily basis, agencies will not shut down and may continue their normal operations," the White House statement said.

Prospects for a short-term government shutdown had appeared to grow Friday evening after Republi-

# Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, March 23, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 271 ~ 32 of 67

cans and Democrats battled over proposed amendments to the bill. Any successful amendments to the bill would have sent the legislation back to the House, which had already left town for a two-week recess.

But shortly before midnight Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer announced a breakthrough.

"It's been a very long and difficult day, but we have just reached an agreement to complete the job of funding the government," Schumer said. "It is good for the country that we have reached this bipartisan deal. It wasn't easy, but tonight our persistence has been worth it."

While Congress has already approved money for Veterans Affairs, Interior, Agriculture and other agencies, the bill approved this week is much larger, providing funding for the Defense, Homeland Security and State departments and other aspects of general government.

The House passed the bill Friday morning by a vote of 286-134, narrowly gaining the two-thirds majority needed for approval. More than 70% of the money would go to defense.

The vote tally in the House reflected anger among Republicans over the content of the package and the speed with which it was brought to a vote. House Speaker Mike Johnson brought the measure to the floor even though a majority of Republicans ended up voting against it. He said afterward that the bill "represents the best achievable outcome in a divided government."

In sign of the conservative frustration, Rep. Marjorie Taylor Greene, R-Ga., initiated an effort to oust Johnson as the House began the vote but held off on further action until the House returns in two weeks. It's the same tool that was used last year to remove the last Republican speaker, Kevin McCarthy of California.

The vote breakdown showed 101 Republicans voting for the bill and 112 voting against it. Meanwhile, 185 Democrats voted for the bill and 22 against.

Rep. Kay Granger, the Republican chair of the House Appropriations Committee that helped draft the package, stepped down from that role after the vote. She said she would stay on the committee to provide advice and lead as a teacher for colleagues when needed.

Johnson broke up this fiscal year's spending bills into two parts as House Republicans revolted against what has become an annual practice of asking them to vote for one massive, complex bill called an omnibus with little time to review it or face a shutdown. Johnson viewed that as a breakthrough, saying the two-part process was "an important step in breaking the omnibus muscle memory."

Still, the latest package was clearly unpopular with most Republicans, who viewed it as containing too few of their policy priorities and as spending too much.

"The bottom line is that this is a complete and utter surrender," said Rep. Eric Burlison, R-Mo.

It took lawmakers six months into the current fiscal year to get near the finish line on government funding, the process slowed by conservatives who pushed for more policy mandates and steeper spending cuts than a Democratic-led Senate or White House would consider. The impasse required several short-term, stopgap spending bills to keep agencies funded.

The first package of full-year spending bills, which funded the departments of Veterans Affairs, Agriculture and the Interior, among others, cleared Congress two weeks ago with just hours to spare before funding expired for those agencies.

When combining the two packages, discretionary spending for the budget year will come to about \$1.66 trillion. That does not include programs such as Social Security and Medicare, or financing the country's rising debt.

To win over support from Republicans, Johnson touted some of the spending increases secured for about 8,000 more detention beds for migrants awaiting their immigration proceedings or removal from the country. That's about a 24% increase from current levels. Also, GOP leadership highlighted more money to hire about 2,000 Border Patrol agents.

Democrats, meanwhile, are boasting of a \$1 billion increase for Head Start programs and new child care centers for military families. They also played up a \$120 million increase in funding for cancer research and a \$100 million increase for Alzheimer's research.

"Make no mistake, we had to work under very difficult top-line numbers and fight off literally hundreds of extreme Republican poison pills from the House, not to mention some unthinkable cuts," said Sen. Patty Murray, the Democratic chair of the Senate Appropriations Committee.



Sen. Susan Collins, the top Republican on that committee, appealed to her GOP colleagues by stating that the bill's spending on non-defense programs actually decreases even before accounting for inflation. She called the package "conservative" and "carefully drafted."

"These bills are not big spending bills that are wildly out of scope," Collins said.

The spending package largely tracks with an agreement that then-Speaker McCarthy worked out with the White House in May 2023, which restricted spending for two years and suspended the debt ceiling into January 2025 so the federal government could continue paying its bills.

Shalanda Young, director of the White House Office of Management and Budget, told lawmakers that last year's agreement, which became the Fiscal Responsibility Act, will save the federal government about \$1 trillion over the coming decade.

## 'I will not feed a demon': YouTuber Ruby Franke's child abuse case rooted in religious extremism

By HANNAH SCHOENBAUM Associated Press

SALT LAKE CITY (AP) — The malnourished and badly bruised son of a parenting advice YouTuber politely asks a neighbor to take him to the nearest police station in newly released video from the day his mother and her business partner were arrested on child abuse charges in southern Utah.

The 12-year-old son of Ruby Franke, a mother of six who dispensed advice to millions via a popular YouTube channel, had escaped through a window and approached several nearby homes until someone answered the door, according to documents released Friday by the Washington County Attorney's office.

Crime scene photos, body camera video and interrogation tapes were released a month after Franke and business partner Jodi Hildebrandt, a mental health counselor, were each sentenced to up to 30 years in prison. A police investigation determined religious extremism motivated the women to inflict horrific abuse on Franke's children, Washington County Attorney Eric Clarke announced Friday.

"The women appeared to fully believe that the abuse they inflicted was necessary to teach the children how to properly repent for imagined 'sins' and to cast the evil spirits out of their bodies," Clarke said.

Franke, 42, and Hildebrandt, 54, pleaded guilty to four counts of aggravated child abuse that included convincing Franke's two youngest children they were evil and subjecting them to manual labor, dayslong fasting and conditions Clarke has described as "concentration camp-like."

The women, who have said they belong to the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, were arrested last August at Hildebrandt's house in Ivins, a picturesque suburb of St. George, after her neighbor Danny Clarkson opened his door to find the emaciated boy. Their actions have been condemned by other Mormon parenting bloggers who say they misrepresented their community and the religion.

In the video, the boy is seen shoeless, walking away — wearing torn socks with his ankles wrapped in bloody duct tape and plastic wrap — but turns back when Clarkson answers the door. He and his wife, Debi, could be seen on their Ring camera feeding the child, calling 911 and asking him about the lacerations on his ankles and wrists, which the boy insisted were his fault.

"I got these wounds because of me," the boy tells the couple as they share worried looks. He tells first responders his younger sister is still in Hildebrandt's house, and police rush to the home.

The boy later told investigators that Hildebrandt had used rope to bind his arms and his feet to weights on the ground. She used a mixture of cayenne pepper and honey to dress his wounds, according to the police report. He had been told by Franke and Hildebrandt that everything being done to him was an act of love.

In handwritten journal entries also released Friday, Franke chronicles months of daily abuse that included starving her son and 9-year-old daughter, forcing them to work for hours in the summer heat and isolating them from the outside world. The women often made the kids sleep on hard floors and sometimes locked them in a concrete bunker in Hildebrandt's basement.

Franke insists repeatedly in her journal that her son is possessed by the devil. In a July 2023 entry titled "Big day for evil," she describes holding the boy's head under water and closing off his mouth and nose

with her hands. Franke tells him the devil will lie and say she is hurting him but that she is actually trying to save him.

She later justifies withholding food and water from her son, writing, "I will not feed a demon."

Franke's attorney, LaMar Winward, and Hildebrandt's attorney, Douglas Terry, did not immediately respond Friday to requests for comment on the new evidence.

Body camera video shows officers entering Hildebrandt's house and detaining her on the couch while others scour the winding hallways in search of the young girl. They quickly discover a child with a buzz-cut sitting cross-legged in a dark, empty closet. After hours of sitting with the girl and feeding her pizza, police coax her out.

Franke describes shaving the girl's head several times for whining, and writes in her journal, "If she is going to act sick, she can look sick."

Franke and her husband, Kevin Franke, launched "8 Passengers" on YouTube in 2015 and amassed a large following as they documented their experiences raising six children in a Mormon community in Springville. The couple also have a 15-year-old and a 16-year-old, as well as two adult children.

She later began working with Hildebrandt's counseling company, ConneXions Classroom, offering parenting seminars, launching another YouTube channel and publishing content on their shared Instagram account, "Moms of Truth."

Ruby Franke was already a divisive figure in the parent vlogging world. The Franke parents had been criticized online for banning their oldest son from his bedroom for seven months for pranking his brother. In other videos, Ruby Franke talked about refusing to take lunch to a kindergartener who forgot it at home.

The "8 Passengers" YouTube channel has since ended, and Kevin Franke filed for divorce shortly after his wife's arrest. He appears stunned in interrogation footage when officers inform him of his son's condition. He had not seen his wife or children since Franke asked him to move out in July 2022, investigators said.

Kevin Franke has filed several petitions in the months since his wife's arrest in hopes of regaining custody of his four minor children, who were taken into state custody.

## **Texas school bus with over 40 pre-K students struck by cement truck, killing 2, authorities say**

BASTROP, Texas (AP) — A cement truck veered into a school bus carrying more than 40 pre-K students returning from a field trip to a Texas zoo Friday, killing a boy on the bus and a man in another vehicle, authorities said.

Officials said the bus rolled over on the highway in the rural outskirts of Austin, where a heavy presence of emergency vehicles shut down traffic for hours. The roof of the bus was crumpled, and much of another vehicle nearby was pulverized. Personal items were strewn across the road.

Four people in critical condition were airlifted from the crash site. Six others with potentially serious injuries were transported by ambulance, said Kevin Parker, division chief Austin-Travis County Emergency Medical Services.

An ambulance bus transported about 10 other patients to a children's hospital with minor injuries, Parker said. Passengers on the bus included 44 students and 11 adults, according to the Hays Consolidated Independent School District.

The child who died "was a precious young boy" who was a pre-K student at Tom Green Elementary School in Buda, according to Eric Wright, school district superintendent. The child's name was not released.

Wright said in addition to the two people who died, 51 others were injured, including the bus driver.

"This is a horrible and tragic day for our school district," Wright said.

The bus was struck at about 2 p.m. when the concrete truck, which was traveling in the opposite direction, veered into the bus' lane, Texas Department of Public Safety Sgt. Deon Cockrell said. He added that authorities told him initial information indicated the truck hit the bus head-on, causing it to roll over.

The man who was killed was in a vehicle that either ran into the back of the bus or maybe part of the concrete truck, Cockrell said. There was one person in the truck and one man in the other vehicle. Cockrell

didn't know how fast the vehicles were going. He said the truck driver was cooperating with authorities. Parents of the students on the bus were notified of the crash and all the children were reunited with their families by the evening, Wright said.

Cynthia Yescas said her 4-year-old nephew had been on the bus and that he was OK, but a little hurt, the Austin American-Statesman reported.

"The kids are more scared than anything else," she said.

The bus didn't have seatbelts because it was a 2011 model, Tim Savoy, a Hays school district spokesperson, told the newspaper. New buses have been fitted with belts since 2017, he said.

Gov. Greg Abbott said in a post on the social media platform X that he spoke with the district superintendent "and offered the state's full support as they help their community through this tragedy."

State Rep. Erin Zwiener, whose district includes Buda, said in a post on Facebook that her heart goes out to the families affected.

"In this terrible moment, our community must come together to support those who've lost loved ones and those who are recovering," she wrote, also thanking first responders and school district employees who she said "saved lives today."

Buda is about 16 miles (25 kilometers) southwest of Austin.

## **Russia says 60 dead, 145 injured in concert hall raid; Islamic State group claims responsibility**

MOSCOW (AP) — Assailants burst into a large concert hall in Moscow on Friday and sprayed the crowd with gunfire, killing over 60 people, injuring more than 100 and setting fire to the venue in a brazen attack just days after President Vladimir Putin cemented his grip on power in a highly orchestrated electoral landslide.

The Islamic State group claimed responsibility for the attack in a statement posted on affiliated channels on social media. A U.S. intelligence official told The Associated Press that U.S. intelligence agencies had learned the group's branch in Afghanistan was planning an attack in Moscow and shared the information with Russian officials.

It wasn't immediately clear what happened to the attackers after the raid, which state investigators were investigating as terrorism.

The attack, which left the concert hall in flames with a collapsing roof, was the deadliest in Russia in years and came as the country's war in Ukraine dragged into a third year. Moscow Mayor Sergei Sobyanyin called the raid a "huge tragedy."

The Kremlin said Putin was informed minutes after the assailants burst into Crocus City Hall, a large music venue on Moscow's western edge that can accommodate 6,200 people.

The attack took place as crowds gathered for a performance by the Russian rock band Picnic. The Investigative Committee, the top state criminal investigation agency, reported early Saturday that more than 60 people were killed. Health authorities released a list of 145 injured — 115 of them hospitalized, including five children.

Some Russian news reports suggested more victims could have been trapped by the blaze that erupted after the assailants threw explosives.

Video showed the building on fire, with a huge cloud of smoke rising through the night sky. The street was lit up by the blinking blue lights of dozens of firetrucks, ambulances and other emergency vehicles, as fire helicopters buzzed overhead to dump water on the blaze that took hours to contain.

The prosecutor's office said several men in combat fatigues entered the concert hall and fired on concertgoers.

Dave Primov, who was in the hall during the attack, described panic and chaos when the attack began. "There were volleys of gunfire," Primov told the AP. "We all got up and tried to move toward the aisles. People began to panic, started to run and collided with each other. Some fell down and others trampled

# Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, March 23, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 271 ~ 36 of 67

on them.”

Videos posted by Russian media and on messaging app channels showed men toting assault rifles shooting screaming people at point-blank range. One video showed a man in the auditorium saying the assailants had set it on fire, as gunshots rang out incessantly.

Guards at the concert hall didn't have guns, and some could have been killed at the start of the attack, Russian media reported. Some Russian news outlets suggested the assailants fled before special forces and riot police arrived. Reports said police patrols were looking for several vehicles the attackers could have used to escape.

In a statement posted by its Amaq news agency, the Islamic State group said it attacked a large gathering of “Christians” in Krasnogorsk on Moscow's outskirts, killing and wounding hundreds. It was not immediately possible to verify the authenticity of the claim.

However, U.S. intelligence officials confirmed the claim by the Islamic State group's branch based in Afghanistan that it was responsible for the Moscow attack, a U.S. official told the AP.

The official said U.S. intelligence agencies had gathered information in recent weeks that the IS branch was planning an attack in Moscow. He said U.S. officials privately shared the intelligence earlier this month with Russian officials. The official was briefed on the matter but was not authorized to publicly discuss the intelligence information and spoke to the AP on condition of anonymity.

Noting that the IS statement cast its claim as an attack targeting Christians, Aymenn Jawad al-Tamimi, an expert on the terrorist group, said it appeared to reflect the group's strategy of “striking wherever they can as part of a global ‘fight the infidels and apostates everywhere.’”

In October 2015, a bomb planted by IS downed a Russian passenger plane over Sinai, killing all 224 people on board, most of them Russian vacation-goers returning from Egypt. The group, which operates mainly in Syria and Iraq but also in Afghanistan and Africa, also has claimed several attacks in Russia's volatile Caucasus and other regions in the past years. It recruited fighters from Russia and other parts of former Soviet Union.

On March 7, Russia's top security agency said it thwarted an attack on a synagogue in Moscow by an Islamic State cell, killing several of its members in the Kaluga region near the Russian capital. A few days earlier, Russian authorities said six alleged IS members were killed in a shootout in Ingushetia in Russia's Caucasus region.

On Friday, statements of outrage, shock and support for those affected by the concert call attack streamed in from around the world.

Some commentators on Russian social media questioned how authorities, who relentlessly surveil and pressure Kremlin critics, failed to identify the threat and prevent the attack.

Russian officials said security was tightened at Moscow's airports, railway stations and the capital's sprawling subway system. Moscow's mayor canceled all mass gatherings, and theaters and museums shut for the weekend. Other Russian regions also tightened security.

The Kremlin didn't immediately blame anyone for the attack, but some Russian lawmakers were quick to accuse Ukraine and called for ramping up strikes. Hours before the attack, the Russian military launched a sweeping barrage on Ukraine's power system, crippling the country's biggest hydroelectric plant and other energy facilities and leaving more than a million people without electricity.

Dmitry Medvedev, deputy head of Russia's Security Council, said that if Ukraine involvement was proven, all those involved “must be tracked down and killed without mercy, including officials of the state that committed such outrage.”

Mykhailo Podolyak, an adviser to Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy, denied Ukraine involvement. “Ukraine has never resorted to the use of terrorist methods,” he posted on X. “Everything in this war will be decided only on the battlefield.”

John Kirby, spokesman for the White House National Security Council, said he couldn't yet speak about the details but “the images are just horrible. And just hard to watch.”

Friday's attack followed a statement earlier this month by the U.S. Embassy in Moscow that urged Americans to avoid crowded places in view of “imminent” plans by extremists to target large gatherings

in the Russian capital, including concerts. The warning was repeated by several other Western embassies.

National Security Council spokesperson Adrienne Watson said Friday the U.S. government had information about a planned attack in Moscow, prompting the State Department advisory to Americans. The U.S. government shared the information with Russian authorities in accordance with its longstanding "duty to warn" policy, Watson said.

Putin, who extended his grip on Russia for another six years in this week's presidential vote after a sweeping crackdown on dissent, denounced the Western warnings as an attempt to intimidate Russians. "All that resembles open blackmail and an attempt to frighten and destabilize our society," he said earlier this week.

Russia was shaken by a series of deadly terror attacks in the early 2000s during the fighting with separatists in the Russian province of Chechnya.

In October 2002, Chechen militants took about 800 people hostage at a Moscow theater. Two days later, Russian special forces stormed the building and 129 hostages and 41 Chechen fighters died, most from effects of narcotic gas Russian forces use to subdue the attackers.

In September 2004, about 30 Chechen militants seized a school in Beslan in southern Russia taking hundreds of hostages. The siege ended in a bloodbath two days later and more than 330 people, about half of them children, were killed.

## **Hundreds of thousands of financial aid applications need to be fixed after latest calculation error**

By COLLIN BINKLEY AP Education Writer

WASHINGTON (AP) — The U.S. Education Department said it has discovered a calculation error in hundreds of thousands of student financial aid applications sent to colleges this month and will need to reprocess them — a blunder that follows a series of others and threatens further delays to this year's college applications.

A vendor working for the federal government incorrectly calculated a financial aid formula for more than 200,000 students, the department said Friday. The information was sent to colleges to help them prepare financial aid packages but now needs to be recalculated — even as the department works through a backlog of more than 4 million other financial aid applications.

A statement from the Education Department says the problem won't affect 1.3 million applications that were processed correctly and distributed to colleges this month. Officials said they have fixed the error and it "will not affect future records."

It's unlikely that many students, if any, received financial aid offers based on the incorrect information since the department only began sending records in the last two weeks. Once colleges receive that information, it usually takes several weeks to assemble financial aid packages.

Students applying for college have been left in limbo this year as they await the Education Department's overhaul of the Free Application for Federal Student Aid. The form, known as FAFSA, is used to determine eligibility for federal Pell Grants, and colleges and states use it to award their own financial aid to students.

The update was meant to simplify the form but took months longer than expected. It gives colleges less time to make financial aid offers to students, and it gives students less time to decide where to enroll.

"This is another unforced error that will likely cause more processing delays for students," said Justin Draeger, president and CEO of the National Association of Student Financial Aid Administrators.

After so many delays, he added, "Every error adds up and will be felt acutely by every student who is counting on need-based financial aid to make their postsecondary dreams a reality."

The latest misstep has to do with the Student Aid Index, a new formula used to determine students' level of financial need after they submit the FAFSA application. For some students, the department forgot to factor in certain financial assets including investments, savings and total cash, according to an agency memo sent to colleges on Friday.

# Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, March 23, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 271 ~ 38 of 67

It resulted in a lower Student Aid Index for those students — indicating they have more financial need than they do in reality.

While the department fixes those students' records, it's encouraging colleges to make their own calculations and craft "a tentative aid package."

Draeger pushed against that idea, saying colleges can only work with "valid and correct data."

"It is not feasible or realistic to send out incorrect FAFSA data and ask thousands of schools to make real-time calculations and adjustments to the federal formula," he said.

Advocates fear that the chaos of this year's process could deter students from going to college at all, especially those for whom finances are a key part of the decision.

Senate Republicans are requesting a hearing with Education Secretary Miguel Cardona to discuss their "serious concerns" about the FAFSA rollout.

In a video message on Friday, Republican Sen. Bill Cassidy of Louisiana said it's "not right" to ask colleges to fix the department's mistake.

"You were supposed to get it done right the first time, and you were supposed to get it done right three months ago," said Cassidy, the ranking Republican on the Senate Committee on Health, Education, Labor and Pensions. "We need more accountability, more responsibility, more confidence from the Department of Education."

The notoriously time-consuming FAFSA form was targeted for an overhaul in 2020 through bipartisan legislation in Congress. The bill promised to simplify the form, going from 100 questions to fewer than 40, and it also changed the underlying formula for student aid, promising to expand it to more low-income students.

But the update has been marred by delays and technical glitches.

The form is typically available to fill out in October, but the Education Department didn't have it ready until late December. Even then, the agency wasn't ready to begin processing the forms and sending them to states and colleges, which only started this month.

Along the way, the department has scrambled to fix numerous bugs. Early on, the process failed to account for inflation properly. Another glitch blocked parents from filling out the form if they did not have a Social Security number. That meant many students who are U.S. citizens or permanent residents but whose parents are not could not apply.

The department says those problems have been fixed, and it's now rushing to process millions of student applications and send them to colleges and states. The agency says it has processed 1.5 million applications out of about 6 million received so far.

The department "will continue delivering large volumes" of records in the coming weeks, its statement said. "We remain focused on helping students and families through this process and supporting colleges produce aid offers as quickly as possible."

## Trump says he has nearly \$500 million in cash but doesn't want to use it to pay New York judgment

By MICHAEL R. SISAK Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — Donald Trump claimed on Friday to have almost a half-billion dollars in cash but said he'd rather spend it on his presidential run than on the \$454 million civil fraud judgment against him in New York. The former president vowed to fight the verdict "all the way up to the U.S. Supreme Court if necessary" as the state gears up to potentially seize some of his assets if he doesn't pay the hefty tab.

Trump has been trying to get a state appeals court to excuse him from a requirement that he provide financial guarantees showing he's good for the money while he appeals the staggering verdict.

The presumptive Republican presidential nominee didn't provide any documentation for his cash claim, and his lawyers have suggested it's not feasible to tie up so much cash on a bond while also keeping his businesses running and meeting other obligations. Among them, according to financial records: a condition on one of his property loans that he maintain a minimum liquidity of \$30 million.

# Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, March 23, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 271 ~ 39 of 67

A Manhattan judge in February found that Trump repeatedly lied about his wealth on financial statements given to banks and others to secure loans and make deals. The judge ordered him to give up profits from certain real estate deals and money he saved by obtaining lower interest rates on loans. Trump denies that he tried to deceive anyone.

As recently as Thursday, Trump's lawyers reiterated in court filings that they were having difficulty obtaining a bond covering the judgment because underwriters insisted on cash, stocks or other liquid assets instead of real estate as collateral. More than 30 bonding companies rejected their entreaties, they said.

Trump's lawyers asked the state's intermediate appeals court to reverse a prior ruling requiring that he post a bond covering the full amount to halt enforcement. New York Attorney General Letitia James has fought Trump's request, urging the appeals court to require the full amount to ensure the state can easily access the money if the verdict is upheld.

To obtain a bond, Trump's lawyers said he would likely have to put up 120% of the judgment, or more than \$557 million. The appeals court has yet to rule.

"I'll fight this all the way up to the U.S. Supreme Court if necessary," Trump told Fox News Channel on Friday. Mischaracterizing the law, he added: "They can't take away your property before you've had a chance to appeal."

Because the fraud case was tried in state court, Trump would likely have to exhaust the state appeals process first or ask a federal court to take up the case, which is rare, to even have a chance bring his fight to the U.S. Supreme Court. A litigant who loses in a federal appeals court or in a state's high court — in New York, called the Court of Appeals — may then file a petition for a writ of certiorari, which is a document asking the Supreme Court to review the case.

Contrary to Trump's claim, seizing assets is a common legal tactic when someone can't access enough cash to cover a civil penalty, even while an appeal is pending. Appealing doesn't, in itself, halt collection. Barring court intervention, James would be well within her legal rights to initiate seizure of Trump's property if he doesn't pay.

In a post Friday on his Truth Social platform, Trump suggested he had enough cash to at least cover the judgment in full — but didn't think he should have to spend it that way.

"Through hard work, talent, and luck, I currently have almost five hundred million dollars in cash," he wrote in all caps, adding that he had planned to use "a substantial amount" on his presidential campaign.

Trump has never before suggested that he would contribute to his own 2024 campaign and has been soliciting contributions from outside donors since before he left the White House. When he ran in 2016, Trump repeatedly claimed that he was self-funding his campaign, even though he relied on donor funds.

"I don't need anybody's money," he said in his announcement speech in 2015. "I'm using my own money. I'm not using the lobbyists, I'm not using donors. I don't care. I'm really rich."

In the end, Trump ended up spending about \$66 million of his own cash in loans and contributions on that race — far less than the \$100 million he frequently promised.

Whether Trump actually has nearly \$500 million in cash, as he claimed, could become the subject of a future court battle over his assets. James, a Democrat, could start efforts to collect on the legal judgment she won against Trump as soon as Monday unless an appeals court intervenes.

James has said she is prepared to seek to seize some of Trump's assets, though it wasn't clear how quickly that might unfold. Her office has declined to comment on its plans.

Last April, Trump testified in a deposition in the civil fraud case that he had "substantially in excess of 400 million in cash," but that was before he sold his rights to manage a New York City golf course to casino operator Bally's for \$60 million. Recently, Trump had to post a \$91.6 million bond to keep from paying a \$83.3 million defamation judgment to writer E. Jean Carroll while he pursues an appeal in that case.

Previously, on a June 30, 2021, financial statement, Trump reported having \$293.8 million in cash and cash equivalents and an overall net worth of \$4.5 billion.

Trump's substantial personal wealth likely grew even more Friday when shareholders of a publicly traded shell company approved a deal to merge with his media business, which operates the social networking site

Truth Social. Based on Thursday's stock price, Trump's stake in the company could be worth more than \$3 billion, though rules could potentially prevent him from selling newly issued shares for at least six months.

## **FBI tells passengers on the Alaska Airlines flight that lost a panel they might be crime victims**

By DAVID KOENIG AP Airlines Writer

The FBI has told passengers on the Alaska Airlines Boeing 737 Max that lost a door-plug panel in mid-flight that they might be victims of a crime.

"I'm contacting you because we have identified you as a possible victim of a crime," a victim specialist from the federal agency's Seattle office wrote in the letters, which passengers received this week. "This case is currently under investigation by the FBI."

The plane was flying 16,000 feet (4,800 meters) over Oregon on Jan. 5 when the panel blew out, leaving a gaping hole in the side. The rapid loss of cabin pressure caused oxygen masks to drop from the ceiling, and suction as air rushed from the hole exerted force on people inside the plane.

Pilots were able to land safely in Portland, Oregon, and none of the 171 passengers and six crew members were seriously injured. Investigators say it appears that four bolts used to help secure the panel were missing after the plane was worked on at a Boeing factory in Renton, Washington.

Published reports and government officials have said the U.S. Justice Department has opened a criminal investigation into whether the panel blowout violated terms of a 2021 settlement that let Boeing avoid prosecution for allegedly misleading regulators who certified the 737 Max.

The settlement followed two crashes of Boeing Max jets in 2018 and 2019 that killed a total of 346 people.

Mark Lindquist, a lawyer representing some of the passengers on the Alaska Airlines flight in a lawsuit against Boeing, shared the FBI letter with The Associated Press. The notice gave recipients an email address, a phone number, a case number and a personal identification number so they can share questions and concerns.

"A criminal investigation can be a lengthy undertaking, and, for several reasons, we cannot tell you about its progress at this time. A victim of a federal crime is entitled to receive certain services," the letter stated.

The FBI letter did not name Boeing, which declined to comment Friday. Alaska Airlines said, "We are fully cooperating and do not believe we are a target of the investigation."

The National Transportation Safety Board, the Federal Aviation Administration and the Justice Department are conducting separate investigations of Boeing.

Lindquist said he and his clients welcome the Justice Department's investigation.

"We want accountability, answers, and safer planes," he said. "The DOJ and the FBI bring significant leverage and resources that I'm confident will help our case and help the flying public as well."

The decision to designate the Alaska passengers as potential crime victims is a turnaround for the Justice Department, which a few years ago argued that families of passengers who died in the Max crashes did not meet the legal definition of crime victims.

A federal judge in Texas, however, ruled that the families did meet the standard. He said that under federal law, the Justice Department should have told them about secret negotiations with Boeing that produced the 2021 settlement.

Robert Clifford, a Chicago lawyer representing some of those families, said his clients are grateful that the Justice Department is following a different policy with the Alaska passengers.

"They are thankful that it is happening," Clifford said. "To be clear: They are not thanking DOJ for doing the right thing. They were forced to do the right thing."



## Trump's social media company approved to go public, potentially netting former president billions

By WYATTE GRANTHAM-PHILIPS AP Business Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — Donald Trump is returning to the stock market, and the former president stands to reap a sizeable payout in the process.

Shareholders of Digital World Acquisition Corp., a publicly traded shell company, approved a deal to merge with the Trump's media business in a Friday vote. That means Trump Media & Technology Group, whose flagship product is social networking site Truth Social, will soon begin trading on the Nasdaq stock market.

Trump is set to own most of the combined company — or nearly 79 million shares. Multiply that by Digital World's closing stock price Friday of \$36.94, and the total value of his stake could be nearly \$3 billion.

The greenlight arrives at a time the presumptive Republican presidential nominee is facing his most costly legal battle to date: a \$454 million judgment in a fraud lawsuit.

But Trump won't be able to cash out the deal's windfall immediately, unless the company's board makes changes to a "lock-up" provision that prevents company insiders from selling newly issued shares for six months.

Trump's presidential campaign did not immediately respond to request for comment.

When a publicly traded shell company agrees to buy a private company, the target company takes its place on a stock exchange once the combination is approved by shareholders. If recent activity in Digital World's stock is any indication, shareholders of Trump Media could be in for a bumpy ride.

Many of Digital World's investors are small-time investors who are either fans of Trump or trying to cash in on the mania, instead of big institutional and professional investors. Those shareholders helped the stock more than double this year in anticipation of the merger going through. But on Friday, the shares lost almost 14%.

Trump's earlier foray into the stock market didn't end well. Trump Hotels and Casino Resorts went public in 1995 under the symbol DJT — the same symbol Trump Media will trade under. By 2004, Trump's casino company had filed for bankruptcy protection and was delisted from the New York Stock Exchange.

Ahead of Friday's approval, Digital World's regulatory filings listed many of the risks its investors face, as well as those of the Truth Social owner once Trump Media also goes public.

One risk, the company said, is that Trump would be entitled to vote in his own interest as a controlling stockholder — which may not always be in the interests of all shareholders. Digital World also cited the high rate of failure for new social media platforms, as well as Trump Media's expectation that it would lose money on its operations "for the foreseeable future."

Trump Media lost \$49 million in the first nine months of last year, when it brought in just \$3.4 million in revenue and had to pay \$37.7 million in interest expenses.

DWA's shareholders also voted Friday to approve a slate of seven people, including the former president's son, Donald Trump Jr., to hold seats on Trump Media's board. Among the others are former Republican Rep. Devin Nunes, who would also be the company's CEO; Robert Lighthizer, who served as Trump's U.S. trade representative; Linda McMahon, who ran the Small Business Administration under Trump; and, Kashyap "Kash" Patel, a White House national security aide during the Trump administration.

Trump Media and Digital World first announced their merger plans back in October 2021. In addition to a federal probe, the deal faced a series of lawsuits leading up to Friday's vote.

Truth Social launched in February 2022, one year after Trump was banned from major social platforms including Facebook and Twitter, the platform now known as X, following the Jan. 6 insurrection at the U.S. Capitol. He's since been reinstated to both, but has stuck with Truth Social as a megaphone for his message.

Trump promoted Truth Social in a post on the social media network Thursday evening, saying: "TRUTH SOCIAL IS MY VOICE, AND THE REAL VOICE OF AMERICA!!! MAGA2024!!!"

Trump Media hasn't so far disclosed Truth Social's user numbers. But research firm Similarweb estimates that it had roughly 5 million active mobile and web users in February. That's far below TikTok's more

than 2 billion and Facebook's 3 billion — but still higher than other "alt-tech" rivals like Parler, which has been offline for nearly a year but is planning a comeback, or Gettr, which had less than 2 million visitors in February.

A plunge into the public market means Trump's social media business will soon have to disclose more details.

Private companies are accountable to their owners, while public ones are accountable to the shareholders who own the company's stock. Once public, Trump Media will be required to report its quarterly finances as well as other material news to federal regulators.

In this sense, Truth Social faces some of the same problems that X has been contending with — mainstream advertisers who don't want to be associated with hate speech and other controversial content.

## Russia and China veto US resolution calling for immediate cease-fire in Gaza

By EDITH M. LEDERER Associated Press

UNITED NATIONS (AP) — Russia and China on Friday vetoed a U.S.-sponsored United Nations resolution supporting "an immediate and sustained cease-fire" in the Israel-Hamas war in Gaza, calling the measure ambiguous and saying it was not the direct demand to end the fighting that much of the world seeks.

The vote in the Security Council became another showdown involving world powers that are locked in tense disputes elsewhere, with the United States taking criticism for not being tough enough against its ally Israel, whose ongoing military offensive has created a dire humanitarian crisis for the 2.3 million Palestinians in Gaza.

A key issue was the unusual language that said the Security Council "determines the imperative of an immediate and sustained cease-fire." The phrasing was not a straightforward "demand" or "call" to halt hostilities.

The resolution reflected a shift by the United States, which has found itself at odds with much of the world as even allies of Israel push for an unconditional end to fighting.

In previous resolutions, the U.S. has closely intertwined calls for a cease-fire with demands for the release of Israeli hostages in Gaza. This resolution, using wording that's open to interpretation, continued to link the two issues, but not as firmly.

Before the vote, Russian U.N. Ambassador Vassily Nebenzia said Moscow supports an immediate cease-fire, but he criticized the diluted language, which he called philosophical wording that does not belong in a U.N. resolution.

He accused U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken and U.S. Ambassador Linda Thomas-Greenfield of "deliberately misleading the international community."

"This was some kind of an empty rhetorical exercise," Nebenzia said. "The American product is exceedingly politicized, the sole purpose of which is to help to play to the voters, to throw them a bone in the form of some kind of a mention of a cease-fire in Gaza ... and to ensure the impunity of Israel, whose crimes in the draft are not even assessed."

China's U.N. ambassador, Zhang Jun, said the U.S. proposal set preconditions and fell far short of expectations of council members and the broader international community.

"If the U.S. was serious about a cease-fire, it wouldn't have vetoed time and again multiple council resolutions," he said. "It wouldn't have taken such a detour and played a game of words while being ambiguous and evasive on critical issues."

The U.S. has vetoed three resolutions demanding a cease-fire, the most recent an Arab-backed measure supported by 13 council members with one abstention on Feb. 20.

Thomas-Greenfield urged the council to adopt the resolution to press for an immediate cease-fire and the release of the hostages, as well as to address Gaza's humanitarian crisis and support ongoing diplomacy by the United States, Egypt and Qatar.

The vote in the 15-member council was 11 members in favor and three against, including Algeria, the

# Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, March 23, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 271 ~ 43 of 67

Arab representative on the council. There was one abstention, from Guyana.

After the vote, Thomas-Greenfield accused Russia and China of voting for "deeply cynical reasons," saying they could not bring themselves to condemn Hamas' terrorist attacks in southern Israel on Oct. 7, which the resolution would have done for the first time.

She accused Russia of again putting "politics over progress" and having "the audacity and hypocrisy to throw stones" after launching its unwarranted invasion of Ukraine in February 2022.

At the White House, national security spokesman John Kirby said Russia and China would "rather shoot down something we authored simply because we authored it."

While the most recent resolution would have been officially binding under international law, it would not have ended the fighting or led to the release of hostages. But it would have added to the pressure on Israel amid global demands for a cease-fire at a time of rising tensions between the U.S. and Israeli governments.

Meanwhile, the 10 elected members of the Security Council have put their own resolution in a final form. It demands an immediate humanitarian cease-fire for the Muslim holy month of Ramadan that began March 10 to be "respected by all parties leading to a permanent sustainable cease-fire." The Palestinian U.N. ambassador said the vote would take place Saturday morning.

The resolution also demands "the immediate and unconditional release of all hostages" and emphasizes the urgent need to protect civilians and deliver humanitarian aid throughout the Gaza Strip.

The Russian, Chinese and Algerian ambassadors urged council members to support it, but Thomas-Greenfield said the text's current form "fails to support sensitive diplomacy in the region. Worse, it could actually give Hamas an excuse to walk away from the deal on the table."

The Security Council had already adopted two resolutions on the worsening humanitarian situation in Gaza, but none has called for a cease-fire.

Russia and China vetoed a U.S.-sponsored resolution in late October calling for pauses in the fighting to deliver aid, protection of civilians and a halt to arming Hamas. They said it did not reflect global calls for a cease-fire.

A day earlier, the U.S. circulated a rival resolution, which went through major changes during negotiations before Friday's vote. It initially would have supported a temporary cease-fire linked to the release of all hostages, and the previous draft would have supported international efforts for a cease-fire as part of a hostage deal.

The vote took place as Blinken, America's top diplomat, was on his sixth mission to the Middle East since the war began, discussing a deal for a cease-fire and hostage release, as well as post-war scenarios.

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

In Gaza, the Health Ministry raised the death toll in the territory Thursday to nearly 32,000 Palestinians. The agency does not differentiate between civilians and combatants in its count but says women and children make up two-thirds of the dead.

A report from an international authority on hunger warned this week that "famine is imminent" in northern Gaza and that escalation of the war could push half of the territory's population to the brink of starvation.

Israel faces mounting pressure to streamline the entry of aid into the Gaza Strip, to open more land crossings and to come to a cease-fire agreement. But Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has vowed to move the military offensive to the southern city of Rafah, where some 1.3 million displaced Palestinians have sought safety. Netanyahu says it's a Hamas stronghold.

The final U.S. resolution eliminated language in the initial draft that said Israel's offensive in Rafah "should not proceed under current circumstances." Instead, in an introductory paragraph, the council emphasized its concern that a ground offensive into Rafah "would result in further harm to civilians and their further displacement, potentially into neighboring countries, and would have serious implications for regional peace and security."

China's Zhang criticized the backtracking on unequivocal U.S. opposition, saying it "would send an utterly wrong signal and lead to severe consequences."

## What is known about Kate's cancer diagnosis

By CARLA K. JOHNSON AP Medical Writer

Kate, the Princess of Wales, has disclosed that she has cancer and is undergoing chemotherapy — though in a video announcement Friday, she did not say what kind of cancer or reveal details of her treatment.

Here's what is known:

What kind of surgery did Kate have?

Kate had what was described as abdominal surgery on Jan. 16. The news wasn't announced until the next day, when Kensington Palace revealed that Kate was recovering from a planned operation.

At the time, officials said her condition wasn't cancerous but did not specify what kind of surgery, saying only that it was successful.

When was Kate's cancer found?

During the video announcement Friday, Kate said: "Tests after the operation found cancer had been present," and that she was in the early stages of treatment.

She didn't say what kind of cancer was found, nor did she give details of her chemotherapy. The statement from Kensington Palace said Kate found out about the cancer after post-surgery tests were done.

Is it unusual to find cancer after surgery?

While it's rare to find cancer after surgery for a noncancerous problem, it does happen in about 4% of such surgeries, said Dr. Yuman Fong, a surgeon at City of Hope cancer center in Southern California.

"That 4% figure represents someone who's going to the operating room for what is thought to be benign disease" such as a procedure to remove the gallbladder or ovarian cysts, Fong said.

Is it unusual to find cancer in someone so young?

Yes, cancer is rare in young adults. But in developed countries, rates of some cancers are rising among younger adults. Kate is 42.

"We hate it when young people get cancer, but at the same time, they are the ones that recover best," Fong said.

What kind of treatment is Kate having?

The palace statement said no details would be provided about her cancer or her treatment, other than she started it in late February.

"We will not be sharing any further private medical information. The Princess has a right to medical privacy as we all do," the statement said.

After successful surgery, chemotherapy is often used to help kill any stray cancer cells and to prevent the cancer from coming back. Treatments have evolved, and when chemo is used now, it's sometimes for shorter periods or lower doses than it once was.

What are the side effects of chemotherapy?

Fatigue, nausea, tingling in the hands and feet, and sometimes hair loss are side effects of chemotherapy, said Dr. Monica Avila of Moffitt Cancer Center in Tampa, Florida. But there are medications for improving these side effects. And cold caps that cool the scalp can prevent hair loss, Avila said.

"A patient can take anywhere from a few weeks to a month or two to recover from those effects," Avila said. Numbness and tingling can take longer to disappear, she said.

How long will Kate's treatment last?

The palace statement said that will be up to her doctors. "The princess is now on a recovery pathway," the statement said.

## Israel's Netanyahu rebuffs US plea to halt Rafah offensive. Tensions rise ahead of Washington talks

By MATTHEW LEE and JOSEF FEDERMAN Associated Press

TEL AVIV, Israel (AP) — U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken on Friday once again left the Middle East empty-handed as Israel's prime minister rejected American appeals to call off a promised ground invasion of the southern Gaza city of Rafah, which is overflowing with displaced civilians.

The tough message from Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu sets the stage for potentially difficult talks next week in Washington between top U.S. officials and a high-level Israeli delegation. Netanyahu said Israel is ready to "do it alone" in Rafah if necessary. Despite their differences, the Biden administration has continued to provide crucial military aid and diplomatic support, even as Israel's war against Hamas has killed more than 32,000 people in Gaza and led to a worsening humanitarian crisis.

Israel says Rafah is the last remaining stronghold of Hamas and says the militant group's forces there must be defeated for Israel to meet its war objectives. Israel vowed to destroy Hamas following the group's Oct. 7 attack, which killed some 1,200 people, took 250 others hostage and triggered the fierce Israeli air and ground offensive in Gaza.

But Rafah now shelters over 1 million homeless Palestinians who fled fighting elsewhere in Gaza. The U.S., along with most of the international community, fears an Israeli ground invasion will endanger civilians' lives and impede the flow of desperately needed humanitarian aid into the territory, most of which comes through Rafah.

Netanyahu said he told Blinken that Israel is working on ways to evacuate civilians from combat zones and to address the humanitarian needs of Gaza, where international aid officials say the entire population is suffering from food insecurity and famine is imminent in the hard-hit north.

"I also said that we have no way to defeat Hamas without entering Rafah," Netanyahu said. "I told him that I hope we would do this with U.S. support but if necessary – we will do it alone."

Blinken, wrapping up his sixth visit to the Mideast since the war broke out, told reporters that the U.S. shares Israel's goal of defeating Hamas.

"But a major ground operation in Rafah is not, in our judgment, the way to achieve it and we were very clear about that," he said, adding that Israel faces growing isolation if it presses ahead.

The looming Rafah invasion has cast a shadow over ongoing efforts to forge a cease-fire deal between Israel and Hamas. Blinken, who also met with Arab leaders during his trip this week, acknowledged "there's still a lot of work to be done."

Blinken spoke shortly after a U.S.-sponsored cease-fire resolution in the U.N. Security Council was vetoed by Russia and China. Blinken said it was "unimaginable" that the measure had been rejected.

### RAFAH TENSIONS RISING

The U.S. initially sided strongly with Israel after the Oct. 7 attack. But relations have increasingly soured as the war drags on into its fifth month.

Palestinian health officials in Gaza said Friday that at least 32,070 people have been killed, with at least two thirds of them women and children. Israel claims at least a third of the dead are Hamas militants, and says the group is responsible for civilian casualties by hiding and operating in residential areas.

The U.S. position on a Rafah operation shifted in recent days. Officials had called for a plan to get civilians out of harm's way. Now, they say there is no credible way to do that.

"It risks killing more civilians. It risks wreaking greater havoc with the provision of humanitarian assistance. It risks further isolating Israel around the world and jeopardizing its long term security and standing," Blinken said.

U.S. officials say other options, including specifically targeted operations against known Hamas fighters and commanders, are the only way to avoid a civilian catastrophe.

Roughly three quarters of Gaza's 2.3 million people have fled into Rafah, the farthest south they can go before the Egyptian border. Sprawling tent camps now dot the city.

The U.S. will share its ideas for alternatives at next week's meetings, when a delegation led by Ne-

# Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, March 23, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 271 ~ 46 of 67

tanyahu's national security adviser and a member of Israel's War Cabinet heads to Washington. Israel's defense minister, another member of the War Cabinet, will also visit.

Blinken said talks would focus on post-war plans, another area of disagreement.

The U.S. wants the internationally recognized Palestinian Authority – which Hamas ousted from Gaza in 2007 – to return to power in the territory, along with a clear path toward an independent Palestinian state beside Israel. Netanyahu rejects Palestinian independence or a role for the Palestinian Authority, which administers parts of the occupied West Bank, and says Israel must maintain long-term security control over Gaza.

## AN ELUSIVE CEASE-FIRE

International mediators, led by the U.S., Qatar and Egypt, have been working on a cease-fire to pause or end the war in Gaza.

Israel is seeking the release of the more than 100 hostages still held by Hamas, while Hamas wants an end — not a temporary pause — to the war along with the withdrawal of Israeli forces from Gaza. Hamas wants Israel to release large numbers of Palestinian prisoners.

After his talks with Israeli leaders, Blinken met with families of hostages who hold U.S. citizenship. He later greeted a small group of protesters who gathered in solidarity with the families outside his hotel.

Protesters chanted "Blinken, thank you," as he walked by the crowd. He said the U.S. was "working to bring them home" as he shook hands.

Blinken told reporters that progress has been made in recent weeks, but the final gaps "tend to be the hardest."

"There's still a lot of work to be done, hard work to be done," he said.

Toward those efforts, he said he also discussed the need to increase humanitarian aid entering Gaza. He said "some positive steps" have been taken in recent days. "But it's not enough."

Israel says it places no restrictions on the amounts of humanitarian aid it allows into Gaza. But international aid groups say deliveries have been impeded by Israeli military restrictions, ongoing hostilities and the breakdown of public order.

So little food has been allowed into Gaza that up to 60% of children under 5 are now malnourished, compared with fewer than 1% before the war began, the head of the World Health Organization said Thursday.

## U.N. RESOLUTION WAS 'CYNICALLY VETOED'

At the United Nations, Russia and China vetoed a U.S.-sponsored U.N. resolution supporting "an immediate and sustained cease-fire" in the Israel-Hamas war. The two countries called the measure ambiguous, and said it was not the direct demand to end the fighting that much of the world seeks.

The vote in the 15-member Security Council was 11 members in favor and three against — including Algeria, the Arab representative on the council. Guyana abstained.

A key issue was the unusual language that said the Security Council "determines the imperative of an immediate and sustained cease-fire." The phrasing was not a straightforward "demand" or "call" to halt hostilities.

It also appeared to loosen, but not drop, previous U.S. demands that Hamas release all hostages as part of a cease-fire.

Blinken said the measure had been "cynically vetoed" and should have been embraced.

"We were trying to show the international community's sense of urgency about getting a cease-fire tied to the release of hostages," Blinken said. He also said it had sought to condemn Hamas. "It's unimaginable why countries wouldn't be able to do that."

## **Kate, Princess of Wales, reveals she has cancer and is undergoing chemotherapy**

By BRIAN MELLEY and JILL LAWLESS Associated Press

LONDON (AP) — Kate, the Princess of Wales, has cancer and is undergoing chemotherapy, she revealed Friday in a stunning announcement that followed weeks of speculation about her health and whereabouts.

The princess disclosed her condition in a video message recorded Wednesday in Windsor and broadcast Friday. It came after relentless speculation on social media ever since January, when she was hospitalized for unspecified abdominal surgery.

Kate asked for "time, space and privacy" while she is treated for an unspecified type of cancer that was discovered after what she described as "major" surgery.

Wearing a casual striped sweater and jeans, Kate sat on a wooden bench in front of a lawn dotted with daffodils. The flowers, which bloom in early spring, are often used as a symbol of hope for people fighting cancer.

"I am well," she said. "I am getting stronger every day by focusing on the things that will help me heal."

Kate, 42, hadn't been seen publicly since Christmas until video surfaced this week of her with her husband, Prince William, heir to the throne. It showed them walking from a shop that sells produce grown on the royal family's Windsor estate.

The news is another jolt for the royal family since the announcement last month that King Charles III was being treated for an unspecified type of cancer that was discovered while undergoing a procedure for a benign enlarged prostate.

Charles said he is "so proud of Catherine for her courage in speaking as she did," according to a statement released by Buckingham Palace. The king, who received prostate treatment in the same hospital and at the same time Kate had her surgery, remained in the "closest contact with his beloved daughter-in-law" in the past weeks.

The king and Queen Camilla "will continue to offer their love and support to the whole family through this difficult time," the palace said.

Prince Harry and his wife Meghan, who have been estranged from William and Kate since their move to California in 2020, wished the princess well.

"We wish health and healing for Kate and the family, and hope they are able to do so privately and in peace," they said in a statement.

Before Friday, Kensington Palace had given little detail about Kate's condition beyond saying it wasn't cancer-related, the surgery was successful and recuperation would keep the princess away from public duties until April. Kate said it had been thought that her condition was non-cancerous until post-surgery tests revealed the diagnosis.

"This of course came as a huge shock, and William and I have been doing everything we can to process and manage this privately for the sake of our young family," she said.

By choosing to speak directly to the country and the world about her condition, rather than issuing a statement through the palace, Kate offered a level of intimacy and transparency atypical of a member of the royal family and may help tamp down runaway conjecture. The king's disclosure of his condition was also notably open by royal standards.

Kate said it had taken her time to recover from the surgery before starting "preventative" treatment, which she said was in the early stages.

Dr. Shivan Sivakumar, associate professor in oncology at the University of Birmingham, said it's unclear what the princess meant by "preventative" chemotherapy but he presumed that it's what is known as "adjuvant" chemotherapy in the medical profession.

"This is chemotherapy after an operation to prevent recurrence," he said. "This is to attempt to destroy any circulating cancer cells."

Kate said it has been "an incredibly tough couple of months" for her family. She said it had taken time to tell her three children Prince George, Princess Charlotte and Prince Louis in a way "appropriate for them"

# Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, March 23, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 271 ~ 48 of 67

and reassure them she will be OK.

The announcement came after the start of the Easter holidays, which will shield the children from media coverage of the news.

British Prime Minister Rishi Sunak said in a statement that Kate "has shown tremendous bravery."

"We are incredibly sad to hear of the news," said White House Press Secretary Karine Jean-Pierre, who opened her briefing with reporters moments after news of cancer treatment broke. "We are taking this in, this terrible news, as all of you are."

Charles, 75, has withdrawn from public duties while he has cancer treatment, though he's appeared frequently in photos carrying on meetings with government officials and dignitaries and was even seen going to church.

Kate, on the other hand, had been out of view instead of appearing at charity events and promoting causes such as supporting children early in life, leading to weeks of speculation and gossip. Attempts to put rumors to bed by releasing a photo of her on Mother's Day in the U.K. surrounded by her three smiling children backfired when The Associated Press and other news agencies retracted the image because it had been manipulated.

Kate issued a statement the next day acknowledging she liked to "experiment with editing" and apologizing for "any confusion" the photo had caused. But that did little to quell the speculation.

Even the footage published by The Sun and TMZ that appeared to show Kate and William shopping sparked a new flurry of rumor-mongering, with some armchair sleuths refusing to believe the video showed Kate at all.

Earlier this week, a British privacy watchdog said it was investigating a report that staff at the private London hospital where she was treated tried to snoop on her medical records while she was a patient for abdominal surgery.

The former Kate Middleton, who married William in a fairy-tale wedding in 2011, has boosted the popularity and appeal of the British monarchy worldwide more than any royal since Princess Diana.

The princess is the oldest of three children brought up in a well-to-do neighborhood in Berkshire, west of London. The Middletons have no aristocratic background, and the British press often referred to Kate as a "commoner" marrying into royalty.

Her brother James Middleton posted on Instagram: "Over the years, we have climbed many mountains together. As a family, we will climb this one with you too."

Kate attended the private school Marlborough College and then University of St. Andrews in Scotland, where she met William around 2001. Friends and housemates at first, their relationship became widely publicized when they were pictured together on a skiing holiday in Switzerland in 2004.

Kate graduated in 2005 with a degree in art history and a budding relationship with the prince.

## **Kate, the reliable face of a modern monarchy, now faces a personal battle in the public eye**

By SYLVIA HUI Associated Press

LONDON (AP) — One of the most famous, photographed and talked-about women in the world is fighting a very personal battle.

Kate, Princess of Wales, disclosed Friday that she is being treated for an unspecified form of cancer.

The revelation went alongside a request for "some time, space and privacy while I complete my treatment" and was in part an attempt to quell the clamor of rumor and speculation that has built since the palace announced in January that Kate, 42, had undergone abdominal surgery and would be out of sight for several months.

Palace hopes that she would be left alone to convalesce were dashed.

An admission from Kate that she altered an official family photo — one meant to reassure the public that she was doing well — only made things worse.

It was a rare misstep for the princess, who has hardly put a foot wrong in her journey from William's



# Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, March 23, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 271 ~ 49 of 67

shy “commoner” girlfriend to the glamorous young mother who, more than any royal since Princess Diana, boosted the popularity and appeal of the British monarchy worldwide.

Kate has enjoyed overwhelmingly positive coverage from the press in recent years, but her relationship with journalists hasn’t always been smooth sailing.

## FROM “COMMONER” TO PRINCESS

The former Kate Middleton is the oldest of three children brought up in a well-to-do neighborhood in the county of Berkshire, west of London. The Middletons have no aristocratic background, and the British press often referred to Kate as a “commoner” marrying into royalty.

Kate attended the private school Marlborough College and then University of St. Andrews in Scotland, where she met William around 2001. Friends and housemates at first, their relationship came to be in the public eye when they were pictured together on a skiing holiday in Switzerland in 2004.

Kate graduated in 2005 with a degree in art history and a budding relationship with the prince.

## UNEASY RELATIONSHIP WITH THE PRESS

The pair’s relationship came under intense public scrutiny from the start.

In 2005, Kate’s lawyers asked newspaper editors to leave her alone, saying photographers were invading her private life. That didn’t stop media interest in her relationship with William, or unkind headlines calling her “Waity Katie” when the couple briefly split in 2007.

The couple’s 2011 wedding sparked a level of royal-mania unseen since the nuptials of the then-Prince Charles and Lady Diana Spencer in 1981.

After the wall-to-wall wedding coverage, the couple retreated to a relatively quiet life away from the limelight in rural Wales for two years while William completed his military service.

But the royals’ tussle with the press again came to the fore in 2012, when William and Kate sued a French magazine for publishing photos of a topless Kate, snapped while the couple was holidaying at a private villa in southern France.

Media pressure on Kate largely eased when Prince Harry married Meghan Markle in 2018, and the tabloids’ critical eye turned to scrutinize the biracial American actress. The papers often depicted Meghan as the upstart newcomer to the royal institution, a contrast to reliable, staid Kate, now a mother to the future king and a darling of the front pages with her elegant outfits and photogenic smile.

Kate rarely revealed her thoughts in public, though in recent years she has grown in confidence as a public speaker and a champion of early education for young children. In 2021, she showed she had some talent as a performer, surprising the audience at a Christmas carol service with her piano playing.

## RELATIVE PRIVACY

Motherhood brought about a determination to forge a new, more controlled relationship with the media. In 2015, when Kate and William’s firstborn, Prince George, was 2, the couple appealed to journalists to stop taking unofficial photos of him. They said they wanted their children to lead as “normal” a life as possible.

Since then, Kate and William have periodically released their own photos of their three children — George, 10; Princess Charlotte, 8; and Prince Louis, 5 — to mark important dates and milestones such as birthdays and Christmases.

In 2022, the family moved from Kensington Palace in central London to a cottage near Windsor Castle, further underlining their desire to raise their children in relative privacy.

That went well until January, when palace officials announced that Kate was hospitalized for abdominal surgery. They said she would not appear for public engagements until Easter.

Her decision to keep details private fueled a social media frenzy. The release of a photo to mark Mother’s Day in Britain, which was withdrawn later by The Associated Press and other news agencies over concerns about digital alteration, only fanned more questions.

The fallout over the photo again left Britain divided over their views of just how much privacy the royals are entitled to.

“I am well and getting stronger every day by focusing on the things that will help me heal; in my mind, body and spirits,” Kate said in her statement.

“We hope that you will understand that, as a family, we now need some time, space and privacy while I complete my treatment.”

## As Kate announces her treatment for cancer, a look at recent events that have fueled rumors

By SYLVIA HUI Associated Press

LONDON (AP) — On Friday, Kate, the Princess of Wales, said she is undergoing chemotherapy for cancer — an announcement that comes amid what hasn't been a good year for Britain's royals so far.

First came the "royal health shock" headlines when palace officials announced that King Charles III and Kate both had health troubles. An absence of information about Kate's health and whereabouts then fueled an increasingly frenzied rumor mill that made its way from the fringes of social media to front pages around the world.

Distrust of the monarchy only intensified after Kate admitted that she edited an official family photo, and palace officials have struggled to regain control of the narrative as conjecture and conspiracy theories persist.

Here is a timeline of recent events relating to the royal family:

Dec. 25, 2023: Kate attends Christmas service at Sandringham, the royal estate on the eastern English coast, alongside Prince William, their children and other members of the royal family. This is the princess's last public appearance.

Jan. 16, 2024: Kate, 42, is admitted to the London Clinic and undergoes abdominal surgery. The news isn't announced until the next day.

Jan. 17: Kensington Palace reveals that Kate is recovering from a planned operation. Officials say her condition isn't cancer-related but did not specify what surgery it was, only saying it was successful. They say she will remain in the private hospital for 10-14 days and be away from public view until after Easter.

Buckingham Palace announces on the same day that King Charles will be treated for a benign enlarged prostate.

Jan. 21: Prince Andrew's ex-wife, Sarah, Duchess of York, says she has malignant melanoma, a form of skin cancer.

Jan. 26: King Charles is admitted to a London hospital for a three-day stay for his prostate treatment.

Jan. 29: Kate and Charles are both discharged from the hospital. Charles is photographed leaving the hospital with Camilla and waving at well-wishers. Kate is not pictured leaving the hospital, but officials say she is "making good progress" and will continue her recovery at home.

Feb. 5: Buckingham Palace announces that Charles has cancer and will receive treatment. Officials did not say what form of cancer the king has.

Feb. 7: Prince Harry arrives in the U.K. from California to visit his father. He departs the next day.

Feb. 27: William pulls out of a memorial service for his godfather, the late King Constantine of Greece, at the last minute, due to a "personal matter." The palace declined to elaborate but said Kate continues to do well.

Later on the same day, Buckingham Palace says Thomas Kingston, the son-in-law of Prince Michael of Kent, has died at the age of 45. Prince Michael is a cousin of the late Queen Elizabeth II.

March 1: An inquest hears that Thomas Kingston died from a "traumatic head wound" on Feb. 25. A gun was found near his body at his parents' home.

March 4: A photo reportedly showing Kate riding in a car with her mother Carole Middleton in Windsor circulates on social media. It is published by some international news outlets but not in any of Britain's newspapers.

March 6: People magazine cites a royal spokesman as saying that William's "focus is on his work and not on social media."

March 10: Kensington Palace releases a photo of Kate surrounded by her three children to mark Mother's Day in Britain. The photo, the first official one since the princess underwent surgery, was retracted hours later by The Associated Press and other news agencies over concerns it had been digitally manipulated.

March 11: Amid a new round of speculation about her health sparked by the edited family photo, Kate issues an apology on social media for the "confusion" caused. She says she "occasionally experiments

with editing” like many amateur photographers.

March 16: The Sun newspaper publishes a video reportedly showing a smiling and relaxed Kate shopping with William at a farm shop near their Windsor home.

March 20: The Information Commissioner’s Office says it is investigating a report that at least one member of staff at the London Clinic tried to snoop on Kate’s medical records while she was a patient at the hospital.

March 22: In a video address, Kate announces she is undergoing treatment for cancer, including preventive chemotherapy. She says she is well and getting stronger every day, but needs to focus on her recovery.

## **Burkina Faso’s security forces are killing more civilians. Survivors detailed 1 village’s massacre**

By SAM MEDNICK and MICHAEL BIESECKER Associated Press

DAKAR, Senegal (AP) — Women slain with babies wrapped against their bodies, lifeless children intertwined together, a 2-month-old face-up on the ground with puppies crawling on his tiny frame. The scenes were horrifying, but the 32-year-old farmer felt he had to document them, as proof of the carnage in his central Burkina Faso village.

More than a dozen relatives were killed Nov. 5 when security forces attacked with mounted pickup trucks, guns and drones, he told The Associated Press on condition of anonymity, for fear of retaliation. He said he hid in a neighbor’s compound and took a series of photos before fleeing the next morning.

Dozens more were killed that day in Zaongo village, according to his account and that of two other survivors, as well as a U.N. report citing government figures. The images the man sent AP and the interviews with the three survivors are rare firsthand accounts amid a stark increase in civilian killings by Burkina Faso’s security forces as the junta struggles to beat back a growing jihadi insurgency and attacks citizens under the guise of counterterrorism.

Most attacks — including the slaying of children by soldiers at a military base last year, uncovered in an AP investigation — go unpunished and unreported in a nation run by a repressive leadership that silences perceived dissidents.

More than 20,000 people have been killed since jihadi violence linked to al-Qaida and the Islamic State group first hit the West African nation nine years ago, according to the Armed Conflict Location and Event Data Project, a U.S.-based nonprofit. The fighting has divided a once peaceful population, blockaded dozens of cities and led to two military coups.

Burkina Faso’s government spokesman didn’t respond to requests for comment about the Nov. 5 attack. Previously, officials have denied killing civilians and said jihadis often disguise themselves as soldiers.

The three survivors told AP they’re certain the men were security forces, not jihadis. They describe them wearing military uniforms, one with a Burkina Faso flag fastened to him. The farmer saw a helicopter flying toward the village in the attack’s aftermath — those are used solely by the military, not insurgents.

The United Nations urged the government to investigate, hold those responsible accountable, and compensate victims, said Seif Magango, of the U.N. Human Rights Office.

Burkina Faso’s prosecutor’s office said it opened an investigation. Four months later, survivors said they’ve had no news.

“THEY MASSACRED THEM”

It was early morning when the farmer heard gunshots in the distance. Violence in Namentenga province is frequent, locals said — shootings and patrolling soldiers are common.

But this Sunday was different.

About 3 p.m., the farmer said, hundreds of men — most in military fatigues — stormed through on motorbikes and trucks and started indiscriminately killing people.

He hid at the neighbor’s home, he said, and after hours of gunshots, the man with the flag entered.

“The soldier told us that his colleagues were in the other compound,” the farmer said. “He said he didn’t want to hurt us, but if the others realized we were still alive, they’d kill us.”

# Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, March 23, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 271 ~ 52 of 67

When the guns stopped, he said, he left the compound and saw Zaongo littered with the dead. "These people sought shelter in their huts, but they massacred them," the farmer said. It's unclear what prompted the attack, but locals said most times, security forces think villagers are working with extremists.

## JUNTA TODAY

Since seizing power in September 2022, the junta has threatened rights groups and journalists and carried out attacks against civilians. It's on a war footing as it tries to beat back the jihadis, who've overtaken more than half the country, according to conflict analysts and experts.

The junta is distancing itself from regional and Western nations that don't agree with its approach. This year, it left the West African regional economic bloc known as ECOWAS and created an alliance with Mali and Niger, also run by military juntas.

The junta severed military ties with former colonial ruler France. Officials have welcomed several dozen Russians tasked in part with keeping the junta in power, according to several conflict experts and a diplomat who spoke on condition of anonymity because he wasn't authorized to discuss the matter.

In November, days after the Zaongo massacre, 50 Russians arrived in Burkina Faso to protect the junta, influence public opinion and provide security services, said Lou Osborn with All Eyes on Wagner, a project focusing on the Russian mercenary group, which operates in a handful of African countries.

The United States said it has cut and suspended assistance to Burkina Faso's military but still supplies nonlethal equipment to civilian security forces such as the national police. In January, it delivered nearly 100 bikes and pickups.

In a statement, the State Department said it's provided \$16 million in "counterterrorism capacity building assistance" since 2022.

"We are not aware of any diversion or misuse of recent equipment," it said. "We take allegations seriously and will continue to monitor and evaluate."

## CIVILIANS IN THE MIDDLE

During the Nov. 5 attack, men in military uniforms speaking French and local language Moore called for men to leave their houses, a 45-year-old mother told AP.

Through the window of the home where she hid, she said, she saw relatives killed — more than 15.

She said a soldier motioned for her to lie down silently. The men dressed, looked and sounded like soldiers who pass through inspecting people's documents, she said.

The third survivor who spoke to AP, a 55-year-old man, said villagers had been accused of working with jihadis because they refused to join tens of thousands of volunteers fighting alongside the military.

Recruiting is part of the junta's strategy. Residents said this contributes to civilian killings as volunteers round up anyone they suspect of extremist ties, and it provokes jihadis to attack communities with volunteers.

Civilians are caught in the middle as violence intensifies. More than 2 million have been displaced and tens of thousands face severe hunger, the U.N. says.

## "WE'RE FRIGHTENED"

Survivors fear that bodies still lie on the ground rotting in Zaongo, now occupied by jihadis. Some relatives returned a week after the deaths, but there were too many bodies and not enough time to bury them, they said.

It's still unclear how many were killed — reports from survivors, the U.N. and aid groups vary, from 70 to more than 200.

Survivors, displaced in different parts of the country, are calling on the government to hold the killers accountable.

"When a door slams or a child shouts, we're frightened," the surviving woman told AP. "If we go back there, we'll just die."

## Russia launches sweeping attack on Ukraine's power sector, a sign of possible escalation

By HANNA ARHIROVA and JIM HEINTZ Associated Press

KYIV, Ukraine (AP) — Russia unleashed one of its most devastating attacks against Ukraine's electric sector on Friday, an aerial assault it said was retaliation for recent strikes inside Russia and which could signal an escalation of the war just days after President Vladimir Putin cemented his grip on power in a preordained election.

Many Ukrainians were plunged into darkness across several cities, at least five people were killed, and damage to the country's largest hydroelectric plant briefly cut off power to a nuclear plant that has been a safety risk throughout the war.

Russia fired off more than 60 exploding drones and 90 missiles in what Ukrainian officials described as the most brutal attack against its energy infrastructure since the full-scale war began in early 2022.

Kharkiv, Ukraine's second-largest city, sustained the most damage, officials said, and the attack came a day after Russia had fired 31 missiles into the Ukrainian capital of Kyiv.

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy has been urging Western allies for weeks to provide it with additional air-defense systems and ammunition, a period in which \$60 billion in U.S. aid has been held up by divisions in Congress.

"With Russian missiles, there are no delays, like with aid packages to our state," Zelenskyy said. "It is important to understand the cost of delays and postponed decisions."

Russia's defense ministry called Friday attacks "strikes of retribution." Ukraine has increased shelling of Russia's Belgorod region along its northeast border and has launched drone strikes targeting Russian oil refineries and other energy facilities.

Ukraine's latest strike inside Russia on Friday killed one and injured at least three, according to local officials.

Putin has described Ukrainian attacks on Belgorod and other regions as an effort to frighten residents and derail the highly orchestrated election that ended Sunday. And he vowed to strike back.

The day after he declared victory, Putin said Russia would seek to create a buffer zone inside eastern Ukraine to help protect against long-range strikes and cross-border raids.

Russia has made progress on the battlefield in recent months against exhausted Ukrainian troops struggling with a shortage of manpower and ammunition along the front line that stretches over 1,000 kilometers (620 miles).

When Putin invaded in 2022, he called it a "special military operation," and his officials have mostly eschewed the word "war." But in a change of rhetoric Friday that may herald a new escalation, Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov told a Russian newspaper that "when the collective West became a participant in this on the side of Ukraine, for us it already became a war."

In the winter of 2022-23, Russia targeted Ukraine's energy infrastructure, causing frequent blackouts across the country. Many in Ukraine and the West expected that Russia might repeat this strategy this winter, but Russia instead focused its strikes on Ukraine's defense industries.

While launching the strikes, Russia has combined sophisticated ballistic and cruise missiles with waves of cheap Iranian-made Shahed drones in a bid to oversaturate and weaken Ukrainian air defenses.

Volodymyr Kudrytskyi, head of the national utility Ukrenergo, described Friday's barrage as the largest assault on Ukraine's energy infrastructure since the full-scale war began.

"This attack was especially dangerous because the adversary combined different means of attack, kamikaze drones, ballistic and cruise missiles," he said.

Kudrytskyi said that Russia "tried to destroy every significant energy object powering the city of Kharkiv," leaving at least 700,000 without electricity. He estimated that several hundred thousand customers in other regions were also left without power.

Oleksiy Kuleba, deputy head of Zelenskyy's office, said that 31 people were injured in the strikes, that also left 200,000 people without constant access to electricity in the Odesa region. He said that power

supplies for most of 400 000 customers in Dnipropetrovsk region was restored.

The huge Dnipro hydroelectric power plant, Ukraine's largest, halted operation after sustaining at least six missile hits that caused massive damage. Ihor Syrota, the head of Ukrhydroenergo company overseeing the country's hydroelectric plants, said it lost about a third of its generation capacity in a "significant loss for the Ukrainian energy system."

Syrota said that the extent of damage to the plant remained unclear because its equipment has been buried under concrete and metal debris from the blasts, noting that the repairs will be a "long process."

The strikes sparked a fire at the Dnipro plant, which supplies electricity to the nuclear power plant in Zaporizhzhia, the largest in Europe. Power to the nuclear plant was lost for several hours before it was restored, International Atomic Energy Agency head Rafael Grossi said early Friday. The Zaporizhzhia plant has been occupied by Russian troops since early days of the invasion, and fighting around it has raised the risk of a nuclear accident.

The dam at the hydroelectric station was not in danger of breaching, the country's hydroelectric authority said. A dam breach could not only disrupt supplies to the nuclear plant but could potentially cause severe flooding similar to what occurred last year when a major dam at Kakhovka further down the Dnieper River collapsed.

## **Burkina Faso's security forces are killing more civilians.**

### **Survivors detailed 1 village's massacre**

By SAM MEDNICK and MICHAEL BIESECKER Associated Press

DAKAR, Senegal (AP) — Women slain with babies wrapped against their bodies, lifeless children intertwined together, a 2-month-old face-up on the ground with puppies crawling on his tiny frame. The scenes were horrifying, but the 32-year-old farmer felt he had to document them, as proof of the carnage in his central Burkina Faso village.

More than a dozen relatives were killed Nov. 5 when security forces attacked with mounted pickup trucks, guns and drones, he told The Associated Press on condition of anonymity, for fear of retaliation. He said he hid for hours in a neighbor's compound and took a series of photos before fleeing the next morning.

Dozens more were killed that day in Zaongo village, according to his account and that of two other survivors, as well as a U.N. report citing government figures. The images the man sent AP and the interviews with the three survivors are rare firsthand accounts amid a stark increase in civilian killings by Burkina Faso's security forces as the junta struggles to beat back a growing jihadi insurgency and attacks citizens under the guise of counterterrorism.

Most attacks — including the slaying of children by soldiers at a military base last year, uncovered in an AP investigation — go unpunished and unreported in a nation run by a repressive leadership that silences perceived dissidents.

More than 20,000 people have been killed since jihadi violence linked to al-Qaida and the Islamic State group first hit the West African nation nine years ago, according to the Armed Conflict Location and Event Data Project, a U.S.-based nonprofit. The fighting has divided a once peaceful population, blockaded dozens of cities and led to two military coups.

Civilian deaths at the hands of security forces increased by 70% from 2022 to 2023 — to 735 people killed from 430, ACLED figures show.

Burkina Faso's government spokesman didn't respond to requests for comment about the Nov. 5 attack. Previously, officials have denied killing civilians and said jihadis often disguise themselves as soldiers.

The three survivors told AP they're certain the men were security forces, not jihadis. They describe them wearing military uniforms, one with a Burkina Faso flag fastened to him as he tried to warn a group of civilians that anyone found alive would be killed. The farmer saw a helicopter flying toward the village in the attack's aftermath — those are used solely by the military, not insurgents.

The United Nations urged the government to conduct an independent and transparent investigation into the attack, hold those responsible accountable, and compensate victims and families, said Seif Magango,

# Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, March 23, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 271 ~ 55 of 67

spokesperson for the U.N. Human Rights Office.

Burkina Faso's prosecutor's office said it opened an investigation, but four months later, survivors said they've had no news.

"THEY MASSACRED THEM"

It was early morning when the farmer heard gunshots in the distance. He was cultivating land a few miles from home with his father, he said, and they returned to the village to wait it out.

Violence in Namentenga province is frequent, locals said — it's common to hear shootings and see soldiers on patrol.

But this Sunday was different.

About 3 p.m., the farmer said, hundreds of men — most in military fatigues — stormed through on motorbikes and trucks and started indiscriminately killing people.

He hid at the neighbor's home, he said, and after hours of gunshots, the man with the Burkina Faso flag entered, warning people to stay out of sight.

"The soldier told us that his colleagues were in the other compound," the farmer said. "He said he didn't want to hurt us, but if the others realized we were still alive, they'd kill us."

When the guns stopped that evening, he said, he left the compound and saw Zaongo littered with dead and injured men, women and children. Among them were his father, two brothers, a sister and her four children.

His uncle's body lay under a pile of several children. His 63-year-old father was by the door of their house.

"These people sought shelter in their huts, but they massacred them," the farmer said.

THE JUNTA TODAY

It's unclear what prompted the attack, but locals said most times, security forces think villagers are working with the extremists.

Since seizing power in the second coup in September 2022, the junta led by Capt. Ibrahim Traoré has threatened rights groups and journalists and carried out attacks against civilians — potential war crimes under international law.

Military drone strikes late last year claiming to target Islamic fighters killed at least 60 people at two markets and a funeral in Burkina Faso and neighboring Mali, according to Human Rights Watch.

The junta is on a war footing as it tries to beat back the jihadis, who've overtaken more than half the country, according to conflict analysts and Sahel region experts. It's using a new general mobilization law to expand its crackdown and force people into combat.

The junta is distancing itself from regional and Western nations that don't agree with its approach. This year, it left the West African regional economic bloc known as ECOWAS and created an alliance with Mali and Niger, also run by military juntas battling jihadi insurgencies.

The junta severed military ties with former colonial ruler France. Officials have welcomed several dozen Russians tasked in part with keeping the junta in power, according to several conflict experts and a diplomat who spoke on condition of anonymity because he wasn't authorized to discuss the matter.

In November, days after the Zaongo massacre, 50 Russians arrived in Burkina Faso to protect the junta, influence public opinion and provide security services, said Lou Osborn with All Eyes on Wagner, a project focusing on the Russian mercenary group, which operates in a handful of African countries.

While the Wagner Group's future has been uncertain since leader Yevgeny Prigozhin died in a suspicious plane crash last year, its presence in Burkina Faso is part of the group's new and more visible phase of influence, Osborn said. A pro-Russian association called the Africa Initiative has been established and is staffed with former Prigozhin employees, she said.

Its goal, initiative president Soumaila Azenwo Ayo told AP, is promoting Russian and Burkina Faso culture and language, in part through its new radio program, "Russian Hour."

Africa is key to Russia politically and economically as it seeks allies amid its war in Ukraine. But Wagner mercenaries have been accused by rights groups and civilians of committing human rights atrocities in the countries where it operates, including the killing of 300 people at a Mali village in 2022. An increased

# Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, March 23, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 271 ~ 56 of 67

Burkina Faso presence would bring fear of even more civilian deaths.

The United States said it has cut and suspended assistance to Burkina Faso's military but still supplies nonlethal equipment to civilian security forces such as the national police. In January, it delivered nearly 100 bikes and pickups.

In a statement, the State Department said it has provided \$16 million in "counterterrorism capacity building assistance" to Burkina Faso since 2022.

"We are not aware of any diversion or misuse of recent equipment," it said. "We take allegations seriously and will continue to monitor and evaluate use of our security assistance."

Some analysts said continued U.S. aid sends the wrong message.

"Other countries around the world are seeing and watching and saying to themselves, 'I can also jail all of my opponents, kill civilians under the guise of counterterrorism efforts and also play friendship with Russia, China — and the US will still give me all the toys I've asked for,'" said Aneliese Bernard, a former State Department official specializing in African affairs who runs a risk advisory group.

## CIVILIANS IN THE MIDDLE

During the Nov. 5 attack, men in military uniforms speaking French and local language Moore called for all men to leave their houses, a 45-year-old mother told AP.

Peering through the window of the home where she hid, she said, she saw relatives being killed — more than 15 in all.

She said she was spotted by a soldier, who motioned for her to lie down and stay silent. The men dressed, looked and sounded like the soldiers who regularly pass through the village inspecting people's documents, she said.

The third survivor who spoke to AP, a 55-year-old man from Zaongo, said villagers had been accused of working with the jihadis because they refused to join tens of thousands of volunteer fighters serving alongside Burkina Faso's military.

Recruiting is part of the junta's strategy, but residents said this has only contributed to civilian killings as volunteers round up anyone they suspect of ties to the extremists. It also provokes jihadis to attack communities with volunteers, they said.

Civilians are increasingly caught in the middle as violence intensifies. More than 2 million have been displaced and tens of thousands face severe hunger, according to the U.N. The insecurity makes it hard for aid groups to get assistance to those who need it.

At least 74 civilians were killed in connection with a weeklong convoy carrying food and aid in December, according to ACLED. They were killed by both the military and jihadis, two aid workers told AP on condition of anonymity because they weren't authorized to speak about the matter. One worker said the jihadis accused the civilians of providing information to the convoy's armed escort.

An internal report for aid workers seen by AP said soldiers escorting the food supplies "fired on suspected accomplices" of jihadi-affiliated fighters.

## "WE'RE FRIGHTENED"

Four months after the attack, survivors fear that bodies still lie on the ground rotting in Zaongo, now occupied by jihadis. Some relatives were able to return about a week after the deaths, but there were too many bodies and not enough time to bury them all, they said. They've been unable to get back since.

It's still unclear how many people were killed — reports from survivors, the U.N. and aid groups vary, from 70 to more than 200.

Survivors are displaced in different parts of the country. They're calling on the government to hold the killers accountable while living in fear that it could happen again.

"We never thought that so many people could be killed at once," said the surviving woman who spoke to AP.

"When a door slams or a child shouts, we're frightened. If we go back there, we'll just die."



## **A Modi rival is arrested. Now, supporters of the opposition leader are protesting in India's capital**

By SHEIKH SAALIQ and KRUTIKA PATHI Associated Press

NEW DELHI (AP) — Supporters of an anti-corruption crusader and one of India's most consequential politicians of the past decade held protests Friday against his arrest, which opposition parties say is part of a crackdown by Prime Minister Narendra Modi's government before national elections.

Arvind Kejriwal, who is New Delhi's top elected official, was arrested Thursday night by the federal Enforcement Directorate, which is controlled by Modi's government. The agency accused his party and ministers of accepting 1 billion rupees (\$12 million) in bribes from liquor contractors nearly two years ago.

Kejriwal's Aam Aadmi Party, or Common People's Party, denied the accusations and said they were fabricated. The party said Kejriwal will remain Delhi's chief minister while it fights the accusations in court. Late Friday, a New Delhi court allowed the agency to take Kejriwal into custody for seven days.

In 2023, as part of the same case, the agency arrested Kejriwal's deputy Manish Sisodia and AAP lawmaker Sanjay Singh.

In the lead-up to the general election, which starts April 19, India's opposition parties accuse the government of misusing its power to harass and weaken its political opponents. They point to a spree of raids, arrests and corruption investigations against key opposition figures. Meanwhile, some probes against erstwhile opposition leaders who later defected to Modi's ruling Bharatiya Janata Party have been dropped.

"It looks like harassment because only opposition leaders are being singled out," said political commentator Neeraj Chowdhury, adding that there's been no probe against anyone in the BJP. "It's not a level playing field."

The BJP denies using law enforcement agencies to target the opposition and says the agencies act independently.

On Friday, hundreds of AAP supporters and some senior party leaders clashed with the police, who whisked a number of them away in buses.

"This is dictatorship. All this is done to win the national polls," said AAP leader Saurabh Bharadwaj, referring to the BJP.

Kejriwal's AAP is part of a broad alliance of opposition parties called INDIA, the main challenger to Modi's BJP in the elections to be held in April-June.

His arrest is another setback for the bloc, and came after the Congress party accused the government Thursday of crippling the party by freezing its bank accounts in a tax dispute. But it has also led to a rare show of strength by the opposition figures who slammed the move as undemocratic, and accused Modi's party of misusing the agency to weaken them.

"A scared dictator wants to create a dead democracy," Congress leader Rahul Gandhi said about the arrest in a post on X, formerly Twitter.

"India is under an undeclared Emergency. Our democracy stands critically endangered today," AAP lawmaker Raghav Chadha said on X.

Meanwhile, the BJP's spokesperson Shehzad Poonawalla said Kejriwal's party was playing the "victim card," and that the leader should resign from his chief minister post.

The Enforcement Directorate has investigated many key opposition leaders and others have faced a variety of legal sanctions.

In January, the agency arrested Hemant Soren — who was, until then, the chief minister of eastern Jharkhand state — for allegedly facilitating an illegal land sale. Soren's party denies the accusations.

Gandhi was convicted of criminal libel in 2023 after a complaint by a member of Modi's party. A two-year prison sentence disqualified him from parliament for a time, until the verdict was suspended by a higher court.

Kejriwal launched the AAP in 2012 and campaigned on a promise to rid the Indian political system and governance of corruption and inefficiency. The party's symbol — a broom — and its promise to sweep the administration of graft struck a chord with Delhi residents.

The party won the Delhi state legislature election a year later, when he became the chief minister — a feat he repeated in 2015 and 2020. Kejriwal's party also governs northern Punjab state.

Modi has previously said his party is targeting 370 seats out of 543 in the upcoming national polls. To achieve that, experts say the BJP will have to repeat its electoral triumph in 2019, in which they won an overwhelming majority of the seats in northern India, including all seven seats in Delhi.

Chowdhury, the commentator, said Kejriwal is the star face of his party. "He's very politically savvy and in Delhi, the AAP has goodwill — their tie-up with the Congress for the elections would have posed a challenge for the BJP to pull that off again."

"But the big question is: Will Kejriwal's arrest galvanize voters? The investigations against opposition leaders so far has not had the kind of traction they may have expected," Chowdhury said, "but now with this arrest, will public opinion start to turn?"

## **US Jews upset with Trump's latest rhetoric say he doesn't get to tell them how to be Jewish**

By PETER SMITH and TIFFANY STANLEY Associated Press

Since the start of his political career, Donald Trump has played on stereotypes about Jews and politics. He told the Republican Jewish Coalition in 2015 that "you want to control your politicians" and suggested the audience used money to exert control. In the White House, he said Jews who vote for Democrats are "very disloyal to Israel."

Two years ago, the former president hosted two dinner guests at his Florida residence who were known to make virulent antisemitic comments.

And this week, Trump charged that Jewish Democrats were being disloyal to their faith and to Israel. That had many American Jews taking up positions behind now-familiar political lines. Trump opponents accused him of promoting antisemitic tropes while his defenders suggested he was making a fair political point in his own way.

Jonathan Sarna, American Jewish history professor at Brandeis University, said Trump is capitalizing on tensions within the Jewish community.

"For people who hate Donald Trump in the Jewish community, certainly this statement will reinforce their sense that they don't want to have anything to do with him," he said. "For people who like Donald Trump in the Jewish community, they probably nod in agreement."

To many Jewish leaders in a demographic that has overwhelmingly identified as Democratic and supported President Joe Biden in 2020, Trump's latest comments promoted harmful antisemitic stereotypes, painting Jews as having divided loyalties and that there's only one right way to be Jewish religiously.

"That escalation of rhetoric is so dangerous, so divisive and so wrong," said Rabbi Rick Jacobs, president of the Union for Reform Judaism, the largest U.S. Jewish religious denomination. "This is a moment when Israel needs there to be more bipartisan support."

But Matt Brooks, CEO of the Republican Jewish Coalition, said the former president's comments must be heard in context of the Israel-Hamas war and Democratic criticisms of the state of Israel.

"What the president was saying in his own unique style was giving voice to things I get asked about multiple times a day," Brooks said. "How can Jews remain Democrats in light of what is going on?" He contended the Democratic Party is "no longer the pro-Israel bastion it used to be."

More than 31,800 Palestinians have been killed in the Israeli offensive that followed Hamas' Oct. 7 attack on southern Israel, in which militants killed some 1,200 people and took hostages. Much of northern Gaza has been leveled, and officials warned famine is imminent.

Trump's comments followed a speech by Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer, the country's highest-ranking Jewish official. Schumer, a Democrat, last week sharply criticized Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's handling of the war in Gaza. Schumer called for new elections in Israel and warned the civilian toll was damaging Israel's global standing.

# Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, March 23, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 271 ~ 59 of 67

"Any Jewish person that votes for Democrats hates their religion," Trump retorted Monday on a talk show. "They hate everything about Israel."

A cascade of Jewish voices, from Schumer to the Anti-Defamation League to religious leaders, denounced Trump's statement.

In a statement to The Associated Press on Wednesday, the Trump campaign doubled down, criticizing Schumer, congressional Democrats' support of Palestinians and the Biden administration's policies on Iran and on aid to Gaza.

"President Trump is right," said Karoline Leavitt, national press secretary for the Trump campaign.

Jeffrey Hert, an antisemitism expert at the University of Maryland, disagrees with Schumer's call for a cease-fire in Gaza, but believes most Democrats support Israel — and he said a second Biden term would be better for it than a second Trump one.

"If (Trump) loses the 2024 election, his comments prepare the way for blaming the Jews for his defeat," Herf said. "The clear result would be to fan the flames of antisemitism and assert that, yet again, the Jews are guilty."

Sarna saw Trump as trying to appeal to politically conservative Jews, particularly the small but fast-growing Orthodox segment, who see Trump as a defender of Israel.

Also, about 10% of U.S. Jews are immigrants, according to a 2020 Pew Research Center report. Sarna said significant numbers are conservative.

At the same time, Democrats face the tension between their Jewish constituency, which is predominantly pro-Israel, and its progressive wing, which is more pro-Palestinian.

Sarna said that while it may seem odd to focus so much attention on subsections of a minority population, "elections in America are very close, and every vote counts."

Conservative commentator Ben Shapiro said Tuesday on his podcast that Trump "was making a point that, frankly, I have made myself, which is that Jews who are voting Democrat do not understand the Democratic Party." Shapiro, who practices Orthodox Judaism, contended the party "overlooks antisemitism" within its ranks.

Rabbi Jill Jacobs, the CEO of T'ruah, a rabbinic human rights organization, said Trump has no business dictating who's a good Jew.

"By insinuating that good Jews will vote for the party that is best for Israel, Trump is evoking the age-old antisemitic trope of dual loyalty — an accusation that Jews are more loyal to their religion than to their country, and therefore can't be trusted," she said. "Historically, this accusation has fueled some of the worst antisemitic violence."

In his own time in office, Trump's policy "of supporting Prime Minister Netanyahu and the settler agenda only endangered Palestinians and Israelis and made peace more difficult to achieve," Jacobs said.

Pittsburgh-based journalist Beth Kissileff — whose husband, a rabbi in the Conservative denomination of Judaism, in 2018 survived the nation's deadliest antisemitic attack — said it was highly offensive for Trump to be a "self-appointed arbiter" of what it means to be Jewish.

"Chuck Schumer had every right to say what he said," Kissileff added. "Just because we're Jews, it doesn't mean we agree with everything the (Israeli) government is doing. We have compassion for innocent Palestinian lives."

Brooks, of the Republican Jewish Coalition, defended the former president against antisemitism charges, pointing to his presidential record as an example of proof.

Trump pursued policies that were popular among American Christian Zionists and Israeli religious-nationalists, including moving the U.S. embassy to Jerusalem and supporting Jewish settlements in occupied territories. His daughter Ivanka is a convert to Orthodox Judaism, and her husband and their children are Jewish. The couple worked as high-profile surrogates to the Jewish community during Trump's administration.

Trump's core supporters include white evangelicals, many of whom believe the modern state of Israel fulfills biblical prophecy. Prominent evangelicals who support Zionism have also been criticized for inflam-

# Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, March 23, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 271 ~ 60 of 67

matory statements about Jewish people.

Sixty-nine percent of Jewish voters in 2020 supported Biden, while 30% supported Trump, according to AP VoteCast, a survey of the electorate conducted in partnership with NORC at the University of Chicago. That made Jewish voters one of the religious groups where support for Biden was strongest. Also, 73% of Jewish voters in 2020 said that Trump was too tolerant of extremist groups.

Rabbi Bradley Shavit Artson said Trump's comments are "in a complex middle zone" — not explicitly antisemitic, but reliant on such tropes.

American Jews base their votes on a complex mix of issues and values, "among them inclusion, diversity, climate change, civil rights," said Artson, a leader within Conservative Judaism. "While they love Israel diversely, many of us also care about the wellbeing and self-determination of Palestinians."

## April's total solar eclipse promises to be the best yet for experiments

By MARCIA DUNN AP Aerospace Writer

CAPE CANAVERAL, Fla. (AP) — April's total solar eclipse promises to be a scientific bonanza, thanks to new spacecraft and telescopes — and cosmic chance.

The moon will be extra close to Earth, providing a long and intense period of darkness, and the sun should be more active with the potential for dramatic bursts of plasma. Then there's totality's densely populated corridor stretching from Mexico to the U.S. to Canada.

Hundreds if not thousands of the tens of millions of spectators will double as "citizen scientists," helping NASA and other research groups better understand our planet and star.

They'll photograph the sun's outer crownlike atmosphere, or corona, as the moon passes between the sun and Earth, blotting out sunlight for up to 4 minutes and 28 seconds on April 8. They'll observe the quieting of birds and other animals as midday darkness falls. They'll also measure dropping temperatures, monitor clouds and use ham radios to gauge communication disruptions.

At the same time, rockets will blast off with science instruments into the electrically charged portion of the atmosphere near the edge of space known as the ionosphere. The small rockets will soar from Wallops Island, Virginia — some 400 miles outside totality but with 81% of the sun obscured in a partial eclipse. Similar launches were conducted from New Mexico during last October's "ring of fire" solar eclipse that swept across the western U.S. and Central and South America.

"Time for the biggie! It is pretty exciting!!!" Embry-Riddle Aeronautical University's Aroh Barjatya, the rockets' mission director, said in an email.

NASA's high-altitude jets also will take to the air again, chasing the moon's shadow with improved telescopes to study the sun's corona and surrounding dust.

"Dust sounds boring," acknowledged NASA's eclipse program manager Kelly Korreck. "But at the same time, dust is actually really interesting. Those are the leftover remnants from when the solar system was forming."

More than 600 weather balloons will be launched by college students along the track, providing livestreams while studying atmospheric changes. Cloudy skies shouldn't matter.

"Lucky for us, the balloons flying to 80,000 feet and above don't care if it's cloudy on the ground," said Angela Des Jardins, an astrophysicist at Montana State University who's coordinating the nationwide project.

And if the Federal Aviation Administration approves, a 21-foot (6.5-meter) kite will lift a science instrument three miles (5 kilometers) above Texas in an experiment by the University of Hawaii's Shadia Habbal. She, too, wants to get above any clouds that might hamper her observations of the sun.

Normally hidden by the sun's glare, the corona is on full display during a total solar eclipse, making it a prime research target. The spiky tendrils emanating thousands of miles (kilometers) into space are mystifyingly hotter than the sun's surface — in the millions of degrees, versus thousands.

"In terms of the value of total eclipses, science still cannot explain how the corona is heated to such extreme temperatures," said retired NASA astrophysicist Fred Espenak, better known as Mr. Eclipse for all his charts and books on the subject.

The U.S. won't see another total solar eclipse on this scale until 2045, so NASA and everyone else is pulling out all the stops.

April's eclipse will begin in the Pacific and make landfall at Mazatlan, Mexico, heading up through Texas and 14 other U.S. states before crossing into Canada and exiting into the Atlantic at Newfoundland. Those outside the 115-mile-wide (185-kilometer-wide) path, will get a partial eclipse.

Scientists got a taste of what's to come during the 2017 total solar eclipse that stretched from Oregon to South Carolina. This time, the moon is closer to Earth, resulting in more minutes of darkness and a wider path.

"Any time we can observe for longer, that gives scientists more data," Korreck said.

Another scientific bonus this time: The sun will be just a year away from its maximum solar activity, as opposed to 2017 when it was near its minimum. That means lots more action at the sun, possibly even a coronal mass ejection during the eclipse, with massive amounts of plasma and magnetic field blasted into space.

Plus there are two new spacecraft out there studying the sun: NASA's Parker Solar Probe and the European Space Agency and NASA's Solar Orbiter. They'll join other spacecraft on eclipse duty, including the International Space Station and its astronauts.

Closer to home, April's eclipse, unlike previous ones, will pass over three U.S. radar sites typically used for monitoring space weather. The stations will tune in to what's happening in the upper atmosphere as the skies dim.

## More than 100 iconic cherry trees in Washington are being cut down. So long, Stumpy

By ASHRAF KHALIL Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — The sun is setting on Stumpy, the gnarled old cherry tree that has become a social media phenom. This year's cherry blossom festivities in Washington will be the last for Stumpy and more than 100 other cherry trees that will be cut down as part of a multiyear restoration of their Tidal Basin home.

Starting in early summer, crews will begin working to replace the crumbling seawall around the Tidal Basin, the area around the Jefferson Memorial with the highest concentration of cherry trees. The work has been long overdue, as the deterioration, combined with rising sea levels, has resulted in Potomac waters regularly surging over the barriers.

The twice-daily floods at high tide not only cover some of the pedestrian paths, they also regularly soak some of the cherry trees' roots. The \$133 million project to rebuild and reinforce the sea wall will take about three years, said Mike Litterst, National Park Service spokesman for the National Mall.

"It's certainly going to benefit the visitor experience, and that's very important to us," Litterst said. "But most of all, it's going to benefit the cherry trees, who right now are every day, twice a day, seeing their roots inundated with the brackish water of the Tidal Basin." Litterst said entire stretches of trees to the water, as wide as 100 yards, or 90 meters, have been lost and can't be replaced "until we fix the underlying cause of what killed them in the first place."

Stumpy remains alive, if in rough shape.

Plans call for 140 cherry trees — and 300 trees total — to be removed and turned into mulch. When the project is concluded, 277 cherry trees will be planted as replacements.

The mulch will protect the roots of surviving trees from foot traffic and break down over time into nutrient-rich soil, "so it's a good second life" for the trees being cut down, Litterst said.

The National Cherry Blossom Festival is widely considered to be the start of the tourist season in the nation's capital. Organizers expect 1.5 million people to view the pink and white blossoms this year, the most since the coronavirus pandemic. Large numbers of cherry blossom fans have already been drawn to the area as the trees entered peak bloom on March 17, several days earlier than expected.

Stumpy became a social media star during the pandemic fever dream of 2020. Its legacy has spawned T-shirts, a calendar and a fanbase. News of Stumpy's final spring has prompted people to leave flowers and bourbon and had one Reddit user threatening to chain themselves to the trunk to save the tree.

The good news on Stumpy is that the National Arboretum plans to take parts of the tree's genetic material and create clones, some of which will eventually be replanted at the Tidal Basin.

The regular flooding at the Tidal Basin — sea levels have risen about a foot since the the seawall was built in the early 1990s — is just one of the ways climate change has impacted the cherry trees. Rising global temperatures and warmer winters have caused peak bloom to creep earlier in the calendar.

This year's peak bloom, when 70% of the city's 3,700 cherry trees will be flowering, was originally predicted to start around Saturday but ended up being declared on March 17. By comparison, the 2013 peak bloom began on April 9. Leslie Frattaroli, national resources program manager for the Park Service, told The Associated Press in February that peak bloom could regularly come in the middle of March by 2050.

"All the timing is off," he said. "It's a huge cascading effect."

Another weather side effect: A mid-March cold snap in the D.C. area should actually extend this year's bloom past the predicted April 9 ending.

For visitors and cherry blossom enthusiasts, the annual tradition of a stroll on the Tidal Basin under the flowers is a core Washington experience.

Jorge and Sandra Perez make a point of coming every year from Stafford, Virginia.

"Yes, we have cherry blossoms in my community, but it's a completely different feel when you see all of them bloom together," Sandra said. "And you can walk through, you know, the trees under it and smell it. And it's just it's a beautiful view."

They also came looking for Stumpy, having heard the legend and knowing this would be its final spring. "It's actually beautiful," Jorge said. "So it's sad to see him leave."

## Reverend Kristin Michael Hayter blurs lines between reality, performance and research with 'Saved!'

By KRISTA FAURIA Associated Press

LOS ANGELES (AP) — The bones that embody an album can take many shapes. They may tell a story, follow a genre or soundtrack a film.

But thanks to her interest in religion and her education in art, literature and linguistics, Kristin Hayter found herself in a unique position to embark on a kind of anthropological experiment through her latest album.

Released under the name Reverend Kristin Michael Hayter, "Saved!" is a concept album which explores a fictionalized conversion to Pentecostalism.

"When people ask me like, 'What is it?' I'm like — I honestly don't know what to say," she says of her album, ahead of the second of two recent performances at the Masonic Lodge at Los Angeles' Hollywood Forever Cemetery. "It's supposed to sound kind of like found sound, field recordings, that kind of thing."

Although not attempting to portray a genuine conversion or create a piece of historical research, Hayter, who previously recorded under the moniker Lingua Ignota, used the album to meditate on how people tell stories about their perceived realities. As she made it, she found herself thinking about the concept of documentary storytelling and "what is edited out and what we choose to leave in."

"Saved!" is made up of a combination of recognizable Christian hymns, including "Nothing but the Blood of Jesus" and "How Can I Keep from Singing," as well as original and sometimes more subversive tracks like "All of My Friends Are Going to Hell."

That range reflects Hayter's following, from devout Christians — including a snake handler from West Virginia who extended to her an open invitation — to those vehemently opposed to religion.

"I was expecting more outrage," she said plainly. "But I think there's enough ambiguity in it and the ambiguity is pretty intentional, where I'm not requesting or requiring people to have any kind of particular response. Your experience is going to dictate what you hear."

To emphasize that "found sound" approach, Hayter recorded in a lo-fi style, often abruptly ending or fad-

# Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, March 23, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 271 ~ 63 of 67

ing in and out of a song. Hayter's powerful voice, accompanied by her prepared piano, vacillates between beautiful and terrifying in a manner not unlike the way in which she thinks about religion.

"A lot of the language surrounding Christianity really is quite beautiful and poetic but is also, or can also be, pretty horrifying," she said.

But Hayter doesn't just utilize her voice for singing on "Saved!" Woven throughout is her attempt at glossolalia — speaking in tongues — a defining feature of Pentecostalism, according to Grant Wacker, a historian at Duke Divinity School who specializes in the denomination.

"It's important to understand how fundamental speaking in tongues is to the identity of historic Pentecostals," Wacker said, recalling the pressure he himself witnessed to speak in tongues growing up in the church.

That Hayter turns such a sacred and integral aspect of the faith into a performance, while cultivating conditions that could bring the act of speaking in tongues about, could be taken as disingenuous. But Wacker says similar tactics are frequently employed within the Pentecostal church.

"The pastor would encourage young people — usually teenagers — they'd say 'Well, just start talking faster and faster, and before long, your tongue will just fall into it,'" he said.

Wacker explained that as long as attempts at glossolalia are done in a "worshipful context," tactics can be employed to achieve it. For Hayter, those included sleep deprivation, fasting and listening to others speak in tongues, an idea from her producer and recording engineer, Seth Manchester.

"He was like, 'Well, let's put you in the studio and blast other people speaking in tongues at you for 90 minutes and see what happens,'" she recalled. "What you hear on the record is actually like one unedited portion of maybe two hours total of speaking in tongues."

As is often the case with art, the line between performance and reality is a blurry one for Hayter. While she would by no means describe herself as a Pentecostal, the preparation and research required for the project raised the age-old question in the study of religion: whether an insider, outsider or both can study a tradition.

She spent much of the pandemic researching the denomination as a clear outsider, meticulously procuring and sifting through countless Gospel tracts and attending Pentecostal worship services behind a distant screen on Zoom. But her research bled into practice when it came time to record the album and experiment with what can be considered spiritual disciplines.

"It was really pretty dissociative. I was able to just kind of let my brain go and let language and the brain kind of act independently or something. I'm not entirely sure what happened. But it definitely felt like releasing something," she said.

Hayter attended parochial school as a kid and sang as a cantor in the Catholic Church. Though she was for years a devout atheist after denouncing her faith as a teenager, Hayter has long been drawn to religious concepts, imagery and iconography.

"I think the ideas of things that are absolutely evil or absolutely good are really interesting to me," she said.

Across her chest, she is tattooed with the name "Caligula" — the notorious first century Roman emperor who — though the veracity of historical accounts is questionable — is often associated with religious persecution and sexual deviancy. Hayter's previous recording name was an ode to the 12th century Benedictine mystic and saint, Hildegard Von Bingen, an epochal figure in the history of glossolalia.

Hayter is hardly the first musician in recent memory to commit to religious extremes for the sake of art — Grimes, also inspired by Von Bingen, famously locked herself in her room for weeks to make the album "Visions." But Hayter is also cognizant of the ways in which her academic background — she has a master of fine arts from Brown University — make her distinct.

"It's just the way that my brain works," she said. "I do like this period of research and then this period of doing the thing and being kind of like an insurgent within the thing. And it becomes like a weird life-filling situation, an obsession."

Calling it an obsession might not be an exaggeration. She co-founded her current label, Perpetual Flame Ministries, ahead of the album's release. And once she settled on adding "reverend," Hayter decided she

might as well get ordained in the Universal Life Church.

Her past work encapsulated avant-garde sounds that tackled dark topics, including her experience with domestic abuse and anorexia.

But more recently, her journey has been one of healing — even conceding she has a “much more open sense of what God is and what God can be at this point” — and so felt it was time to retire her old recording name and music.

“For the first time in my adult life, I have a normal life now. I have a really nice home life. And I have a lovely boyfriend and the cats and the house,” she said with a smile. “So I’m trying to really lean into that.”

## **Cheating on your spouse is a crime in New York. The 1907 law may finally be repealed**

By ANTHONY IZAGUIRRE Associated Press

ALBANY, N.Y. (AP) — For more than a century, it has been a crime to cheat on your spouse in New York.

But adultery may soon be legal in the Empire State thanks to a bill working its way through the New York Legislature, which would finally repeal the seldom-used law that is punishable by up to three months behind bars.

Adultery bans are still on the books in several states across the U.S., though charges are also rare and convictions even rarer. They were traditionally enacted to reduce the number of divorces at a time when a cheating spouse was the only way to secure a legal split.

Adultery, a misdemeanor in New York since 1907, is defined in state code as when a person “engages in sexual intercourse with another person at a time when he has a living spouse, or the other person has a living spouse.” Just a few weeks after it went into effect, a married man and a 25-year-old woman were the first people arrested under the new law after the man’s wife sued for divorce, according to a New York Times article from the time.

Only about a dozen people have been charged under New York’s law since 1972, and of those, just five cases have netted convictions, according to Assemblyman Charles Lavine, who sponsored the bill to appeal the ban. The last adultery charge in New York appears to have been filed in 2010 against a woman who was caught engaging in a sex act in a public park, but it was later dropped as part of a plea deal.

Lavine says it’s time to throw out the law given that it’s never enforced and because prosecutors shouldn’t be digging into what willing adults do behind closed doors.

“It just makes no sense whatsoever and we’ve come a long way since intimate relationships between consenting adults are considered immoral,” he said. “It’s a joke. This law was someone’s expression of moral outrage.”

Katharine B. Silbaugh, a law professor at Boston University who co-authored “A Guide to America’s Sex Laws,” said adultery bans were punitive measures aimed at women, intended to discourage extramarital affairs that could throw a child’s parentage into question.

“Let’s just say this: patriarchy,” Silbaugh said.

New York’s bill to repeal its ban has already passed the Assembly and is expected to soon pass the Senate before it can move to the governor’s office for a signature.

The law almost was removed from the books in the 1960s after a state commission tasked with updating the entire penal code found the ban practically impossible to enforce. The commission’s leader was quoted at the time as saying, “this is a matter of private morality, not of law.”

The panel’s changes were initially accepted in the Assembly, but the chamber restored the adultery law after a politician argued its elimination might appear like the state was endorsing infidelity, according to a 1965 New York Times article.

Another Times article from the period also detailed pushback from at least one religious group that argued adultery undermined marriages and the common good. The penal code changes were eventually signed into law, with the adultery ban intact.

Most states that still have adultery laws classify them as misdemeanors, but Oklahoma, Wisconsin and



Michigan treat adultery as felony offenses. Several states, including Colorado and New Hampshire have moved to repeal their adultery laws, using similar arguments as Assemblyman Lavine.

There also are lingering questions over whether adultery bans are even constitutional.

A 2003 Supreme Court decision that struck down sodomy laws cast doubt on whether adultery laws could pass muster, with then-Justice Antonin Scalia writing in his dissent that the court's ruling put the bans in question.

However, in the court's landmark 2022 decision that stripped away abortion protections, Justice Clarence Thomas wrote that the Supreme Court "should reconsider" its sodomy law decision, as well as its decision legalizing same-sex marriage, in light of its newer interpretation of Constitutional protections around liberty and privacy.

The high court's hypothetical stance on adultery laws might be mostly academic fodder given how rare it is for such a charge to be filed.

## **Bird flu is decimating seal colonies. Scientists don't know how to stop it**

By PATRICK WHITTLE Associated Press

PORTLAND, Maine (AP) — Avian influenza is killing tens of thousands of seals and sea lions in different corners of the world, disrupting ecosystems and flummoxing scientists who don't see a clear way to slow the devastating virus.

The worldwide bird flu outbreak that began in 2020 has led to the deaths of millions of domesticated birds and spread to wildlife all over the globe. This virus isn't thought to be a major threat to humans, but its spread in farming operations and wild ecosystems has caused widespread economic turmoil and environmental disruptions.

Seals and sea lions, in places as far apart as Maine and Chile, appear to be especially vulnerable to the disease, scientists said. The virus has been detected in seals on the east and west coasts of the U.S., leading to deaths of more than 300 seals in New England and a handful more in Puget Sound in Washington. The situation is even more dire in South America, where more than 20,000 sea lions have died in Chile and Peru and thousands of elephant seals have died in Argentina.

The virus can be controlled in domesticated animals, but it can spread unchecked in wildlife and marine mammals such as South America's seals that lacked prior exposure to it have suffered devastating consequences, said Marcela Uhart, director of the Latin America program at the Karen C. Drayer Wildlife Health Center at the University of California, Davis.

"Once the virus is in wildlife, it spreads like wildfire, as long as there are susceptible animals and species," Uhart said. "Movement of animals spreads the virus to new areas."

Scientists are still researching how the seals have contracted bird flu, but it is most likely from contact with infected seabirds, Uhart said. High mortality has affected South American marine mammals consistently since the virus arrived late in 2022, and birds in Peru and Chile have died by the hundreds of thousands from the virus since then, she noted.

The virus is still spreading and was detected in mainland Antarctica for the first time in February.

The deaths of seals and sea lions disrupts ecosystems where the marine mammals serve as key predators near the top of the food chain. Seals help keep the ocean in balance by preventing overpopulation of the fish species they feed on.

Many species affected, such as South American sea lions and Southern elephant seals, have relatively stable populations, but scientists worry about the possibility of the virus jumping to more jeopardized animals. Scientists have said bird flu might have played a role in the deaths of hundreds of endangered Caspian seals in Russia last year.

"The loss of wildlife at the current scale presents an unprecedented risk of wildlife population collapse, creating an ecological crisis," the World Organisation for Animal Health, an intergovernmental organization, said in a statement.

# Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, March 23, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 271 ~ 66 of 67

In New England, scientists with the Cummings School of Veterinary Medicine at Tufts University found an outbreak of bird flu that killed more than 330 harbor and gray seals along the North Atlantic coast in 2022 turned out to be worse than initially thought. It's possible the seals contracted the virus from gulls by coming into contact with sick gulls' excrement or by preying on an infected bird, the scientists reported.

The U.S. government determined the seal die-off was an "unusual mortality event" attributable to bird flu. The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration has declared the event is over, but concerns remain about a possible repeat.

"Marine mammals are still pretty unique in the scale of the outbreaks that are occurring," said Wendy Puryear, an author of the Tufts study. "One of the connections is there is a lot of virus that circulates in coastal birds. A lot of opportunities for those wild birds to host the virus and pass it on to marine mammals."

Some scientists and environmental advocates say there could be a link between the outbreaks and climate change and warming oceans. Warmer sea temperatures off northern Chile decrease the population of forage fish, and that makes sea lions weaker and more susceptible to disease, said Liesbeth van der Meer, director of the environmental group Oceana in Chile.

Scientists and environmentalists are hopeful vaccinating poultry will help lessen the spread of the disease, van der Meer said, adding that it's also important for people to avoid potentially infected animals in the wild.

"Authorities have carried out campaigns about the disease, strongly recommending to stay away from seabirds or marine mammals with symptoms or found dead in the coastal areas," van der Meer said.

Even seals in aquariums are not considered completely safe from bird flu. The New England Aquarium, where outdoor harbor seal exhibits delight thousands of visitors every year, has taken strict sanitation precautions to prevent transmission of the virus to its animals, said Melissa Joblon, the Boston aquarium's director of animal health.

Staff aren't allowed to bring backyard poultry products to the aquarium, and an awning protects the seal exhibit from birds that could carry the virus, she said.

"We do know that it's a risk for the animals that reside here," said Joblon, adding that none of the aquarium's seals have been infected.

The deaths of marine mammals are even more concerning because of mutations of the avian virus, according to a paper in the journal Nature Communications last fall. The mutations "warrant further examination and highlight an urgent need for active local surveillance to manage outbreaks and limit spillover into other species, including humans," the study stated.

Another study, published in the journal Emerging Infectious Diseases in February, found the bird flu virus has adapted to spread between birds and mammals. Researchers found nearly identical samples of the virus in dead sea lions, a dead seal and a dead seabird. They said the finding is significant because it confirms a multispecies outbreak that can affect marine mammals and birds.

More seal deaths could disrupt critical ecosystems around the world, said Lynda Doughty, executive director of Marine Mammals of Maine, a marine mammal rescue organization that responded to seals with bird flu during the New England outbreak.

"You need this happy ecosystem. If we're taking out some important species, what is the trickle down effect of that? That's the million dollar question," Doughty said.

## Today in History: March 23, "Titanic" wins record-tying 11 Oscars

By The Associated Press undefined

Today in History

Today is Saturday, March 23, the 83rd day of 2024. There are 283 days left in the year.

Today's Highlight in History:

On March 23, 1938, "Titanic" tied an Academy Awards record by winning 11 Oscars, including best picture, best director for James Cameron and best original song for "My Heart Will Go On."

On this date:

In 1775, Patrick Henry delivered an address to the Virginia Provincial Convention in which he is said to

# Groton Daily Independent

**Saturday, March 23, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 271 ~ 67 of 67**

have declared, "Give me liberty, or give me death!"

In 1806, explorers Meriwether Lewis and William Clark, having reached the Pacific coast, began their journey back east.

In 1919, Benito Mussolini founded his Fascist political movement in Milan, Italy.

In 1933, the German Reichstag adopted the Enabling Act, which effectively granted Adolf Hitler dictatorial powers.

In 1942, the first Japanese-Americans interned by the U.S. Army during World War II arrived at the camp in Manzanar, California.

In 1965, America's first two-person space mission took place as Gemini 3 blasted off with astronauts Virgil I. "Gus" Grissom and John W. Young aboard for a nearly 5-hour flight.

In 1981, the U.S. Supreme Court, in *H.L. v. Matheson*, ruled that states could require, with some exceptions, parental notification when teenage girls seek abortions.

In 1993, scientists announced they'd found the renegade gene that causes Huntington's disease.

In 1994, Aeroflot Flight 593, an Airbus A310, crashed in Siberia with the loss of all 75 people on board; it turned out that a pilot's teenage son who was allowed to sit at the controls had accidentally disengaged the autopilot, causing loss of control.

In 2003, during the Iraq War, a U.S. Army maintenance convoy was ambushed in Nasiriyah (nah-sih-REE'-uh); 11 soldiers were killed, including Pfc. Lori Ann Piestewa (py-ES'-tuh-wah); six were captured, including Pfc. Jessica Lynch, who was rescued on April 1, 2003.

In 2010, claiming a historic triumph, President Barack Obama signed the Affordable Care Act, a \$938 billion health care overhaul.

In 2012, urging Americans to "do some soul searching," President Barack Obama injected himself into the emotional debate over the fatal shooting of Trayvon Martin in Florida, saying, "If I had a son, he'd look like Trayvon."

In 2018, President Donald Trump released an order banning most transgender troops from serving in the military except under "limited circumstances."

In 2020, President Donald Trump said he wanted to reopen the country for business in weeks, not months; he asserted that continued closures could result in more deaths than the coronavirus itself. Britain became the latest European country to go into effective lockdown, as Prime Minister Boris Johnson ordered the closure of most retail stores and banned public gatherings.

In 2021, a cargo ship the size of a skyscraper ran aground and became wedged in the Suez Canal; hundreds of ships would be prevented from passing through the canal until the vessel was freed six days later.

In 2022, NATO estimated that 7,000 to 15,000 Russian soldiers were killed in four weeks of fighting in Ukraine, where the country's defenders put up stiffer-than-expected resistance and denied Moscow the lightning victory it hoped for.

Today's Birthdays: Movie director Mark Rydell is 95. Former Secretary of State Rex Tillerson is 72. Singer Chaka Khan is 71. Actor Amanda Plummer is 67. Actor Catherine Keener is 65. Actor Hope Davis is 60. Actor Richard Grieco is 59. Actor Marin Hinkle is 58. Rock singer-musician Damon Albarn (Blur) is 56. Actor Kelly Perine is 55. Actor-singer Melissa Errico is 54. Rock musician John Humphrey (The Nixons) is 54. Bandleader Reggie Watts (TV: "The Late Late Show With James Corden") is 52. Actor Randall Park is 50. Actor Michelle Monaghan is 48. Actor Keri Russell is 48. Actor Anastasia Griffith is 46. Gossip columnist-blogger Perez Hilton is 46. Actor Nicholle Tom is 46. Actor Brandon Dirden is 46. Country singer Brett Young is 43. Actor Nicolas Wright is 42. Actor Ben Rappaport is 38. NBA point guard Kyrie Irving is 32.