

# Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, March 30, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 278 ~ 1 of 63

[1- Upcoming Events](#)

[2- 1440 News Headlines](#)

[3- Groton Area Kindergarten Roundup](#)

[4- Drought Monitor](#)

[5- South Dakota Average Gas Prices](#)

[6- Taryn Traphagen wins the 400m dash at NSU](#)

[Indoor meet](#)

[6- GHS Track Schedule](#)

[7- Girls Golf Schedule](#)

[7- Spring Baseball Schedule](#)

[7- GDI Fitness Center Ad](#)

[8- Help Wanted Ads](#)

[9- Easter Baskets by Tina](#)

[10- SD Search Light: Corrections: Search for contraband follows second night of unrest at Sioux Falls prison](#)

[12- SD Search Light: Republicans to battle through dozens of contested primary elections in 2024](#)

[13- SD Search Light: Thune pushes for free trade agreements as ag trade deficit rises](#)

[15- SD Search Light: In the central U.S., an electric grid bottleneck persists](#)

[18- SD Search Light: Experts say the economy is getting better, but consumers don't feel that way. Here's why.](#)

[20- Weather Pages](#)

[24- Daily Devotional](#)

[25- Subscription Form](#)

[26- Lottery Numbers](#)

[27- News from the Associated Press](#)

## Saturday, March 30

Thrift Store open 10 a.m. to 1 p.m.  
Catholic: SEAS Confession, 3:45-4:15 p.m.; SEAS Mass, 4:30 p.m.

## Sunday, March 31

Easter Sunday  
Groton CM&A: Sunday School at 9:15 a.m., Worship Service at 10:30 a.m.  
Catholic: SEAS Confession, 7:45-8:15 a.m., SEAS Mass, 8:30 a.m.; Turton Confession, 10:30-10:45 a.m.; Turton Mass, 11 a.m.  
First Presbyterian Church: Bible Study, 9:30 a.m.; Worship, 11 a.m.

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



Emmanuel Lutheran: Worship with communion, 7 a.m. (Breakfast by Luther League), worship with communion, 9:30 a.m.

St. John's Lutheran: Zion at 7:30 a.m.; St. John's at 9 a.m.

United Methodist: Worship at Conde, 8:30 a.m., and at Groton, 10:30 a.m.; Coffee hour, 9:30 am.; No Sunday school.

## Monday, April 1

NO SCHOOL - Easter Break  
Pantry Open 11 a.m. to 3 p.m.  
Senior Menu: Sloppy Joe on bun, oven roasted potatoes, broccoli, ice cream sundae, fruit.  
Emmanuel Lutheran: Bible Study 6:30 a.m.

**OPEN:** **Recycling Trailer in Groton**  
The recycling trailer is located west of the city shop. It takes cardboard, papers and aluminum cans.  
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# 1440

## One Year in Russian Prison

American journalist Evan Gershkovich marked one year in a high-security Moscow prison yesterday as he awaits trial in Russia on charges of espionage. The Wall Street Journal reporter was imprisoned last March by Russia on accusations of spying on behalf of the US government. The 32-year-old's imprisonment marked the first time a US journalist was detained on spying allegations since the Cold War.

In partnership with [smartasset™](#)

Gershkovich, who has pleaded not guilty, was accused of gathering state secret information on activities at a Russian defense plant while on a reporting trip in the Ural Mountains city of Yekaterinburg. He faces up to 20 years in prison if convicted. Gershkovich's pretrial detention period was extended for the fifth time this week until June 30, with no details from Russian authorities on when his trial would begin.

The US government has said Gershkovich was wrongfully detained and has been working to get him released via a prisoner swap. Gershkovich is among a handful of Americans who have been in Russia's custody.

## EPA sets new emissions rules for heavy-duty trucks, buses, and vans.

The Environmental Protection Agency issued new emissions standards that limit the amount of pollution allowed from large vehicles across a manufacturer's product line, with the limit decreasing over time. The rules apply to vehicles for model years 2027 through 2032 and are expected to reduce greenhouse gas emissions in the US by 1 billion metric tons over the next 30 years.

## Louis Gossett Jr., first Black man to win Oscar for best supporting actor, dies.

Gossett's cause of death was not announced; he was 87. He won the Oscar for best supporting actor in 1983 for playing Sergeant Emil Foley in the romantic drama "An Officer and a Gentleman." He made history as the second Black actor to win an Oscar after Sidney Poitier, who won best actor in 1963. Gossett also won an Emmy in 1977 for his role in the TV miniseries "Roots." See his life in pictures here.

## OpenAI unveils technology that recreates human voices.

The ChatGPT creator previewed its latest tool called Voice Engine, which can clone a person's voice in several languages based on a 15-second recording. A small group of businesses are testing the new tool while OpenAI tries to understand its potential dangers before publicly releasing it. The preview of Voice Engine comes a month after OpenAI previewed its new Sora text-to-video generator. Listen to samples here.

## At least 44 people killed in airstrikes targeting Aleppo, Syria.

A human rights group said 36 Syrian troops and seven members of Lebanon's Hezbollah militant group were among those killed. The Syrian army accused Israel of the attack; Israeli officials did not comment on the airstrikes.

## Forty-five people killed after bus crashes in South Africa.

The bus was traveling from Botswana to an Easter weekend church gathering in South Africa when it veered off a bridge and fell about 165 feet into a ravine, bursting into flames. An 8-year-old child, who was the only survivor, sustained injuries but is now in stable condition.

## Key US inflation measure rises in February in line with expectations.

The core personal consumption expenditures price index, which measures costs consumers pay across a wide swath of items, excluding food and energy, rose 2.8% year-over-year and 0.3% month-over-month in February, as expected. The index is the Federal Reserve's preferred inflation gauge.

# Groton Daily Independent

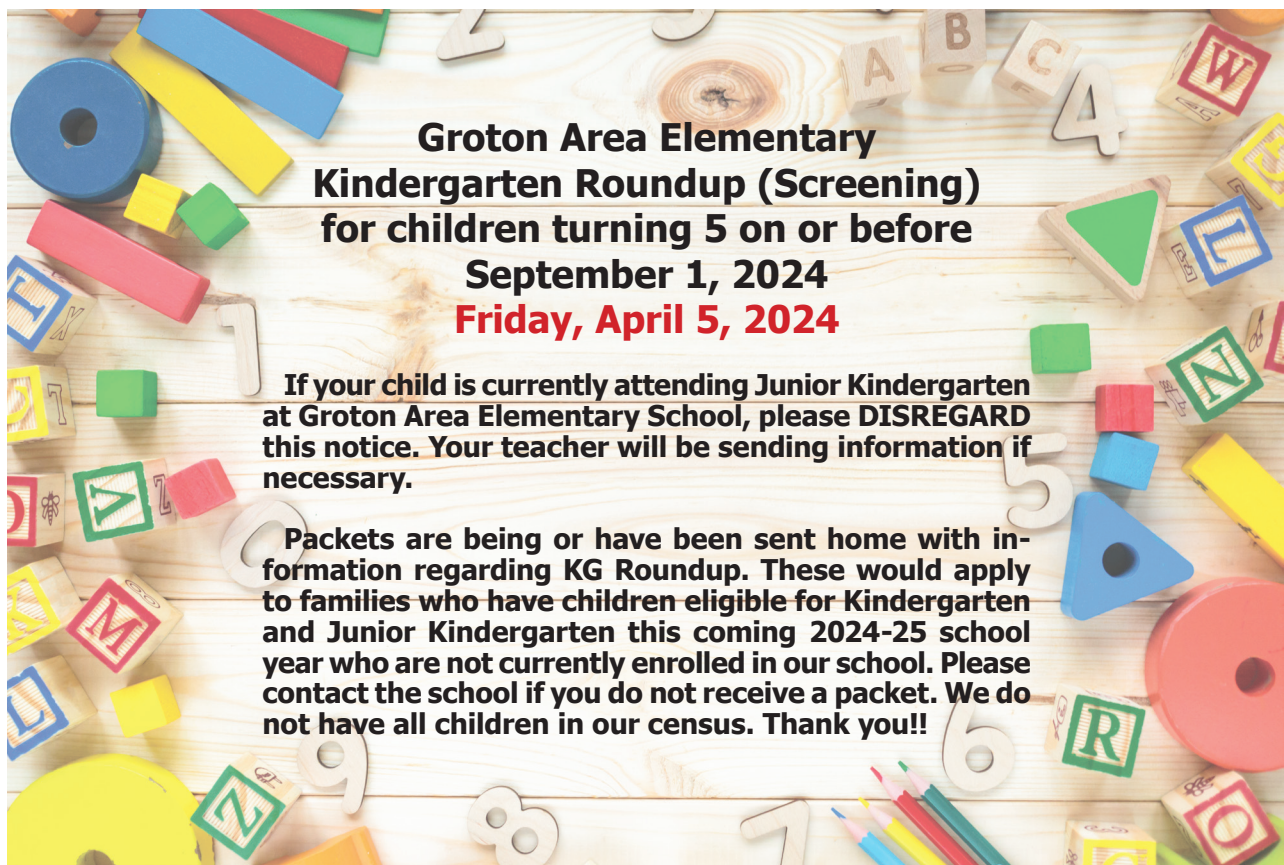
Saturday, March 30, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 278 ~ 3 of 63

## Humankind(ness)

Today, we're sharing a story from reader Alice F. from Blue Lake, California.

"I work at a school. One of my students is having a hard time as their parent is going through a second round of chemo. They really like tea, so on my way to school I stopped at my local co-op and picked out some of their favorite flavors of tea along with a few produce items I needed to make dinner. As I went to pay, I realized my card was expired. I had enough to pay for the tea on another card but asked the cashier if I could put the produce back. The cashier said, 'How about we do this,' as they pulled out their card and paid for it all. 'We all need help sometimes.' We do. It's true."

"As I gathered my items, the cashier went on their break. I had never seen them before and did not get a chance to find out their name. All I could do was think about how much of an impact they had on me, and when I told my student I brought them tea that feeling of kindness flooded through me again, as they had the biggest smile on their face. Sometimes we just don't realize how many people are impacted by our act of kindness."



**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!!**

# Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, March 30, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 278 ~ 4 of 63

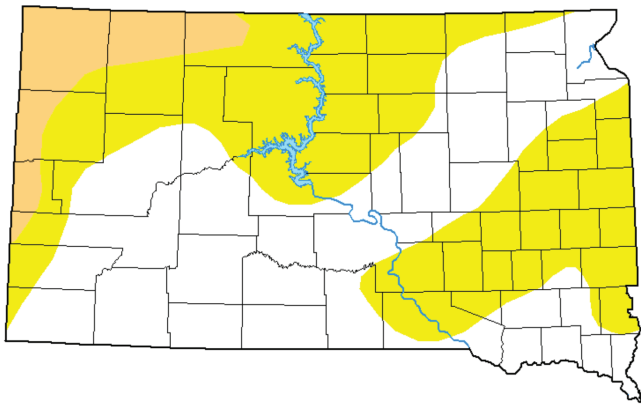
## Drought Classification

None  
D0 (Abnormally Dry)  
D1 (Moderate Drought)

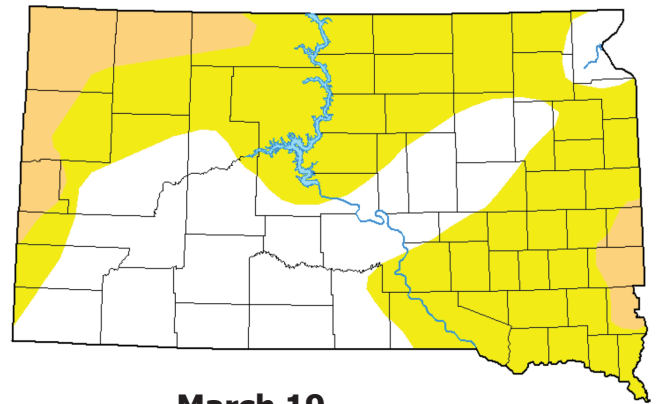
D2 (Severe Drought)  
D3 (Extreme Drought)

D4 (Exceptional Drought)  
No Data

## Drought Monitor



March 26



March 19

While much of the region experienced precipitation, including late-season snow, there were some targeted areas of expansion of abnormal dryness (D0) and moderate drought (D1), especially in southern Kansas. General reductions in the coverage of D0 and moderate to severe drought (D1 to D2) were observed in several areas, including parts of the Dakotas, northern Kansas, and eastern sections of Montana and Nebraska. According to the U.S. Department of Agriculture, topsoil was rated more than 40% very short to short on March 24 in Wyoming (55%), North Dakota (49%), South Dakota (47%), Nebraska (47%), Kansas (45%).

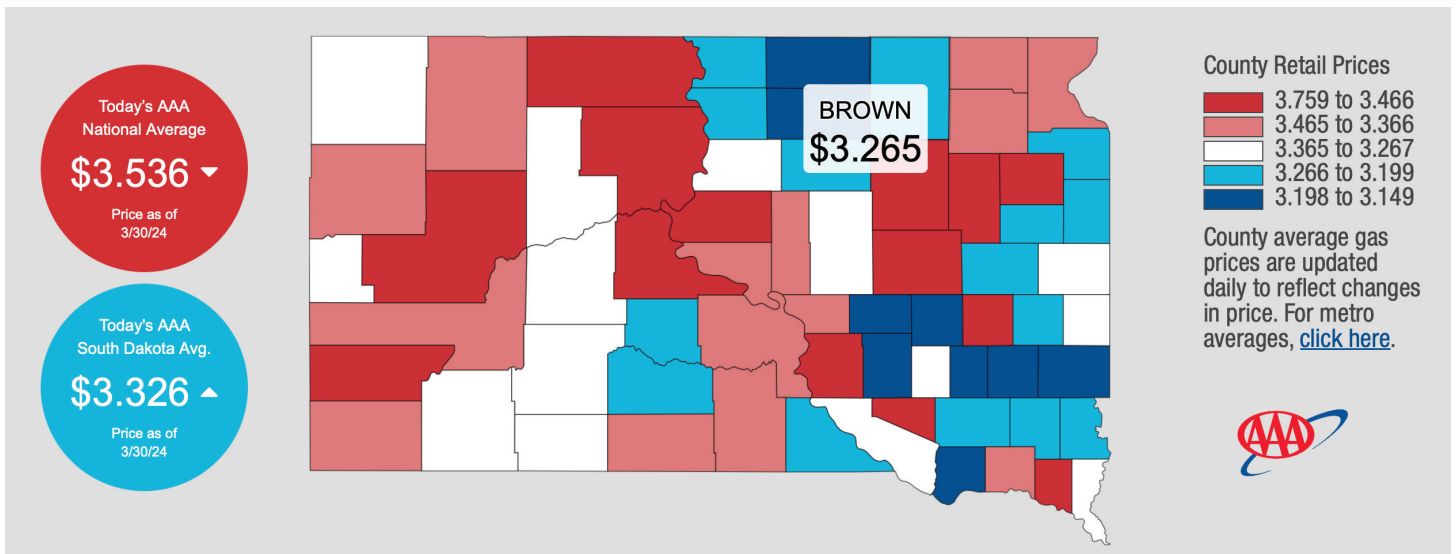
# Broton Daily Independent

Saturday, March 30, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 278 ~ 5 of 63

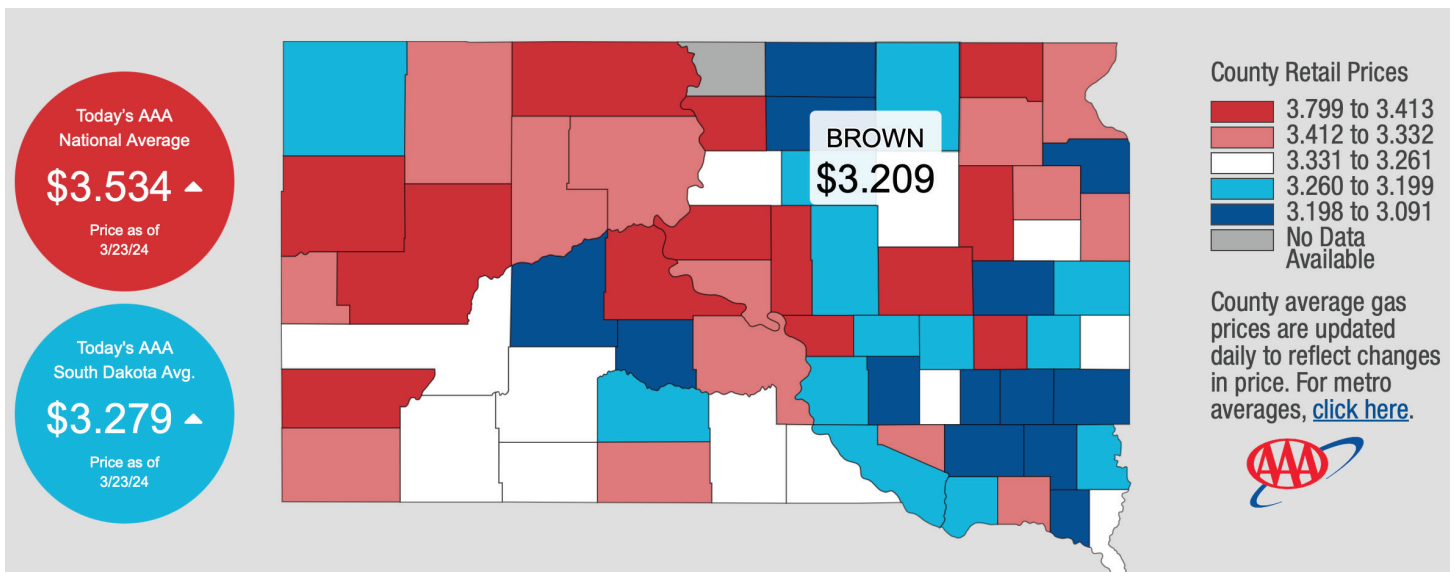
## South Dakota Average Gas Prices

|                | Regular | Mid-Grade | Premium | Diesel  |
|----------------|---------|-----------|---------|---------|
| Current Avg.   | \$3.326 | \$3.474   | \$3.884 | \$3.711 |
| Yesterday Avg. | \$3.318 | \$3.470   | \$3.881 | \$3.717 |
| Week Ago Avg.  | \$3.279 | \$3.434   | \$3.845 | \$3.727 |
| Month Ago Avg. | \$3.054 | \$3.192   | \$3.664 | \$3.750 |
| Year Ago Avg.  | \$3.291 | \$3.454   | \$3.881 | \$3.917 |

### This Week



### Two Weeks Ago



# Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, March 30, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 278 ~ 6 of 63

## Taryn Traphagen wins the 400m dash at NSU Indoor meet

Northern State University held an indoor track meet on March 26. Taryn Traphagen took first place in the 400m dash, Logan Ringgenberg and Emma Kutter both placed third in the shot put, Faith Traphagen was fourth in the 800m run, Laila Roberts was fifth in the 55m dash and McKenna Tietz was sixth in the 55m hurdles .

### Mens Results

#### 55 Meter Dash- Prelims

- 44. Karter Moody, 7.86
- 58. Logan Ringgenberg, 8.25

#### Shot Put- Finals

- 3. Logan Ringgenberg, 42' 4.75
- 18. Karter Moody, 36' 2
- 30. Ashton Holmes, 32' 6.25
- 44. Drew Thurston, 25' 10.75

### Womens Results

#### 55 Meter Dash- Finals

- 5. Laila Roberts, 7.84

#### 55 Meter Dash- Prelims

- 7. Laila Roberts, 8.06
- 19. Kella Tracy, 8.62
- 26. Kayla Lehr, 8.75

#### 200 Meters- Finals

- 12. McKenna Tietz, 29.97
- 33. Talli Wright, 32.45
- 34. Elizabeth Fliehs, 32.46
- 38. Kayla Lehr, 32.69

#### 400 Meters- Finals

- 1. Taryn Traphagen, 1:05.17
- 3. Jerica Locke, 1:07.63
- 10. Ashlynn Warrington, 1:11.44

#### 800 Meters- Finals

- 4. Faith Traphagen, 2:37.25

#### 55m Hurdles- Finals

- 6. McKenna Tietz, 10.17

#### 55m Hurdles- Prelims

- 7. McKenna Tietz, 10.30
- 14. Talli Wright, 11.41
- 20. Emerlee Jones, 11.92
- 21. Teagan Hanten, 12.00

#### Shot Put- Finals

- 3. Emma Kutter, 31' 3.25
- 11. Faith Fliehs, 27' 8
- 16. Avery Crank, 25' 8.25
- 17. Ashley Johnson, 25' 5.25
- 38. Emily Overacker, 18' 10.5
- 39. Emma Davies, 18' 2.25
- 44. Abby Yeadon, 13' 2

#### High Jump- Finals

- 9. Emerlee Jones, 4' 2

#### Long Jump- Finals

- 12. Laila Roberts, 13' 0.25
- 17. Teagan Hanten, 11' 4.75

#### Triple Jump- Finals

- 13. Emerlee Jones, 26' 3
- 15. Teagan Hanten, 25' 6

## GHS Track Schedule

**Thursday, April 4:** Varsity at Mobridge, 11 a.m.

**Tuesday, April 9:** Varsity at Ipswich, 2:30 p.m., Junior High at Milbank, 4 p.m.

**Thursday, April 11:** Varsity at Milbank, 3:30 p.m.

**Saturday, April 13:** Varsity at Mobridge, 10 a.m.

**Monday, April 15:** Junior High at Ipswich, 2 p.m.

**Tuesday, April 16:** Varsity Relays at Britton, 2 p.m.

**Friday, April 19:** Junior High at Groton Area, 2 p.m.

**Monday, April 22:** Junior High at Britton, 3:30 p.m.

**Tuesday, April 23:** Varsity at Groton Area, 11 a.m.

**Friday, April 26:** Varsity at Webster 1 p.m.

**Tuesday, April 30:** Varsity at Milbank, 1:30 p.m.

**Thursday, May 2:** Junior High at Aberdeen Roncalli, 2 p.m.

**Friday, May 3:** Varsity at Sisseton, 1 p.m.

**Monday, May 6:** Junior High at Webster, 3 p.m.

**Thursday, May 9:** Varsity NEC at Sisseton, 11 a.m.

**Monday, May 13:** Junior High NEC at Redfield, 10 a.m.; Varsity at Hamlin, 3 p.m.

**Friday, May 17:** Varsity Region at Mobridge

**Thursday-Saturday, May 23-25:** State at Howard Wood, Sioux Falls

# Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, March 30, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 278 ~ 7 of 63

## Girls Golf Schedule

**Thursday, April 11:** Mobridge-Pollock Invitational  
**Thursday, April 18:** Milbank Invite, 10 a.m.  
**Thursday, April 25:** Redfield Invite, 10 a.m.  
**Thursday, May 2:** Aberdeen Roncalli Invite at Lee Park Golf Course, 10 a.m.  
**Monday, May 6:** Groton Invitational, 10 a.m.  
**Monday, May 13:** NEC at Redfield, 10 am.  
**Thursday, May 16:** Sisseton Invite, 10 a.m.  
**Thursday, May 23:** Regional Meet at Groton, 10 a.m.  
**June 3-4:** State at Bakker Crossing Golf Course, Sioux Falls

## Spring Baseball Schedule

**Monday, April 8:** Varsity at Dell Rapids, 5 p.m.; second game TBD, 7 p.m.  
**Sunday, April 14:** Varsity Groton Invite: Elkton/Lake Benton at noon; W-I-N at 4 p.m.  
**Monday, April 22:** JV Double Header at Northville, vs. W-I-N, 5:30 p.m.  
**Wednesday, April 24:** Varsity: Madison at Groton, 7 p.m.  
**Saturday, April 27:** Varsity: Howard at Groton, 2 p.m.  
**Sunday, April 28:** at Volga: Varsity at 2 p.m., JV at 4 p.m.  
**Saturday, May 4:** Redfield at Groton: Varsity at 1 p.m., JV at 3 p.m.  
**Sunday, May 5:** Varsity at Bryant: vs. O-R/R/A at 2 p.m., vs. Hamlin Area at 4 p.m.  
**May 19-23:** Regional at highest two seeds.  
**May 31-June 1:** State B Tournament at Augustana University, Sioux Falls

15 N Main St. - Ste. 101  
Downtown Groton

Call/Text Paul: 605-397-7460

Call/Text Tina: 605-397-7285



When arthritis tries to slow you down,  
exercise can keep you moving. - Mayo Clinic

## 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.**

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# Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, March 30, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 278 ~ 9 of 63

## 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



## SOUTH DAKOTA SEARCHLIGHT

<https://southdakotasearchlight.com>

### **Corrections: Search for contraband follows second night of unrest at Sioux Falls prison**

**Frustrations over tablets spark questions about security, discipline policy**

**BY: JOHN HULT - MARCH 29, 2024 5:24 PM**

SIOUX FALLS – The state Department of Corrections says an ongoing search for contraband is underway after a second night of unrest at South Dakota’s largest penal institution.

Tea Storm Chasers, a nonprofit media outlet based in Tea, started a livestream video of the incident shortly before midnight Thursday. As on Wednesday, the disruption centered on East Hall, one of two large cell blocks at the South Dakota State Penitentiary in Sioux Falls.

At points in the 27-minute video, inmates can be heard yelling “we have rights,” and “water.” The noise had quieted by the end of the livestream, but the interior lights inside the cell block remained on until at least 3 a.m. The lights typically go out overnight, and were out in West Hall, located on the other side of the penitentiary.

A correctional officer was injured during a similar disruption on Wednesday, according to Gov. Kristi Noem. That incident was sparked by an attempt to confiscate inmate tablets, the governor said in a recorded interview, on which calling and messaging have been restricted since March 8 as a result of an investigation into what Noem called “nefarious” uses by some inmates.

Inmates could be heard chanting “we want phones” during the first incident, which began late in the afternoon. DOC Secretary Kellie Wasko sent a statement to media organizations at 8:30 p.m. that night to announce that order had been restored.

It’s unclear if any injuries to staff or inmates occurred in the second bout of unrest, which took place Thursday evening into early Friday morning.

On Friday evening, nearly 22 hours after the Tea Storm Chasers video appeared, DOC Secretary Kellie Wasko issued a statement on the Thursday situation.

“DOC staff began a thorough search of the State Penitentiary March 28th for illicit contraband in order to ensure the safety of the facility following a small group of offenders being disruptive. The search for contraband is ongoing,” the statement read. “Leadership at all levels has been engaged. We are proud of the professional and dedicated staff in Sioux Falls and volunteers from other facilities that are contributing to order and security.”

Attorney General Marty Jackley, through spokesman Tony Mangan, said the Division of Criminal Investigation (DCI) was not called upon to respond to the overnight disruption, but that the agency would investigate the incident. Jackley offered a similar statement on Thursday about the initial incident in East Hall.

“It is the Attorney General’s intent to prosecute those responsible for any harm done to correctional officers, other inmates, and state property to the fullest extent of the law,” he said.

#### **State employee lobbyist: ‘Is it something larger?’**

Eric Ollila, director of the South Dakota State Employees Organization, said he’d been in contact with several correctional officers about the Wednesday and Thursday incidents.

On Thursday, he said, the trouble apparently began when an inmate or inmates began to start fires in hopes of getting cell doors open.

The earlier issue was tied to tablets and began as a correctional officer tried to take a tablet from an inmate, Noem said.

# Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, March 30, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 278 ~ 11 of 63

But Ollila said there was likely more behind the tension.

"I think we all knew, just from the coverage, that the tablets are apparently the issue. But is it a tablet thing, or is it something larger?" Ollila said. "What kinds of policies are in place that allow them to do this, and what impact do those policies have on the safety of the correctional officers?"

Inconsistent enforcement of disciplinary policies and a lack of steady communication about disciplinary measures from shift to shift have become common complaints from correctional officers, Ollila said.

Short staffing has long been a concern, but he said that raises and recently hired classes of recruits mean the state has "turned a corner" in that regard.

Ollila said officers have described the incidents to him as "disruptions," rather than riots. Even so, he said, they raise questions about the safety of staff – something Noem and Wasko have said will be easier to insure in a proposed new, modern prison in Lincoln County.

The major question, he said, is "why do (the inmates) feel like they can get away with this?"

## Former corrections secretary: 'things can go south in a hurry'

State Rep. Tim Reisch, R-Howard, served as corrections secretary under former Gov. Mike Rounds. Reisch has not been in contact with the DOC about the incidents in Sioux Falls, but said he's proud of how quickly order was restored on Wednesday and that he's praying for the officers at the penitentiary.

"I applaud the DOC for getting things settled down," Reisch said.

There is an inherent risk in corrections, Reisch told South Dakota Searchlight, in the mismatch between the number of officers and inmates in correctional facilities. If inmates "get the idea that they should be doing something stupid like acting out, things can go south in a hurry," he said.

The current situation, Reisch said, harkens back to something that took place at Mike Durfee State Prison in Springfield during his time with the prison system.

"I remember when we went from getting two cartons of milk a day to one carton of milk a day, we had kind of a mini-riot down in Springfield," Reisch said. "They were yelling out the windows there, just like they were in this deal."

It doesn't take but a few inmates acting out for the behavior to spread, he said. That's true on the outside, as well, he said, like in situations where a handful of people might vandalize property during a protest and inspire others to cross a line.

"People will do things in a group they'd never consider doing on their own," he said.

## Future of tablets

The tablets that helped spark the current dispute were not a factor for Reisch, as they arrived after his tenure. He doesn't have a position on their use in prisons, he said, but did offer that electronic communications can mitigate problems that sometimes appear in letters and packages.

"You can't send drugs through an iPad," Reisch said.

The tablets are not iPads, but have some similar functions and operate in what's meant to be a secure and closed network. The tablets are provided to the state at no cost by its communications contractor in exchange for a share of the revenue generated by payments for messaging, phone calls and other services.

But Noem said Thursday that they'd been used for illegal purposes, and that the state needs to "see if it's possible for prisoners to have these tablets and have them not be used for nefarious reasons."

Ollila, the state employees representative, said there are questions that need to be addressed with the tablets, which were updated last year across DOC facilities.

"I think maybe the technology has leaped over the security features, and we really need to get a handle on that," Ollila said.

Jason Zaharris hopes the DOC finds a way to keep them. He was in prison in South Dakota until 2022. He didn't spend much time on "The Hill," as many call the penitentiary, before being transferred to a lower-security unit. But he said the tablets are especially important for inmates at higher security levels, such as the Jamison Annex.

"When you're on the Hill or in Jamison, 95% of your communications are done with your loved one on the tablets because you're locked down so much," Zaharris said. "Kristi Noem is saying 'oh, they still have access to phones on the wall.' Well, okay, yeah, that's technically true. But we're talking about 1,000-plus inmates with maybe two to three hours a day to have access to those phones."

Zaharris credits daily communication with his family for his current success. He's sober, he said, living in the Washington, D.C. area where he owns a junk removal company and works two other jobs. Keeping in touch with his support system helped him lay the groundwork for the life he has today, he said.

"If I hadn't talked to my family on those tablets every day, multiple times a day, and if it wasn't for that communication, then I would probably be back in that prison," Zaharris said. "But I was able to communicate with them, I was able to know that they were willing to help me if I was willing to do the work, and that's exactly how it worked out."

*John is the senior reporter for South Dakota Searchlight. He has more than 15 years experience covering criminal justice, the environment and public affairs in South Dakota, including more than a decade at the Sioux Falls Argus Leader.*

## Republicans to battle through dozens of contested primary elections in 2024

**BY: JOSHUA HAIAR - MARCH 29, 2024 4:56 PM**

Republicans are poised for plenty of guaranteed state legislative victories in the 2024 general election. But most of the candidates in South Dakota's dominant political party who want a seat in Pierre will first need to face off in the June 4 primary.

As of Friday evening, the Secretary of State's website listed 44 contested GOP primary contests.

The same candidate list shows that Republicans are guaranteed to win 17 seats in the 35-member Senate and 37 seats in the 70-member House of Representatives because no alternative candidates are running in those districts. Each district has two seats in the House and one in the Senate.

The filing deadline for state Democratic and Republican legislative candidates passed this week, but Rachel Soulek, director of the office's Division of Elections, said candidate information can still change over the next few days. Mail sent before the deadline containing candidate petitions could still come in, she said, and it will take time to validate signatures. While no Independent legislative candidates have filed, they have until April 30 to do so.

Already, the Republican primary election is shaping up to have several contested legislative races, showing GOP competition for 27 House and 17 Senate seats.

A wave of "fringe" populist candidates are trying to rebuild the state's established Republican party in their image, according to Pat Powers, a longtime Republican activist and blogger.

"This is shaping up to be a more competitive year," Powers said. "That's for sure."

Powers has written about Senate Majority Leader Casey Crabtree of Madison being challenged in the primary by Rick Weible, who has made a name for himself criticizing the security of the state's elections and quarreling with Republican leadership during the legislative session.

That dynamic offers an opening for Democrats, according to Pete Stavrianos, whose career in Democratic politics spanned 1962 to 2004, in roles including chief of staff and campaign manager for prominent Democrats including U.S. Senators Jim Abourezk and Tom Daschle. He said the Republican party's complete control of the state and the Make America Great Again (MAGA) movement's influence on Republicans should worry South Dakotans.

"If Democrats campaign hard against this kind of one-party boss rule that commands South Dakotans to live a MAGA lifestyle or else, 2024 could well sprout the first seeds of a return to healthy two-party competition in our state," Stavrianos said.

Longtime Republican leader Sen. Lee Schoenbeck, R-Watertown, is not running in 2024. Despite his re-

# Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, March 30, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 278 ~ 13 of 63

tirement, he has been offering "good, hardworking" Republican candidates advice for beating "hard-right" primary challengers: keep the focus on local issues, and spend a lot of time engaging with constituents and community leaders.

"You must be a proven person of your community," he said.

Six Republican Senate candidates have uncontested primary and general election races. Seats are assured for GOP incumbents Michael Rohl of Aberdeen, Steve Kolbeck of Sioux Falls, Ernie Otten of Tea, Kyle Schoenfish of Scotland, Jim Mehlhaff of Pierre, and Helene Duhamel of Rapid City.

In the House, four Republicans have uncontested primary and general elections: incumbents Will Mortenson and Mike Weisgram of Pierre, and Phil Jensen and Curt Massie of Rapid City.

On the Democratic side, Sioux Falls Senate incumbent Liz Larson is the sole candidate vying for a District 10 seat in the 35-member chamber.

The ballot picture is similar for the Democrats in the House of Representatives, with guaranteed Democratic seats for two of the body's 70 members. They include District 10 incumbents Erin Healy and Cameron Nelson, who will face one Republican on the general election ballot. Both candidates could best the GOP challenger in the general election contest and retain their seats. The other could be in District 27, where either Democrat Elsie Meek or incumbent Peri Pourier is guaranteed to be one of the two representing the district.

Democrats did not put forth 105 candidates – which would be a full slate for contests in both chambers. The party put together a slate of 19 Senate and 33 House candidates.

However, Powers said Democrats did place higher caliber candidates on the ballot this year.

"There are not a lot of placeholder candidates," he said. "These aren't interns they could convince to run for office."

Part of the credit goes to the Democratic Party's current Executive Director, Dan Ahlers, Powers said. Ahlers has an extensive background serving in the legislature and working with the state Democratic Party.

Ahlers said recruiting experienced candidates with name recognition in their communities was a top priority.

"We have more candidates than we did in the previous two election cycles," he said. "You don't change these things overnight."

Ahlers said his party has to work to convince qualified candidates to run in what he called a hostile environment. That's bad for everyone, he said, because quality candidates result in quality government.

"We get what we put into our representative democracy," he said.

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

## Thune pushes for free trade agreements as ag trade deficit rises

BY: MAKENZIE HUBER - MARCH 29, 2024 10:47 AM

U.S. Sen. John Thune spent March criticizing the Biden Administration trade policies and touting the importance of free trade to South Dakota and the nation's trade economy.

In a recent letter, for example, Thune and other senators lambasted the administration for not committing to a new free trade agreement since Biden took office in 2021. The letter argues that lack of action is, in part, causing the national agricultural trade deficit to skyrocket in recent years, he claimed.

The U.S. agricultural trade deficit is projected to reach a record \$30.5 billion in 2024. South Dakota, an agricultural state, largely depends on international trade.

But Thune's interest in free trade and critical eye to the policies around it extend beyond the current administration.

Former President Donald Trump's administration only approved one trade agreement, reconfiguring the

# Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, March 30, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 278 ~ 14 of 63

North American Free Trade Agreement into the U.S.-Mexico-Canada Agreement in early 2020. Trade deficits with Canada and Mexico continue to climb despite the agreement, according to reporting from POLITICO.

Shortly after his inauguration in 2017, Trump withdrew the United States from the Trans-Pacific Partnership, which was a proposed trade agreement between 12 Pacific Rim economies, including Mexico, Canada, Japan, Vietnam and Malaysia.

With both administrations historically pivoting away from an embrace of free trade policies, that leaves an uphill battle for Thune's agenda no matter who is sworn into the White House next January.

"There is certainly a sentiment in the U.S. right now in certain quarters that America doesn't need to be engaged in the world. I would disagree with it," Thune told South Dakota Searchlight.

Thune's comments came after a Wednesday panel discussion in Sioux Falls to celebrate the creation of the South Dakota Advisory Committee to the U.S. Global Leadership Coalition, which encourages America to stay involved in international affairs.

About 114,000 jobs in South Dakota – about 20% of jobs in the state – depend on trade. South Dakota exported \$6.7 billion globally in 2021, about \$5 billion of which was from agricultural products.

That makes international affairs all the more important to land-locked South Dakota, said DaNita Murray, executive director of South Dakota Corn.

"I don't think one has to be an economist to understand that demand, regardless of where it comes from, is important for the price on the big board of corn. And that certainly has a relationship to what happens in South Dakota," Murray said.

Corn prices halved from over \$8 to more than \$4 a bushel in 2022. Meanwhile, operating costs have increased, tightening profit margins for producers.

"I don't know when we're going to see \$5 for corn again," Murray added.

Thune is carrying a bill with Delaware Democrat Sen. Chris Coons to launch free trade negotiations with the United Kingdom. Thune called it a "no brainer" after Wednesday's panel discussion. But he's still hoping to one day return to the Pacific.

The 11 other countries that were originally part of the Trans-Pacific Partnership formed a new free trade agreement without the United States called the Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership. The partnership initially launched in 2018, and was intended to open up trade among the same group of partners.

"From a national security standpoint, I just think there are countries in that region of the world, many of whom are in what would have been TPP and are now CPTPP, who are in China's geographical orbit right now, but are more naturally aligned with the U.S.," Thune told Searchlight. "I think they would much rather be doing business with America, but because we're not there they end up just gravitationally getting sucked into China's orbit."

In regards to the current US-Mexico-Canada agreement, Thune said he doesn't believe Mexico has been "playing fair and honoring that agreement," and that China's continued practice of trans-shipping, which is shipping through other countries to avoid tariffs, is undermining U.S. producers.

That has an impact on the national trade deficit. The strength of the U.S. dollar, he added, is also making it more expensive for international markets to buy U.S. goods.

Andrea Thompson, the CEO of Dakota State University Applied Research, warned attendees of the Sioux Falls luncheon that China is already heavily involved in emerging markets in countries across the African continent.

"You've got to stay present, you've got to stay forward both economically, diplomatically and militarily," Thompson said.

Murray, with South Dakota Corn, said she'd like to look beyond the United Kingdom and other established countries and see partnerships in emerging markets.

"Those are incredibly important for demand growth," Murray said, because agreements with African or East Asian nations can influence an emerging economy's stance on imports, bio-technology and other

trade-related policies.

"It's not just about demand and import tariffs and giving U.S. grain a competitive advantage or keeping the playing field, but also about very obscure topics at times that impact the ability for that grain to flow freely," Murray said.

That will require continuing conversations about free trade with policy makers. Thune hopes for a receptive White House administration, regardless of which party is in charge.

"If you're running trade deficits, if you're not selling abroad, you're not creating that demand," Thune said. "... I think we have the most efficient producers and I think we can win in the global marketplace, but we've got to have access to it."

*Makenzie Huber is a lifelong South Dakotan whose work has won national and regional awards. She's spent five years as a journalist with experience reporting on workforce, development and business issues within the state.*

## **In the central U.S., an electric grid bottleneck persists**

**BY: ROBERT ZULLO - MARCH 29, 2024 6:01 PM**

Forty-five million people live in the area managed by the Midcontinent Independent System Operator, the organization that runs a massive portion of the North American electric grid running from Manitoba, Canada, to the Gulf of Mexico.

Inside that footprint are all or parts of 15 states, 75,000 miles of transmission lines and nearly 3,000 electric generating units: coal, nuclear, natural gas, wind, solar and hydroelectric plants.

But where the northern part of the system meets the southern end — a narrow corridor that traverses a corner of southeast Missouri and northeastern Arkansas — there's a bottleneck that can hurt electric customers and create major inefficiencies on both sides of the divide.

"It's definitely a problem," said Dan Scripps, chairman of the Michigan Public Service Commission and former president of the Organization of MISO States, which represents utility regulators in MISO territory. "The price separation you see between the regions is concerning."

The limited ability to shift power between the regions has been a longstanding concern. But a paper published earlier this year by an energy economist says a major utility company in MISO's southern region, Entergy, has big financial incentives to resist better transmission connections which the company has been repeatedly accused of doing.

The analysis by Catherine Hausman, an associate professor at the Gerald Ford School of Public Policy at the University of Michigan, says two Entergy subsidiaries, Entergy Louisiana and Entergy Arkansas, would have "seen profits lowered by \$930 million in 2022 under market integration." The report was published in January by the National Bureau of Economic Research as a working paper, which is circulated prior to peer review. Though complaints about the north-south constraint have been longstanding, Hausman's paper for the first time quantifies potential losses to power plant revenue if it gets fixed.

In a statement to States Newsroom, Entergy said Hausman's paper presents "a false and misleading narrative about Entergy and its approach to new transmission investment." The company added that, per the regulatory models it operates under, "profits do not depend on how often its generators run."

A MISO spokesman said the organization had no comment on Hausman's paper. However, MISO does plan to upgrade the connection in the years to come as part of its long range transmission planning process.

### **The beginnings of the bottleneck**

The MISO chokepoint is a product of both the limited connectivity between MISO's northern regions and the southern part and a contractual agreement, the regional directional transfer limit, which throttles the amount of power that can flow between them because of the effects on neighboring systems. Those include Southwest Power Pool, the grid operator to MISO's west, and the Tennessee Valley Authority to the east. The north-to-south limit is 3,000 megawatts and the south-to-north limit is 2,500 megawatts, though

# Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, March 30, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 278 ~ 16 of 63

those thresholds can be “temporarily increased or decreased to avoid a system emergency,” MISO says. “It is a contractual limitation designed frankly to protect SPP and TVA from Entergy free riding on their transmission lines to move power back to the north,” said Simon Mahan, executive director of the Southern Renewable Energy Association, an industry group. Also, Mahan said, it protects Entergy from cheaper power flows into its service area.

The limit’s roots stem from Entergy being prodded into joining a regional transmission organization in 2012 as part of a deal with the U.S. Department of Justice, which was investigating the company over anti-competitive behavior in how it managed its transmission system.

Instead of joining SPP, which some observers thought made the most sense because of the number of transmission connections it had with Entergy, the company chose MISO, “which put the utility effectively on an island with limited ability to move power back and forth,” wrote Daniel Tait, a research and communications manager with the Energy and Policy Institute, a pro-renewable energy nonprofit focused on utilities.

After Entergy’s merger into MISO in 2013, MISO began sending power between the regions in excess of the 1,000-megawatt direct physical connection between the regions, creating “significant incremental power flows” onto SPP’s system, per a complaint filed with the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission.

“MISO should not be permitted to be a free rider on the SPP system,” Southwest Power Pool transmission owners wrote in the FERC filing. “SPP transmission customers are paying for the SPP system, and will continue to pay for it, and should not be forced to subsidize MISO’s transmission customers.” A subsequent settlement agreement reached between the organizations in 2016 set the current constraints. The deal allows “MISO to purchase additional system capacity in exchange for compensation,” a MISO spokesman said.

## Why it matters

So, more than a decade since integrating with MISO, Entergy’s territories remain on an island, and that’s no accident, Tait and others say.

Why? Critics of the company point to “load pockets,” areas with high demand but limited ability to bring in electricity from elsewhere. A transmission line could be a potential fix, as could new power plants. And while Entergy says its profits aren’t affected by how often its power plants run, monopoly utilities like Entergy do make considerable money on building new ones, since the utility gets state-approved profit margins and is incentivized to build the most expensive project it can get regulators to go along with. (It’s a move Entergy has employed in East Texas that has drawn considerable criticism and lots of litigation).

“Entergy makes a lot more money by building a power plant under a state-regulated model compared to the lower return on equity from a federally regulated transmission project,” Tait said. Transmission lines that bring in cheaper power from elsewhere, like the wind-rich regions in northern MISO, can also make it harder to make the case for building new plants.

“Entergy joined MISO and sold off transmission assets, but has since been accused of stalling the MISO transmission process, again to protect its fossil plants,” Hausman’s paper says. “The incentives to have power plants dispatched a large portion of the year to still appear used and useful are likely to still be large.”

Rob Gramlich, a former FERC economic adviser and president of Grid Strategies, a consulting firm, said there’s “some generator protectionism going on in MISO South.” He added that there’s no good economic reason why upgrades to the north-south constraint to allow more power to flow can’t happen quicker.

“It’s just politics and certain companies’ interest,” he said.

Entergy, however, rejects the notion that it has fought new transmission to protect profits and says that revenues from operating Entergy’s plants are “credited 100% to customers” on their bills.

“Simply put, there is no incentive, profit or otherwise, for Entergy to oppose new transmission that is beneficial to our customers,” the company told States Newsroom.

Rather, Entergy pointed at renewable developers, who often build power generation far from areas of high electric demand and may need considerable transmission to get their power to market. (Per Hausman’s analysis, wind generators in MISO North would have seen a gain of about \$800 million in 2022 if



# Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, March 30, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 278 ~ 17 of 63

transmission constraints were fixed.)

"There is every profit incentive for renewable developers to pursue new transmission regardless of its merit or whether it reduces the delivered cost of electricity to utility customers," the company said. "Unlike Entergy, such developers do benefit from increasing the dispatch of their generation, and the resulting costs are borne not by them but by utility customers."

Bringing in cheaper power only makes sense for utility customers when the savings are greater than the cost of the new transmission projects needed to provide it, the company said.

"It is one thing to be able to import more wind generation, but if the cost of the transmission necessary to import that wind generation makes the total delivered cost of electricity more expensive, then it is not in our customers' interests to pursue that project," Entergy said.

Bill Booth, an energy attorney who works for developers, utilities and state commissions in the MISO region, said several areas in MISO have transmission constraints, not just the North-South connection.

"Two critical issues are cost allocation and the belief by a state commission that the facilities built are going to benefit the state," he said. "You can drive on a two-lane highway or you can drive on a six-lane highway. ... There would have to be a business case to justify the expense."

## Making connections

Scripps, the Michigan utility regulator and the former president of the Organization of MISO States, says he's unsure why the limitations between MISO's regions persist but added that it causes real headaches. Among the biggest is the inability to move the cheapest power to customers in the region, which is one of the main reasons regional transmission organizations like MISO exist in the first place. It can likewise be a problem during severe weather, when moving electricity between the regions is crucial to compensate for plant outages or other emergencies.

"The whole idea of these regional markets and interconnections is you can draw from a broader pool, you can drive down prices and you can increase reliability," Scripps said. "We are clearly losing out on both the reliability benefit and the opportunity to lower prices by having the RDT continue to exist as a significant constraint on the MISO system." The constraint also presented problems during a recent MISO capacity auction, Scripps said. That's when utilities purchase excess electric capacity to ensure they can meet electric demand at all times. Prices were significantly higher in MISO's northern regions than in the south, Scripps noted. "If that constraint didn't exist we would not have seen the price spike in the capacity market that we did," he said.

Mahan, with the Southern Renewable Energy Association, pointed out that during Winter Storm Elliott in 2022 the power flow along the north-south connection was reduced to alleviate strain on the grid. There were also blackouts in Entergy territory during Winter Storm Uri in 2021.

"MISO South had rolling blackouts in part because we couldn't import enough power from the north," Mahan said. "Being able to move power back and forth helps lower the cost of the system for everyone."

During Winter Storm Heather in January, wholesale electric prices exceeded \$900 per megawatt hour in one part of MISO South while they were as low as \$9 per megawatt hour in other parts of the system. As the storm moved on, the problem reversed to some degree, with prices in MISO North climbing.

"The economics of the system flipped and now all of a sudden MISO South had way more generation than we needed," Mahan said.

As of now, MISO contemplates fixing the RDT constraint as part of the fourth phase (called Tranche 4) of its long range transmission planning process. The organization just laid out proposals for the second tranche, which involve additional transmission projects in MISO North. The third tranche envision fixes for MISO South. "The MISO South grid is too weak to import lower-cost electricity, which is increasing consumers' bills unnecessarily," said Lauren Azar, an energy attorney working for the Natural Resources Defense Council and former Wisconsin utility commissioner, at a MISO meeting in February.

But there's a battle under way over who should pay for what. That means an upgrade for the north-south constraint is likely still years away.

"The vision for melding MISO North and South together on this rolling time frame has really lagged behind," said Beth Sohlt, executive director of the Clean Grid Alliance, based in St. Paul, Minnesota. "It's in the ratepayers' best interest to find the political will to solve this."

*Robert Zullo is a national energy reporter based in southern Illinois focusing on renewable power and the electric grid. Robert joined States Newsroom in 2018 as the founding editor of the Virginia Mercury. Before that, he spent 13 years as a reporter and editor at newspapers in Virginia, New Jersey, Pennsylvania and Louisiana. He has a bachelor's degree from the College of William and Mary in Williamsburg, Va. He grew up in Miami, Fla., and central New Jersey.*

## **Experts say the economy is getting better, but consumers don't feel that way. Here's why.**

**BY: CASEY QUINLAN - MARCH 29, 2024 5:19 PM**

Americans are still worried about their financial stability even as their recession fears lessen. High prices at the grocery store and consumers' memories of their pre-pandemic budgets may be playing a role. Here's what financial and economic experts have to say about what this week's economic indicators tell us about people's perception of the economy.

### **What is driving consumer confidence?**

The Consumer Confidence Index, released by the business nonprofit and research organization the Conference Board, is a survey indicating how optimistic or pessimistic consumers feel about their financial well-being and the economy.

The Consumer Confidence Index fell slightly in March from 104.8 to 104.7, well below some economist expectations of 106.5. Although consumers' perception of the likelihood of a recession fell this month, consumers were less confident about their family's financial situation in the next six months. The percentage of consumers who expected their incomes to fall rose from 11.9% in February to 13.8% in March.

Elizabeth Pancotti, director of special initiatives for the Roosevelt Institute, said that consumers' experience of the economy and their financial situation may come down to crises they're feeling that may not show up at a macro level but may strike their budgets particularly hard.

"When egg prices finally come down and chicken prices finally come down, but orange juice is high because of some random citrus greening disease or some other shocking food item, your total grocery bill doesn't come down and that really highlights it," she said. "There's one crisis after another at a micro level, which I think is really why we're not seeing that divergence between overall economic strength and at a very micro level, the feelings of average consumers."

Pancotti acknowledged that housing is also one of the highest expenses for consumers right now, and those prices aren't showing as much movement as other areas of consumers' budgets.

"For most families, it is the largest purchase they make every month," she said.

### **Why isn't consumer sentiment higher?**

Consumer sentiment, a smaller survey conducted by the University of Michigan, also gauges people's sense of the economy overall, the labor market, and how they see inflation. On Thursday, U.S. consumer sentiment jumped to 79.4 from 76.9 in February and 62 a year earlier, making this its highest level since July 2021.

Joanne Hsu, director of the survey, said in the report that this number is an indication that consumers believe the economy is "holding steady."

"As the election season progresses and debates over economic policy become more salient for consumers, their outlook for the economy could become more volatile in the months ahead," she added.

Kevin Kliesen, business economist and research officer at the Federal Reserve Bank of St. Louis, said

# Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, March 30, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 278 ~ 19 of 63

consumer confidence and consumer sentiment are still far below pre-pandemic levels and that it's a puzzle as to why when the economy has "been growing fairly strongly" in the past year and a half. But like Pancotti, he added that high prices at the store compared to pre-pandemic prices may be playing a role in those measures.

"If you're like me, you look at something, and you go, 'Oh my gosh. I remember when it was so much less before the pandemic.' So I think that calls into question, probably, a lot of people's perceptions of the overall state of the economy and importantly their consumer finances," he said.

## **What can we expect from inflation and the Fed?**

As the Federal Reserve looks to its favorite inflation measure, the personal consumption expenditures price index, economists are watching the PCE closely for signs the Fed will cut rates in the coming months. This policy change is expected to have effects on the housing market as well as the growth of businesses.

The PCE rose 0.3% from January to February and 2.5% over the past year, according to the Bureau of Economic Analysis's Friday release. Fed Chairman Jerome Powell responded to the news when he spoke at the San Francisco Fed and said the numbers were "in line with expectations" but not as reassuring as the numbers Fed officials saw last year.

Despite this reception from Powell, some financial experts believe inflation will ease up soon. Cristian Tiu, associate professor of finance at the University at Buffalo, said that although the economy is adding jobs, he doesn't believe the quality of those jobs is high enough to sustain this price growth for much longer.

"Prices basically on consumer goods can't be driven up forever just by the very top of the wage distribution. The rest of the wage distribution actually looks pretty modest. So I don't think these price increases can actually be sustained," Tiu said.

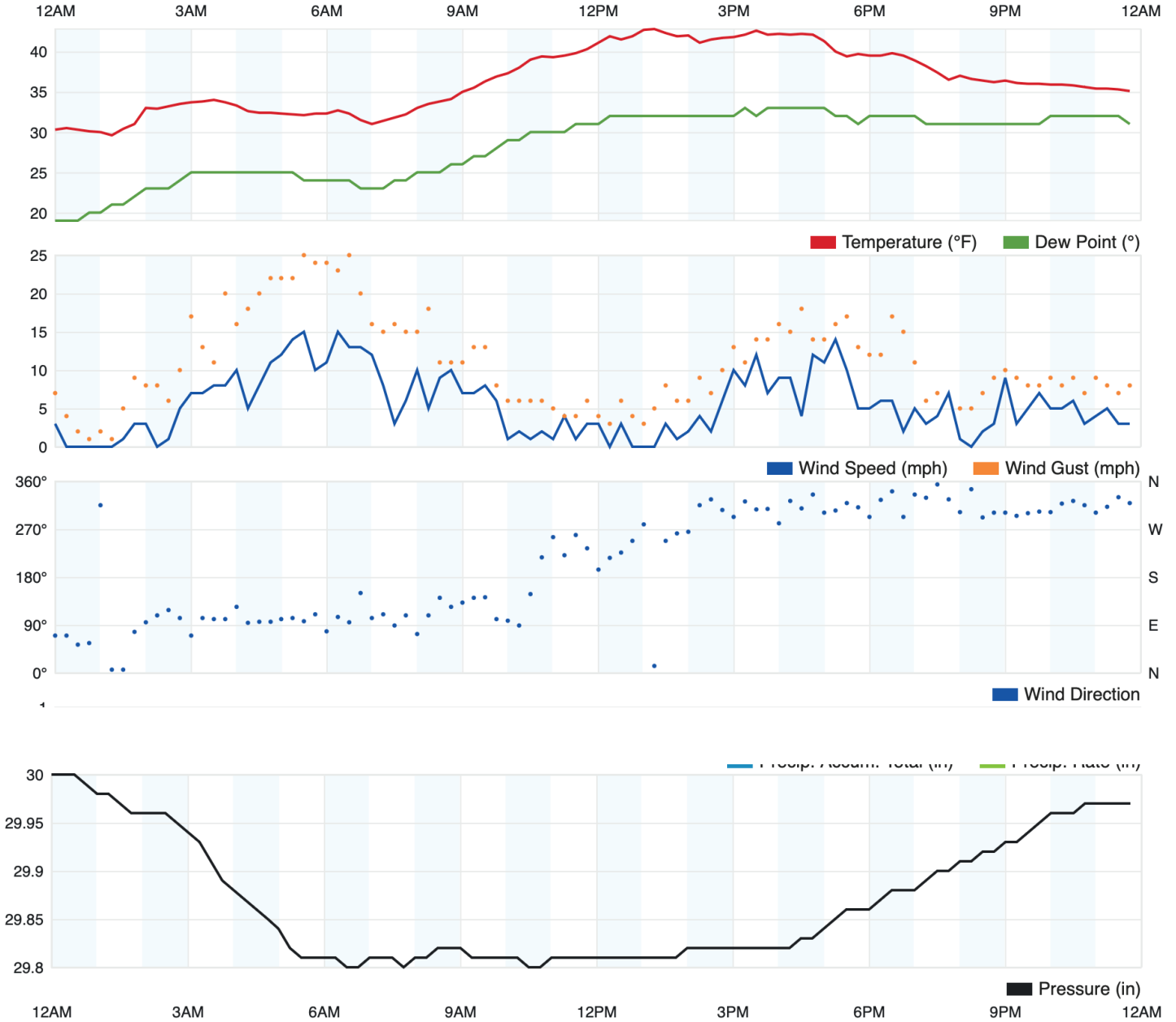
For this reason, he doesn't think the Fed should continue to put brakes on the economy through restrictive monetary policy. Tiu added that he sees inflation as driven partly by corporate profit-seeking, with companies taking advantage of inflation to continue to keep prices higher than they can justify for the American consumer.

*Casey Quinlan is an economy reporter for States Newsroom, based in Washington, D.C. For the past decade, they have reported on national politics and state politics, LGBTQ rights, abortion access, labor issues, education, Supreme Court news and more for publications including The American Independent, ThinkProgress, New Republic, Rewire News, SCOTUSblog, In These Times and Vox.*

# Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, March 30, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 278 ~ 20 of 63

## Yesterday's Groton Weather Graphs





# Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, March 30, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 278 ~ 22 of 63

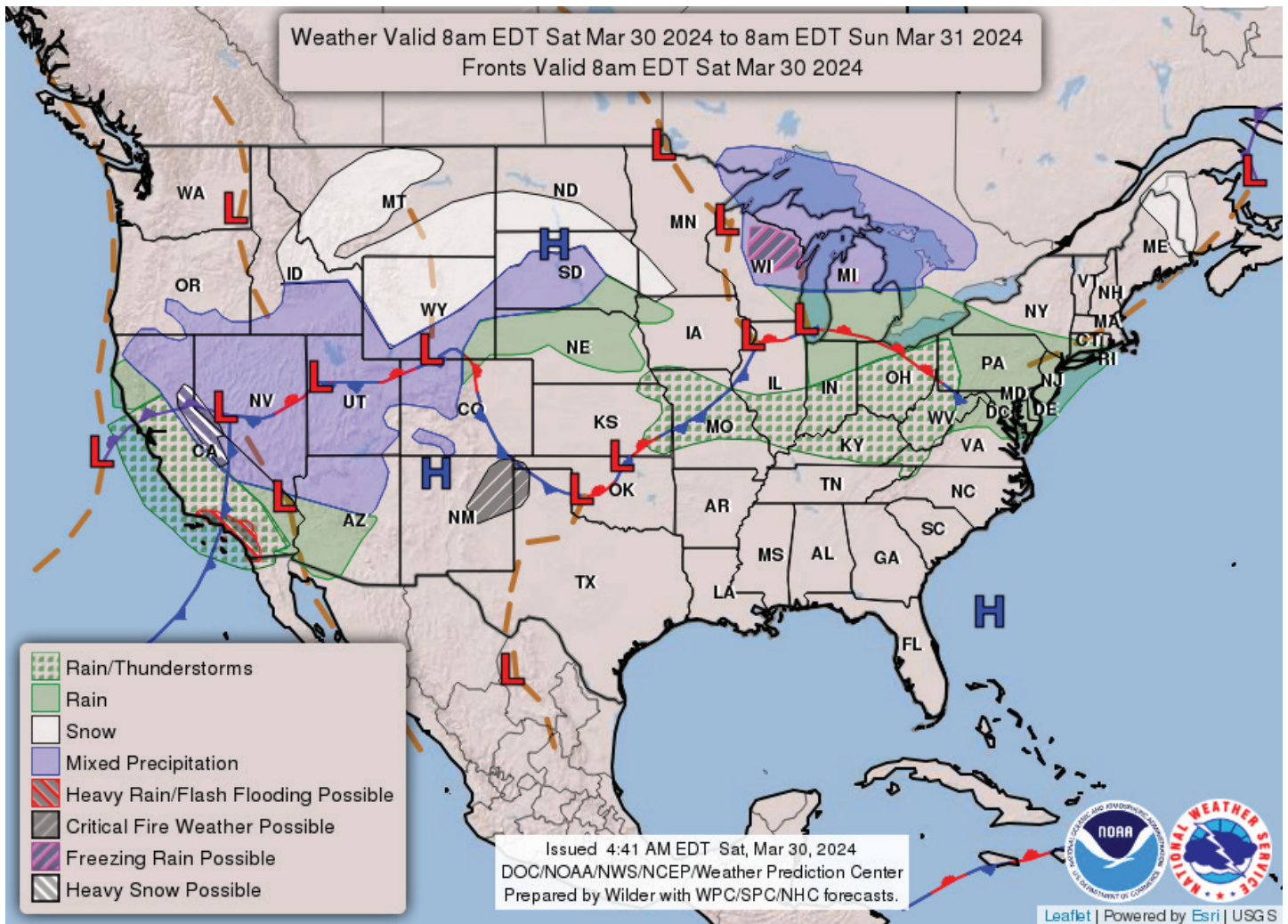
## Yesterday's Groton Weather

**High Temp: 43 °F at 1:21 PM**  
**Low Temp: 30 °F at 1:09 AM**  
**Wind: 26 mph at 6:36 AM**  
**Precip: : 0.00**

Day length: 12 hours, 46 minutes

## Today's Info

Record High: 81 in 1943  
Record Low: -14 in 1969  
Average High: 49  
Average Low: 25  
Average Precip in March.: 0.85  
Precip to date in March: 0.78  
Average Precip to date: 2.02  
Precip Year to Date: 0.85  
Sunset Tonight: 7:59:57 pm  
Sunrise Tomorrow: 7:11:24 am



# Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, March 30, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 278 ~ 23 of 63

## Today in Weather History

March 30, 1967: Prolonged strong southerly winds of 20 to 30 mph, with gusts to 55 mph, caused areas of blowing dust in eastern South Dakota, reducing visibilities to near zero. A metal roof on lumber shed in Vermillion was blown off. The strong winds also piled ice along the shore of Lake Poinsett to heights of 20ft, causing damage to some cabins along the lakeshore.

March 30, 2009: A major winter storm moved across the Northern Rockies and into the Northern Plains producing from 2 to 22 inches of snowfall along with widespread blizzard conditions. Most area schools and events were canceled. Travel was challenging and not advised. Interstate 29 from Watertown to the North Dakota line and Interstate 90 across Jones and Lyman counties were both closed during the storm. There were several vehicle accidents with no serious injuries reported. However, this storm took a toll on area ranchers as the calving season was underway. Storm total snowfall amounts included; 6 inches in Blunt, Timber Lake, Gettysburg, and Wilmot; 7 inches in Doland and Pierre; 8 inches in Clark, Clear Lake, Leola, Hosmer, Gettysburg, southeast of McIntosh, and Kennebec; 9 inches south of Bristol, Waubay, and near Chelsea; 10 inches in Eagle Butte and Mobridge; 11 inches in Pollock and Turton. Locations with a foot or more of snowfall included; 12 inches in Aberdeen, Britton, Andover, Sisseton, and Faulkton; 13 inches at Lake Sharpe, Roy Lake, and eight miles southwest of Keldron; 14 inches in Miller, Redfield, and Webster; 15 inches near Highmore and near Columbia; 16 inches southwest of Stratford; 17 inches 14 miles northeast of Isabel; 20 inches in McLaughlin, Ree Heights, and 4 miles northeast of Victor with almost 22 inches northwest of Stephan.

March 30, 2010: Scattered light rain showers falling into a very dry air mass were responsible for several heat bursts that occurred across central South Dakota from Pierre to Onida during the evening hours of March 30th. Between 853 pm and 1053 pm CDT, observations from the Pierre airport (KPIR) showed a marked increase in temperature (+10F), a decrease in dew point temperature (-4F), the pressure falls, and gusty surface winds (a peak wind gust of 48 mph). On a farm outside of Pierre, winds were estimated up to 70 mph as some shingles were blown off the roof along with damage to several outbuildings. The Onida airport recorded a peak wind gust of 66 mph in the early evening.

1805: New York's City's Battery Park was strewn with 24-inch snow rollers, from a ferocious storm between the March 26th and March 28th. Snow rollers are natural snowballs that are formed when winds blow over a snow-covered surface.

1823 - A great Northeast storm with hurricane force winds raged from Pennsylvania to Maine. The storm was most severe over New Jersey with high tides, uprooted trees, and heavy snow inland. (David Ludlum)

1848: On six reported occasions, the water flow over the American Falls has been entirely blocked by ice and ceased to fall. But only once has this happened on the much larger Horseshoe Falls.

1899 - A storm which buried Ruby, CO, under 141 inches of snow came to an end. Ruby was an old abandoned mining town on the Elk Mountain Range in the Crested Butte area. (The Weather Channel)

1977 - Hartford, CT, hit 87 degrees to establish a record for the month of March. (The Weather Channel)

1987 - A storm spread heavy snow across the Ohio Valley and Lower Great Lakes Region. Cleveland OH received sixteen inches of snow in 24 hours, their second highest total of record. Winds gusting to 50 mph created 8 to 12 foot waves on Lake Huron. The storm also ushered unseasonably cold air into the south central and southeastern U.S., with nearly one hundred record lows reported in three days. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1988 - A winter-like storm developed in the Central Rockies. Snowfall totals in Utah ranged up to 15 inches at the Brian Head Ski Resort, and winds in Arizona gusted to 59 mph at Show Low. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1989 - Thunderstorms developing along and ahead of a slow moving cold front produced large hail and damaging winds at more than fifty locations across the southeast quarter of the nation, and spawned a tornado which injured eleven persons at Northhampton NC. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1990 - Low pressure produced heavy snow in central Maine and northern New Hampshire, with up to eight inches reported in Maine. A slow moving Pacific storm system produced 18 to 36 inches of snow in the southwestern mountains of Colorado in three days. Heavier snowfall totals included 31 inches at Wolf Creek Pass and 27 inches at the Monarch Ski Area. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

# Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, March 30, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 278 ~ 24 of 63

Daily Devotionals

## Seeds of Hope

### BE WHO GOD WANTS YOU TO BE

When Bill Robinson joined the New York Yankees, he was introduced as the "new Mickey Mantle." He tried desperately to live up to that title, and in the process, he failed.

After being traded from one team to another, he ended up with the Pittsburgh Pirates. The coach came to him one day and said, "Bill, stop trying to be Mickey Mantle. Be yourself!"

When he did, he became a star.

Paul wrote, "Don't copy the behavior and customs of this world, but let God transform you into a new person by changing the way you think."

In His infinite wisdom, God created each of us to be different from every other person who has ever lived. So, when we try to act, be like, or think like another person, we limit ourselves and abandon the plan that He has designed especially for us.

When we accept the fact that God has "transformed" us into new persons that makes life so very exciting for the Christian. Imagine, in you can, the limitless possibilities that become ours as a result of allowing God to change the way we think! New thoughts will result in our eyes being opened to see the limitless opportunities and possibilities that God has designed for each of us that only we can do.

We limit God's power in our lives when we refuse to allow Him to transform our minds. Transformed minds always result in transformed lives that are truly unique.

Prayer: Father, we pause in a moment of humility to consider the fact that You have a special plan for each of us. May we willingly change our minds and follow You. In Jesus' Name, Amen.

Scripture For Today: Don't copy the behavior and customs of this world, but let God transform you into a new person by changing the way you think. Romans 12:2



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 30, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 278 ~ 25 of 63

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# Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, March 30, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 278 ~ 26 of 63



## WINNING NUMBERS

### MEGA MILLIONS

WINNING NUMBERS:  
03.29.24

11 30 33 38 60 16

MegaPlier: 4x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:  
**\$36,000,000**

NEXT DRAW:

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

### LOTTO AMERICA

WINNING NUMBERS: 03.27.24

9 22 30 31 34 5

All Star Bonus: 2x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:  
**\$2,500,000**

NEXT DRAW: 15 Hrs 1 Mins 32 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

### LUCKY FOR LIFE

WINNING NUMBERS:  
03.29.24

8 13 14 42 44 2

TOP PRIZE:  
**\$7,000/week**

NEXT DRAW: 15 Hrs 16 Mins 32 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

### DAKOTA CASH

WINNING NUMBERS: 03.27.24

3 4 11 34 35

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:  
**\$36,000**

NEXT DRAW: 15 Hrs 16 Mins 32 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

### POWERBALL

DOUBLE PLAY

WINNING NUMBERS: 03.27.24

31 47 52 53 57 23

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

NEXT DRAW: 15 Hrs 45 Mins 32 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

### POWERBALL

WINNING NUMBERS: 03.27.24

37 46 57 60 66 8

Power Play: 2x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:  
**\$935,000,000**

NEXT DRAW: 15 Hrs 45 Mins 32 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

## News from the Associated Press

### Police say 3 hostages have been released but the situation in a Dutch town is not over

By ALEKSANDAR FURTULA Associated Press

EDE, Netherlands (AP) — Three people who were held hostage for hours in a nightclub in the central town of Ede were released Saturday, police said, but they added that the “situation is not over.”

Gelderland Police announced the hostage release in a message on X, formerly Twitter. They gave no further details about whether more hostages remained in the club. Heavily armed police and special arrest teams, some wearing masks, were massed outside the popular club.

Video from the scene showed three people walking out of the club with their hands in the air following their release.

Police said in a message on X, formerly Twitter, that “at the moment there is no indication of a terrorist motive.”

Earlier Saturday, officers cordoned off a square in central Ede and evacuated about 150 nearby homes, saying that multiple people were being held hostage in a building there.

Police spokesman Simen Klok told The Associated Press people were being held hostage but he declined to give more details of the incident or say how many people were involved.

The hostages were being held in Cafe Petticoat, a popular bar and nightclub in Ede, according to an AP videographer at the scene.

Images from the scene in Ede, a rural market town 85 kilometers (53 miles) southeast of Amsterdam, showed police and firefighters on the streets in a cordoned-off area.

The municipality said that all shops in the center of Ede would remain closed while the situation continued. Trains to and from the town’s station also were halted.

### Government agents raid Peruvian President Boluarte’s residence in luxury watch investigation

Televised images swept Peru late Friday of government agents from an investigative team breaking into the president’s residence with a sledgehammer in a raid authorized by the judiciary at the request of the attorney general’s office.

Dina Boluarte is being preliminarily investigated for possessing an undisclosed collection of luxury watches since she came to power in July 2021 as vice president and Social Inclusion minister, and then as president in December 2022.

Initially, she claimed ownership of at least one Rolex as a long-held possession acquired through “personal gains” since the age of 18, urging the media not to delve into personal matters.

Earlier in the week, Attorney General Juan Villena criticized Boluarte’s request to delay her appearance before the court for two weeks, emphasizing her obligation to cooperate with the investigation.

Political turmoil is nothing new in Peru, which has seen six presidents in the last five years. But many see Boluarte’s recent statements as contradicting her earlier pledge to speak truthfully to prosecutors, exacerbating a political crisis stemming from her unexplained ownership of Rolex watches.

The Attorney General emphasized Boluarte’s obligation to promptly produce the three Rolex watches for investigation, cautioning against their disposal or destruction.

Boluarte, a 61-year-old lawyer, ascended from a modest district official to vice president under President Pedro Castillo in July 2021, subsequently assuming the presidency in December 2022 following Castillo’s impeachment after he attempted to dissolve congress and rule by decree.

At least 49 people were killed in the protests that followed.

Critics accuse Boluarte’s government of taking an increasingly authoritarian bent as it staves off demands

for early elections and works with members of congress on laws that threaten to undermine the independence of Peru's judicial system.

## Volunteers uncover fate of thousands of Lost Alaskans sent to Oregon mental hospital a century ago

By MARK THIESSEN Associated Press

ANCHORAGE, Alaska (AP) — Lucy Pitka McCormick's relatives cooked salmon, moose, beaver and muskrat over an earthen firepit on the banks of the Chena River, just outside Fairbanks, as they honored her life. They whipped whitefish, blueberries and lard into a traditional Alaska Native dessert, and dolloped servings onto a paper plate, setting it in the flames to feed her spirit.

The family prayed as McCormick's great-grandson built a small plywood coffin that was filled with gifts and necessities for the next world, such as her granddaughter's artwork and a hairbrush.

The weeklong Koyukon Athabascan burial ceremony in September was traditional in all ways but one: McCormick died in 1931. Her remains were only recently identified and returned to family.

McCormick was one of about 5,500 Alaskans between 1904 and the 1960s who were committed to a hospital in Portland, Oregon, after being deemed by a jury "really and truly insane," a criminal offense.

There were no facilities to treat those with mental illness or developmental disabilities in what was then the Alaska territory, so they were sent — often by dog sled, sleigh or stagecoach — to a waiting ship in Valdez. The 2,500-mile (4,000 km) journey ended at Morningside Hospital.

Many never left, and their families never learned their fate.

They are known as the Lost Alaskans.

For more than 15 years, volunteers in Fairbanks and in Portland have been working to identify the people who were committed to the hospital. Many were buried in Portland cemeteries, some in unmarked pauper graves. A few, like McCormick, have been returned to Alaska for proper burials.

"It was pretty powerful that we had Lucy back," said her grandson, Wally Carlo. "You could feel the energy when she came back to Alaska, like she had to wait 90-some years for this."

A new database went online in February to help families see if their long-lost auntie or great-grandfather were among those sent to Morningside. The website, which builds on an earlier blog, is a clearinghouse for research performed by the volunteers.

Finding information has been laborious. Most records at the private hospital were lost in a 1968 fire, and territorial officials didn't document those who were committed.

The volunteers became history detectives in an investigation that has spanned more than 15 years. Among them: former Alaska health commissioner Karen Perdue; two retired state judges, Niesje Steinkruger and the late Meg Green; and two other Fairbanks residents, Ellen Ganley and Robin Renfroe, aided by Eric Cordingley, a cemetery volunteer in Portland.

They combed through dusty Department of Interior records at the National Archives, the Alaska and Oregon state archives, and old Alaska court records for any tidbit: the results of commitment trials, cemetery files, death certificates, old newspaper stories and U.S. marshals reimbursement records for the costs of escorting patients.

Ganley and Perdue started the search at the National Archives in College Park, Maryland, in 2008. Armed with laptops and a scanner, they gave themselves a week to find any reference to Perdue's uncle, Gilford Kriska, who had disappeared from the village of Nulato, on the Yukon River in western Alaska, when he was a boy.

They found a wealth of information about others in Morningside's payment requests for housing Alaskans. Finally, they saw her uncle's name on a patient trust account, showing the federal government owed him a few cents.

That entry provided his patient number, which they used to uncover more about Kriska, including that it was village nuns who had him committed.

Kriska eventually returned to Fairbanks, where Perdue said she met him once in the 1970s.

# Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, March 30, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 278 ~ 29 of 63

"He was mildly what we would call developmentally disabled today," she said. He could read and write but had few life skills.

Perdue said that while she was health commissioner, from 1994 to 2001, many people approached her with similar stories of long-missing relatives. That pain had been passed down in the families for decades — "intergenerational trauma," Perdue said.

There are several thousand names in the new database, with more names and details being added. Users might be able to find when and why a patient was committed, when they left or died, a burial location, and a death certificate.

The hospital was founded in the late 19th century by Dr. Henry Waldo Coe, initially in his home and later on a bucolic farm in Portland. It operated under several names before it was called Morningside.

In 1904 it received a government contract to care for mentally ill Alaskans, a contract that lasted until after Alaska gained statehood in 1959 and began to build its own mental health facilities.

A variety of Alaskans wound up there: miners, housewives, Alaska Natives, a co-founder of Juneau, a banker from Fairbanks. Causes included postpartum depression, cabin fever, epilepsy, addiction and syphilis. The youngest patient was 6 weeks old; the oldest was 96.

Parents sometimes would frighten their children into behaving by mentioning the hospital. "Inside, outside, Morningside," became a common phrase denoting people could stay in Alaska, move away or be committed.

It was likely letters written by the patients were never sent, and they never received mail meant for them, according to evidence found by retired judge Steinkruger.

Morningside's treatment of its residents came under public scrutiny by the 1950s. Congressional hearings and public outrage eventually helped force its closure in 1968. A shuttered mall off Interstate 205 now sits on its former grounds.

From Portland, Cordingley documented burial sites at several cemeteries and obtained 1,200 Oregon death certificates.

"I'm just glad that I happened to be here when they needed someone to help," said Cordingley, who has volunteered at his neighborhood cemetery for about 15 years, helping to clean headstones and decipher obscure burial records.

In 2012, he began creating his own databases to help families find lost loved ones. He built three virtual cemeteries at [www.findagrave.com](http://www.findagrave.com), including photos of death certificates, burial sites and in some cases the patients. One virtual site is dedicated to Alaska Natives who died at Morningside, a second to other patients and a third for Alaska children who died at another Oregon institution, Baby Louise Haven.

Cordingley found Lucy McCormick's grave marker in Portland, informed the family — they were stunned — and later watched as she was disinterred.

McCormick's aunt, Fairbanks furrier Helen Callahan, claimed she was "insane," and McCormick was admitted to Morningside April 5, 1930, after a jury confirmed Callahan's diagnosis, records show.

In January 1931, doctors performed a hysterectomy. McCormick died within weeks from a post-surgery infection.

Wally Carlo said his father and uncles never talked about McCormick, and he never knew what happened to her. After Cordingley found her grave, the family decided to bring her home, Carlo said.

On a beautiful fall day, relatives launched four boats on the Yukon River to take her to her birthplace in the village of Rampart. They were escorted by eagles and swans, "like a salute to Grandma Lucy," he said. She was laid to rest on a hill overlooking the village of 29 people and the river.

"Don't ever give up hope and try to get them back to where they belong," he said. "Their spirits don't rest until they're found and brought back home."

## Israel's high court says the government must stop funding seminaries. Could that topple Netanyahu?

By JULIA FRANKEL Associated Press

JERUSALEM (AP) — Israel's Supreme Court ruling curtailing subsidies for ultra-Orthodox men has rattled Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's governing coalition and raised questions about its viability as the country presses on with the war in Gaza.

Netanyahu has until Monday to present the court with a plan to dismantle what the justices called a system that privileges the ultra-Orthodox at the expense of the secular Jewish public.

If that plan alienates the ultra-Orthodox lawmakers on whose support he depends, his coalition could disintegrate and the country could be forced to hold new elections.

Here's a breakdown of the decision and what it might spell for the future of Israeli politics.

### WHAT DOES THE DECISION SAY?

Most Jewish men are required to serve nearly three years in the military, followed by years of reserve duty. Jewish women serve two mandatory years.

But the politically powerful ultra-Orthodox, who make up roughly 13% of Israeli society, have traditionally received exemptions while studying full time in religious seminaries, or yeshivas.

This years-old system has bred widespread resentment among the broader public — a feeling that has deepened during nearly six months of war. More than 500 soldiers have been killed in fighting, and tens of thousands of Israelis have had their careers, studies and family lives disrupted because of reserve duty.

The Supreme Court ruled that the current system is discriminatory and gave the government until Monday to present a new plan, and until June 30 to pass one. Netanyahu asked the court Thursday for a 30-day extension to find a compromise.

The court did not immediately respond to his request. But it issued an interim order barring the government from funding the monthly subsidies for religious students of enlistment age who have not received a deferral from the army. Those funds will be frozen starting Monday.

While the loss of state subsidies is certainly a blow, it appears the yeshivas can continue to function. Israel's Channel 12 reported Friday that the state provides only 7.5% of all funding for the institutions. Netanyahu's coalition could also search for discretionary funds to cover the gaps.

### HOW IS THE DECISION BEING RECEIVED?

Many Israelis are celebrating the court's decision, believing it spells an end to a system that takes for granted their military service and economic contributions while advantaging the ultra-Orthodox, or "Haredim" as they are called in Israel.

The religious exemption dates back to Israel's founding, a compromise that the country's first prime minister, David Ben Gurion, made with ultra-orthodox leaders to allow some 400 yeshiva students to devote themselves fully to Torah study. But what was once a fringe Haredi population has grown precipitously, making the exemption a hugely divisive issue to Israeli society.

Many ultra-Orthodox continue to receive government stipends into adulthood, eschewing getting paying jobs to instead continue full-time religious studies. Economists have long warned the system is unsustainable.

"The next government will have to hold a long overdue conversation about the future of the Haredi relationship to the state," commentator Anshel Pfeffer wrote in Israel's left-leaning daily, Haaretz.

"Now, the Haredim will have no choice but to take part in it. It won't be just about the national service of its young men, it will also have to address fundamental questions about education and employment," he said.

Ultra-Orthodox leaders have reacted angrily.

Aryeh Deri, head of the ultra-Orthodox Shas party, called the court's decision "unprecedented bullying of Torah students in the Jewish state."

The ultra-Orthodox say that integrating into the army will threaten their generations-old way of life, and that their devout lifestyle and dedication to upholding the Jewish commandments protect Israel as much

as a strong army. Although a small number have opted to serve in the military, many have vowed to fight any attempt to compel Haredim to do so.

"Without the Torah, we have no right to exist," said Yitzchak Goldknopf, leader of the ultra-Orthodox party United Torah Judaism. "We will fight in every way over the right of every Jew to study Torah and we won't compromise on that."

#### WHY DOES IT THREATEN NETANYAHU?

Netanyahu, Israel's longest-serving prime minister, is known as a master political survivor. But his room for maneuver is limited.

Vowing to press forward with a war that has harmed the Israeli economy and asked much of its soldiers and reservists, Netanyahu could lose the support of the more centrist elements of his fragile national unity government if he tries to preserve the exemptions for the ultra-Orthodox.

The two centrists in his fragile War Cabinet, both former generals, have insisted that all sectors of Israeli society contribute equally. One, Benny Gantz, has threatened to quit — a step that would destabilize a key decision-making body at a sensitive time in the war.

But the powerful bloc of ultra-Orthodox parties — longtime partners of Netanyahu — want draft exemptions to continue.

The ultra-Orthodox parties have not said what they will do if they lose their preferential status. But if they decide to leave the government, the coalition would almost certainly collapse and the country could be forced into new elections, with Netanyahu trailing significantly in the polls amid the war.

## Uranium is being mined near the Grand Canyon as prices soar and the US pushes for more nuclear power

By SUSAN MONTOYA BRYAN Associated Press

The largest uranium producer in the United States is ramping up work just south of Grand Canyon National Park on a long-contested project that largely has sat dormant since the 1980s.

The work is unfolding as global instability and growing demand drive uranium prices higher.

The Biden administration and dozens of other countries have pledged to triple the capacity of nuclear power worldwide in their battle against climate change, ensuring uranium will remain a key commodity for decades as the government offers incentives for developing the next generation of nuclear reactors and new policies take aim at Russia's influence over the supply chain.

But as the U.S. pursues its nuclear power potential, environmentalists and Native American leaders remain fearful of the consequences for communities near mining and milling sites in the West and are demanding better regulatory oversight.

Producers say uranium production today is different than decades ago when the country was racing to build up its nuclear arsenal. Those efforts during World War II and the Cold War left a legacy of death, disease and contamination on the Navajo Nation and in other communities across the country, making any new development of the ore a hard pill to swallow for many.

The new mining at Pinyon Plain Mine near the Grand Canyon's South Rim entrance is happening within the boundaries of the Baaj Nwaavjo I'tah Kukv National Monument that was designated in August by President Joe Biden. The work was allowed to move forward since Energy Fuels Inc. had valid existing rights.

Low impact with zero risk to groundwater is how Energy Fuels spokesman Curtis Moore describes the project.

The mine will cover only 17 acres (6.8 hectares) and will operate for three to six years, producing at least 2 million pounds (about 907,000 kilograms) of uranium — enough to power the state of Arizona for at least a year with carbon-free electricity, he said.

"As the global outlook for clean, carbon-free nuclear energy strengthens and the U.S. moves away from Russian uranium supply, the demand for domestically sourced uranium is growing," Moore said.

# Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, March 30, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 278 ~ 32 of 63

Energy Fuels, which also is prepping two more mines in Colorado and Wyoming, has produced about two-thirds of the uranium in the U.S. in the last five years. In 2022, it was awarded a contract to sell \$18.5 million in uranium concentrates to the U.S. government to help establish the nation's strategic reserve for when supplies might be disrupted.

The ore extracted from the Pinyon Plain Mine will be transported to Energy Fuels' mill in White Mesa, Utah — the only such mill in the U.S.

Amid the growing appetite for uranium, a coalition of Native Americans testified before the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights in late February, asking the panel to pressure the U.S. government to overhaul outdated mining laws and prevent further exploitation of marginalized communities.

Carletta Tilousi, who served for years on the Havasupai Tribal Council, said she and others have written countless letters to state and federal agencies and sat through hours of meetings with regulators and lawmakers. Her tribe's reservation lies in a gorge off the Grand Canyon.

"We have been diligently participating in consultation processes," she said. "They hear our voices. There's no response."

A group of hydrology and geology professors and nuclear watchdogs sent Arizona Gov. Katie Hobbs a letter in January, asking she reconsider permits granted by state environmental regulators that cleared the way for the mine. She has yet to respond and her office declined to answer questions from The Associated Press.

Lawyers for Energy Fuels said in a letter to state officials that reopening the permits would be an improper attempt to side step Arizona's administrative procedures and rights protecting permit holders from "such politicized actions."

The environmentalists' request followed a plea weeks earlier by the Havasupai saying mining at the foot of Red Butte will compromise one of the tribe's most sacred spots. Called Wii'i Gdwiisa by the Havasupai, the landmark is central to tribal creation stories and also holds significance for the Hopi, Navajo and Zuni people.

"It is with heavy hearts that we must acknowledge that our greatest fear has come true," the Havasupai said in a January statement, reflecting on concerns that mining could affect water supplies, wildlife, plants and geology throughout the Colorado Plateau.

The Colorado River flowing through the Grand Canyon and its tributaries are vital to millions of people across the West. For the Havasupai Tribe, their water comes from aquifers deep below the mine.

The U.S. Geological Survey recently partnered with the Havasupai Tribe to examine contamination possibilities that could include exposure through inhalation and ingestion of traditional food and medicines, processing animal hides or absorption through materials collected for face and body painting.

Legal challenges aimed at stopping the Pinyon Plain Mine repeatedly have been rejected by the courts, and top officials in the Biden administration are reticent to weigh in beyond speaking generally about efforts to improve consultation with Native American tribes.

It marks another front in an ongoing battle over energy development and sacred lands, as tribes in Nevada and Arizona are fighting the federal government over the mining of lithium and the siting of renewable energy transmission lines.

The Pinyon Plain Mine, formerly known as the Canyon Mine, was permitted in 1984. Because it retained existing rights, the mine effectively became grandfathered into legal operation despite a 20-year moratorium placed on uranium mining in the Grand Canyon region by the Obama administration in 2012.

The U.S. Forest Service in 2012 reaffirmed an environmental impact statement that had been prepared for the mine years earlier, and state regulators signed off on air and aquifer protection permitting within the past two years.

"We work extremely hard to do our work at the highest standards," Moore said. "And it's upsetting that we're vilified like we are. The things we're doing are backed by science and the regulators."

The regional aquifers feeding the springs at the bottom of the Grand Canyon are deep — around 1,000 feet (304 meters) below the mine — and separated by nearly impenetrable rock, Moore said.

State regulators also have said the geology of the area is expected to provide an element of natural



# Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, March 30, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 278 ~ 33 of 63

protection against water from the site migrating toward the Grand Canyon.

Environmental reviews conducted as part of the permitting process have concluded the mine's operation won't affect visitors to the national park, area residents or groundwater or springs associated with the park. Still, environmentalists say the mine raises a bigger question about the Biden administration's willingness to adopt policies favorable of nuclear power.

The U.S. Commerce Department under the Trump administration issued a 2019 report describing domestic production as essential to national security, citing the need to maintain the nuclear arsenal and keep commercial nuclear reactors fueled to generate electricity. At that point, nuclear reactors supplied nearly 20% of the electricity consumed in the U.S.

The Biden administration is staying the course. It's in the midst of a multibillion-dollar modernization of the nation's nuclear defense capabilities, and the U.S. Energy Department on Wednesday offered a \$1.5 billion loan to the owners of a Michigan power plant to restart the shuttered facility, which would mark a first in the U.S.

Taylor McKinnon, the Center for Biological Diversity's Southwest director, said pushing for more nuclear power and allowing mining near the Grand Canyon "makes a mockery of the administration's environmental justice rhetoric."

"It's literally a black eye for the Biden administration," he said.

Using nuclear power to reach emissions goals is a hard sell in the western U.S. From the Navajo Nation to Ute Mountain Ute and Oglala Lakota homelands, tribal communities have deep-seated distrust of uranium companies and the federal government as abandoned mines and related contamination have yet to be cleaned up.

A complex of mines on the Navajo Nation recently was added to the federal Superfund list. The eastern edge of the reservation also is home to the largest radioactive accident in U.S. history. In 1979, more than 93 million gallons (350 million liters) of radioactive and acidic slurry spilled from a tailings disposal pond, contaminating water supplies, livestock and downstream communities. It was three times the radiation released at the Three Mile Island accident in Pennsylvania just three months earlier.

Teracita Keyanna with the Red Water Pond Road Community Association got choked up while testifying before the human rights commission in Washington, D.C., saying federal regulators proposed keeping contaminated soil onsite rather than removing it.

"It's really unfair that we have to deal with this and my children have to deal with this and later on, my grandchildren have to deal with this," she said. "Why is the government just feeling like we're disposable. We're not."

There is bipartisan backing in Congress for nuclear power, but some lawmakers who come from communities blighted by contamination are digging in their heels.

Congresswoman Cori Bush of Missouri said during a congressional meeting in January that lawmakers can't talk about expanding nuclear energy in the U.S. without first dealing with the effects that nuclear waste has had on minority communities. Bush pointed to her own district in St. Louis, where waste was left behind from the uranium refining required by the top-secret Manhattan Project.

"We have a responsibility to both fix — and learn from — our mistakes," she said, "before we risk subjecting any other communities to the same exposure."

## **Closed bridges highlight years of neglect, backlog of repairs awaiting funding**

By DAVID A. LIEB, MICHAEL CASEY, JEFF MCMURRAY and CHRISTOPHER KELLER Associated Press

After a yearlong closure, a bridge over the Puyallup River reopened in 2019 with a sturdy new span and a brand new name. It even won a national award.

But today, the Fishing Wars Memorial Bridge is closed again after federal officials raised concerns about a vintage section of the nearly century-old bridge that carried about 15,000 vehicles a day. It has no timetable to reopen because the city of Tacoma, Washington, first must raise millions of dollars to clean

# Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, March 30, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 278 ~ 34 of 63

and inspect it.

"It's frustrating — and hard to comprehend how we got here," said Ed Wallace, whose Harley-Davidson motorcycle store has lost customers since the nearby bridge was shuttered.

Bridges fulfill a vital function that often goes overlooked until lives are lost or disrupted by a closure or collapse, like that of the Francis Scott Key Bridge in Baltimore early Tuesday. That bridge crumpled when struck by a cargo ship, not because of poor maintenance. But thousands of others stand in worse shape.

About 42,400 U.S. bridges are in poor condition, yet they carry about 167 million vehicles each day, according to the federal government. Four-fifths of them have problems with the legs holding them up or the arms supporting their load. And more than 15,800 of those bridges also were in poor shape a decade ago, according to an Associated Press analysis.

One of those persistently poor bridges — carrying about 96,000 westbound vehicles daily on Interstate 195 over the Seekonk River in Rhode Island — was suddenly shut to traffic late last year, resulting in long delays as drivers diverted to new routes. In March, the governor announced that the bridge must be demolished and replaced. That could cost up to \$300 million and take at least two years to complete.

These closures illustrate a nationwide issue.

"We have not maintained our infrastructure at the rate that we should for many, many years, and now we're trying to play catch-up," said Marsia Geldert-Murphey, president of the American Society of Civil Engineers.

When an old bridge gets closed because of safety concerns, it disrupts daily commutes, business supply chains and emergency response times by police, firefighters and medical personnel. Yet many bridges still await replacement or repairs because the costs can reach millions or even billions of dollars.

## A FUNDING INFUSION

A massive infrastructure law signed by President Joe Biden in 2021 directed \$40 billion to bridges over five years — the largest dedicated bridge investment since construction of the interstate highway system, which began nearly 70 years ago.

Transportation Secretary Pete Buttigieg said that law already is funding over 7,800 bridge projects. One of the most notable is a \$3.6 billion project in Cincinnati to build a long-awaited new bridge carrying traffic on Interstates 71 and 75 over the Ohio River at the Kentucky border.

But funding from the infrastructure law will make only a dent in an estimated \$319 billion of needed bridge repairs nationwide, according to the American Road & Transportation Builders Association.

"The bottom line is that America's bridges need a lot of work," Buttigieg told the AP after visiting the closed Rhode Island bridge. He added: "The sooner we can address those significant bridges, the less likely they will be abruptly taken out of service, or worse, experience the risk of a collapse."

Inspectors rate bridges using a 0-9 scale, with 7 or above considered "good." A "poor" rating reflects a 4 or below. A mid-range rating is considered "fair." The nation's poor bridges are on average 70 years old.

Even before the federal funding infusion, the number of bridges in poor condition declined 22% over the past decade as structures were repaired, replaced or permanently closed, according to the AP's analysis. But in recent years, more bridges also slipped from good to fair condition.

## COLLAPSING BRIDGES

Though potholes on bridges can jar cars, many of the most concerning problems are below the surface. Chipping concrete and rusting steel can weaken the piers and beams that keep a bridge upright. When the condition of substructures or superstructures deteriorates too much, a bridge typically is closed out of public safety concerns.

Though rare, bad bridges can eventually collapse.

Design flaws contributed to the evening rush hour collapse of an Interstate 35 bridge over the Mississippi River in Minneapolis in 2007. The collapse killed 13 people and injured 145 others. It also was costly financially. A state analysis estimated Minnesota's economy lost \$60 million in 2007-2008 due to increased travel time and operating costs for commuters and businesses.

In January 2022, a bridge carrying a bus and several cars collapsed over Fern Hollow Creek in Pittsburgh, causing injuries but no deaths. Federal investigators determined the steel legs had corroded to the point

# Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, March 30, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 278 ~ 35 of 63

of having visible holes, yet inspectors failed to calculate the severity of the problem and the city failed to follow repeated recommendations.

"This bridge didn't collapse just by an act of God. It collapsed because of a lack of maintenance and repair," National Transportation Safety Board member Michael Graham said.

## FINANCIAL CHALLENGES

Iowa has the most poor bridges, followed by Pennsylvania, Illinois and Missouri. The twin Burlington Street bridges in Iowa City, Iowa, exemplify the financial challenges facing old bridges. The state owns the southbound span carrying vehicles over the Iowa River while the city owns the northbound span of what's also known as state Highway 1.

The city's part, constructed in 1915, was rated in poor condition in the 2023 and 2013 National Bridge Inventory. Inspection reports show numerous cracks and structural deficiencies in the concrete bridge. The state's side, built in 1968, is in much better condition.

Although the federal infrastructure law provided a grant to analyze the bridges, the split ownership has made it difficult to fund the more than \$30 million estimated cost of a replacement.

"It's not something we can just fund in a year and say: 'Here we go, let's do it quick,'" said city engineer Jason Havel. "It takes years of planning, years of working through dedicated funding."

## ECONOMIC EFFECTS

In Rhode Island, problems had been mounting for the I-195 Washington Bridge connecting Providence to East Providence. It closed after an engineer in December noticed the failure of multiple steel tie rods in concrete beams at two piers. A subsequent examination found widespread structural problems.

Joseph McHugh, an engineer with 40 years of experience in bridge and road construction, reviewed a draft engineering report compiled after the bridge's closure along with inspection reports from July 2022 and July 2023.

"This failure didn't occur overnight," McHugh told the AP. "To me, it should have been caught by an inspection, not by a contractor or whomever was looking at what was going on."

The U.S. Department of Justice is investigating allegations that false payment claims for the bridge's construction, inspection or repair were submitted to the federal government.

Marco Pacheco, who owns a liquor store along a main road in a Portuguese neighborhood of East Providence, said he believes "mismanagement," "negligence" and "incompetence" caused the closure. His business revenue is down 20% since the bridge closed. But he's even more concerned about the long-term consequences.

"That traffic doesn't instantly come back. Folks have reshaped their patterns, their thought processes and so on," Pacheco said.

Business owners in Washington share similar concerns about the indefinite closure of the Fishing Wars Memorial Bridge, in an industrial area near the Port of Tacoma. Several years ago, the city spent \$42 million to replace a span leading up to the river. But the bridge was abruptly closed again last October after the Federal Highway Administration raised concerns that debris had prevented the inspection of potentially corroded steel connection points.

To clean and inspect the bridge, the city first must encapsulate it to protect debris from falling into the river. But the city lacks the more than \$6 million needed for the project. It also has no means of paying for a potential \$280 million replacement.

A nearby Interstate 5 bridge provides a good alternative but that means many motorists zoom right past an exit ramp without thinking about the Harley-Davidson store or other nearby businesses. At least one shop already has closed.

Wallace, the Harley-Davidson store owner, wishes the city could re-open the bridge, at least temporarily.

"Is there a peril that exists?" Wallace asks rhetorically. "Yeah, absolutely, a very serious one for me as a business owner."

## President Joe Biden is lapping Donald Trump when it comes to campaign cash — and he'll need it

By SEUNG MIN KIM and BRIAN SLODYSKO Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Joe Biden's reelection campaign is raising gobs of cash. And it has an election-year strategy that, in a nutshell, aims to spend more — and spend faster.

Not only has Biden aimed to show himself off as a fundraising juggernaut this month, but his campaign is also making significant early investments both on the ground and on the airwaves — hoping to create a massive organizational advantage that leaves Republican Donald Trump scrambling to catch up.

But while the money pouring in has given Biden and the Democrats a major cash advantage, it's also becoming clear Biden will need it. Throughout his life in business and politics, Trump's provocations have earned him near limitless free media attention. Biden, meanwhile, has often struggled to cut through the noise with his own message despite holding the presidency.

That means Biden is going to need oodles of cash to blanket battleground states where a few thousand votes could mean the difference between victory or defeat. Add to that the challenge of reaching millennials, as well as even younger voters, who formed an important part of his 2020 coalition, in a far more fractured media ecosystem that skews toward streaming services over conventional broadcast and cable.

Biden's organizational and outreach effort began in earnest this month, with the campaign using his State of the Union address as a launching pad to open 100 new field offices nationwide and boosting the number of paid staff in battleground states to 350 people. It's also currently in the middle of a \$30 million television and digital advertising campaign targeting specific communities such as Black, Hispanic and Asian voters.

In one example of the incumbent president's organizational advantage, his reelection campaign in February had 480 staffers on the ground, compared with 311 to that of Trump and the Republican National Committee, according to Biden campaign officials.

"We're ramping up campaign headquarters and field offices, hiring staff all across the country before Trump and his MAGA Republicans have even opened one single office," Biden boasted Friday in New York during a meeting of his national finance committee, which included 200 of his largest donors and fundraisers from in and around the city.

A massive ground game disadvantage didn't prevent Trump from winning the presidency in 2016, a fact Democrats keenly remember.

"It's one of the stubborn challenges of Trump," said Robby Mook, campaign manager for Hillary Clinton's 2016 presidential bid. "Trump is Trump's best organizer, and Trump can motivate people from the podium."

But, Mook added, the Biden campaign is doing what it needs to do, pointing to the State of the Union as a powerful example of how to effectively mobilize the base and harness the anti-Trump energy that will inevitably motivate many Democrats this year.

"The most magical and the scariest part of politics is, you never know until Election Day," Mook said. "And so I wouldn't want to leave anything on the table if I were them, and the great part about having a resource advantage is, you get to have all these different things."

Even Biden's bricks-and-mortar campaign is likely to be far more costly this year.

Unlike 2020, when many Americans were hunkered down due to the pandemic, Biden will need to travel more while also building a political infrastructure that will be far more expensive than the socially distanced, virtual campaign he waged from his basement the last time around.

His reelection campaign will also have expenses that Trump won't have to confront, such as reimbursing the federal government for use of Air Force One. So far, it has reimbursed \$4.5 million for use of the official presidential aircraft for political activity, according to the campaign.

Mook said decisions about how to strategically invest the campaign's cash are never as nimble as the staff wants them to be, and there is not only a risk in spending too much, too fast — but also spending far too late in an election year.

Last fall and summer, Democrats fretted about Biden's early lack of fundraising and campaign activity. Writers' and actors' guild strikes in Hollywood didn't help, either — effectively sidelining the pro-labor union

president from raising money in a region that has long bankrolled the party's political ambitions.

Fast forward to the present and the second-guessing about his fundraising operation has tamped down. Aside from raking in millions at high-dollar events around the country — and bringing in \$26 million at an event featuring Biden, Barack Obama and Bill Clinton on Thursday evening — the president has frequently pointed to the 500,000 new donors who have contributed in recent weeks, arguing that he's expanding his appeal.

Now, even donors lukewarm to the president are contributing, Democratic Party donors and fundraisers say.

"I think people really want to hear what they have to say," said Michael Smith, a major Hollywood donor and fundraiser, who hosted a Los Angeles event earlier this year featuring rocker Lenny Kravitz and held another event last week in Palm Springs with the president's wife, Jill Biden. "They realize this is an investment."

Trump campaign officials concede that Biden and the Democrats will likely have more cash to spend, though they argue that Trump will still be able to run an effective campaign given his ability to attract media coverage.

"Our digital online fundraising continues to skyrocket, our major donor investments are climbing, and Democrats are running scared of the fundraising prowess of President Trump," said Steven Cheung, communications director for the Trump campaign. "We are not only raising the necessary funds but we are deploying strategic assets that will help send President Trump back to the White House and carry Republicans over the finish line."

But given Trump's propensity for making explosive remarks, that can also cut both ways, which Democrats are sure to exploit by using their cash advantage to run ads. Trump's legal fees from the myriad of court cases he is tied up with are also sure to be a drag on his cash situation. Records show his political operation has shelled out at least \$80 million to cover court costs over the past two years.

"Trump promises to be a Dictator on Day 1, suspend our Constitution and bring back political violence even worse than January 6. His MAGA agenda is so toxic and extreme that hundreds of thousands of Republicans in swing states voted for Nikki Haley over him, even after she dropped out — how unique!" Biden campaign spokesperson Lauren Hitt said. "Donald Trump has no resources or even the will to bring those critical voters back."

There's also the open question of whether Trump will be able to break through in the same ways he did in 2016, when he was a political novelty. Or as he did during the 2020 election, when he held the presidency and was a ubiquitous presence at a time when locked-down Americans were glued to their TVs.

"The media landscape and where voters get their news has changed and so assumptions based on Trump's ability to dominate mainstream media conversations should be questioned," said Josh Schwerin, a Democratic strategist who formerly worked at Priorities USA, the Democrats' primary super PAC during the 2020 presidential campaign.

"Fewer voters are getting their news from traditional outlets and finding ways to get information in front of them is getting harder and harder — and that takes money," he said. "Both candidates are going to have to do this. And this is one place where having a financial advantage is going to be a big benefit to the Biden campaign."

## **At collapsed Baltimore bridge, focus shifts to the weighty job of removing the massive structure**

By LEA SKENE and BRIAN WITTE Associated Press

BALTIMORE (AP) — Teams of engineers are now focused on the formidable job of hauling the shattered remains of the Francis Scott Key Bridge out of Maryland's Patapsco River, the first step toward reopening the Port of Baltimore and recovering the bodies of four workers who are still missing and presumed dead.

A massive cargo go ship felled the span Tuesday after striking one of its main supports. Experts are

# Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, March 30, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 278 ~ 38 of 63

trying to figure out how to “break that bridge up into the right-sized pieces that we can lift,” U.S. Coast Guard Rear Adm. Shannon Gilreath said Friday at a news conference.

The tools that are needed have been coming into place. They include seven floating cranes — one of which is one of the largest on the Eastern Seaboard, capable of lifting 1,000 tons — 10 tugboats, nine barges, eight salvage vessels and five Coast Guard boats.

“To go out there and see it up close, you realize just how daunting a task this is,” Gov. Wes Moore said Friday afternoon as the massive crane loomed behind him.

“With a salvage operation this complex — and frankly with a salvation operation this unprecedented — you need to plan for every single moment,” Moore added.

Moore surveyed the scene and saw shipping containers ripped apart “like papier-mache.” The broken pieces of the bridge, including its steel trusses, weigh as much as 4,000 tons.

The wreckage has blocked ships from entering or leaving the vital port and also stymied the search for the missing workers.

“We have to bring a sense of closure to these families,” Moore said.

Moore also spoke of the disaster’s severe economic impact, saying, “What we’re talking about today is not just about Maryland’s economy; this is about the nation’s economy. The port handles more cars and more farm equipment than any other port in this country.”

Maryland’s Department of Transportation is already planning for rebuilding of the span and “considering innovative design, engineering and building methods so that we can quickly deliver this project,” Secretary Paul J. Wiedefeld said.

Adam Ortiz, the Environmental Protection Agency’s mid-Atlantic Regional Administrator, said there was no indication in the water of active releases from the ship or materials hazardous to human health.

Col. Roland L. Butler Jr., superintendent of the Maryland State Police, said the Federal Aviation Administration has been asked to establish a flight restriction area that would begin 3 nautical miles in every direction from the bridge’s center span and extend upward to 1,500 feet.

Butler advised people to keep drones away and said law enforcement is poised to act on any violations of that airspace.

The victims, members of a crew fixing potholes on the span when it was destroyed, were from Mexico, Guatemala, Honduras and El Salvador, officials said. At least eight people initially went into the water when the ship struck the bridge column, and two of them were rescued.

Divers then recovered the bodies of two men from a pickup truck in the river, but the nature and placement of the debris has complicated efforts to find the other four workers, as have the murky water conditions.

“The divers can put their hands on that faceplate, and they can’t even see their hands,” said Donald Gibbons, an instructor with Eastern Atlantic States Carpenters Technical Centers. “So we say zero visibility. It’s very similar to locking yourself in a dark closet on a dark night and really not being able to see anything.”

Baltimoreans made morning stops at vantage points Friday to watch for the cranes. Among them was Ronald Hawkins, 71, who used to be able to see the bridge from his home and recalled watching its construction in the 1970s.

“I’m going to come up here every day, because I want to see the bridge coming up out of the water,” Hawkins said. “It’s a hurtin’ thing.”

President Joe Biden’s administration has approved \$60 million in immediate aid, and Biden has said the federal government will pay the full cost of rebuilding the bridge, which was completed in 1977 and carried Interstate 695.

Ship traffic at the Port of Baltimore remains suspended, but the Maryland Port Administration said in a statement Friday that trucks were still being processed at marine terminals.

Federal and state officials have said the collision and collapse appeared to be an accident that came after the ship lost power. Investigators are still trying to determine why.

The crash caused the bridge to break and fall into the water within seconds. Authorities had just enough time to stop vehicle traffic but were unable to alert the construction crew.

The cargo ship Dali, which is managed by Synergy Marine Group, had been headed from Baltimore to

Sri Lanka. It is owned by Grace Ocean Private Ltd. and was chartered by Danish shipping giant Maersk. The loss of a road that carried 30,000 vehicles a day and the port disruption will affect not only thousands of dockworkers and commuters, but also U.S. consumers, who are likely to feel the impact of shipping delays.

Scott Cowan, president of the International Longshoremen's Association Local 333, said the union was scrambling to help its roughly 2,400 members whose jobs are at risk of drying up. "If there's no ships, there's no work," he said. "We're doing everything we can."

## Japanese authorities raid a factory making health supplements linked to 5 deaths

By YURI KAGEYAMA Associated Press

TOKYO (AP) — Japanese government health officials raided a factory Saturday producing health supplements that they say have killed at least five people and hospitalized more than 100 others.

About a dozen people wearing dark suits solemnly walked into the Osaka plant of Kobayashi Pharmaceutical Co. in the raid shown widely on Japanese TV news, including public broadcaster NHK.

The company says little is known about the exact cause of the sicknesses, which include kidney failure. An investigation into the products is underway in cooperation with government health authorities.

The supplements all used "benikoji," a kind of red mold. Kobayashi Pharmaceuticals' pink pills called Benikoji Choleste Help were billed as helping lower cholesterol levels.

Kobayashi Pharmaceutical, based in the western Japanese city of Osaka, said about a million packages were sold over the past three fiscal years. It also sold benikoji to other manufacturers, and some products have been exported. The supplements could be bought at drug stores without a prescription from a doctor.

Reports of health problems surfaced in 2023, although benikoji has been used in various products for years.

Company president Akihiro Kobayashi has apologized for not having acted sooner. The recall came March 22, two months after the company had received official medical reports about the problem.

On Friday, the company said five people had died and 114 people were being treated in hospitals after taking the products. Japan's health ministry says the supplements are responsible for the deaths and illnesses, and warned that the number of those affected could grow.

Some analysts blame the recent deregulation initiatives, which simplified and sped up approval for health products to spur economic growth. But deaths from a mass-produced item is rare in Japan, as government checks over consumer products are relatively stringent.

The government has ordered a review of the approval system in response to the supplement-related illnesses. A report is due in May.

## Girl, 8, only survivor of bus crash that kills 45 Easter pilgrims on South Africa's deadly roads

By GERALD IMRAY and NQOBILE NTSHANGASE Associated Press

MMAMATLAKALA, South Africa (AP) — An 8-year-old girl was the lone survivor after a bus full of pilgrims making their way to a popular Easter festival in rural South Africa slammed into a bridge on a mountain pass and plunged into a ravine before bursting into flames, killing all 45 others onboard.

It was a tragic reminder of how deadly South Africa's roads become during the Easter period, when millions crisscross the country during the long holiday weekend. Authorities repeatedly warn motorists of the danger and had issued multiple messages urging caution just a day before Thursday's horrific crash.

The girl somehow survived after the bus carrying worshippers from neighboring Botswana careened off the bridge, fell more than 150 feet (50 meters) and caught fire as it hit the rocks below, according to authorities.

The girl was in a stable condition in the hospital after being admitted with serious injuries and was "in safe

# Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, March 30, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 278 ~ 40 of 63

hands," an official with the local health department said Friday. Details of her injuries were not released.

Forensic investigators retrieved what they believed were 34 of the 45 bodies but couldn't be certain of the exact number, reflecting the gruesome nature of the crash. Many of the victims trapped inside the bus were burned beyond recognition, authorities said.

Dr. Phophi Ramathuba, an official with the Limpopo provincial health department, said only nine of the bodies recovered were likely to be identifiable.

South African President Cyril Ramaphosa said the victims, who appeared to all be from Botswana, were on their way to the rustic town of Moria in Limpopo province for the Easter weekend pilgrimage that attracts hundreds of thousands of followers of the Zion Christian Church.

The church has its headquarters in Moria and it was the first time the full pilgrimage was being held since the COVID-19 pandemic. Worshippers flocked to the small town which features a giant star — the church's emblem — and the words "Zion City Moria" painted in white on a hillside.

The church was formed in South Africa in the early 1900s as a Christian denomination that also retains some African traditions. It has an estimated 7 million followers across the southern African region.

Ramathuba said South African authorities had asked church leaders from Botswana to come and help identify the victims.

Good Friday and Easter Monday are national holidays in South Africa and many of its neighbors, when millions travel into, out of and across the nation. For some South Africans, it's a chance to return to their home towns and villages from jobs in the cities. Migrants also travel back to their home countries to see family. Some, like the pilgrims that died on Thursday, make religious trips.

Road travel can be treacherous; South Africa's Road Traffic Management Corporation reported that 252 people died in road crashes between Holy Thursday and Easter Monday last year.

Authorities said it appeared the bus driver lost control and the vehicle slammed into the barriers along the side of the bridge and then went over the edge. The driver was among the dead.

South African Minister of Transport Sindisiwe Chikunga was in Limpopo province attending a road safety campaign when she was informed of the "devastating news" of the crash, according to the national Department of Traffic.

Ramathuba said she had been at an Easter prayer meeting when she was called to the crash scene on the Mmamatlakala bridge near the town of Mokopane, which is about 200 kilometers (125 miles) north of the South African capital, Pretoria.

"I attended the scene of the accident, but now our focus as the health department is on the brave little survivor. She is in safe hands in a hospital with experts looking after her," Ramathuba told reporters. She declined to give details of the child's injuries, but authorities released a photograph of the child lying in a hospital bed and being examined by a doctor.

Ramathuba also declined to say if the child's parents or other family members were on the bus, saying authorities needed time to trace and inform families of the dead, who were mostly in Botswana.

Meanwhile, forensic investigators worked through the wreckage amid the rocks and steep cliffs. At least 11 bodies were believed still inside what was left of the charred bus, which was almost crushed flat.

"We were at the scene," said local resident Simone Mayema, who said he was one of the first to arrive after the crash. "We tried to help (but) there was nothing we could do because there was flames."

## Study says since 1979 climate change has made heat waves last longer, spike hotter, hurt more people

By SETH BORENSTEIN AP Science Writer

Climate change is making giant heat waves crawl slower across the globe and they are baking more people for a longer time with higher temperatures over larger areas, a new study finds.

Since 1979, global heat waves are moving 20% more slowly — meaning more people stay hot longer — and they are happening 67% more often, according to a study in Friday's Science Advances. The study



found the highest temperatures in the heat waves are warmer than 40 years ago and the area under a heat dome is larger.

Studies have shown heat waves worsening before, but this one is more comprehensive and concentrates heavily on not just temperature and area, but how long the high heat lasts and how it travels across continents, said study co-authors and climate scientists Wei Zhang of Utah State University and Gabriel Lau of Princeton University.

From 1979 to 1983, global heat waves would last eight days on average, but by 2016 to 2020 that was up to 12 days, the study said.

Eurasia was especially hit harder with longer lasting heat waves, the study said. Heat waves slowed down most in Africa, while North America and Australia saw the biggest increases in overall magnitude, which measures temperature and area, according to the study.

"This paper sends a clear warning that climate change makes heat waves yet more dangerous in more ways than one," said Lawrence Berkeley National Lab climate scientist Michael Wehner, who wasn't part of the research.

Just like in an oven, the longer the heat lasts, the more something cooks. In this case it's people, the co-authors said.

"Those heat waves are traveling slower and so slower so that basically means that ... there's a heat wave sitting there and those heat waves could stay longer in the region," Zhang said. "And the adverse impacts on our human society would be huge and increasing over the years."

The team conducted computer simulations showing this change was due to heat-trapping emissions that come from the burning of coal, oil and natural gas. The study found climate change's fingerprint by simulating a world without greenhouse gas emissions and concluding it could not produce the worsening heat waves observed in the last 45 years.

The study also looks at the changes in weather patterns that propagate heat waves. Atmospheric waves that move weather systems along, such as the jet stream, are weakening, so they are not moving heat waves along as quickly — west to east in most but not all continents, Zhang said.

Several outside scientists praised the big picture way Zhang and colleagues examined heat waves, showing the interaction with weather patterns and their global movement and especially how they are slowing down.

This shows "how heat waves evolve in three dimensions and move regionally and across continents rather than looking at temperatures at individual locations," said Kathy Jacobs, a University of Arizona climate scientist who wasn't part of the study.

"One of the most direct consequences of global warming is increasing heat waves," said Woodwell Climate Research Center scientist Jennifer Francis, who wasn't part of the study. "These results put a large exclamation point on that fact."

## **As cranes arrive at Baltimore bridge collapse site, governor describes daunting task of cleaning up**

By LEA SKENE and BRIAN WITTE Associated Press

BALTIMORE (AP) — A crane that can lift 1,000 tons, described as one of the largest on the Eastern Seaboard, appeared near the site of a collapsed highway bridge in Baltimore as crews prepared Friday to begin clearing wreckage that has stymied the search for four workers missing and presumed dead and blocked ships from entering or leaving the city's vital port.

Maryland Gov. Wes Moore called the Francis Scott Key Bridge's collapse following a freighter collision an "economic catastrophe" and described the challenges ahead for recovering the workers' bodies and clearing tons of debris to reopen the Port of Baltimore.

"What we're talking about today is not just about Maryland's economy; this is about the nation's economy," Moore said at a news conference, the massive crane standing in the background. "The port handles more cars and more farm equipment than any other port in this country."

# Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, March 30, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 278 ~ 42 of 63

Moore went to the scene Friday and said he saw shipping containers ripped apart "like papier-mache." The broken pieces of the bridge weigh as much as 4,000 tons, Moore said, and teams will need to cut into the steel trusses before they can be lifted from the Patapsco River.

Equipment on hand will include seven floating cranes, 10 tugboats, nine barges, eight salvage vessels and five Coast Guard boats, Moore said. Much of it is coming from the Navy.

"To go out there and see it up close, you realize just how daunting a task this is. You realize how difficult the work is ahead of us," Moore said. "With a salvage operation this complex — and frankly with a salvation operation this unprecedented — you need to plan for every single moment."

Water conditions have prevented divers from entering the river, Moore said. When conditions change, they will resume efforts to recover the construction workers, who were repairing potholes on the bridge when it fell early Tuesday.

"We have to bring a sense of closure to these families," Moore said.

The Coast Guard is focused on removing what's left of the bridge and the container ship that struck it in order to clear the port's shipping lanes, Rear Adm. Shannon Gilreath said.

Teams of engineers from the Army Corps of Engineers, the Navy and the Coast Guard — along with some private-sector experts — are assessing how to "break that bridge up into the right-sized pieces that we can lift," Gilreath said.

Maryland's Department of Transportation is already focused on building a new bridge and is "considering innovative design, engineering and building methods so that we can quickly deliver this project," Secretary Paul J. Wiedefeld said.

Adam Ortiz, the Environmental Protection Agency's mid-Atlantic Regional Administrator, said there is no indication of active releases from the ship, nor of the presence in the water of materials hazardous to human health.

Col. Roland L. Butler Jr., superintendent of the Maryland State Police, said the Federal Aviation Administration has been asked to establish a tactical flight restriction area that would begin 3 nautical miles in every direction from the center span of the bridge and extend upward to 1,500 feet.

Butler advised people to keep drones away from the area and said law enforcement is poised to act on any violations of that airspace.

The victims of the collapse were from Mexico, Guatemala, Honduras and El Salvador, officials said. At least eight people initially went into the water when the ship struck the bridge column, and two of them were rescued.

Divers have recovered the bodies of two men from a pickup truck in the river, but the nature and placement of the debris has complicated efforts to find the other four workers.

"The divers can put their hands on that faceplate, and they can't even see their hands," said Donald Gibbons, an instructor with Eastern Atlantic States Carpenters Technical Centers. "So we say zero visibility. It's very similar to locking yourself in a dark closet on a dark night and really not being able to see anything."

One of the two whose bodies were found, Alejandro Hernández Fuentes, left Xalapa, Mexico, 15 years ago to join his mother and sister in the United States, hoping to make enough money to eventually build a house and open a business back in his native country. But the 35-year-old put down roots in Maryland, and the family decided he will be buried in the United States.

"He already had a life there; that's why they didn't return his body," Wenceslao Contreras Ortiz, Hernández Fuentes' uncle, said Friday in Xalapa. He described his nephew as a hard-working father of four who doted on his mother.

Another sister still lives in Mexico but remained in close contact with Hernández Fuentes, and she is asking authorities for help securing a humanitarian visa to travel to the U.S. and say goodbye.

"She just wants to hug him for the last time," Contreras Ortiz said.

In Baltimore, locals made morning stops at vantage points Friday to watch for the cranes. Ronald Hawkins, 71, who could see the bridge from his home, recalled watching its construction in 1972. It opened in 1977.

"I'm going to come up here every day, because I want to see the bridge coming up out of the water," Hawkins said. "It's a hurtin' thing."

President Joe Biden's administration has approved \$60 million in immediate aid, and Biden has said the federal government will pay the full cost of rebuilding the bridge, which carried Interstate 695.

Ship traffic at the Port of Baltimore remains suspended, but the Maryland Port Administration said in a statement Friday that trucks were still being processed at marine terminals.

Federal and state officials have said the collision and collapse early Tuesday appeared to be an accident that came after the ship lost power. Investigators are still trying to determine why.

The crash caused the bridge to break and fall into the water within seconds. Authorities had just enough time to stop vehicle traffic but were unable to alert the construction crew.

The loss of a road that carried 30,000 vehicles a day and the port disruption will affect not only thousands of dockworkers and commuters, but also U.S. consumers, who are likely to feel the impact of shipping delays.

Scott Cowan, president of the International Longshoremen's Association Local 333, said the union was scrambling to help its roughly 2,400 members whose jobs are at risk of drying up.

"If there's no ships, there's no work," he said. "We're doing everything we can."

## DA suggests Donald Trump violated gag order with post about daughter of hush-money trial judge

By MICHAEL R. SISAK Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — Manhattan prosecutors suggested Friday that Donald Trump violated a gag order in his hush-money criminal case this week by assailing the judge's daughter and making a false claim about her on social media.

The Manhattan district attorney's office asked Judge Juan M. Merchan to "clarify or confirm" the scope of the gag order, which he issued Tuesday, and to direct the former president and presumptive Republican nominee to "immediately desist from attacks on family members."

In a letter to Merchan, Assistant District Attorney Joshua Steinglass argued that the gag order's ban on statements meant to interfere with or harass the court's staff or their families makes the judge's daughter off-limits from Trump's rhetoric. He said Trump should be punished for further violations.

Trump's lawyers contended the D.A.'s office is misinterpreting the order and said it doesn't prohibit him from commenting about Loren Merchan, a political consultant whose firm has worked on campaigns for Trump's rival, President Joe Biden, and other Democrats.

"The Court cannot 'direct' President Trump to do something that the gag order does not require," Trump's lawyers Todd Blanche and Susan Necheles wrote to Merchan in a response to the prosecution's letter. "To 'clarify or confirm' the meaning of the gag order in the way the People suggest would be to expand it."

The trial, which involves allegations Trump falsified payment records in a scheme to cover up negative stories during his 2016 presidential campaign, is scheduled to begin April 15. Trump denies wrongdoing and has pleaded not guilty to 34 counts of falsifying business records.

In his posts Wednesday on his Truth Social platform, Trump wrote that Loren Merchan "makes money by working to 'Get Trump,'" and he wrongly accused her of posting a social media photo showing him behind bars.

A spokesperson for New York's state court system said Trump's claim was false and that the social media account Trump was referencing no longer belonged to Loren Merchan.

The account on X, formerly known as Twitter, "is not linked to her email address, nor has she posted under that screenname since she deleted the account. Rather, it represents the reconstitution, last April, and manipulation of an account she long ago abandoned," court spokesperson Al Baker said.

In the same Truth Social posts, Trump complained that his gag order was "illegal, un-American, unConstitutional." He said that Judge Merchan was "wrongfully attempting to deprive me of my First Amendment Right to speak out against the Weaponization of Law Enforcement" by Democratic rivals.

The gag order, which prosecutors had requested, bars Trump from either making or directing other people to make public statements on his behalf about jurors or potential witnesses in the hush-money

trial, such as his lawyer turned nemesis Michael Cohen and porn star Stormy Daniels.

The order, echoing one in Trump's Washington, D.C., election interference criminal case, also prohibits any statements meant to interfere with or harass the court's staff, prosecution team or their families. Trump, however, is free to criticize Manhattan District Attorney Alvin Bragg, the elected Democrat whose office is prosecuting Trump — but Steinglass wants his family off limits, too.

In his letter, Steinglass implored the judge to "make abundantly clear" to Trump that the gag order protects his family, Bragg's family and family members of all other individuals covered by the gag order. He urged Merchan to warn Trump "that his recent conduct is contumacious and direct him to immediately desist."

A gag order violation could result in Trump being held in contempt of court, fined or even jailed.

Trump's lawyers argued against any such warnings, citing constitutional concerns about restricting Trump's speech further while he's campaigning for president and fighting criminal charges.

They said that if prosecutors press the issue, they'll want to litigate it fully, adding a potential wrinkle to trial preparations with jury selection set to begin in a little over two weeks.

## UNLV releases video of campus shooter killed by police after 3 professors shot dead

By KEN RITTER Associated Press

LAS VEGAS (AP) — Images of a campus police officer diving behind a patrol vehicle to escape gunfire and then fatally shooting a gunman outside a building at the University of Nevada, Las Vegas, are among footage in newly released video of a deadly rampage that left three professors dead and a fourth badly wounded last December.

The deadly shootout captured by campus surveillance cameras ended what authorities say was 10 minutes of terror unleashed by a 67-year-old former business professor from North Carolina whose applications to teach at UNLV had been rejected.

The gunman, Anthony Polito, was armed with a legally purchased 9 mm handgun, carried nine bullet magazines, and had a target list of names, although none of the people shot was on that list, police said.

The university on Thursday released 20 hours of footage from campus security and officer body cameras, along with more than an hour of recordings of 911 calls made to campus police.

Sounds of the gunfire that killed three people in upper floors of the five-story business school sent people fleeing from the nearby Student Union just before noon on a sunny day. Video shows a campus police officer, running across the plaza toward the business school building, arrived within 78 seconds of the shooting.

"It is difficult to listen to these recordings and watch the videos and not reflect on the tragic events that day," university Vice President of Public Safety Adam Garcia said in a statement accompanying the release of the material in response to public records requests.

Two gunshots are heard early in more than an hour of 911 recordings that include one father calling to say he got a text from his daughter who was hiding in a classroom.

"Is there an active shooter there?" he asks.

"Yes," the male dispatcher replies, adding that police are at the scene. "So just tell your daughter to stay where she's at."

New video shows campus security officers immediately entering the business school building as Las Vegas police swarm the area near the center-campus Student Union while young people stream the other way.

Video footage from a parking lot shows the gunman get out of a black sedan wearing a black trench coat and retrieve something from a passenger compartment before walking calmly toward the business school building.

A different video shows officers helping a badly wounded professor who walked out of the same building before collapsing on a sidewalk behind a patrol car.

UNLV President Keith Whitfield told the university community this month the man, a visiting professor, was "improving daily ... doing rehab and out of the hospital." He has not been identified by name.

Las Vegas police began releasing video and audio recordings in December showing officers from throughout southern Nevada spending hours going door to door in campus buildings, releasing students and faculty members in waves, before declaring the gunman had acted alone and there was no further threat.

The shooting occurred just a few miles from the site of the deadliest mass shooting in modern U.S. history: An Oct. 1, 2017, massacre that had a gunman open fire from windows of the high-rise Mandalay Bay resort into a crowd of 20,000 people at an outdoor music festival below. Sixty people died, and hundreds were wounded or injured.

## In Jerusalem, Palestinian Christians observe scaled-down Good Friday rituals

By JULIA FRANKEL Associated Press

JERUSALEM (AP) — Hundreds of Christians participated in a customary Good Friday procession through the limestone walls of Jerusalem's Old City, commemorating one of the faith's most sacred days with noticeably thinner crowds amid the ongoing Israel-Hamas war.

The procession, which normally draws thousands of foreign visitors, was unusually local — mostly Palestinian Christians, joined by some foreigners living in Jerusalem and a few undeterred tourists.

The procession passes along the Way of the Cross, or Via Dolorosa, the route believed to have been walked by Jesus to his crucifixion. Squads of Israeli police set up barricades along the path, rerouting shoppers in the Old City's bustling Muslim quarter to make way for hundreds of pilgrims.

A young group of Palestinian Arab scouts led the day's procession, past the 14 stations, each marking an event that befell Jesus on his final journey. Hundreds of Palestinian Christians walked in their wake. Behind them was a small parade of the Franciscan religious order, composed mainly of foreigners who live in Jerusalem.

"We wait for this every year," said Munira Kamar, a Palestinian Christian from the Old City, who waved to the cross-bearers who stopped to give her young daughter a kiss on the cheek. "Of course, this year we are unhappy because of the situation with the ongoing war."

Thousands of Palestinians have been killed in Israel's ongoing offensive in Gaza, launched after Hamas' Oct. 7 killings and hostage-taking in Israel.

The impact of the war was clear at the procession's final stations are inside the Church of the Holy Sepulcher, where Jesus is believed to have been crucified and laid to rest before his resurrection on Easter. There, instead of the crowds who normally queue for hours in the church courtyard, entrance to the site was easy.

The city's streets were noticeably devoid of Palestinian Christians from the West Bank, who normally flock to the Holy City for Easter. Since Oct. 7, Palestinian worshippers have needed special permission to cross checkpoints into Jerusalem.

Despite the thinned crowds, shopkeepers, whose heavy metal doors are usually closed on Fridays, threw them open for tourists seeking Catholic memorabilia. But shoppers were few and far between.

"Comparing last year's Easter festivities with this year is like light and day," said Fayaz Dakkak, a Palestinian storeowner whose family first opened the shop in 1942. His shop stood empty.

"Usually people are joyful today and kids are excited," he said. "But when you compare children here who have water and food and a family to what's happening in Gaza, how can you be happy?"

An estimated 50,000 Christian Palestinians live in the West Bank and Jerusalem, according to the U.S. State Department's international religious freedom report for 2022. Approximately 1,300 Christians lived in Gaza, it said. Some Christians are also citizens of Israel. Many Palestinian Christians live in diaspora communities.

A few tourists braved the day. Carmen Ros, a lawyer who lives in Jerusalem, had managed to corral a group of pilgrims from Spain to visit the country for a religious tour. The group rested in the shade outside the church.

"They were afraid of the situation at first," she said, "but I told them here in Jerusalem, it's safe, we

don't have violence. We are close to Gaza, but the Christian people are not the target of terrorism."

The celebrations coincided with the third Friday in the Muslim holy month of Ramadan, with worshippers once again flocking to the revered Al-Aqsa mosque for prayer. Despite fears the ongoing war would spark clashes at the revered Al-Aqsa mosque, Ramadan has so far been peaceful, under tight Israeli security.

Sister Harriet Kabaije, a pilgrim from Uganda who moved to Jerusalem three weeks ago to live in a monastery, said she was holding the people of Gaza in her prayers. She said she believed that peace could be achieved in the region.

"Many people think that the war here is natural," she said. "But when Jesus was in Bethlehem, it was peaceful. We know that people are suffering in Gaza so we carry them in our prayers and pray that peace can return to this land."

Elsewhere, Pope Francis skipped the traditional Good Friday procession at the Colosseum in Rome, the Vatican said, to "conserve his health in view of the vigil tomorrow and Mass on Easter Sunday."

It was the second time Francis had skipped the traditional procession in his 11-year papacy, an event that St. John Paul II famously skipped just before he died in 2005. Francis had also skipped the event in 2023 because he was recovering from bronchitis and it was a particularly cold night.

In Spain, several Good Friday street processions were canceled due to storms that provided some much-needed rain to areas battling a prolonged drought. Seville's brotherhoods were forced to call off the processions of their giant floats bearing sculptures of Jesus of the Virgin for the first time in over a decade due to bad weather.

In Chicago, hundreds of spectators flocked to the city's Pilsen neighborhood to witness a Good Friday tradition — the 47th Via Crucis procession reenacting scenes from Jesus' final days.

"It's the story that we all know from when we were little kids," said Jason Rodriguez, a Pilsen resident and event volunteer. "This reenactment drives home the suffering, the strength and the passion that our Lord had."

## **Judge questions Border Patrol stand that it's not required to care for children at migrant camps**

By ELLIOT SPAGAT Associated Press

SAN DIEGO (AP) — A federal judge on Friday sharply questioned the Biden administration's position that it bears no responsibility for housing and feeding migrant children while they wait in makeshift camps along the U.S.-Mexico border.

The Border Patrol does not dispute the conditions at the camps, where migrants wait under open skies or sometimes in tents or structures made of tree branches while short on food and water. The migrants, who crossed the border illegally, are waiting there for Border Patrol agents to arrest and process them. The question is whether they are in legal custody.

That would start a 72-hour limit on how long children can be held and require emergency medical services and guarantees of physical safety, among other things.

U.S. District Judge Dolly Gee said evidence presented by migrant advocacy groups appeared to support the definition of legal custody. "Are they free to leave?" she asked.

"As long as they do not proceed further into the United States," answered Justice Department attorney Fizza Batool.

Gee, who was appointed by former Democratic President Bill Clinton, acknowledged it was complicated — "like dancing on the head of a pin" — because some children arrive on their own at the camps and are not sent there by Border Patrol agents.

Advocates are seeking to enforce a 1997 court-supervised settlement on custody conditions for migrant children, which includes the time limit and services including toilets, sinks and temperature controls. Gee did not rule after a half-hour hearing in Los Angeles.

Children traveling alone must be turned over within 72 hours to the U.S. Health and Human Services De-

partment, which generally releases them to family in the United States while an immigration judge considers asylum. Asylum-seeking families are typically released in the U.S. while their cases wind through courts.

The legal challenge focuses on two areas in California: one between two border fences in San Diego and another in a remote mountainous region east of San Diego. When the number of migrants was particularly high last year, they waited for several days to be arrested and processed by overwhelmed Border Patrol agents. From May to December, agents distributed colored wristbands to prioritize whom to process first.

Advocates say the Border Patrol often directs migrants to the camps, sometimes even driving them there. Agents are often seen nearby keeping a loose watch until buses and vans arrive.

The Justice Department, which rejects advocates' label of "open-air detention sites," says smugglers send migrants to camps. It says agents giving them water and snacks is a humanitarian gesture and that any agent who sends, or even escorts, migrants there is "no different than any law enforcement officer directing heightened traffic to avoid disorder and disarray."

The Border Patrol generally arrests migrants at the camps within 12 hours of encountering them, down from 24 hours last year, Brent Schwerdtfeger, a senior official in the agency's San Diego sector, said in a court filing. The agency has more than doubled the number of buses in the San Diego area to 15 for speedier processing.

On Friday, 33 migrants, including two small children, waited between border walls in San Diego until agents came to ask they empty their pockets, remove shoelaces and submit to weapons searches before being taken in vans to a holding station. They were primarily from China and India, with others from Afghanistan, Azerbaijan and Georgia. Agents spoke to them in English.

Pedro Rios, a volunteer with American Friends of Service Committee, delivered turkey sandwiches and hot tea and coffee through spaces in the border wall. He gave pain relievers and ointment to a limping Chinese woman who had fallen from the wall.

Kedian William, 38, said she left a 10-year-old daughter with family in Jamaica because she couldn't afford the journey, including airfare to Mexico, but that asthma would have made the trip difficult for her child anyway. She planned to apply for asylum and settle with family in New York, having fled her home after her sister-in-law, her sister-in-law's husband their child were killed last year.

William said she attempted to reach the camp on Wednesday but fled back into Tijuana to avoid Mexican authorities in pursuit. She tried again a day later, waiting six hours on U.S. soil for agents to pick her up for processing.

## **Pope skips Good Friday event to preserve health ahead of Easter, Vatican says**

By NICOLE WINFIELD, ANDREW MEDICHINI, SILVIA STELLACCI and ARITZ PARRA Associated Press  
ROME (AP) — Pope Francis skipped the traditional Good Friday procession at Rome's Colosseum to protect his health, the Vatican said, making a last-minute decision that added to concerns about his frail condition during a particularly busy period.

Francis had been expected to preside over the Way of the Cross procession, which re-enacts Christ's Passion and crucifixion, and composed the meditations that are read aloud at each station. But just as the event was about to begin, the Vatican announced that Francis was following the event from his home at the Vatican.

"To conserve his health in view of the vigil tomorrow and Mass on Easter Sunday, Pope Francis will follow the Via Crucis at the Colosseum this evening from the Casa Santa Marta," a statement from the Vatican press office said.

While Francis had also skipped the event in 2023 because he was recovering from bronchitis and it was a particularly cold night, his decision to stay home this year suggested his plans had changed suddenly.

The 87-year-old Francis, who had part of one lung removed as a young man, has been battling what he and the Vatican have described as a case of the flu, bronchitis or a cold all winter long. For the last several weeks he has occasionally asked an aide to read aloud his speeches, and he skipped his Palm

Sunday homily altogether.

The decision to stay home appeared to be very last-minute: Francis' chair was in place on the platform outside the Colosseum where he was to preside over the rite. His close aide, Monsignor Leonardo Sapienza, was on hand and moved the television screen around on the platform so Francis would have a better view of what was going on inside the Colosseum itself.

But at 9:10 p.m., five minutes before the official start of the procession, the Vatican press office announced on Telegram that he wouldn't attend. The chair was quickly taken away.

His absence was noted with concern but understanding among some of the estimated 25,000 pilgrims who packed the area for the torchlit procession.

"I think of course it causes concern for the people who make sure that he is doing well, but he must have his reasons for the decisions that he makes," said Marlene Steuber, who was visiting from Costa Rica. "Still I think that people are involved and very blessed and happy to be here and experience these events here in Rome."

Brian Hopp, a visitor from Chicago, noted that Francis has had his health challenges this year.

"I definitely don't think it was a decision taken lightly. I think a lot was taken into it and I think he probably prioritized his health for Easter, which I think is a very responsible thing to do," Hopp said. "I know he has been going through a lot this year so I don't expect him to be able to make every event."

The hasty announcement recalled Francis' last-minute decision on Palm Sunday, when the Vatican issued the pope's homily in advance to journalists, and his aide got up to give him his glasses to read it. But Francis made clear he wouldn't read it, and the aide put the glasses back in his pocket. The Vatican later said the homily was replaced by a moment of silent prayer.

Francis had appeared in good form earlier in the day for a Good Friday liturgy in St. Peter's Basilica, though he remained mostly seated and it was not a particularly taxing event that required him to speak at length.

On Thursday, he left the Vatican to preside over the Holy Thursday foot-washing ritual at a Rome women's prison. While he performed the rite from his wheelchair, Francis appeared strong and engaged with the inmates, even giving a big chocolate Easter egg to one woman's young son.

On Saturday, he is scheduled to preside over a lengthy evening Easter Vigil in St. Peter's, one of the most solemn events in the liturgical calendar. He also is due to preside over Easter Sunday Mass in the piazza and deliver his "Urbi et Orbi" (to the city and the world) speech rounding up global crises and threats to humanity.

In addition to his respiratory problems, Francis had a chunk of his large intestine removed in 2021 and was hospitalized twice last year, including once to remove intestinal scar tissue from previous surgeries to address diverticulosis, or bulges in his intestinal wall. He has been using a wheelchair and cane for over a year because of bad knee ligaments.

In his recently published memoirs, "Life: My Story Through History," Francis said he isn't suffering from any health problems that would require him to resign and that he still has "many projects to bring to fruition."

## Former US Sen. Joe Lieberman remembered as 'mensch' who bridged political divides

By CEDAR ATTANASIO Associated Press

STAMFORD, Conn. (AP) — The late Joe Lieberman on Friday was remembered by political allies and even a former foe as a "mensch" who both bridged and defied partisan political divides, during a funeral service for the four-term U.S. senator.

Former Vice President Al Gore, who ran for president on a Democratic ticket with Lieberman in the disputed 2000 election, told mourners at the Stamford, Connecticut, synagogue that there is no English equivalent for the Yiddish term. But, he said, they could find its definition by looking at Lieberman, who passed away this week at 82.



# Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, March 30, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 278 ~ 49 of 63

"They find it in the way Joe Lieberman lived his life: friendship over anger, reconciliation as a form of grace," Gore said. "We can learn from Joe Lieberman's life some critical lessons about how we might heal the rancor in our nation today."

A socially progressive foreign policy hawk, Lieberman was long known for his pragmatic, independent streak, which Gore noted sometimes "left him exposed to partisan anger from both sides."

Gore, who said he first knew Lieberman as Connecticut's attorney general in the 1980s, praised him for being "ready to reclaim friendships that had been seared by disagreements" — including their own after their political paths diverged following the 2000 loss.

Embodying Lieberman's conciliatory powers, Connecticut Gov. Ned Lamont delivered a stirring eulogy, despite the two having engaged in a contentious battle for the Democratic nomination for Lieberman's Senate seat in 2006. The race drew national attention by focusing on Lieberman's support for the war in Iraq. Lieberman lost the primary, but defeated Lamont as an independent.

Joking that they started on "an inauspicious note," Lamont described Lieberman as a "bridge over troubled waters" amid "partisan sniping from both directions."

Lamont noted that Lieberman loved Frank Sinatra songs, especially "My Way." "He did it his way," Lamont said. "He never quite fit in that Republican or Democratic box. I think maybe in an odd way I helped liberate him because when he beat me — he beat me pretty good, by the way — he won as an independent."

Other top Connecticut Democrats, including Sens. Richard Blumenthal and Chris Murphy, also spoke at the service, which was attended by Republican Maine U.S. Sen. Susan Collins, former Democratic Gov. Dannel Malloy and former New Jersey U.S. Sen. Bill Bradley.

Blumenthal said Lieberman's accomplishments included helping to form the Department of Homeland Security and championing civil rights, voting rights, women's reproductive freedom and LGBTQ rights. "But the greatest accomplishment of his life was his marriage to Hadassah and their children and grandchildren," Blumenthal said, addressing Lieberman's widow before descending to join hands with her.

The service was held at Congregation Agudath Sholom, his hometown synagogue. Lieberman was a self-described observant Jew who followed the rules of the Jewish Sabbath from sundown Friday to sundown Saturday.

While somber, Lieberman's eulogists, family and friends shared hearty laughs, and celebrated his good humor. Lamont, for example, relayed stories from a former colleague about the challenges of finding kosher food on the campaign trail in Utah.

When Lieberman's children spoke, the tears began to flow. Cousins dabbed tears as daughter Hani Lowenstein described his kindness to all, and his commitment to the Jewish principles of "tikkun olam," which means repairing the damage in the world.

Lowenstein, who moved to Israel in 2018 with her family, said tearfully that she had prayed, "Please God, give my father many more years. Let him see all of my kids' bar mitzvahs, their weddings, his great-grandchildren." But she said God "had other plans."

Lowenstein said her father would walk 5 miles (8 kilometers) in order to abide by the Jewish Sabbath's prohibition on riding in a car. "You were literally someone who was sanctifying God's name by everything you did," she said, as his casket lay below her, draped in a black blanket with a white star of David.

Matthew Lieberman, the former senator's son from his first marriage, said Lieberman "was a blessing for all of us" but "a solid slice of people" nevertheless developed a hate for him. His father never hated them back, he said.

"We're not the Hatfields and McCoys here," Matthew Lieberman said. "We're Americans, we're fellow citizens in the greatest country in the history of the world. We're all humans and we're all we've got."

As Gore's running mate, Joe Lieberman came tantalizingly close to winning the vice presidency in the contentious 2000 presidential contest that was decided by a 537-vote margin victory for George W. Bush over Gore in Florida after a drawn-out recount, legal challenges and a Supreme Court decision. Lieberman was the first Jewish candidate on a major party's presidential ticket.

After losing the chance to serve as vice president with the Democrat Gore, Lieberman came close to becoming Republican John McCain's running mate in 2008. However, conservatives balked at the idea of

tapping Lieberman, who was known for supporting socially liberal causes while taking a hawkish stand on military and national security matters.

Over the last decade, Lieberman helped lead No Labels, a centrist third-party movement that has said it will offer as-yet-unnamed candidates for president and vice president this year. Some groups aligned with Democrats oppose the effort, fearing it will help presumptive Republican nominee Donald Trump win the White House.

President Joe Biden on Thursday called Lieberman a friend, someone who was "principled, steadfast and unafraid to stand up for what he thought was right."

"Joe believed in a shared purpose of serving something bigger than ourselves," Biden, who served 20 years in the Senate with Lieberman, said in his statement. "He lived the values of his faith as he worked to repair the wounds of the world."

## Could tugboats have helped avert the bridge collapse tragedy in Baltimore?

By JOSHUA GOODMAN and RICHARD LARDNER Associated Press

With the 95,000-ton cargo ship Dali powerless and hurtling helplessly toward the Francis Scott Key Bridge, the harbor pilot commanding the vessel had just minutes to make his last, desperate attempts to avoid disaster. He declared distress, dropped anchor and, notably, called for help from nearby tugboats.

Two 5,000-horsepower tugs, which only minutes earlier had helped guide the ship out of its berth at the Port of Baltimore and peeled off, quickly turned back and raced toward the Dali. But it was too late. The massive ship stacked with cargo slammed into the bridge in the predawn darkness Tuesday, toppling the span and killing six construction workers.

Whether those tugs could have averted the disaster with the Dali already out of control is debatable. But maritime experts interviewed by The Associated Press say they could have made a difference if the tugs had stuck by the ship longer, escorting it on its 18-minute trip through the port's deep-water channel, in a position to see it drifting off course and potentially nudge or tow it back in line.

Such extended tugboat escorts aren't required or even customary in Baltimore or at many other U.S. ports, mostly because of the costs they would add for shippers. But with the increasing size of cargo ships and the threat they pose to bridges and other critical infrastructure, some are questioning whether they should be.

"I'm a big fan of tug escorts," said Joseph Ahlstrom, a member of the Board of Commissioners of Pilots of the State of New York, which regulates the state's harbor pilots. "If applied early enough and effectively, yes, a tug escort could prevent a collision with the bridge or with another ship, or going aground."

"Going to sea is danger," added Ahlstrom, who also teaches at the State University of New York's Maritime College. "But if you're going to go to sea, if you're going to put yourself at risk, do whatever it takes to minimize risk."

Maritime experts told the AP that the Baltimore disaster highlights how each individual port makes its own tugboat rules, resulting in a patchwork across the nation, and how competition among ports for business from cost-conscious shipping companies has trumped calls for extended tugboat escorts that can add tens of thousands of dollars to every transit.

Baltimore's port, operated by the state of Maryland, ordinarily uses tugboats to help maneuver big ships out of their docks and doesn't require extended tugboat escorts into the port's channel and broader Chesapeake Bay unless ordered by local harbor pilots or the U.S. Coast Guard over safety concerns tied to weather, traffic, cargo or mechanical issues. Shippers can also request tugs.

In the case of the Dali, two state harbor pilots boarded the Singaporean-flagged ship to take over navigation through the port as the vessel set out on a trip to Sri Lanka. Two tugboats, the Eric McAllister and the Bridget McAllister, guided the massive vessel out of the tight spaces of the dock and then released when the ship was safely in the channel.

But within minutes, according to satellite data that tracks vessel traffic, the 984-foot (300-meter) Dali

# Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, March 30, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 278 ~ 51 of 63

began to drift out of its lane and veered more sharply before slamming into one of the main pillars of the bridge, which is a critical conduit for Baltimore truckers and commuters.

The National Transportation Safety Board, which is investigating the crash, said a review of the ship's voyage data recorder showed the pilot's 1:26 a.m. call for help from nearby tugs came about four minutes before impact.

"One of the things that was hard for me to believe is that they didn't require tugs on the vessel as it was traversing towards the bridge," said David Heindel, president of the Seafarers International Union, which represents U.S. merchant mariners.

"Some ports require tugs, depending on the vessel, usually tankers. You see where tugs have to escort ships in and out of port, especially narrow ports," Heindel said. "In the end, I think that that may be exactly what happens in the Port of Baltimore."

The Maryland Port Administration did not immediately respond to requests for comment. A U.S. Coast Guard spokesman said the service doesn't direct tug operations in the port and the Dali's departure "is the typical outbound scenario for these types of cargo ships."

The Dali is owned by Grace Ocean Private Ltd. and managed by the Singapore-based Synergy Marine Group. Synergy spokesman Darrell Wilson said the pilots guide the company's ships in and out and that he didn't know how tugs are coordinated.

The Eric McAllister and Bridget McAllister are muscular machines. Called tractor tugs, they don't just nudge ships. The Eric McAllister, the bigger of the two, is 98 feet (30 meters) long and equipped with a thick steel cable and winch that, when attached to even a large cargo ship, can potentially pull it away from trouble.

The 1989 Exxon Valdez disaster in Alaska's Prince William Sound spurred Congress and a few states to require tug escorts for oil tankers. But those limited requirements were aimed at protecting wildlife from spills, not safeguarding critical infrastructure such as bridges.

Jennifer Carpenter, president of the American Waterways Operators, a trade group that represents tugboat and barge companies, said that given the Dali tragedy, she expects regulators to look closely at whether more stringent tugboat escort requirements are needed.

But she said tugboats are just one part of a complex safety matrix that also includes concrete fenders for bridges and emergency response systems.

The supply of tugboats is limited and using them more frequently entails risks, she said, primarily pollution and increased sea traffic.

"The last thing we want to do is have two tugs escorting every vessel," Carpenter said. "That would have massive implications for the efficiency and safety of our waterways, which are already pretty crowded."

Some ports have tried to boost vessel escort requirements. But they often face resistance from shippers, who are under pressure from customers to move goods as cheaply as possible.

In 2004, California's Legislature passed a bill requiring tug escorts for chemical tanker ships in San Francisco Bay, but it was vetoed by then-Republican Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger amid protests by the shipping industry over cost concerns.

"Tugs are a big upfront cost and a lot of companies don't want to pay for that," said Sal Mercogliano, who writes a widely followed shipping blog. "And if Baltimore starts mandating it, you're going to see ships go to Norfolk, Philadelphia, New York — wherever is cheapest."

McAllister Towing, which operates the tugboats that guided the Dali, can charge \$15,000 or more for one or more of its ships to lead a large cargo vessel out of its berth, according to a recent rate sheet, with more charges for extended escorts.

That may be small change for a big shipping company but the costs can add up.

John Konrad, a licensed captain, said there's an "unspoken tension" between shipping companies and pilots over how many tugboats should be used and how long they remain with a seagoing vessel.

"The pilots would like, in an ideal world, to have extra tugs with them all the time until the ship gets out to the ocean," said Konrad, founder and CEO of gCaptain, a website for maritime professionals.

"But the shipping companies don't want to pay for those tugs," he said. "So there's always this push and pull."

## Trump asks appeals court to review ruling allowing Fani Willis to remain on Georgia election case

By KATE BRUMBACK Associated Press

ATLANTA (AP) — Former President Donald Trump and eight other defendants accused of illegally trying to interfere in the 2020 election in Georgia on Friday submitted a formal application to appeal a judge's ruling allowing Fulton County District Attorney Fani Willis to remain on the case.

Trump and other defendants had tried to get Willis and her office tossed off the case, saying her romantic relationship with special prosecutor Nathan Wade created a conflict of interest. Superior Court Judge Scott McAfee earlier this month found that there was not a conflict of interest that should force Willis off the case but said that the prosecution was "encumbered by an appearance of impropriety."

McAfee ruled that Willis could continue her prosecution if Wade left the case, and the special prosecutor resigned hours later. Lawyers for Trump and other defendants then asked McAfee to allow them to appeal his ruling to the Georgia Court of Appeals, and he granted that request.

The filing of a formal application with the appeals court is the next step in that process. The Court of Appeals has 45 days to decide whether it will take up the matter. McAfee has said he plans to continue to press on with the case in the meantime — to that end, he held a motions hearing Thursday.

The allegations that Willis had improperly benefited from her romance with Wade upended the case for weeks. Intimate details of Willis and Wade's personal lives were aired in court in mid-February, overshadowing the serious allegations in one of four criminal cases against the Republican former president. Trump and 18 others were indicted in August, accused of participating in a wide-ranging scheme to illegally try to overturn his narrow 2020 presidential election loss to Democrat Joe Biden in Georgia.

All of the defendants were charged with violating Georgia's Racketeer Influenced and Corrupt Organizations, or RICO, law, an expansive anti-racketeering statute. Four people charged in the case have pleaded guilty after reaching deals with prosecutors. Trump and the others have pleaded not guilty.

The appeal application says McAfee was wrong not to disqualify both Willis and Wade from the case, saying that "providing DA Willis with the option to simply remove Wade confounds logic and is contrary to Georgia law."

The application says dismissal of the case is "the truly appropriate remedy" because the damage done to the defendants and their due process rights cannot be fully undone even by disqualifying Willis and her office. But her disqualification is "the minimum that must be done to remove the stain of her legally improper and plainly unethical conduct from the remainder of the case," it says.

A spokesperson for Willis declined to comment.

The allegations against Willis first surfaced in a motion filed in early January by Ashleigh Merchant, a lawyer for former Trump campaign staffer and onetime White House aide Michael Roman. The motion alleged that Willis and Wade were involved in an inappropriate romantic relationship and that Willis paid Wade large sums for his work and then benefitted when he paid for lavish vacations.

Willis and Wade acknowledged the relationship but said they didn't begin dating until the spring of 2022, after Wade was hired in November 2021, and their romance ended last summer. They also testified that they split travel costs roughly evenly, with Willis often paying expenses or reimbursing Wade in cash.

McAfee clearly found that Willis' relationship with Wade and his employment as lead prosecutor in the case created an appearance of impropriety, and his failure to disqualify Willis and her whole office from the case "is plain legal error requiring reversal," the defense attorneys wrote in their application.

Given the complexity of the case and the number of defendants, the application says, multiple trials will likely be necessary. Failure to disqualify Willis now could require any verdicts to be overturned, and it would be "neither prudent nor efficient" to risk having to go through "this painful, divisive, and expensive process" multiple times, it says.

# Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, March 30, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 278 ~ 53 of 63

Lawyers for Trump and the other defendants had argued that during a speech in mid-January at a historically Black church in Atlanta Willis had inappropriately injected race and religion into the case, prejudicing any future jury pool against the defendants. The appeal application also accuses her of giving untruthful testimony under oath during a hearing last month. It says those actions amount to forensic misconduct that should disqualify her.

In his ruling, McAfee cited a lack of appellate guidance on the issue of disqualifying a prosecutor for forensic misconduct, and the defense lawyers argued the appeals court should take up the appeal to establish such a precedent.

Finally, the defense attorneys argued, it is crucial that prosecutors "remain and appear to be disinterested and impartial" to maintain public faith in the integrity of the judicial system.

## **Louis Gossett Jr., 1st Black man to win supporting actor Oscar, dies at 87**

By BETH HARRIS Associated Press

LOS ANGELES (AP) — Louis Gossett Jr., the first Black man to win a supporting actor Oscar and an Emmy winner for his role in the seminal TV miniseries "Roots," has died. He was 87.

Gossett's first cousin Neal L. Gossett told The Associated Press that the actor died in Santa Monica, California. A statement from the family said Gossett died Friday morning. No cause of death was revealed.

Gossett's cousin remembered a man who walked with Nelson Mandela and who also was a great joke teller, a relative who faced and fought racism with dignity and humor.

"Never mind the awards, never mind the glitz and glamor, the Rolls-Royces and the big houses in Malibu. It's about the humanity of the people that he stood for," his cousin said.

Louis Gossett always thought of his early career as a reverse Cinderella story, with success finding him from an early age and propelling him forward, toward his Academy Award for "An Officer and a Gentleman."

Gossett broke through on the small screen as Fiddler in the groundbreaking 1977 miniseries "Roots," which depicted the atrocities of slavery on TV. The sprawling cast included Ben Vereen, LeVar Burton and John Amos.

Gossett became the third Black Oscar nominee in the supporting actor category in 1983. He won for his performance as the intimidating Marine drill instructor in "An Officer and a Gentleman" opposite Richard Gere and Debra Winger. He also won a Golden Globe for the same role.

"More than anything, it was a huge affirmation of my position as a Black actor," he wrote in his 2010 memoir, "An Actor and a Gentleman."

He had earned his first acting credit in his Brooklyn high school's production of "You Can't Take It with You" while he was sidelined from the basketball team with an injury.

"I was hooked — and so was my audience," he wrote in his memoir.

His English teacher urged him to go into Manhattan to try out for "Take a Giant Step." He got the part and made his Broadway debut in 1953 at age 16.

"I knew too little to be nervous," Gossett wrote. "In retrospect, I should have been scared to death as I walked onto that stage, but I wasn't."

Gossett attended New York University on a basketball and drama scholarship. He was soon acting and singing on TV shows hosted by David Susskind, Ed Sullivan, Red Buttons, Merv Griffin, Jack Paar and Steve Allen.

Gossett became friendly with James Dean and studied acting with Marilyn Monroe, Martin Landau and Steve McQueen at an offshoot of the Actors Studio taught by Frank Silvera.

In 1959, Gossett received critical acclaim for his role in the Broadway production of "A Raisin in the Sun" along with Sidney Poitier, Ruby Dee and Diana Sands.

He went on to become a star on Broadway, replacing Billy Daniels in "Golden Boy" with Sammy Davis Jr. in 1964.

Gossett went to Hollywood for the first time in 1961 to make the film version of "A Raisin in the Sun." He had bitter memories of that trip, staying in a cockroach-infested motel that was one of the few places

# Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, March 30, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 278 ~ 54 of 63

to allow Black people.

In 1968, he returned to Hollywood for a major role in "Companions in Nightmare," NBC's first made-for-TV movie that starred Melvyn Douglas, Anne Baxter and Patrick O'Neal.

This time, Gossett was booked into the Beverly Hills Hotel and Universal Studios had rented him a convertible. Driving back to the hotel after picking up the car, he was stopped by a Los Angeles County sheriff's officer who ordered him to turn down the radio and put up the car's roof before letting him go.

Within minutes, he was stopped by eight sheriff's officers, who had him lean against the car and made him open the trunk while they called the car rental agency before letting him go.

"Though I understood that I had no choice but to put up with this abuse, it was a terrible way to be treated, a humiliating way to feel," Gossett wrote in his memoir. "I realized this was happening because I was Black and had been showing off with a fancy car — which, in their view, I had no right to be driving."

After dinner at the hotel, he went for a walk and was stopped a block away by a police officer, who told him he broke a law prohibiting walking around residential Beverly Hills after 9 p.m. Two other officers arrived and Gossett said he was chained to a tree and handcuffed for three hours. He was eventually freed when the original police car returned.

"Now I had come face-to-face with racism, and it was an ugly sight," he wrote. "But it was not going to destroy me."

In the late 1990s, Gossett said he was pulled over by police on the Pacific Coast Highway while driving his restored 1986 Rolls Royce Corniche II. The officer told him he looked like someone they were searching for, but the officer recognized Gossett and left.

He founded the Eracism Foundation to help create a world where racism doesn't exist.

Gossett made a series of guest appearances on such shows as "Bonanza," "The Rockford Files," "The Mod Squad," "McCloud" and a memorable turn with Richard Pryor on "The Partridge Family."

In August 1969, Gossett had been partying with members of the Mamas and the Papas when they were invited to actor Sharon Tate's house. He headed home first to shower and change clothes. As he was getting ready to leave, he caught a news flash on TV about Tate's murder. She and others were killed by Charles Manson's associates that night.

"There had to be a reason for my escaping this bullet," he wrote.

Louis Cameron Gossett was born on May 27, 1936, in the Coney Island section of Brooklyn, New York, to Louis Sr., a porter, and Hellen, a nurse. He later added Jr. to his name to honor his father.

"The Oscar gave me the ability of being able to choose good parts in movies like 'Enemy Mine,' 'Sadat' and 'Iron Eagle,'" Gossett said in Dave Karger's 2024 book "50 Oscar Nights."

He said his statue was in storage.

"I'm going to donate it to a library so I don't have to keep an eye on it," he said in the book. "I need to be free of it."

Gossett appeared in such TV movies as "The Story of Satchel Paige," "Backstairs at the White House," "The Josephine Baker Story," for which he won another Golden Globe, and "Roots Revisited."

But he said winning an Oscar didn't change the fact that all his roles were supporting ones.

He played an obstinate patriarch in the 2023 remake of "The Color Purple."

Gossett struggled with alcohol and cocaine addiction for years after his Oscar win. He went to rehab, where he was diagnosed with toxic mold syndrome, which he attributed to his house in Malibu.

In 2010, Gossett announced he had prostate cancer, which he said was caught in the early stages. In 2020, he was hospitalized with COVID-19.

He also is survived by sons Satie, a producer-director from his second marriage, and Sharron, a chef whom he adopted after seeing the 7-year-old in a TV segment on children in desperate situations. His first cousin is actor Robert Gossett.

Gossett's first marriage to Hattie Glascoe was annulled. His second, to Christina Mangosing, ended in divorce in 1975 as did his third to actor Cyndi James-Reese in 1992.

## Blind people can hear and feel April's total solar eclipse with new technology

By CHRISTINA LARSON AP Science Writer

WASHINGTON (AP) — While eclipse watchers look to the skies, people who are blind or visually impaired will be able to hear and feel the celestial event.

Sound and touch devices will be available at public gatherings on April 8, when a total solar eclipse crosses North America, the moon blotting out the sun for a few minutes.

"Eclipses are very beautiful things, and everyone should be able to experience it once in their lifetime," said Yuki Hatch, a high school senior in Austin, Texas.

Hatch is a visually impaired student and a space enthusiast who hopes to one day become a computer scientist for NASA. On eclipse day, she and her classmates at the Texas School for the Blind and Visually Impaired plan to sit outside in the school's grassy quad and listen to a small device called a LightSound box that translates changing light into sounds.

When the sun is bright, there will be high, delicate flute notes. As the moon begins to cover the sun, the mid-range notes are those of a clarinet. Darkness is rendered by a low clicking sound.

"I'm looking forward to being able to actually hear the eclipse instead of seeing it," said Hatch.

The LightSound device is the result of a collaboration between Wanda Díaz-Merced, an astronomer who is blind, and Harvard astronomer Allyson Bieryla. Díaz-Merced regularly translates her data into audio to analyze patterns for her research.

A prototype was first used during the 2017 total solar eclipse that crossed the U.S., and the handheld device has been used at other eclipses.

This year, they are working with other institutions with the goal of distributing at least 750 devices to locations hosting eclipse events in Mexico, the U.S., and Canada. They held workshops at universities and museums to construct the devices, and provide DIY instructions on the group's website.

"The sky belongs to everyone. And if this event is available to the rest of the world, it has to be available for the blind, too," said Díaz-Merced. "I want students to be able to hear the eclipse, to hear the stars."

The Perkins Library — associated with the Perkins School for the Blind in Watertown, Massachusetts — plans to broadcast the changing tones of the LightSound device over Zoom for members to listen online and by telephone, said outreach manager Erin Fragola.

In addition to students, many of the library's senior patrons have age-related vision loss, he said.

"We try to find ways to make things more accessible for everyone," he said.

Others will experience the solar event through the sense of touch, with the Cadence tablet from Indiana's Tactile Engineering. The tablet is about the size of a cellphone with rows of dots that pop up and down. It can be used for a variety of purposes: reading Braille, feeling graphics and movie clips, playing video games.

For the eclipse, "A student can put their hand over the device and feel the moon slowly move over the sun," said Tactile Engineering's Wunji Lau.

The Indiana School for the Blind and Visually Impaired started incorporating the tablet into its curriculum last year. Some of the school's students experienced last October's "ring of fire" eclipse with the tablet.

Sophomore Jazmine Nelson is looking forward to joining the crowd expected at NASA's big eclipse-watching event at the Indianapolis Motor Speedway, where the tablet will be available.

With the tablet, "You can feel like you're a part of something," she said.

Added her classmate Minerva Pineda-Allen, a junior. "This is a very rare opportunity, I might not get this opportunity again."

## Many Americans say immigrants contribute to economy but there's worry over risks, AP-NORC poll finds

By REBECCA SANTANA and AMELIA THOMSON-DEVEAUX Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Americans are more worried about legal immigrants committing crimes in the U.S. than they were a few years ago, a change driven largely by increased concern among Republicans, while Democrats continue to see a broad range of benefits from immigration, a new poll shows.

The poll from The Associated Press-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research found that substantial shares of U.S. adults believe that immigrants contribute to the country's economic growth, and offer important contributions to American culture. But when it comes to legal immigrants, U.S. adults see fewer major benefits than they did in the past, and more major risks.

About 4 in 10 Americans say that when immigrants come to the U.S. legally, it's a major benefit for American companies to get the expertise of skilled workers in fields like science and technology. A similar share (38%) also say that legal immigrants contribute a major benefit by enriching American culture and values.

Both those figures were down compared with 2017, when 59% of Americans said skilled immigrant workers who enter the country legally were a major benefit, and half said legal immigrants contribute a major benefit by enriching American culture.

Meanwhile, the share of Americans who say that there's a major risk that legal immigrants will commit crimes in the U.S. has increased, going from 19% in 2017 to 32% in the new poll.

Republicans were more likely than Democrats to say that immigration is an important issue for them personally, and 41% now say it's a major risk that legal immigrants will commit crimes in the U.S., up from 20% in 2017. Overall, Republicans are more likely to see major risks — and fewer benefits — from immigrants who enter the country legally and illegally, although they tend to be most concerned about people who come to the country illegally.

Bob Saunders is a 64-year-old independent from Voorhees, New Jersey. He disapproves of President Joe Biden's performance when it comes to immigration and border security and is particularly worried about the number of immigrants coming to the southern border who are eventually released into the country. He stressed that there's a difference between legal and illegal immigration. Saunders said it's important to know the background of the immigrants coming to the U.S. and said legal immigration contributes to the economy. He also noted the immigrants in his own family.

"It's not anti-immigration," Saunders said. "It's anti-illegal immigration."

Many Republicans, 71%, say there's a risk of people in the country illegally coming to the U.S. and committing crimes, although many studies have found immigrants are less drawn to violent crime than native-born citizens. Even more, 80%, think there's a major risk that people in the country without permission will burden public service programs, while about 6 in 10 Republicans are concerned that there's a major risk of them taking American jobs, that their population growth will weaken American identity or that they will vote illegally — although only a small number of noncitizen voters have been uncovered.

Amber Pierce, a 43-year-old Republican from Milam, Texas, says she understands that a lot of migrants are seeking a better life for their children, but she's also concerned migrants will become a drain on government services.

"I believe that a lot of them come over here and get free health care and take away from the people who have worked here and are citizens," Pierce said. "They get a free ride. I don't think that's fair."

Democrats, on the other hand, are more likely to see benefits from immigration, although the poll did find that only half of Democrats now think that legal immigrants are making important contributions to American companies, a decrease of more than 20 percentage points from 2017. But they're more likely than Republicans to say that the ability of people to come from other places in the world to escape violence or find economic opportunities is extremely or very important to the U.S.'s identity as a nation.

"People who are coming, are coming for good reason. It's how many of us got here," said Amy Wozniak, a Democrat from Greenwood, Indiana. Wozniak said previous waves of immigrants came from European countries. Now immigrants are coming from different countries but that doesn't mean they're not fleeing



for justifiable reasons, she said: "They're not all drugs and thugs."

There's also a divide among partisans about the value of diversity, with 83% of Democrats saying that the country's diverse population makes it at least moderately stronger, compared with 43% of Republicans and Independents. Republicans are more likely than Democrats to say that a shared American culture and set of values is extremely or very important to the United States' identity as a nation, although about half of Democrats also see this as important.

U.S. adults — and especially Republicans — are more likely to say that the country has been significantly changed by immigrants in the past five years than they are to say that immigrants have changed their own community or their state. About 3 in 10 U.S. adults say immigrants have had a major impact on their local community while about 6 in 10 say they've had a major impact on the country as a whole. The gap between perceptions of community impact and effects on the country as a whole is particularly wide among Republicans.

There is some bipartisan agreement about how immigration at the border between the U.S. and Mexico should be addressed. The most popular option asked about is hiring more Border Patrol agents, which is supported by about 8 in 10 Republicans and about half of Democrats. Hiring more immigration judges and court personnel is also favored among majorities of both parties.

About half of Americans support reducing the number of immigrants who are allowed to seek asylum in the U.S. when they arrive at the border, but there's a much bigger partisan divide there, with more Republicans than Democrats favoring this strategy. Building a wall — former President Donald Trump's signature policy goal — is the least popular and most polarizing option of the four asked about. About 4 in 10 favor building a wall, including 77% of Republicans but just 12% of Democrats.

Donna Lyon is a Democratic-leaning independent from Cortland, New York. She believes a border wall would do little to stop migrants. But she supports hiring more Border Patrol agents and more immigration court judges to deal with the growing backlog of immigration court cases: "That would stop all the backup that we have."

Congress just recently approved money to hire about 2,000 more Border Patrol agents but so far this year, there's been no significant boost for funding for more immigration judges. Many on both sides of the aisle have said it takes much too long to decide asylum cases, meaning migrants stay in the country for years waiting for a decision, but the parties have failed to find consensus on how to address the issue.

## **A growing number of Americans end up in Russian jails. The prospects for their release are unclear**

By DASHA LITVINOVA and ERIC TUCKER Associated Press

TALLINN, Estonia (AP) — A journalist on a reporting trip in a Ural Mountains city. A corporate security executive traveling to Moscow for a wedding. A dual national returning to her hometown in Tatarstan to visit her family.

All of them are U.S. citizens, and all are behind bars in Russia on charges of varying severity.

Arrests of Americans in Russia have become increasingly common as relations between Moscow and Washington sink to Cold War lows. Washington accuses Moscow of targeting its citizens and using them as political bargaining chips, but Russian officials insist they all broke the law.

Some have been exchanged for Russians held in the U.S., while for others, the prospects of being released in a swap are less clear.

"It seems that since Moscow itself has cut off most of the communication channels and does not know how to restore them properly without losing face, they are trying to use the hostages. ... At least that's what it looks like," said Boris Bondarev, a former Russian diplomat who quit after Moscow invaded Ukraine in 2022.

WHO ARE THE AMERICANS IN CUSTODY?

Friday marks a year since the arrest of Evan Gershkovich, a 32-year-old reporter for The Wall Street Journal who is awaiting trial in Moscow's notorious Lefortovo Prison on espionage charges.

# Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, March 30, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 278 ~ 58 of 63

Gershkovich was detained while on a reporting trip to the Ural Mountains city of Yekaterinburg and accused of spying for the U.S. Russian authorities haven't revealed any details of the accusations or evidence to back up the charges, which he, his employer and the U.S. government all deny.

Another American accused of espionage is Paul Whelan, a corporate security executive from Michigan. He was arrested in 2018 in Russia and sentenced to 16 years in prison two years later. Whelan, who said he traveled to Moscow to attend a friend's wedding, has maintained his innocence and said the charges against him were fabricated.

The U.S. government has declared both Gershkovich and Whelan to be wrongfully detained and has been advocating for their release.

Others detained include Travis Leake, a musician who had been living in Russia for years and was arrested last year on drug-related charges; Marc Fogel, a teacher in Moscow, who was sentenced to 14 years in prison, also on drug charges; and dual nationals Alsu Kurmasheva and Ksenia Khavana.

Kurmasheva, a Prague-based editor for the U.S. government-funded Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty's Tatar-Bashkir service, was arrested October 2023 in her hometown of Kazan, where she traveled to see her ailing elderly mother. She has faced multiple charges, including not self-reporting as a "foreign agent" and spreading false information about the army.

Khavana, of Los Angeles, returned to Russia to visit family and was arrested on treason charges. According to Pervy Otdel, a rights group that specializes in treason cases, the charges against her stem from a \$51 donation to a U.S. charity that helps Ukraine.

## A PATH TO FREEDOM VIA PRISONER SWAPS

The precise number of Americans jailed in Russia is unclear, but the cases of Gershkovich and Whelan have received the most attention.

Gershkovich was designated as wrongfully detained by the State Department less than two weeks after his arrest, unusually fast action by the U.S. government. The designation is applied to only a small subsection of Americans jailed by foreign countries.

Prisoners who get that classification have their cases assigned to a special State Department envoy for hostage affairs, who tries to negotiate their releases, and must meet certain criteria — including a determination that the arrest was done solely because the person is a U.S. national or as part of an effort to influence U.S. policy or extract concessions from the government.

The U.S. has had some success in recent years negotiating high-profile prisoner swaps with Russia, striking deals in 2022 that resulted in the releases of WNBA star Brittney Griner and Marine veteran Trevor Reed. Both Griner and Reed were designated as wrongfully detained.

In the exchanges for them, Moscow got arms dealer Viktor Bout, who was serving a 25-year sentence in the U.S., and pilot Konstantin Yaroshenko, given a 20-year prison term in the U.S. for cocaine trafficking.

It's unclear whether there are any negotiations in the works on swapping other Americans held in Russia, such as Leake, Fogel, Kurmasheva or Khavana.

Kurmasheva's husband, Pavel Butorin, told The Associated Press shortly after her arrest that he hoped the U.S. government would use "every avenue and every means available to it" to win her release, including designating her as a wrongfully detained person.

## IS THE WEST HOLDING RUSSIANS THAT MOSCOW WANTS?

In December, the State Department said it had made a significant offer to secure the release of Gershkovich and Whelan, which it said Russia had rejected.

Officials did not describe the offer, although Russia has been said to be seeking the release of Vadim Krasikov, who was given a life sentence in Germany in 2021 for the killing in Berlin of Zelimkhan "Tornike" Khangoshvili, a 40-year-old Georgian citizen of Chechen descent who had fought Russian troops in Chechnya and later claimed asylum in Germany.

President Vladimir Putin, asked this year about releasing Gershkovich, appeared to refer to Krasikov by pointing to a man imprisoned by a U.S. ally for "liquidating a bandit" who had allegedly killed Russian soldiers during separatist fighting in Chechnya.

# Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, March 30, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 278 ~ 59 of 63

Beyond that hint, Russian officials have kept mum about the talks. Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov repeatedly said that while "certain contacts" on swaps continue, "they must be carried out in absolute silence."

Whether there are any other Russians held in the West that Moscow might be interested in is unclear.

When Russia agreed to release Griner but not Whelan, a senior Biden administration official lamented to reporters that Russia had "rejected each and every one of our proposals for his release."

Those scenarios — in which one detainee is released but not another — weigh heavily on officials in the U.S. government, said Roger Carstens, the special presidential envoy for hostage affairs, speaking in a January interview with AP.

"Unless someone's coming off a plane, onto a tarmac, in the United States of America and into the arms of their loved ones, we're not getting a win," Carstens said.

Historically, "when the relationships (between countries) are better, the exchanges seem to be smoother," said Nina Khrushcheva, a Moscow-born professor of international affairs at the New School in New York and the great-granddaughter of Soviet leader Nikita Khrushchev.

She pointed to prisoner swaps between the Soviet Union and Chile during the detente period of the 1970s, as well as those with the U.S. and Germany shortly after Mikhail Gorbachev took office in the 1980s. Prominent Soviet dissidents Vladimir Bukovsky and Natan Sharansky were released in these exchanges.

Ultimately, however, the fate of those imprisoned in Russia "is only in Putin's hands," Khrushcheva said.

Carstens echoed her sentiment.

"These are tough cases. The fact is that Russia holds the key to the jail cell," he told AP in a statement this week. "The United States continues to have conversations with allies and partners about what we can do to secure Evan and Paul's freedom. These efforts are sensitive and it doesn't help Evan and Paul to have negotiations in public. The United States will continue our efforts until we can bring Evan and Paul home."

## France asks for foreign police and military help with massive Paris Olympics security challenge

By JOHN LEICESTER Associated Press

France says it has asked 46 countries if they would be willing to supply more than 2,000 police officers to help secure the Paris Olympics this summer, as organizers finalize security planning for the French capital's first Games in a century while on heightened alert against potential attacks.

The Interior Ministry said Friday that the request for foreign security assistance was made in January, seeking nearly 2,185 reinforcements. The officers are sought to help with Games security and "the spectator experience" and to "strengthen international cooperation," the ministry said.

"This is a classic approach of host countries for the organization of major international events," the ministry added.

It noted that France sent 200 of its gendarmes to soccer's World Cup in Qatar in 2022 and also welcomed 160 officers from other European security forces for the Rugby World Cup that France hosted last year.

Separately, the French Defense Ministry has also asked foreign nations for "small numbers" of military personnel who could help with "very specific" tasks at the Games, including sniffer dog teams, said Col. Pierre Gaudillière, spokesman for the army general staff.

Poland's defense minister said his country will be sending soldiers to the Paris Games. The Polish armed forces delegation will include dog handlers and "its main goal will be to undertake activities related to the detection of explosives and counteracting terrorist phenomena," the minister, Władysław Kosiniak-Kamysz, posted on X.

Security is the biggest challenge for Paris Games organizers in a city that has been repeatedly hit by deadly attacks by Islamic extremists and which is expecting as many as 15 million visitors for the July 26-Aug. 11 Games and Paralympics that follow.

Security concerns are notably high for the opening ceremony, which will involve boats along the Seine

River and huge crowds watching from the embankments.

France's government increased its security alert posture to the highest level in the wake of the recent deadly attack at a Russian concert hall and the Islamic State's claim of responsibility.

French Prime Minister Gabriel Attal announced the decision in a post on X, saying authorities were "taking into account the Islamic State's claim of responsibility for the (Moscow) attack and the threats weighing on our country."

## Hijab-wearing players in women's NCAA Tournament hope to inspire others

By DOUG FEINBERG AP Basketball Writer

N.C. State's Jannah Eissa and UC Irvine's Diaba Konate are bringing visibility and inspiration to some Muslim women by wearing hijabs while they play basketball.

They aren't the first women to do it in NCAA Tournament play, but with record viewership and attendance they are certainly getting noticed.

"Representation really matters," said Konate, whose team lost in the first round of the tournament to Gonzaga. "Just having people, young Muslim women wearing the hijab, we're not there yet. Just seeing us play, I think it makes me really happy because I used to have people that I was looking up to. Now having people that look up to me makes me happy."

Konate admires Bilqis Abdul-Qaadir, who made NCAA history by being the first to wear a hijab in college basketball when she played for Memphis a decade ago. Abdul-Qaadir was instrumental in getting FIBA, the International Basketball Federation, to overturn its own ban on headgear in 2017.

Former UConn player Batouly Camara, who was one of the first to wear a hijab in Spain's LF1 league, has enjoyed seeing Eissa and Konate represent their religion.

"It's truly inspiring to witness these two Muslim athletes competing at the highest level. This tournament serves as a significant moment, shining a spotlight on the best teams simultaneously with their faith," said Camara, who founded the non-profit organization Women And Kids Empowerment (WAKE) in 2017. "It sends a powerful message to girls worldwide, affirming that they belong on the sports field, regardless of economic class, race, culture and more."

Konate started 31 of 32 games for UC Irvine, averaging 7.5 points and nearly four assists. She moved to the U.S. from France after receiving a scholarship from Idaho State. She transferred to UC Irvine as a junior.

She'd like a chance to play in a hijab at home in France, where she won two medals playing on their youth teams. But currently, the French Federation of Basketball prohibits the wearing of "any equipment with a religious or political connotation."

"Being French and hosting the Olympics, it really hurts to not be able to be ourselves," said Konate, who first started wearing the hijab in 2020. "Hopefully, it changes."

Eissa and Konate have never met, but are aware of each other.

"I just know there's another woman wearing a hijab," Eissa said. "I just saw a post about two days ago. I was so happy there are other people."

Eissa, who turned 18 in February, was a walk-on at N.C. State. She joined the team after trying out in September. She didn't play much this season — appearing in 11 games and hitting one 3-pointer.

Earlier this season, a group of young Muslim girls came to her game. They also showed up a few more times to support her.

"I'd love to say I was a role model to them. Never thought I could be a role model for someone I didn't know," said Eissa, who grew up in Cairo before coming to N.C. State. "Never knew one person could make such an impact. They were so young girls and girls my age looking up to me and I was so happy."

Eissa chose N.C. State because her father got his PhD there and her two older sisters attend the university.

She said when having a bad day or an off day, she'd remember her young fans and it would bring a smile.

"If they see someone giving them hope, I'm happy that I'm the person to give it to them," Eissa said.

"I want to make it as far as I can for the image of women in hijabs."

## Easter is March 31 this year. Here's why many Christians will wake up before sunrise to celebrate

By HOLLY MEYER Associated Press

On Easter morning, many Christians wake before dawn to celebrate their belief in the resurrection of Jesus, the son of God — as the sun rises.

They gather outside on beaches and church lawns, in local cemeteries and national parks, marking the holy day at the very core of Christianity. For the majority of the world's Christians, Easter Sunday — and in turn, the sunrise service tradition — will be observed on March 31 this year.

**WHY DOES EASTER MOVE EVERY YEAR?**

Easter is not a fixed date. It swings between March 22 and April 25 based on a calendar calculation involving the moon.

The U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops explains further: "Easter is celebrated on the first Sunday after the Paschal full moon, which is the first full moon occurring either on or after the spring equinox (March 21)."

That means sunrise service attendees will be waking up early on the last day of March this year.

**IS THERE A RELIGIOUS REASON FOR EASTER SUNRISE SERVICES?**

There is biblical symbolism in the Easter worship of the early risers.

In the New Testament's four Gospels, the resurrection story varies, but all tell of the four women followers of Jesus who discovered Christ's empty tomb at dawn, said the Rev. Ginny Tobiassen, pastor of Home Moravian Church in Winston-Salem, North Carolina, where one of the most well-known sunrise services is held.

"When we as Christians stand in a graveyard at dawn, we are saying we believe in the resurrection. We are here among our dead, celebrating the resurrection," she said.

It's a message members of the Moravian Church — one of the oldest Protestant denominations in the world — have sent for nearly 300 years.

**WHEN WAS THE FIRST-EVER EASTER SUNRISE SERVICE?**

It is unclear if the Moravian Church was the first to hold an Easter sunrise service. As Tobiassen pointed out, it is an obvious choice given the Gospel stories about the early morning visit to Jesus' empty tomb.

But the denomination's annual tradition dates to 1732 in Herrnhut, Germany, where Moravian refugees of religious persecution fled to and established the original Renewed Moravian Church settlement, according to accounts of church history.

For the first year, the single men gathered for an all-night prayer vigil, ending with hymn singing in the graveyard they referred to as "God's Acre." They invited the whole community the following year, and missionaries spread the tradition beyond the settlement, including to North Carolina.

**WHAT HAPPENS DURING A MORAVIAN SUNRISE SERVICE?**

In the 1750s, Moravians settled in what would become present-day Winston-Salem, North Carolina. The city is now home to one of the oldest Easter sunrise services in the U.S. It's known to draw thousands of people — not only Moravians but everyone from the curious to the spirituality seekers, Tobiassen said. It also can be watched online and heard on the radio.

"People who just want to know what is this thing that Winston-Salem has been doing all this time," she said. "It's very much a part of our community's history."

Started in 1772, this year will be No. 252.

The sunrise service is put on by the Salem Congregation, which represents 13 Moravian churches in the city, including Home Moravian Church where Tobiassen serves as minister. In addition to the longstanding liturgy, the service includes a silent procession to the Salem Moravian Graveyard, also called "God's Acre," and concludes among the graves that go back generations.

While Moravians hold their sunrise services in church graveyards, others hold them elsewhere and in various worship styles, including at Mount Rushmore in South Dakota, the Lincoln Memorial in Washington and on Newport Beach in California.

**IS THERE MUSIC?**

# Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, March 30, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 278 ~ 62 of 63

Yes. Moravian congregations are known for their trombone choirs made up mostly of brass and some wind musicians, Tobiassen said, and so the sunrise service will feature a band of about 300 horn players from churches in the region paying Moravian hymns together. Many of those musicians will have been playing all night, she said. They spread out on street corners, creating a cascade of sound throughout the community as they take turns playing lines of antiphonal hymns, she said.

"The idea is they are alerting people in the community to wake up — the Lord has risen. It's time to gather," Tobiassen said. "Their playing expands the worship space. If you can hear a horn, you're in church."

## ARE THEIR OTHER EASTER SERVICE TRADITIONS?

Yes. Some Christian faith groups hold an Easter vigil between sunset Saturday and sunrise Sunday, which can include a renewal of believers' baptismal vows. In some instances, Easter vigils and Easter sunrise services are one and the same.

The Episcopal Church also calls Easter vigil the "Great Vigil." In its tradition, the service includes a four-part liturgy that the church describes as recovering "the ancient practice of keeping the Easter feast."

It's explained further on the church's website: "Believers would gather in the hours of darkness ending at dawn on Easter to hear scripture and offer prayer. This night-long service of prayerful watching anticipated the baptisms that would come at first light and the Easter Eucharist. Easter was the primary baptismal occasion for the early church to the practical exclusion of all others. This practice linked the meanings of Christ's dying and rising to the understanding of baptism."

## Today in History: March 30, President Ronald Reagan is shot

By The Associated Press undefined

Today in History

Today is Saturday, March 30, the 89th day of 2024. There are 276 days left in the year.

Today's Highlight in History:

On March 30, 1981, President Ronald Reagan was shot and seriously injured outside a Washington, D.C., hotel by John W. Hinckley Jr.; also wounded were White House press secretary James Brady, Secret Service agent Timothy McCarthy and a District of Columbia police officer, Thomas Delahanty.

On this date:

In 1822, Florida became a United States territory.

In 1842, Dr. Crawford W. Long of Jefferson, Georgia, first used ether as an anesthetic during an operation to remove a patient's neck tumor.

In 1867, U.S. Secretary of State William H. Seward reached agreement with Russia to purchase the territory of Alaska for \$7.2 million, a deal ridiculed by critics as "Seward's Folly."

In 1870, the 15th Amendment to the U.S. Constitution, which prohibited denying citizens the right to vote and hold office on the basis of race, was declared in effect by Secretary of State Hamilton Fish.

In 1923, the Cunard liner RMS Laconia became the first passenger ship to circle the globe as it arrived in New York.

In 1945, during World War II, the Soviet Union invaded Austria with the goal of taking Vienna, which it accomplished two weeks later.

In 1959, a narrowly divided U.S. Supreme Court, in *Bartkus v. Illinois*, ruled that a conviction in state court following an acquittal in federal court for the same crime did not constitute double jeopardy.

In 1975, as the Vietnam War neared its end, Communist forces occupied the city of Da Nang.

In 1987, at the 59th Academy Awards, "Platoon" was named best picture; Marlee Matlin received best actress for "Children of a Lesser God" and Paul Newman was honored as best actor for "The Color of Money."

In 2010, President Barack Obama signed a single measure sealing his health care overhaul and making the government the primary lender to students by cutting banks out of the process.

In 2015, Comedy Central announced that Trevor Noah, a 31-year-old comedian from South Africa, would succeed Jon Stewart as host of "The Daily Show."

In 2018, thousands of Palestinians marched to Gaza's border with Israel and Palestinian health officials

# Groton Daily Independent

**Saturday, March 30, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 278 ~ 63 of 63**

said 15 of the protesters were killed by Israeli fire on the first day of what Hamas organizers said would be six weeks of daily protests against a border blockade; it was the area's deadliest violence in four years.

In 2020, Florida authorities arrested a megachurch pastor after they said he held two Sunday services with hundreds in attendance in violation of coronavirus restrictions. (The charges were later dropped.)

In 2022, Russian forces bombarded areas around Kyiv and another city just hours after pledging to scale back military operations in those places to help negotiations with Ukraine.

In 2023, a Manhattan grand jury has voted to indict Donald Trump on charges involving payments made during the 2016 presidential campaign to silence claims of an extramarital sexual encounter, the first ever criminal case against a former U.S. president.

Today's Birthdays: Game show host Peter Marshall is 98. Actor John Astin is 94. Actor-director Warren Beatty is 87. Rock musician Eric Clapton is 79. Actor Justin Deas is 76. Actor Paul Reiser is 68. Rap artist MC Hammer is 62. Singer Tracy Chapman is 60. Actor Ian Ziering is 60. TV personality Piers Morgan is 59. Rock musician Joey Castillo is 58. Actor Donna D'Errico is 56. Singer Celine Dion is 56. TV personality/producer Richard Rawlings is 55. Actor Mark Consuelos is 53. Actor Bahar Soomekh is 49. Actor Jessica Cauffiel is 48. Singer Norah Jones is 45. Actor Fiona Gubelmann is 44. Actor Katy Mixon is 43. Actor Jason Dohring is 42. Country singer Justin Moore is 40. Actor Tessa Ferrer is 38. Country singer Thomas Rhett is 34. Rapper NF is 33.