

Groton Daily Independent

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Sunday, April 7

POPS Concert 2 p.m. and 5 p.m.
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.
Emmanuel Lutheran: Worship with communion, 9 a.m.; Sunday School, 10:15 a.m.; Choir, 6 p.m.
St. John's Lutheran: Worship with communion at St. John's at 9 a.m. and Zion at 11 a.m.; Sunday School, 9:45 a.m.
NSU Soccer Camp at the Groton soccer field, 2-5 p.m.

Monday, April 8

Senior Menu: Ranch chicken breast, sweet potatoes mixed Monterey blend, applesauce bars, whole wheat bread.
School Breakfast: Pancake on stick.
School Lunch: French bread pizza, cooked carrots.
State Smarter Balanced Testing (EIA/Math: April 8-12, Science (Grade 11) Week of April 15-19 (day TBD)
School Board meeting, 7 p.m.

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



“Tradition simply means that we need to end what began well and continue what is worth continuing.”

-EMMA CHASE

Pantry Open 11 a.m. to 3 p.m.
Senior Citizen meet at the Groton Community Center, 1 p.m.
Emmanuel Lutheran: Bible Study 6:30 a.m.
High School Baseball: Varsity at Dell Rapids 5 p.m., second game at 7 p.m.
Soccer uniform pickup, 5-8 p.m., Groton Community Center

Tuesday, April 9

ELECTION DAY!
Groton Area Opt-Out Election. Polls open 7 a.m. to 7 p.m.
Senior Menu: Lemon baked fish, baked potato with sour cream, California blend vegetables, peach crisp, whole wheat bread.
School Breakfast: Scones.
School Lunch: Chicken patty, fries.
Track at Ipswich, 2:30 p.m.
JH Track at Milbank 4 p.m.
Thrift Store open 3 p.m. to 6 p.m.
Food Pantry open 4 p.m. to 8 p.m.
United Methodist: Bible Study, 10 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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Coming up on . . .

GDILIVE.COM

The Groton Music Department

Presents:

2024 Pops Concert

Sunday April 7th

2 pm & 5 pm

Tickets \$5 at door

LIVE STREAM PROVIDED BY
GDI LIVE

GDI Subscribers watch for Free. Otherwise a \$5 ticket is required for viewing. One \$5 ticket gets you both performances.

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15 N Main St. - Ste. 101
Downtown Groton

Call/Text Paul: 605-397-7460
Call/Text Tina: 605-397-7285



Bones need strong muscles for support.
Not exercising weakens those supporting muscles.
Weak muscles put more stress on joints. - Mayo Clinic

EMPLOYMENT

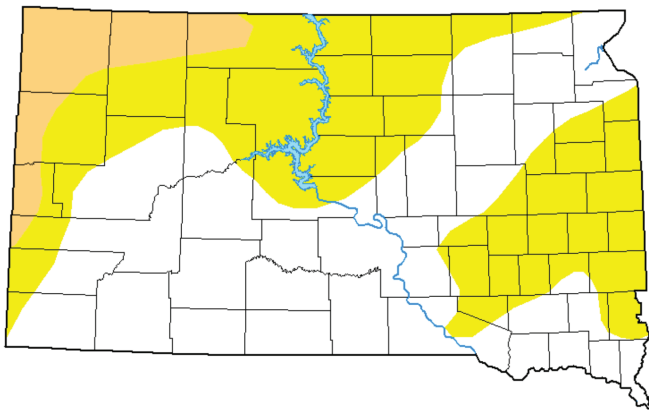
Position available for full-time Public Works Laborer. Formal training and/or experience preferred. Salary negotiable DOE. Benefits include medical insurance, life insurance, and SD State Retirement. Please send application and resume to the City of Groton, PO Box 587, Groton, SD 57445, or email to city.doug@nvc.net. 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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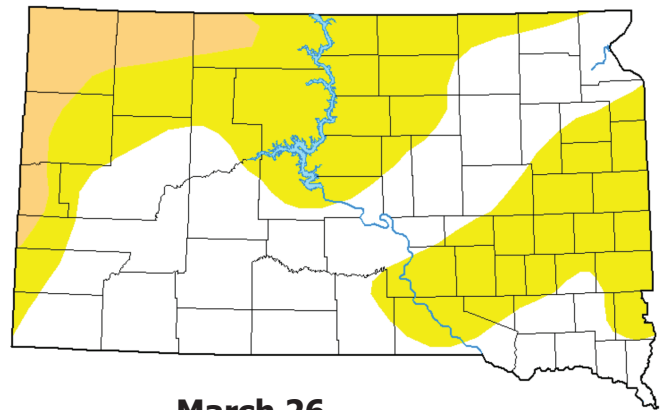
Drought Classification

- None
- D0 (Abnormally Dry)
- D1 (Moderate Drought)
- D2 (Severe Drought)
- D3 (Extreme Drought)
- D4 (Exceptional Drought)
- No Data

Drought Monitor



April 2



March 26

The northern to central Great Plains along with the central Rockies remained either status quo this week or had a 1-category improvement. Locally heavy precipitation (more than 1 inch) led to targeted improvements across southeastern Kansas. Lighter precipitation (0.25 to 1 inch) supported minor improvements to South Dakota. Based on SPIs at various time scales along with snow water equivalent close to average, improvements were necessary for parts of northern Colorado and southern Wyoming. 30-day SPEI and GRACE-based soil moisture supported a large increase in abnormal dryness (D0) across southwestern Kansas along with a slight expansion of moderate drought (D1) to the west of Wichita.

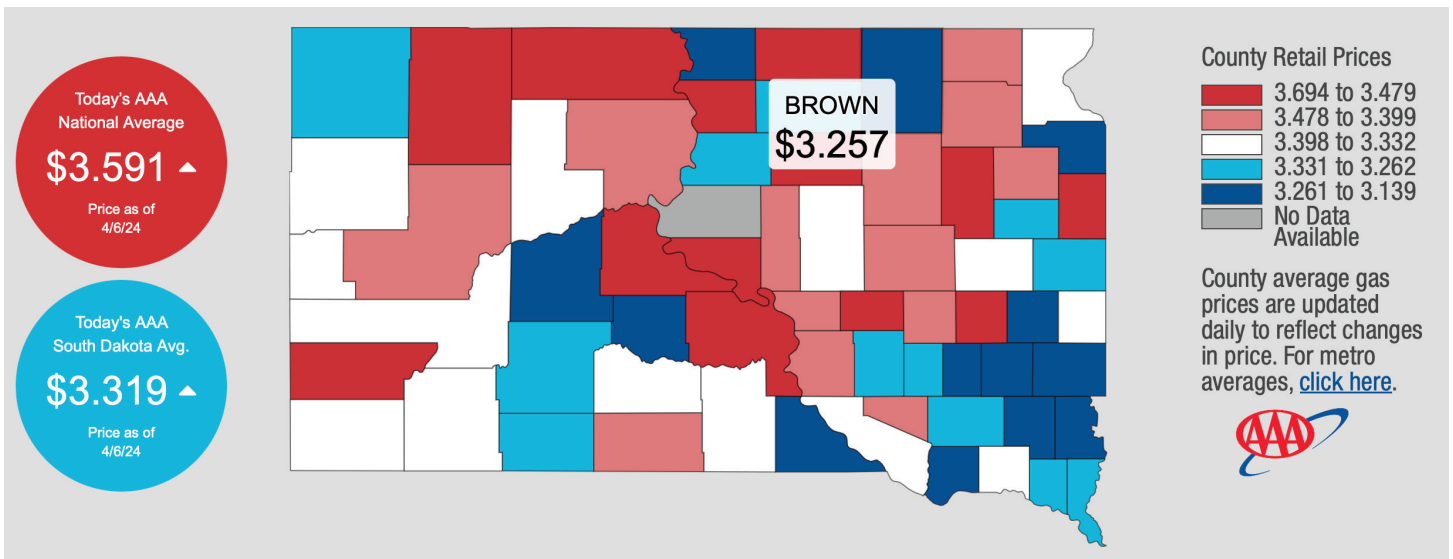
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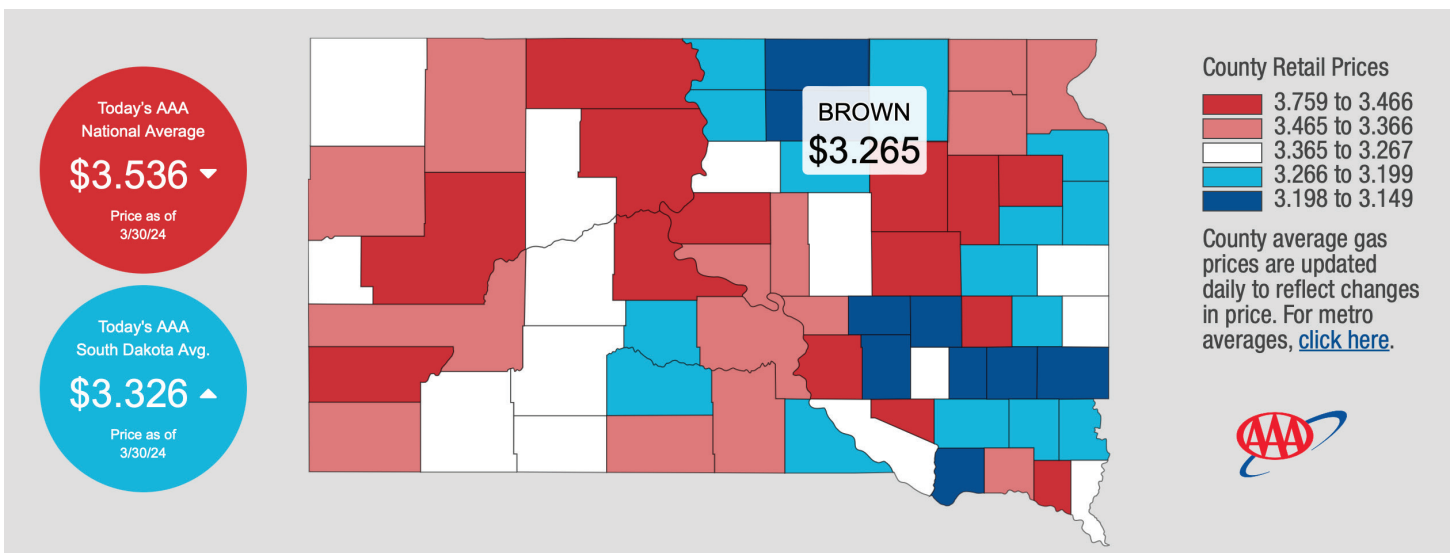
South Dakota Average Gas Prices

	Regular	Mid-Grade	Premium	Diesel
Current Avg.	\$3.319	\$3.448	\$3.860	\$3.699
Yesterday Avg.	\$3.318	\$3.452	\$3.858	\$3.682
Week Ago Avg.	\$3.326	\$3.474	\$3.884	\$3.711
Month Ago Avg.	\$3.144	\$3.271	\$3.718	\$3.719
Year Ago Avg.	\$3.338	\$3.506	\$3.963	\$3.900

This Week



Last Week



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THE ILLUSTRATED BIBLE

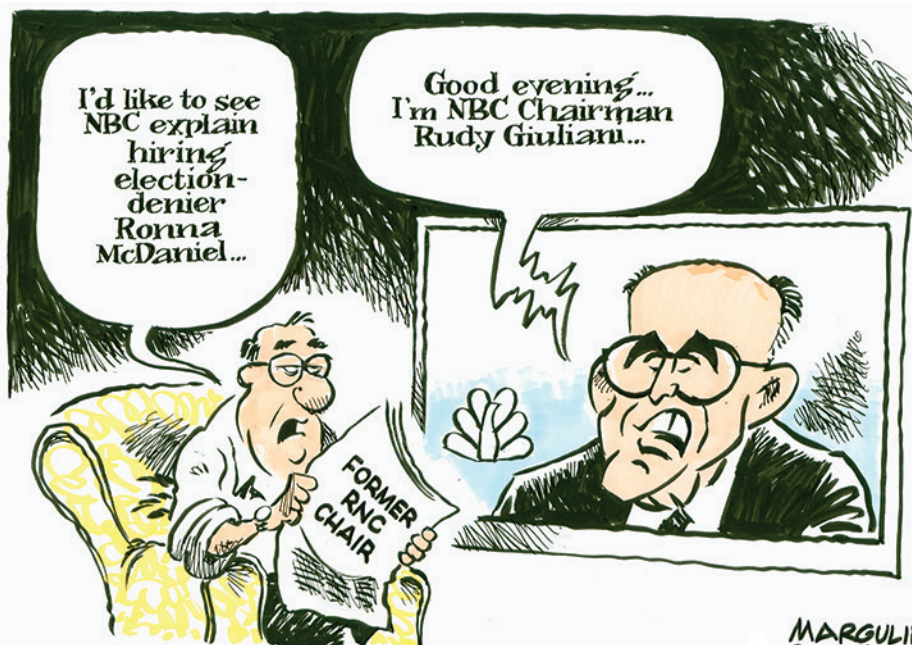
*So why do you worry about clothing?
Consider the lilies of the field,
how they grow: they neither toil
nor spin; and yet I say to you
that even Solomon in all his glory
was not arrayed like one of these.*

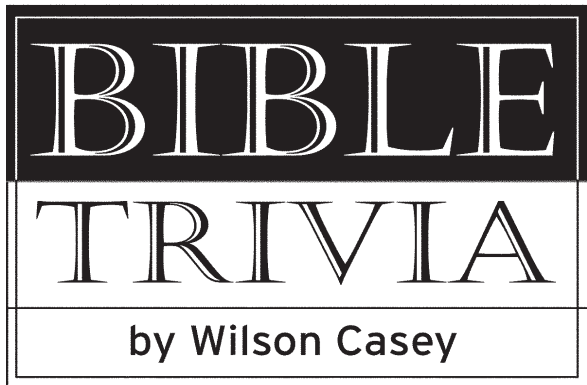
❧ MATTHEW 6:28,29 ❧

Detail of "Yuri (yama yuri)"
by Shodo Kawarazaki (1953)



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1. Is the book of 3 Corinthians (KJV) in the Old or New Testament or neither?

2. Who was praised for his beauty “from the sole of his foot even to the crown of his head”? *Absalom, Elisha, Pekah, Tola*

3. What camp saw 185,000 of its soldiers slaughtered by an angel of the Lord? *Assyrian, Midianite, Philistine, Persian*

4. From Genesis 1:30, what is the first color mentioned in the Bible? *Purple, Red, Green, Yellow*

5. Which city’s wall fell down flat at the shout of Joshua’s army? *Tarsus, Jericho, Corinth, Sardis*

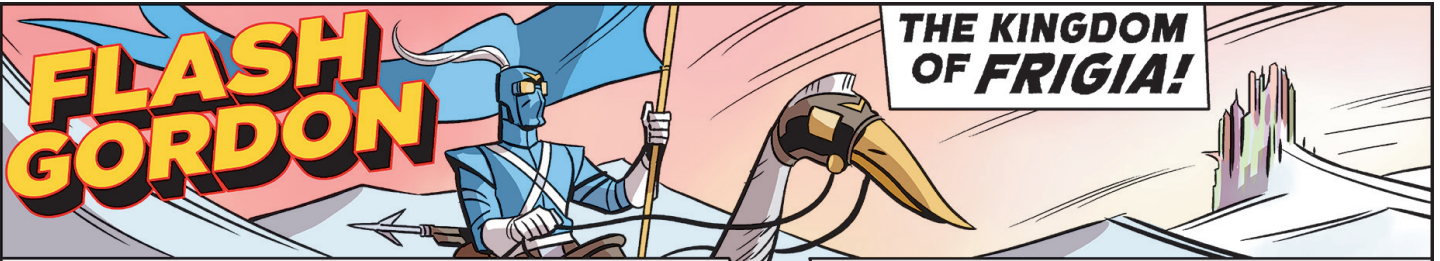
6. From 2 Kings, who became king of Judah at age 8? *Abijam, Rehoboam, Marcus, Josiah*

ANSWERS: 1) Neither, 2) Absalom, 3) Assyrian, 4) Green, 5) Jericho, 6) Josiah

Comments? More Trivia? Gift ideas? Visit www.TriviaGuy.com.

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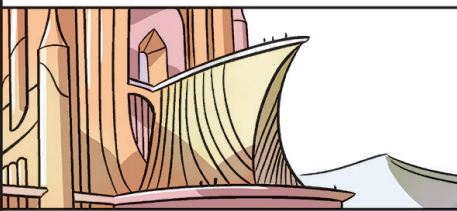


FLASH GORDON

THE LARGEST NATION ON THE PLANET MONGO, HER FROZEN SURFACE HIDING LAND RICH WITH EVERY MONGOTHIC ELEMENT--

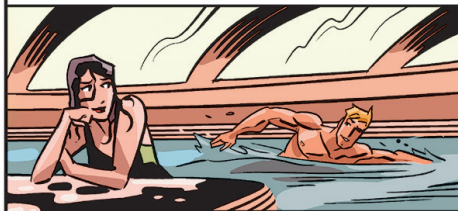
--AND HOME TO A VIBRANT AND HARDY PEOPLE, AS INTEGRAL TO HER LANDSCAPE AS THE ICE ITSELF!

COME TO MAGNIFICENT DAY'S PEAK!



A MIRACLE OF GEOMORPHIC DESIGN, CAPITAL OF THE KINGDOM OF FRIGIA!

RELAX IN OUR WELLNESS POOLS!



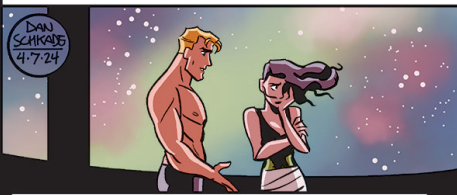
HEATED BY THERMAL VEINS FROM THE VERY HEART OF MONGO!

MAKE NEW FRIENDS AND FRIENDLY* RIVALS IN OUR FAMED COMBAT CLUBS!



*CONTINGENT ON INTERPERSONAL CHEMISTRY, NOT GUARANTEED BY MANAGEMENT

FIND ROMANCE NEW AND OLD UNDER THE CLEAREST SKIES ON MONGO!



IF YOU CAN'T MAKE IT WORK HERE, IT MIGHT NOT WORK ANYWHERE!

WHO KNOWS? YOU MIGHT EVEN MEET OUR QUEEN -- WISE, BEAUTIFUL FRIA!



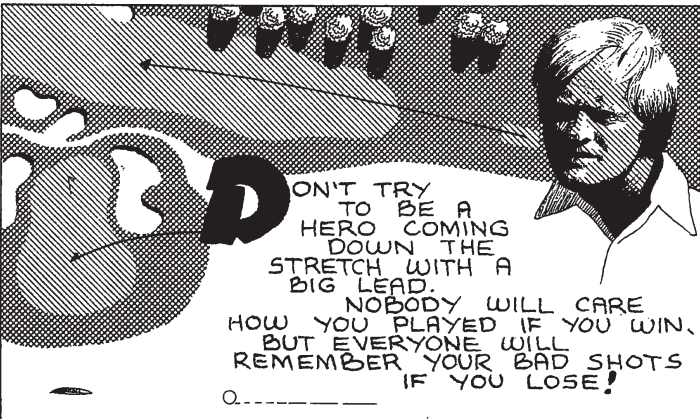
ADVENTURE AWAITS!



BOOK YOUR ROCKET TRAIN NOW!

NEXT: NO QUEENS IN THE WILD

Play Better Golf with JACK NICKLAUS



DON'T TRY TO BE A HERO COMING DOWN THE STRETCH WITH A BIG LEAD. NOBODY WILL CARE HOW YOU PLAYED IF YOU WIN, BUT EVERYONE WILL REMEMBER YOUR BAD SHOTS IF YOU LOSE!

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GO FOR THE CENTERS OF THE FAIRWAYS AND THE HEARTS OF THE GREENS AND LAG RATHER THAN CHARGE LONG PUTTS.

BELIEVE ME, WINNING BY ONE OR TWO STROKES IS JUST AS ENJOYABLE AS WINNING BY FIVE OR SIX.





Constant Aleve and Ibuprofen Consumption Can Cause Damage

DEAR DR. ROACH: My husband, age 70, had been diagnosed with osteoarthritis in his neck, for which he would take Aleve to relieve his discomfort when needed. Just before Christmas last year, his back began hurting so much that he went to his doctor, who said to get up and move more. (We have always exercised and remained active in life, but he did slow down due to his pain.)

My husband then added ibuprofen to the Aleve he was already using. His doctor said that the pain is due to osteoarthritis in his mid-back area. Apparently, there is nothing to do for it but take Extra Strength Tylenol at the recommended dose. Ibuprofen or Aleve isn't recommended because it causes liver and kidney damage. So, we bought Tylenol, and he used this medication instead of his usual. But his pain only got worse.

So, this morning, he switched back to Aleve and ibuprofen. It is what helped before and is helping again now. In addition, he is using a drug-free Aleve Direct Therapy pad that uses waveform technology. He also uses Icy Hot pain relief cream and a heating pad. These reduce his pain, but his back continues to hurt since before the holidays.

Our question is, should he use Aleve and ibuprofen instead of the Tylenol that doesn't seem to help? He has actually used Aleve for a very long time. He just had his blood tested, and the doctor said his liver

and kidneys are good. Is there anything more we can do to relieve his osteoarthritic pain? It is hard to see my husband in so much discomfort when he was previously a very active, pain-free man. — S.F.A.

ANSWER: Osteoarthritis in the neck is a common and painful condition, and there are not always good treatment options. In terms of medicine, anti-inflammatory medicines, like Aleve or ibuprofen (Advil and many other brands), can be very helpful for some people.

However, taking both doesn't improve pain relief. It does increase the risk of toxicity, so he should never take two anti-inflammatory medicines — choose just one. Tylenol helps some people, but in my experience, most people do better with anti-inflammatories instead of Tylenol. Tylenol does have a smaller risk of side effects.

In addition to liver and kidney problems, Aleve and similar medicines can cause stomach problems, ranging from mild upset to life-threatening ulcers; though, this is uncommon with over-the-counter doses. I often recommend a trial of Tylenol to see if it is as good as the anti-inflammatories. Since it's not for your husband, he should tell his doctor this, and it seems reasonable for him to go back to taking Aleve alone. However, I can't tell you to disregard his physician's advice. Some people benefit from Tylenol on top of Aleve.

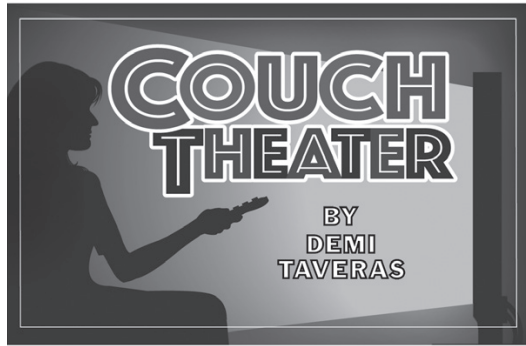
Beyond pain medicines, the Aleve Direct Therapy pad uses electricity to relieve pain without medicine. It's fine to combine this therapy with medicines. Creams — whether they are anti-inflammatory, menthol and camphor, or topical anesthetics — provide some relief, but they tend to be better on the hands, wrists and knees than the neck. Though, they still may be worth trying in combination with medicines.

In more severe cases, injections can be used before considering surgery.

Dr. Roach regrets that he is unable to answer individual questions, but will incorporate them in the column whenever possible. Readers may email questions to ToYourGoodHealth@med.cornell.edu.

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Kirby Howell-Baptiste, left, and Colin Farrell star in "Sugar." Courtesy of AppleTV+

"The Zone of Interest" (PG-13) -- After taking home Best International Feature Film and Best Sound at this year's Oscars, Jonathan Glazer's historical drama is out now on streaming for viewers to watch at home. Taking place in 1943 during World War II, the film follows commandant Rudolf Hoss and his family, who live alongside the

Auschwitz concentration camp in Poland. While the Hosses enjoy their tranquil life in their beautiful home, the sound of furnaces and gunshots can be heard just beyond their garden wall, and camp prisoners tend to their household chores. Christian Friedel ("Babylon Berlin") and Sandra Huller ("Anatomy of a Fall") lead this chilling film. (Max)

"Sugar" (TV-MA) -- In this new mystery-drama series, Irish actor Colin Farrell ("The Banshees of Inisherin") dons an American accent to become John Sugar, a private investigator in Los Angeles. Known for his razor-sharp instincts, great sense of style and blue Corvette, Sugar gets put on a case regarding the disappearance of Olivia Siegel, the granddaughter of a Hollywood producer. But when Sugar starts inching his way closer to the truth of Olivia's disappearance, more and more people try to throw him off the case. The first two episodes are out now, with subsequent episodes releasing every Friday. (Apple TV+)

"Fallout" (TV-MA) -- Based on the role-playing video game of the same name, this apocalyptic drama series takes place 219 years after nuclear technology destroyed what we know as Earth. The war led humans to take shelter in underground bunkers known as "Vaults" in order to survive. But a Vault dweller named Lucy finally decides to leave her bunker to find out what the world has come to in the past two centuries. Finding herself in a post-apocalyptic version of Los Angeles, Lucy encounters mutants, bandits and all kinds of destructive technology in the remnants of our old world. Ella Purnell ("Star Trek: Prodigy") and Walton Goggins ("Invincible") lead this action-packed, eight-episode series premiering April 11. (Amazon Prime Video)

"Vanderpump Villa" (TV-MA) -- Lisa Vanderpump couldn't get enough of the smashing success of her show "Vanderpump Rules," which took the internet by storm last summer when the show was rocked with a cheating scandal called "Scandoval." The British restaurateur has decided to start a new unscripted show, which follows her carefully picked staff at the Chateau Rosabelle in France. The staff work in varied positions, like chefs, servers, housekeepers and mixologists, and get the ultimate experience by enjoying everything the French countryside has to offer. Don't think that just because they're in a luxury villa, there won't be any drama -- if anything, Vanderpump truly thrives off it! The first four episodes are out now. (Hulu)

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1. Name the non-Beatle musician credited on "Get Back."
2. Which group released "Long Lonely Nights"?
3. Name the Vikki Carr worldwide hit that was a translation from the original French version.
4. Which group was the first to release "Walk Away Renee"?
5. Name the song that contains this lyric: "I stood on this corner, waiting for you to come along, So my heart could feel satisfied."

Answers

1. Billy Preston, in 1969. The citation reads "The Beatles with Billy Preston." Preston also appeared in the "Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band" film in 1978.
2. Lee Andrews and the Hearts, in 1957. It was later covered by Clyde McPhatter, also in 1957.
3. "It Must Be Him," in 1967. The original was "Seul sur Son Etoile," which translates to "Alone on His Star." A dozen artists around the globe covered the song, with translations into several languages, including German and Lebanese.
4. The Left Banke, in 1966. The Four Tops followed with a cover in 1967.
5. "What's Your Name," by Don and Juan, in 1961. The song was used in the documentary "It Came from Hollywood" in 1982 and in the film "Siam" in 1998.

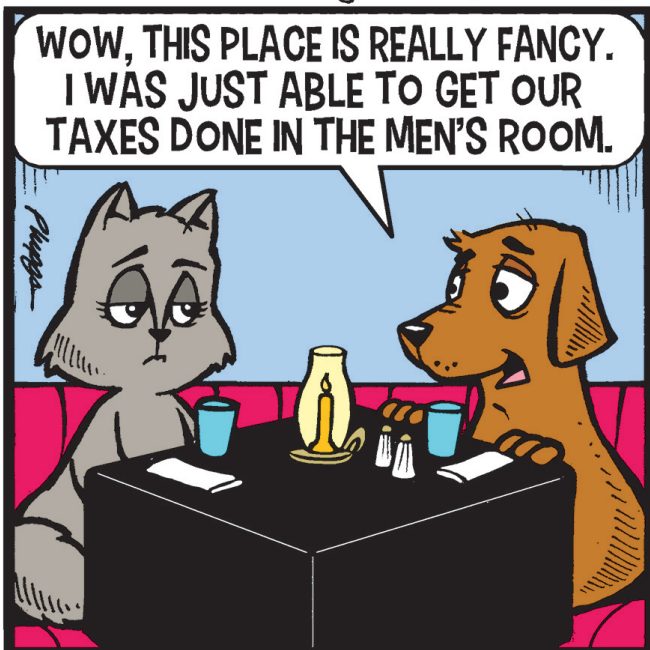
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GRIN and BEAR IT by Wagner



"Look what I bought with what I found buried in the back yard!"

Just Like Cats & Dogs by Dave T. Phipps

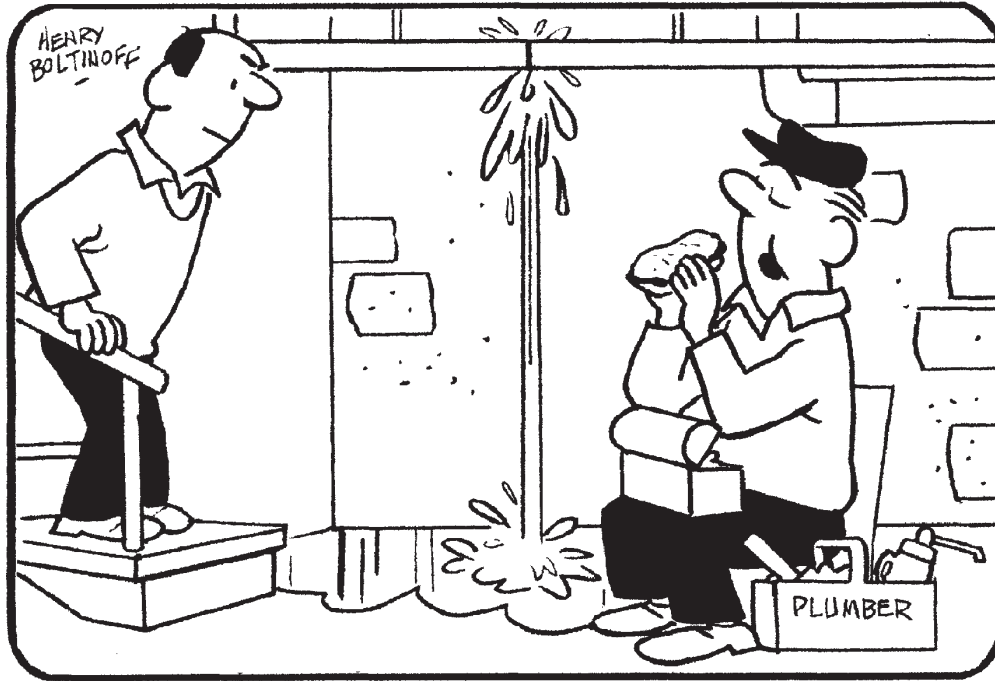


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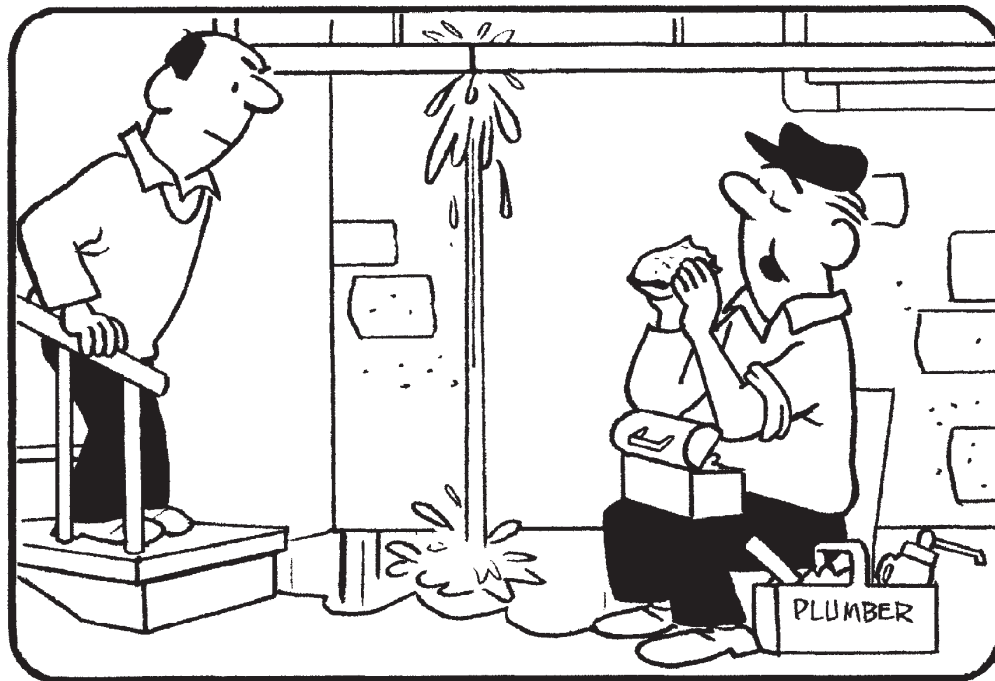
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HOCUS-FOCUS

BY
HENRY BOLTINOFF



Find at least six differences in details between panels.



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Differences: 1. Railing is different. 2. Handle is added to lunch box. 3. Sleeve is rolled up. 4. Leak is moved. 5. Pipe is thinner. 6. Bite is missing from sandwich.

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* A topcoat a day keeps the manicurist away! Revive your polish by giving the ends a quick coat of clear topcoat daily to extend the life of your manicure.

* "I like to cut out and save comic strips. I used to put them in photo albums with the plastic sleeves, but the pages were a little small. Now I use scrapbook pages, which are much wider. I just glue them to a coordinating color paper. They look much nicer, too." -- A reader in Virginia

* The hardware on my favorite purse started to look very banged up and flaking. I found a silver leaf pen at the craft store, and it was very easy to spruce my bag up again.

* To keep spring boots looking tall and smelling pretty good, loosely roll a thin stack of newspaper, stick it down the leg portion of your boot, then fill it with a stack of

ballied-up newspapers. It will support the leg, which will not flop over, causing cracks. And the newspaper absorbs any smells.

* If you have trapped hairs, try this trick: Wet an old, clean toothbrush and dip it in baking soda or body scrub. Gently exfoliate the area once a day for several days, and it should work itself right out.

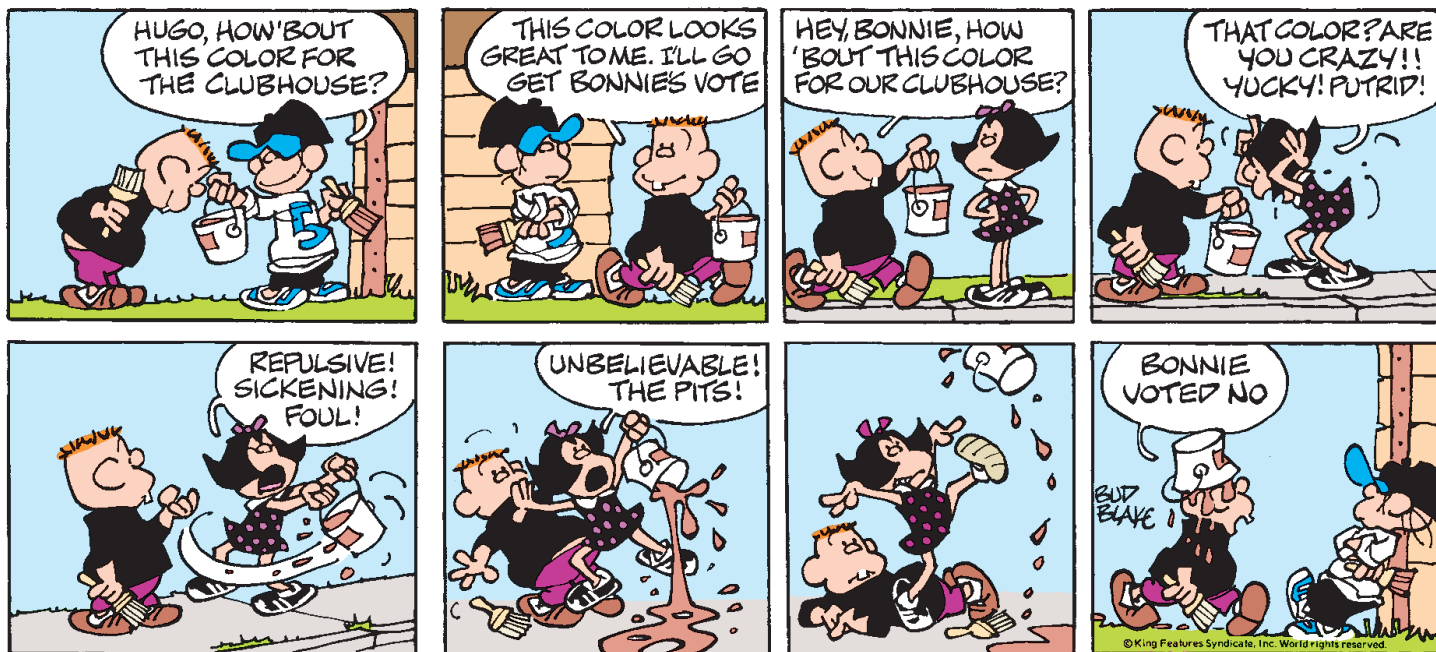
* Bar soap is much more concentrated and eco-friendly than liquid body washes. These days, they are just as moisturizing as any liquid soap. Look for ingredients like shea butter or the words "ultra-moisturizing" and "added emollients."

Send your tips to Now Here's a Tip, 628 Virginia Drive, Orlando, FL 32803.

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TIGER

by BUD BLAKE



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King Crossword

ACROSS

- 1 Flair
- 5 Enterprise letters
- 8 Stuffing herb
- 12 Taunt
- 13 Aussie hopper
- 14 Hockey legend Phil, to fans
- 15 Home of the Packers
- 17 Compared to
- 18 Congeal
- 19 Sturdy tree
- 20 Spassky's game
- 21 — -Manuel Miranda
- 22 Huge
- 23 Bottom
- 26 Fear-stricken
- 30 "E Pluribus —"
- 31 Blue hue
- 32 Lighten
- 33 Arty area
- 35 Hinder
- 36 Sailor
- 37 Soda container
- 38 Norwegian inlet
- 41 "It's c-c-cold!"
- 42 Right angle
- 45 Actress Russo
- 46 Chinese brew
- 48 Diminutive suffix

1	2	3	4		5	6	7		8	9	10	11
12					13				14			
15				16					17			
18				19				20				
			21				22					
23	24	25				26				27	28	29
30					31				32			
33				34				35				
			36				37					
38	39	40				41				42	43	44
45						46				47		
48						49				50		
51						52				53		

- 49 Mosquito barrier
- 50 Cupid's alias
- 51 Thames town
- 52 Multipurpose truck
- 53 Compass point
- 9 Tennis champ Arthur
- 10 Transcript stats
- 11 Eternities
- 16 Dark film genre
- 20 Spy org.
- 21 Color named for a fruit
- 22 Journalist Nellie
- 23 Gist
- 24 Year in Spain
- 25 "Gee, ya think?"
- 26 Alias abbr.
- 27 Yoga pad
- 28 Jargon suffix
- 29 Aachen article
- 31 Bro or sis
- 34 '60s chic
- 35 Challenge
- 37 El Greco's birthplace
- 38 Gratis
- 39 Joan of rock
- 40 Aware of
- 41 Author Harte
- 42 To be, in Toulon
- 43 Some July babies
- 44 Endure
- 46 Wildebeest
- 47 Up-to-date

DOWN

- 1 Omelet needs
- 2 Old Italian money
- 3 Help a crook
- 4 Born abroad?
- 5 City-related
- 6 Drench
- 7 Sauce source
- 8 "The Italian

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— King Crossword —

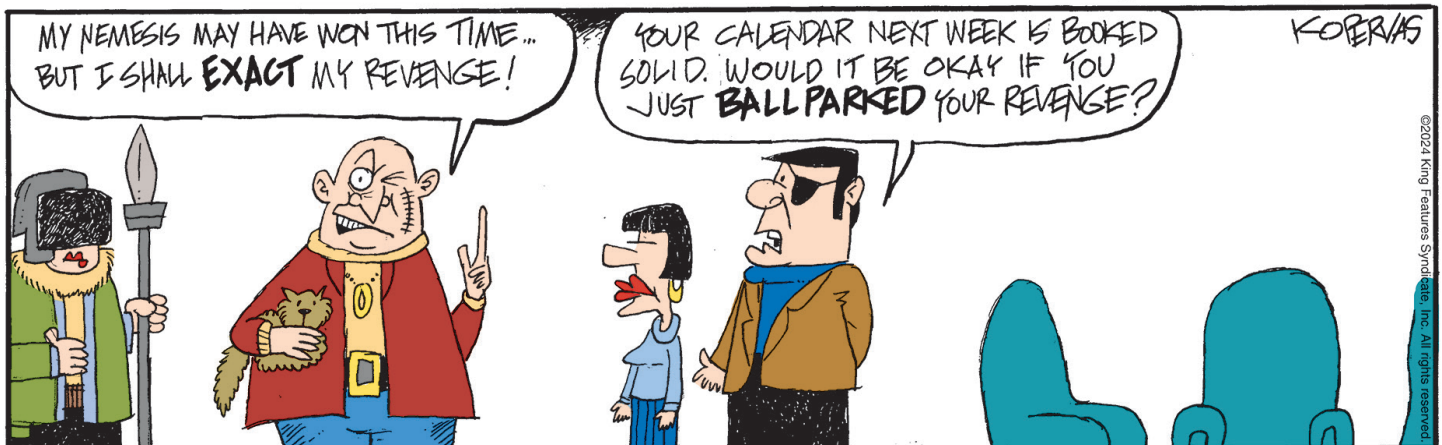
Answers

Solution time: 23 mins.

E	L	A	N		U	S	S		S	A	G	E
G	I	B	E		R	O	O		E	S	P	O
G	R	E	E	N	B	A	Y		T	H	A	N
S	E	T		O	A	K		C	H	E	S	S
			L	I	N		B	I	G			
N	A	D	I	R		A	L	A	R	M	E	D
U	N	U	M		S	K	Y		E	A	S	E
B	O	H	E	M	I	A		D	E	T	E	R
			G	O	B		C	A	N			
F	J	O	R	D		B	R	R		E	L	L
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E	T	O	N		U	T	E		W	E	S	T

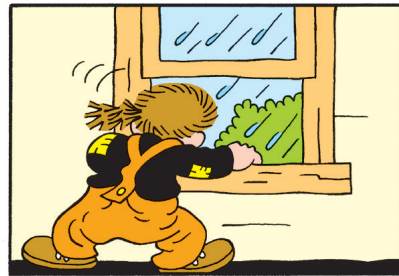
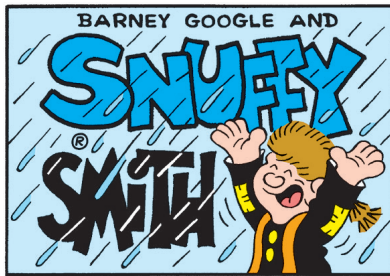
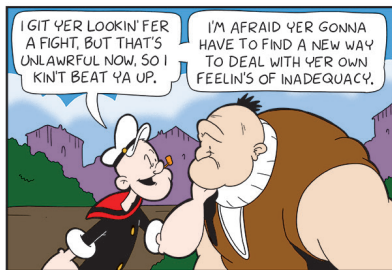
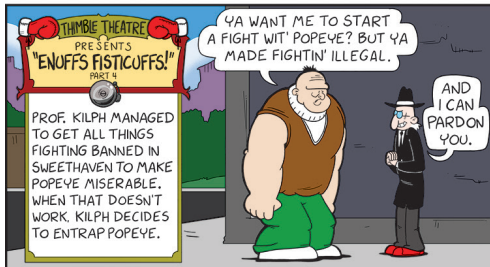
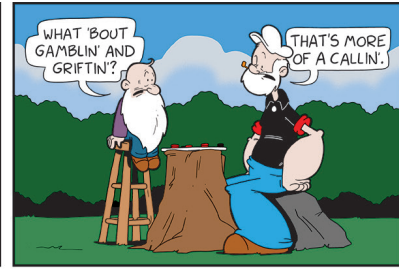
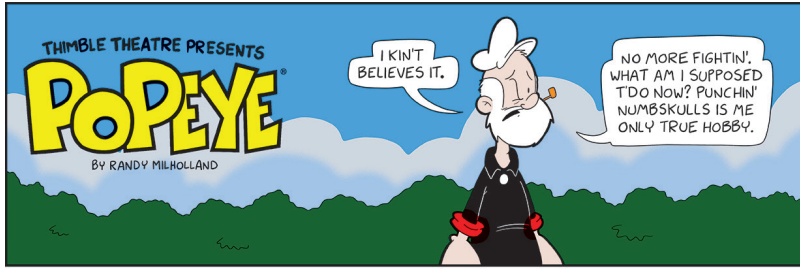
Out on a Limb

by Gary Kopervas



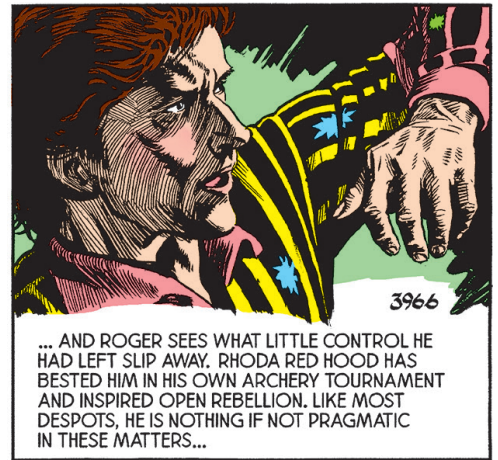
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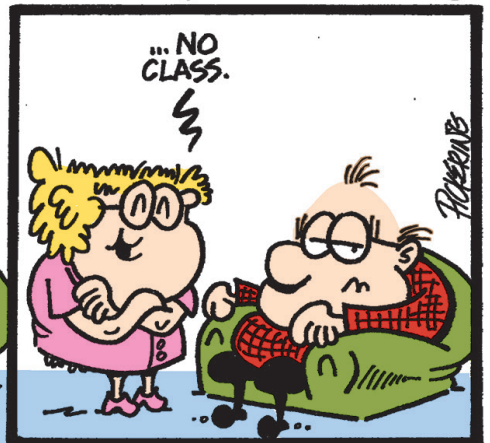
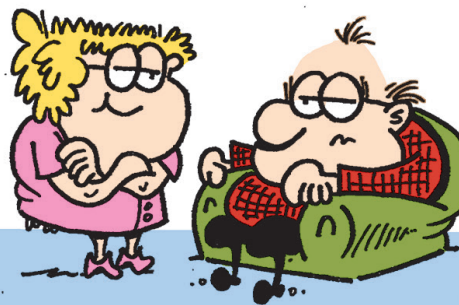
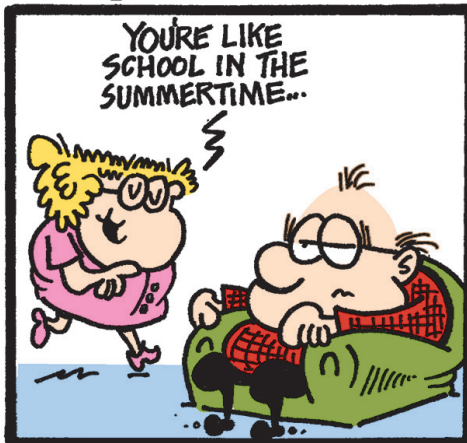
... AND CHOOSES NOT TO DIE IN A BLAZE OF RIGHTEOUS DEFIANCE. "COME, BARMUS," HE TELLS HIS ENFORCER, "GRAB TWO STOUT GUARDS AND FOLLOW ME - WE WILL SEEK AID!"

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The Spats

by Jeff Pickering



SENIOR NEWS LINE

by Matilda Charles

What Seniors Worry About

It's very helpful to have friends and acquaintances scattered across the country when I need to do another informal poll. This time my questions to them concerned what seniors worry about.

I got them started with a list of suggestions on a page, to be ranked in order, with a blank place under each one for comments, and space below for their own contributions.

And I wasn't surprised.

The number one concern was about money. Is there enough to last the rest of our life? Will grocery prices ever come down again? We're concerned about having to go back to work to keep from burning through our savings, running up medical bills, losing the house because of not being able to pay the mortgage and having the rent raised to an amount we can't pay.

Health was the second biggest concern, with loss of independence topping that list. We fear getting dementia, losing muscle strength, falling and breaking a limb, having to go into the hospital or rehab for an extended stay, catching Covid or a bad flu. This was a very long list with everyone adding comments.

Concerns about safety was surprisingly high in the rankings. We worry about crime on the streets, not being able to trust our financial advisers and that we might need to give up driving.

Other topics ranked lower, but they're concerns just the same. We worry about identity theft and not being able to recover from it if we lose money. Tied with that are concerns that we might not recognize scams. We worry about needing to ask others for help with things we used to be able to do.

But the one topic that garnered the most comments was loneliness. We fear losing all our friends when they die. We fear being the last one standing.

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1. In August 2023, the London Capitals defeated the London Mets to claim the championship in what baseball league?

2. Tim Grgurich resigned as head coach of what college basketball team after just seven games and a 2-5 record in 1994?

3. How many times was drag racer Doug Kalitta the NHRA Top Fuel season runner-up before he finally won a championship in 2023?

4. What Minnesota Vikings player set the NFL record for longest kick return touchdown with a 109-yard score on the opening kickoff vs. the Green Bay Packers in 2013?

5. What two golfers made holes-in-one in consecutive groups in the final round of the 2004 Masters?

6. Who was the first American woman to win an Olympic gold medal in boxing?

7. What Iowa Hawkeyes women's basketball star surpassed LSU's Pete Maravich as the all-time career NCAA Division I scoring leader?



by Ryan A. Berenz

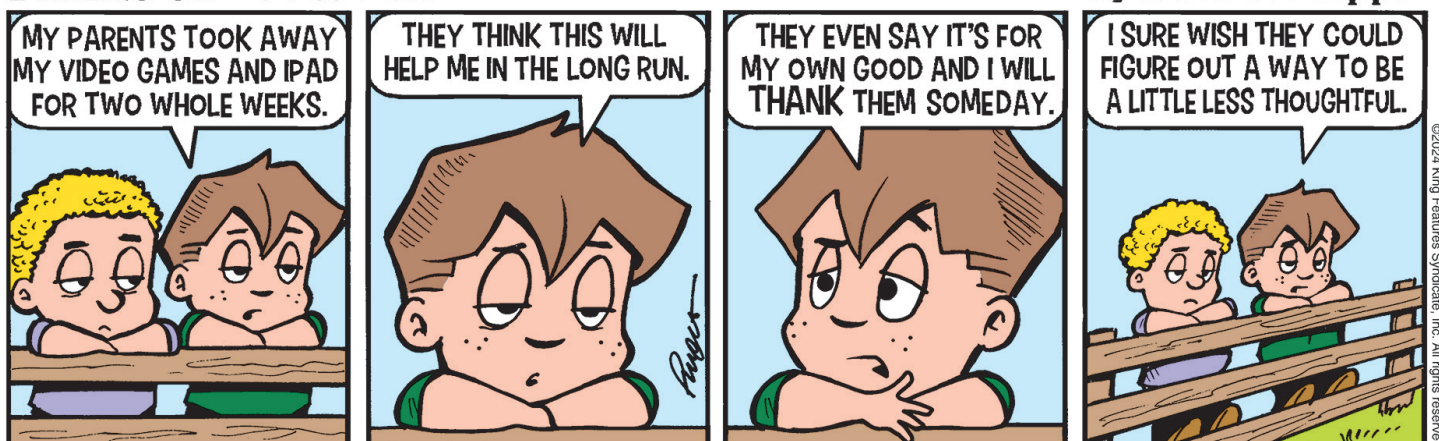
Answers

1. The British Baseball Federation's National Baseball League.
2. The UNLV Runnin' Rebels.
3. Six.
4. Cordarelle Patterson.
5. Padraig Harrington and Kirk Triplett.
6. Claressa Shields (2012).
7. Caitlin Clark.

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Amber Waves

by Dave T. Phipps





This Little Dog Has a Lot of Moxie

DEAR PAW'S CORNER: I adopted a small mutt from the local shelter and named her "Moxie." She's adorable but really energetic. She'll actually jump straight up in the air as high as my waist! She also tugs hard at the leash when we walk. How do I tame all of this energy? -- Janice F., Hyde Park, New York

DEAR JANICE: Congratulations on your new pet! Moxie sounds like a bundle of joy. But I can understand that all her energy can be tiring.

In addition to walks twice a day (or more, if you can swing it), give Moxie plenty of puppy toys to play with at home, and spend time with her on the floor just playing fetch and helping her work off more of that energy.

She may also respond very well to a consistent schedule of walks, feeding and bedtime (yes, bedtime). Build certain predictable routines around each of these events. When it's time for a walk, call Moxie and have her sit while you put on her leash. During walks, keep the leash short and work on the "heel" command. But when in a safe, open area, give Moxie more room on the leash to explore. When it's bedtime, create a routine that is the same every night -- one that is positive, with a little play time and a signal to settle down and rest (such as turning down the lights).

Now, if Moxie's energetic behavior is morphing into something more serious, like destroying furniture or being aggressive toward other dogs or humans on walks, that's a problem you'll need to address as soon as possible. Talk to Moxie's vet about ways to reduce her hyperactivity and anxiety (if those are the causes). If she isn't responding to basic behavioral training, hire a trainer to help.

Send your tips, comments or questions to ask@pawscorner.com.

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Strange BUT TRUE

By Lucie Winborne

* While death by guillotine might seem like an ancient ritual, the practice was still in use in France up until 1977 -- when the original "Star Wars" was in theaters.

* Sleeping through summer is called estivation.

* The Museum of Bad Art in Somerville, Massachusetts, is pretty much exactly what it sounds like -- a collection of really bad art! But then again, who's to judge?

* The American Psychiatric Association's DSM-5 handbook classifies caffeine withdrawal as a mental

disorder.

* Humans invented booze before the wheel.

* When swallowed by toads, bombardier beetles project hot, noxious chemicals from their anuses, which sometimes forces the predators to puke the beetle back up.

* The town of Baarle straddles the Dutch-Belgian border. In some places, the official borderline cuts through houses and cafes.

* There are approximately 200 feral cats roaming the grounds of Disneyland, where they help control the park's rodent population. All of them are spayed or neutered, and park staff provide them with both extra food and medical care.

* The second-half kickoff in Super Bowl I had to be done twice, as NBC didn't cut back from a commercial break in time to catch the first one on camera.

* In Japan, instead of a "Man in the Moon," people see a "Rabbit in the Moon."

* The Mobile Phone Throwing World Championships are held in Finland. One winner said he prepared for the event by "mainly drinking."

* Sometimes it snows on Mars, but the flakes are made out of carbon dioxide, not water.

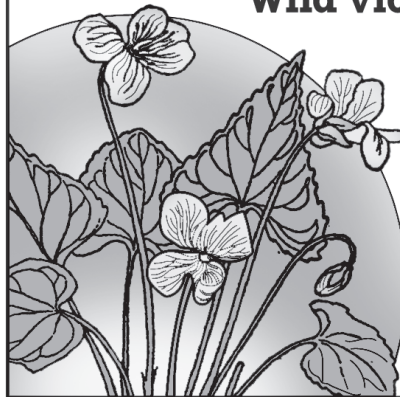
* After the band OutKast sang "Shake it like a Polaroid picture," Polaroid released a statement warning that "shaking or waving can actually damage the image."

Thought for the Day: "The stupid neither forgive nor forget; the naive forgive and forget; the wise forgive but do not forget." -- Thomas Szasz

Szasz

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The Garden Bug



Wild violets

If you choose to propagate wild violet plants, divide an established "clump" in spring or fall by gently separating the rooted stems from each other within the group, then replant them separately. Also, their seeds can be collected and sown in the fall, if you desire spring blooms.

Other than watering following planting, and occasional watering throughout the growing season, wild violets require very little care. Their foliage is occasionally affected by spider mites in dry weather.

Brenda Weaver

Source: gardeningknowhow.com

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by Freddy Groves

VA by the Numbers

The Department of Veterans Affairs has been going all out to provide expanded access to care to veterans. They're calling it Access Sprints, and it means they're scheduling more appointments at night and on weekends, as well as scheduling more veterans into their daily schedule.

The effort seems to be showing progress. Just this year so far the VA has had 25,000 more new patients than they did during the same period last year. Appointments increased by 11%.

Per the stats, 12% fewer new patients had to wait over 20 to 28 days to get an appointment, and 14% fewer new patients are having to wait to see community providers because of wait time eligibility.

This is on top of the care they provided in 2023 in over 116 million appointments.

Other 2023 stats are equally impressive. The crisis line took over 1 millions calls, over 33,000 veterans received emergency care in suicide crises and 5.5 million dental procedures were completed for over 560,000 patients.

Nearly 5 million veterans were screened for toxin exposure, an important step in monitoring their health. (As of March 5, 2024, veterans exposed to toxins and meeting other requirements have become eligible for VA health care, even before enrolling for other VA benefits. This means those who were in the Vietnam War, Gulf War, Iraq, Afghanistan, the Global War on Terror or any other combat zone since Sept. 11. Any who weren't deployed but who trained and were exposed here in the U.S. are included in eligibility.)

Even the non-medical efforts saw success: Ten million veterans have individual pages in the online digital Veterans Legacy Memorial website, with over 5 million of those being created in the last year, and 5.6 million policyholders got life insurance coverage.

The VA was able to hire over 61,000 staffers to provide care to the increased number of veterans seeking health care, bringing the total to over 400,000.

Not a bad year for the VA ... and veterans.

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Wishing Well®



8	6	8	7	2	4	3	8	6	8	2	5	3
F	S	I	A	K	H	Y	D	U	E	N	A	O
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O	B	Y	C	E	N	C	U	I	G	L	N	O
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L	O	H	R	U	E	A	G	R	O	G	V	R
3	7	8	5	4	5	7	3	6	3	5	3	6
I	E	E	I	E	N	V	S	S	H	N	E	E
5	6	2	7	5	7	2	6	7	2	3	2	5
I	B	S	E	N	N	E	Y	T	L	D	F	G

HERE IS A PLEASANT LITTLE GAME that will give you a message every day. It's a numerical puzzle designed to spell out your fortune. Count the letters in your first name. If the number of letters is 6 or more, subtract 4. If the number is less than 6, add 3. The result is your key number. Start at the upper left-hand corner and check one of your key numbers, left to right. Then read the message the letters under the checked figures give you.

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1. GEOGRAPHY: The island of Ibiza belongs with which European country?
2. ANIMAL KINGDOM: What is a group of flamingos called?
3. MOVIES: What is the name of the island terrorized by a shark in "Jaws"?
4. U.S. STATES: Which state capital has the highest elevation in the United States?
5. ANATOMY: Where is the corpus collosum located?
6. LITERATURE: Who wrote the children's book "Where the Wild Things Are"?
7. TELEVISION: Which 1970s TV show had a spinoff hit with "Laverne & Shirley"?
8. MATH: How many sides does a dodecagon have?
9. ASTRONOMY: Which one of the planets in our solar system has the Great Red Spot?
10. U.S. PRESIDENTS: Which president ended the military draft?

Answers

1. Spain.
2. A flamboyance.
3. Amity Island.
4. Santa Fe, New Mexico.
5. In the brain. It connects the two hemispheres of the brain.
6. Maurice Sendak.
7. "Happy Days."
8. 12.
9. Jupiter.
10. Richard Nixon.

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South Dakota Governor

Kristi Noem



South Dakota: *Under God, the People Rule*

Banish the Cartels

There is an invasion happening at our Southern Border. It is a warzone. People are dying every day because of the crime, drugs, and human trafficking flowing into our country. President Trump is right – we need to secure our borders and keep Americans safe.

When you have a warzone, you send soldiers – and that’s exactly what South Dakota has done time and time again. I was the first governor in the nation to send National Guard soldiers to defend our border in 2021. This week, the South Dakota National Guard was deployed to our Southern Border for the fifth time. Their mission is critical.

South Dakota’s National Guard soldiers are doing all they can to keep our nation secure. They will be working with Texas to build the wall. They will stop dangerous criminals and terrorists from being able to enter into America where the wall is built. But illegal border crossings will still take place where the wall is not being constructed because President Biden refuses to secure the border.

While the front lines of this battle started along the Southern Border, all 50 states now have a common enemy – the Mexican drug cartels. They are waging a war against our nation. And it is the fault of President Joe Biden. Unfortunately, we see the effects of the open border every day. The citizens of South Dakota are less safe because of it. We especially see the impact on our tribal reservations. Mexican drug cartel presence in Indian country is a problem across the nation.

I have called on all our tribal leaders to banish the cartels from tribal lands.

The cartels instigate drug addiction, murder, rape, human trafficking, and so much more in tribal communities across the nation, including right here in South Dakota. This suffering is only made worse by the failures of the Biden Administration and the severe lack of funding for law enforcement on tribal lands.

As recent media reports say, “In many ways, Indian reservations make for ideal places for a drug operation to set up shop. The communities suffer from high rates of drug addiction and low numbers of law enforcement.”

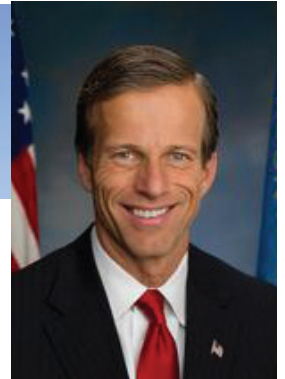
The federal government has repeatedly failed to serve our Native American tribes. These communities are suffering because the Biden Administration continues to turn a blind eye. This administration is underfunding tribal law enforcement, preventing the tribes from adequately responding to public safety issues.

This is why I am also pushing for an audit of federal funds going to South Dakota’s Native American tribes. This is necessary to understand the funding level that is needed to keep these communities safe. For years, the level of actual funding drastically underestimates the true breadth of the challenges of Indian Country. And it has only been made worse by the failed border policies of the Biden Administration and the presence of drug cartel operations on South Dakota tribal reservations.

I continue to request Law Enforcement Agreements between the State of South Dakota and the state’s Native American tribes. Although we might not always agree on every issue, we can surely agree on the need for law and order is imperative. We must work together to combat illegal activities in our most vulnerable and rural areas.

I will continue to speak the truth and fight to protect the lives of Native Americans in South Dakota – because that’s what they deserve.

John Thune
U.S. SENATOR - SOUTH DAKOTA



Pump the Brakes on Biden's EV Mandate

The Biden administration's pursuit of its Green New Deal agenda jeopardizes Americans' access to secure, reliable, and affordable energy. Energy costs have increased 35 percent under President Biden. The electric grid is struggling to keep up with demand. And new taxes and regulations are making life difficult for conventional energy producers. Nevertheless, the Biden administration continues to push its radical environmental agenda on the American people.

In recent weeks, the Biden administration finalized restrictive new regulations on cars and trucks, creating a de facto mandate for the majority of new car sales to be electric vehicles (EVs) by 2032. There are a number of issues with this overreaching regulation, particularly that it will be incredibly costly for most Americans. The average cost of an EV is \$52,000, which would be a significant expense for most families at any time, but especially now when compounded by the effects of inflation and higher interest rates.

Most Americans are also not convinced that an EV is right for them. South Dakotans expect a lot from their vehicles. We drive our cars and trucks long distances, put them to work on farms and ranches, and they face extremely cold temperatures. We also keep them for more than 14 years on average. Unsurprisingly, South Dakotans have not been eager to trade in their car or truck for an electric model. And with gas stations still vastly outnumbering charging stations in our state, as they do in the rest of the country, the eight-year timeline the president envisions is unrealistic at best.

EVs would also place a heavy burden on our electric grid, which is nowhere near capable of supporting such a significant increase in demand. In fact, our nation's energy grid is already being stretched by increased demand and the move away from conventional energy sources. We are rapidly approaching a situation in which we simply won't have the ability to keep up with current electricity demand, and adding millions of electric vehicles on top of that could lead to widespread blackouts and brownouts, to say nothing of higher electricity prices.

In addition to Americans' daily drivers, the Biden administration is also imposing new regulations on heavy-duty trucks, like those used in commercial trucking, to push truckers to switch to electric versions of their vehicles. By one estimate, the infrastructure and electricity costs of complying with the regulation could cost almost \$1 trillion, which doesn't include the cost of the new trucks themselves.

The future the Biden administration envisions is unrealistic, and forcing it on the American economy and households through heavy-handed regulations is just wrong. I have joined my Senate Republican colleagues in pushing legislation that would roll back these onerous and costly mandates, and we will see to it that the Senate takes an up-or-down vote on stopping these misguided regulations.

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CONGRESSMAN
DUSTY JOHNSON
Representing **SOUTH DAKOTA** at large



Great Faces, Great Places

BIG Update

Applications for my U.S. Service Academy nomination consideration opened this week for the Class of 2029. It's one of the privileges of my job to meet and nominate brilliant young individuals to attend one of the prestigious academies.

Attending a Service Academy equips and trains the next generation of officers in our Armed Forces, focusing on leadership, both the physical and mental aspects of military training, and preparing students for a career as an officer.

You can find more information on my website at <https://dustyjohnson.house.gov/services/service-academy-nominations> and by watching the video below from current academy students I previously nominated.

BIG News

In March, the National Guard temporarily suspended its reenlistment bonuses for servicemembers. This isn't the first time this has happened. In October 2023, more than 9,000 soldiers saw delays in receiving their enlistment bonus—some from up to five years ago. This same type of payment suspension happened again in 2021.

This week, I asked the National Guard Bureau why the availability of their incentive programs has been unreliable. Failing to fulfill these programs could discourage our military men and women from reenlisting or civilians from joining. We need to ensure a robust military, but unfortunately, the Armed Services significantly missed recruiting goals in 2023 by more than 40,000 people. Now, we have the smallest active-duty force since 1940.

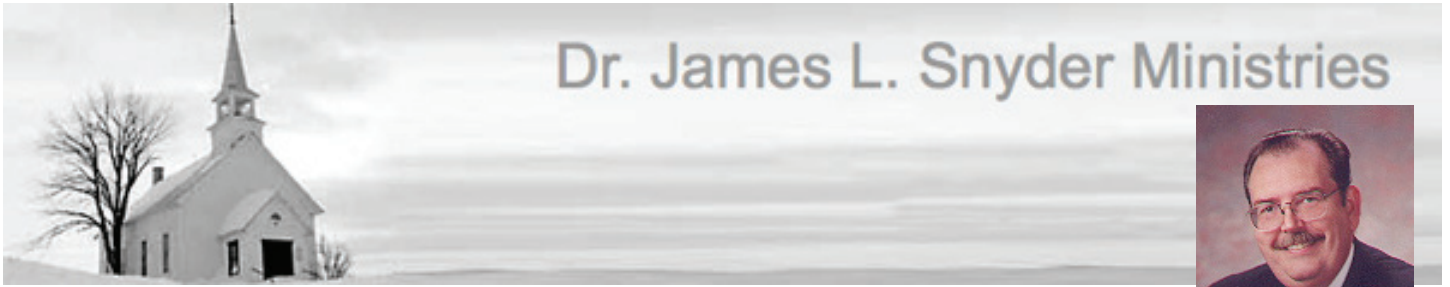
Waiting years to receive an enlistment bonus is unacceptable. These men and women are sacrificing to serve our country and keep us safe—we must uphold our commitment to them.

BIG Idea

This week, I stopped by Big Frig in North Sioux City to learn about their business. They make a variety of coolers, drinkware, and cattle coolers to help their customers get the job done. I saw how they make and design their products that withstand the ranching conditions of the Midwest. A big part of my job is meeting with business owners to see how I can help—by navigating federal bureaucracies or introducing policies to address supply chain disruptions, high prices, immigration, and more—to ensure our businesses, economy, and communities can thrive.

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It Was A Fool's Game And I Lost



When it comes to games, I am not a good player. I lose more times than I win, and I can't remember the last time I won.

My paternal grandfather's favorite holiday of the year was April Fools' Day. He often would spend the whole year developing a prank for family and friends.

He had a construction company, and I'm not sure how many employees he had, but every one of them was the subject of some prank during their time with him.

Some pranks were so bad I can't mention them today.

Through the years, I have tried unsuccessfully to prank The Gracious Mistress of the Parsonage. One of these days, cross my fingers, I will come up with a prank that works.

A week before April Fools' Day, The Gracious Mistress of the Parsonage asked me a rather silly question. "When was the last time you had an Apple Fritter?"

I was very suspicious of this question because I'm not allowed to bring them into our house, at least if she knows about it.

I was thinking that when she asked me this question, she was suspicious that I had been eating an Apple Fritter behind her back.

Being old has a great deal of benefits to it so I told her, "Oh, my dear. I can't remember eating an Apple Fritter lately."

Looking at me rather strangely and with some air of disbelief, she said, "I was just thinking that maybe this April Fools' Day would be a good time for you to have an Apple Fritter."

I smiled at her, thinking she was trying to set me up for something.

"Well, it would be very nice."

With a twinkle in her eye that I couldn't explain, she said, "How would you feel if I got you an Apple Fritter for April Fools' Day?"

She has tricked me so many times that I'm not quite sure if this was a trick on her part or if she was having some "buyer's remorse" about not allowing me to eat an Apple Fritter in the house.

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With a pleasant smile, I replied, "I would feel very good about an Apple Fritter on April Fools' Day."

At the time, I did not know she was setting me up. I didn't think she could do that to me and I would not notice it. After all, I'm the one who tries to prank her every chance I get.

With a smile like I've never seen before, she replied, "Maybe I'll do that for you for April Fools' Day." With a laugh, she turned around and walked away.

I didn't know if I should be happy or suspicious at the time.

I went on with my week as normal and was busy with a few projects. I forgot about the Apple Fritter because I assumed she was just pranking me. I did not expect an Apple Fritter on April Fools' Day. I did, however, think about going out and getting one for myself behind her back.

It was a busy week because we were preparing for Easter Sunday. Usually, our family gets together for dinner on Easter, so there was a lot of work in preparation for the family gathering.

During dinner, The Gracious Mistress of the Parsonage said something rather strange. I pretended not to hear, but she said something to our oldest daughter, "What do you think about having an Apple Fritter on April Fools' Day?"

I had no idea why she asked that question. She was pretending to say it behind my back but did it in such a way that I could hear it without knowing that she knew I was listening.

Like a good husband, I pretended not to hear and just looked the other way.

Several times during our family get-together, she mentioned the word "Apple Fritter." There was no substance to what she was talking about; she just mentioned the word. I knew there was no chance of her getting me an Apple Fritter for April Fools' Day. I knew she was trying to play with my expectations.

All that day I couldn't help but think of Apple Fritters and how much I would really like one but I knew it was a prank, so I had no expectations.

The more I thought about it, the more I began to think that maybe, just maybe, she wanted me not to believe she was going to give me an Apple Fritter and then, at the last moment, surprise me and give me an Apple Fritter.

That breakfast on April Fools' Day, she brought me a little box, and on the top of the box, it said, "This is your Apple Fritter for April Fools' Day."

I must say I was a little surprised when she handed me that little box. I smiled, opened the lid, and saw written at the bottom of the box was, "April Fool."

Sometimes what you do to others comes back on you. I was reading my bible and came across this verse. "And as ye would that men should do to you, do ye also to them likewise" (Luke 6:31).

That got me thinking about some of my actions. Would I want others to do to me what I sometimes do to them? Maybe I should begin doing good to people and see how that works. I think I'll start with the Gracious Mistress of the Parsonage.

EARTHTALK ™

Dear EarthTalk: What is so-called “embodied carbon” and what percent of our greenhouse gas emissions does it make up? And more important, how can we reduce it?
– Mike O., Durham, NC

As the process of reducing carbon dioxide (CO₂) emissions continues to grow in importance, the building operations industry has been working hard on limiting theirs. The problem is that this industry typically targets operational carbon rather than embodied carbon. Operational carbon is the sum of the carbon produced over the lifetime of a building and includes things like lighting, heating, ventilation and general power usage throughout the building. On the other hand, embodied carbon is all of the emissions that are created during the process of constructing a building. Embodied carbon is associated with the harvesting, manufacturing, transportation, installation, maintenance and disposal of building materials.

Buildings in general tend to account for at least 39 percent of annual global carbon emissions. At least a quarter of these emissions are the result of embodied carbon. Cement alone is responsible for around eight percent of the world’s CO₂ emissions. The production of iron and steel emits roughly the same number of emissions. These carbon-intensive materials are large contributors of embodied carbon.

There are some measures that have already been taken in efforts to reduce embodied carbon. The Inflation Reduction Act, which was passed by Congress in 2022, includes six sections that address the embodied carbon of construction materials. For example, section 60112 gave \$250 million to the EPA to develop a program to help support enhanced standardization, measurement, reporting and verification of embodied carbon of construction materials and products. Overall, these sections of the Inflation Reduction Act gave money to various government organizations to help transition to lower carbon materials.

To reduce embodied carbon, the building industry will have to make operational changes. One key way to do that is to design buildings in a way that minimizes the number of materials needed. Companies can also replace carbon-intensive materials like concrete and steel with greener options like sustainably grown wood. Repurposing existing buildings instead of building new ones can also reduce embodied carbon.

Another way to limit embodied carbon is to use greener construction equipment. The traditional diesel-powered equipment so commonly used in construction accounts for roughly three percent of embodied carbon in new construction projects. There are some equipment manufacturers that are developing zero-emission construction equipment. Liebherr, the German-Swiss equipment manufacturer, has developed an electric crane that releases no emissions and still performs on par with the traditional diesel equipment.

Limiting operational carbon is important, but it’s also important to remember all of the carbon that comes from the processes prior to buildings being operational. The processes behind the scenes still emit CO₂. Limiting embodied carbon needs to be prioritized on par with the emissions that come from typical building operations.



Building with sustainably grown wood reduces embodied carbon significantly as compared to using concrete and steel. Credit: Pexels.com.



SOUTH DAKOTA SEARCHLIGHT

<https://southdakotasearchlight.com>

Q&A: Johnson calls criticism of his forestry hearing 'absurd'

Congressman responds to commentary, shares views on Black Hills logging debate

BY: SETH TUPPER - APRIL 6, 2024 11:30 AM

Dusty Johnson resents the implication that he's looking out for the timber industry at the expense of the Black Hills National Forest.

"The idea that anyone in government wants to allow the timber industry to cut what they want to cut is absurd," Johnson told South Dakota Searchlight. "I think it does a tremendous disrespect to this process."

Johnson, a Republican who is South Dakota's lone U.S. representative, disliked a recent commentary-written by retired U.S. Forest Service employee Dave Mertz and published by Searchlight. Mertz wrote the commentary in response to Johnson's March 2 forestry roundtable discussion in Spearfish.

"Repeatedly," Mertz wrote, "panelists stated what the timber industry needs. Never was there any concern for what level of timber harvesting the forest needs."

Timber companies bid for the right to purchase and harvest timber in areas designated by the Forest Service. Debates about logging in the Black Hills have intensified since 2020, after Forest Service researchers published a draft "General Technical Report," which came to be known as the "GTR."

The researchers said wildfires and a mountain pine beetle epidemic drastically reduced the number of trees suitable for logging. They said the forest had only half the trees needed to sustain the level of timber sales allowed in the forest plan.

That level is 181,000 "CCF," with 1 CCF equaling 100 cubic feet of timber. Annual harvests of 70,000 to 115,000 CCF would be more sustainable, the researchers said.

Debates about the research ensued, resulting in official challenges and some clarifying responses from a review panel. Meanwhile, timber sales have declined. A sawmill in Hill City closed in 2021, and timber industry officials say more closures could happen.

Read on for more of Searchlight's interview with Johnson about forestry issues, with questions and answers edited for length and clarity.

How did you get your education on forestry issues?

My real education came as chief of staff to then-Governor Dennis Daugaard during the mountain pine needle epidemic, when I spent a lot of time focusing on state efforts. We were lucky we had a timber industry in place then that was able to step up.

It is amazing: You can look at a side-by-side photo of Custer State Park, properly managed, next to Black Elk Wilderness Area, managed by the federal government, and you can see the terrible carnage that the pine beetle exacted on Black Elk. It is dead. Millions of trees, dead, for miles.

And right next to it, Custer State Park, which had been properly thinned and was not an attractive target for the pine beetle, survived.

If the state is better at managing the forest than the federal government, why did the last major wildfire in the Black Hills — the Legion Lake Fire, which burned 84 square miles — start in Custer State Park?

Well, lightning strikes are a little random.

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Lightning didn't start the fire. Wind blew a tree onto a power line in the park.

But my point is that the causes of forest fires are pretty random, right? This is like saying, "Why does the guy who goes to the gym every day get a heart attack and die, but the guy who doesn't, didn't?" You can properly manage an area and still have forest fires. There are no guarantees.

But I don't want to bicker about a straw man. If you can find an expert in South Dakota that tells you that treating at a sustainable level increases the risk of forest fire, then I'll give you a comment. But the state clearly manages well in Custer State Park. That lowers the risk of forest fire, but it doesn't lower it to zero.

How do you respond to Dave Mertz's criticisms of your forestry roundtable?

He seemed to take issue with the fact that we had members of Congress from California and Georgia there. Let's be clear: Doug LaMalfa is the chair of the Forestry Subcommittee. This is literally the U.S. House's most powerful and influential member related to how we manage our national forests. So I think if we're going to talk about forest policy, it absolutely makes sense to have those kinds of leaders. Austin Scott is the vice chair of the full Ag Committee.

Mr. Mertz also suggested that we only focused on what numbers were needed to save industry, as opposed to what numbers were needed to save the forest. He's absolutely wrong about that.

And then when I tried to dive into the math about what the forest can provide, Dave sort of contradicted himself. On one hand, he said we didn't talk about what the forest inventory is; then, when I started to get into the math of forest inventory, he criticized the fact that we got into a discussion of forest inventory in a way that he thought was too cursory. But that's how you start conversations, right? You start big and then you move to more detailed analysis as you dive in.

This debate goes back to the findings in the "GTR." It seems to me you either believe that research or you don't. Do you believe it?

I don't think it's quite that cut and dried, and I think the Forest Service feels the same way. Remember, at the roundtable, we had the regional forester there. He never alleged there's not enough inventory. He talked at some point about, "Well, if we had 20 million dollars more, we could go out and make more of this inventory available."

Wasn't he contradicting his own experts' research, then?

The GTR never said that you can't do treatment in the Black Hills. The GTR is ultimately about what's the appropriate level. And I think more to the point, if the Forest Service doesn't think 120,000 CCF is doable or healthy, why do they continue to have their annual harvest targets be 120,000?

Whatever their targets are, they're selling less timber. Is it possible the Forest Service leaders don't believe their own targets are attainable?

I think the Forest Service clearly must disagree that the research is cut and dried, because they continue to say one thing publicly and then they don't act in that way. I think that's a pretty big problem. I think in our form of government when you've got people who promise to do something and then don't deliver, that's noteworthy.

But I don't want to turn this into bashing the Forest Service. They have a lot of incredibly dedicated professionals, and there were a lot of very kind things said about the Forest Service at the roundtable about their willingness to go above and beyond in some ways.

Mertz and some other experts say the reason timber sales are down is because the trees just aren't there. How do you respond?

The data does not support that. The total inventory is only off 20% from the all-time peak, from the levels that caused catastrophic wildfires and the mountain pine beetle epidemic.

And so I think part of the question is, what do you want to manage to? Do you want to manage to 20%

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off the all-time peak, or do you want to manage to a different number? And Dave can say, "Oh, it's just not out there." That's not what the GTR says. The GTR doesn't say that the annual harvest target should be zero or 5,000 or 20,000 CCF.

But it says the harvest should be reduced.

I'm not saying it's got to be 120,000 CCF. The only reason I get focused on 120,000 is that is what the Forest Service says their target is, year in and year out.

We want to determine what the healthy harvest target is. It seems as though the broad cross-section of experts indicate that there is a lot of timber in the Black Hills.

People might disagree whether it's 70,000, 100,000 or 120,000 CCF, but certainly there are millions of cubic board feet that should be treated on an annual basis, and everyone agrees with that. And so then the broader question is, why aren't we coming close to even those reduced targets?

So what's the answer? If it's not for a lack of trees, why isn't the Forest Service doing more timber sales?

That's really the whole point of the field hearing, which is what roadblocks are there that either Congress or the Forest Service can remove, or are there additional tools we can provide so that we can get to those numbers?

What we do know is that once you lose the infrastructure, it's gone forever. We can talk about the risk on one side of the ledger, but we don't want to assume there's not any risk on the other side of the ledger. And that is if the Spearfish sawmill closes, we will have the lowest level of timber harvest infrastructure in modern history in the Black Hills, and we will pay a long-term price. The forest will pay a long-term price for that.

You mentioned getting rid of roadblocks. What are the roadblocks?

The Forest Service talked a little bit about money. That was hard for Representatives LaMalfa and Scott and I to understand, given that they also admitted they have more money than they've ever had.

They did mention openings. They have about 75 open positions in the Black Hills National Forest. We talked about what can be done to streamline that bureaucracy. It takes more than six months to go from an open position to a field spot. That is clearly a bureaucracy problem.

I also think there is a sense that much of this inventory is located in areas that have not been traditionally harvested, and so we probably need a more innovative approach to figure out how to get there, to get in there and make sure that it's safely harvested.

Are you talking about areas that are particularly rugged, steep or remote?

Yes, slope is an issue, and technology has come a long way. We have seen in other national forests that there are areas that are able to be safely harvested that were not safely harvested 20 and 50 years ago.

It does require a different way of doing things, and new technology always brings disruption and the need to learn on the job. And I think if we did not have a timber industry on the verge of collapse, then we could probably take the time for the Forest Service to just learn at a natural and organic pace. But I do think we're in a challenging spot, and so I think higher than normal urgency is called for.

Why is logging necessary for a healthy forest?

We know that the mountain pine beetle likes dense stands. We know that fire likes dense stands. That provides the kind of fuel load that fire needs to rage dangerously and quickly through a forest. So if you can thin the forest, you drastically reduce both fire damage and disease damage.

We see this in nature all the time. When a particular species gets overpopulated in an area, nature's reaction to that is to have a disease go level a devastating cost on that overpopulated inventory.

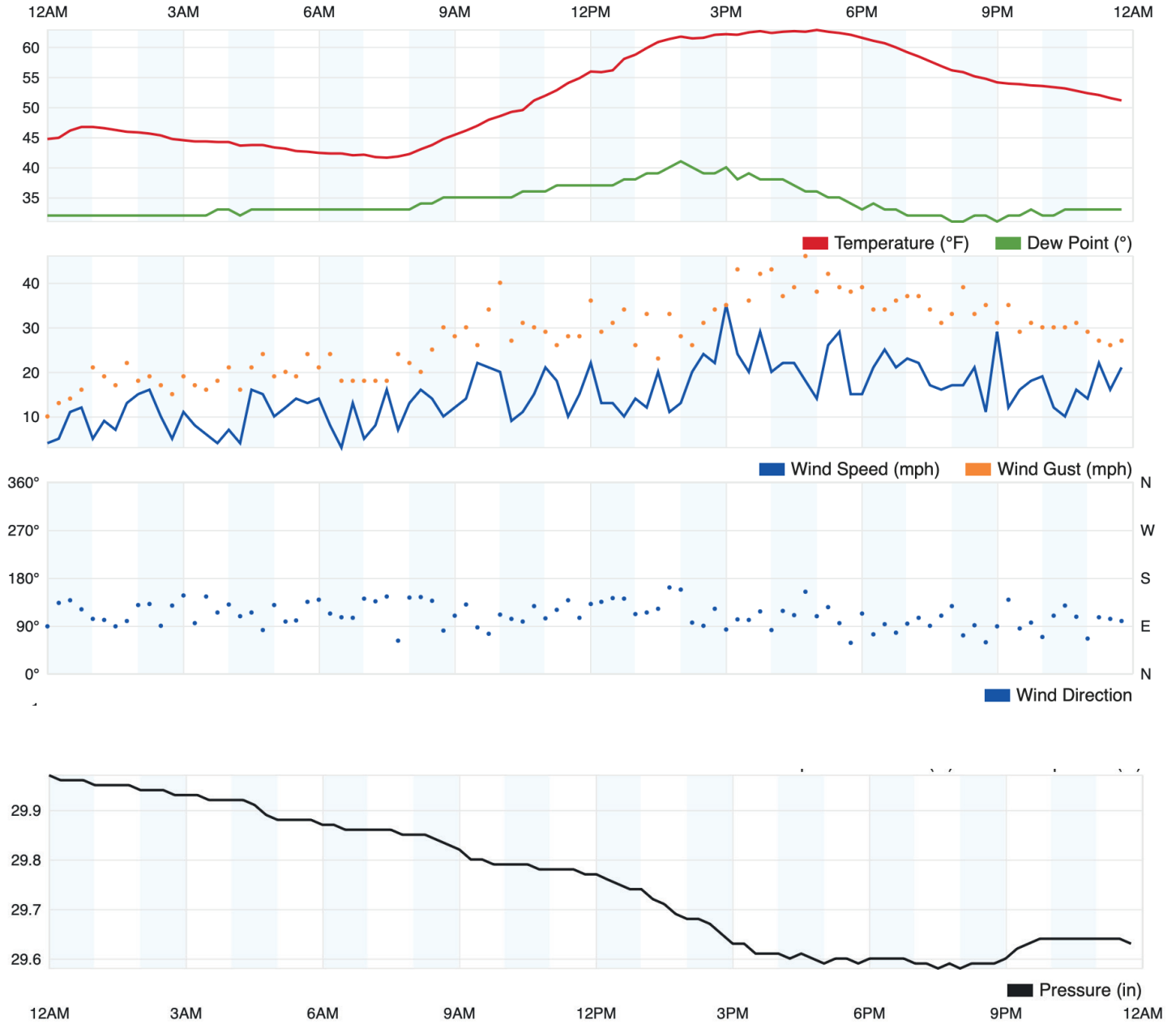
We've got tools at our disposal to be able to avoid that in the forest, which is why the overwhelming consensus of stakeholders is that we want to go in and manage to a sustainable level in the Black Hills, because that's better for everybody.

Seth is editor-in-chief of South Dakota Searchlight. He was previously a supervising senior producer for South Dakota Public Broadcasting and a newspaper journalist in Rapid City and Mitchell.

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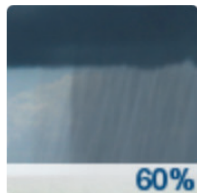
Yesterday's Groton Weather Graphs



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Sunday



Showers Likely and Patchy Fog

High: 46 °F

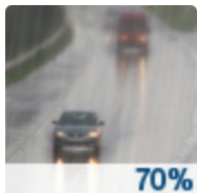
Sunday Night



Rain Likely and Patchy Fog then Rain/Snow Likely

Low: 34 °F

Monday



Rain Likely

High: 47 °F

Monday Night



Slight Chance Rain

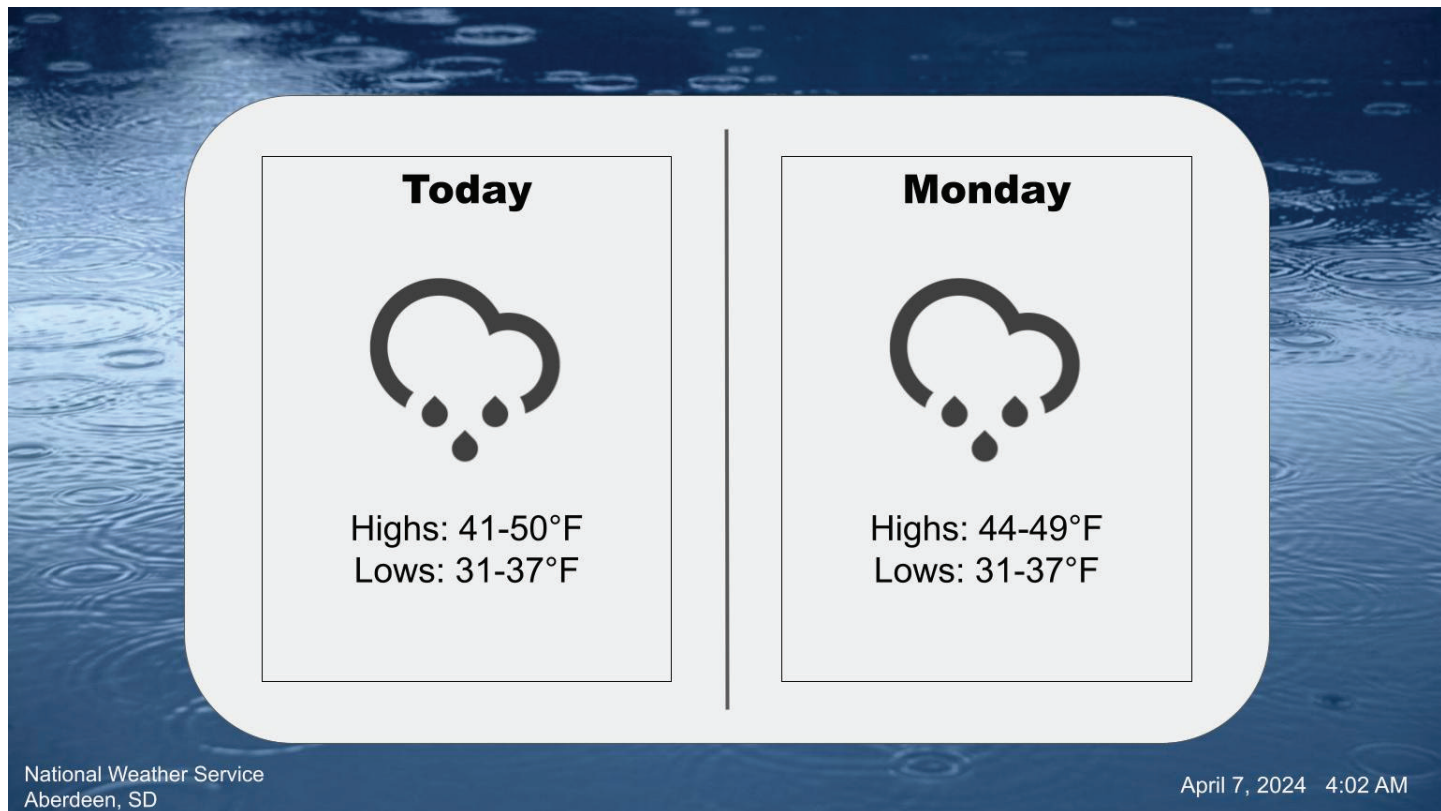
Low: 33 °F



Tuesday



Mostly Sunny

High: 61 °F



Today	Monday
	
Highs: 41-50°F Lows: 31-37°F	Highs: 44-49°F Lows: 31-37°F

National Weather Service
Aberdeen, SD

April 7, 2024 4:02 AM

Rain will be the story for the next couple days. Expect clouds to continue. Rainfall amounts are expected to exceed a quarter of an inch across the region. Winds will diminish through the day.

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Yesterday's Groton Weather

High Temp: 63 °F at 4:35 PM

Low Temp: 42 °F at 7:30 AM

Wind: 46 mph at 4:39 PM

Precip: : 0.00

Day length: 13 hours, 11 minutes

Today's Info

Record High: 90 in 1895

Record Low: 2 in 2018

Average High: 54

Average Low: 28

Average Precip in April.: 0.31

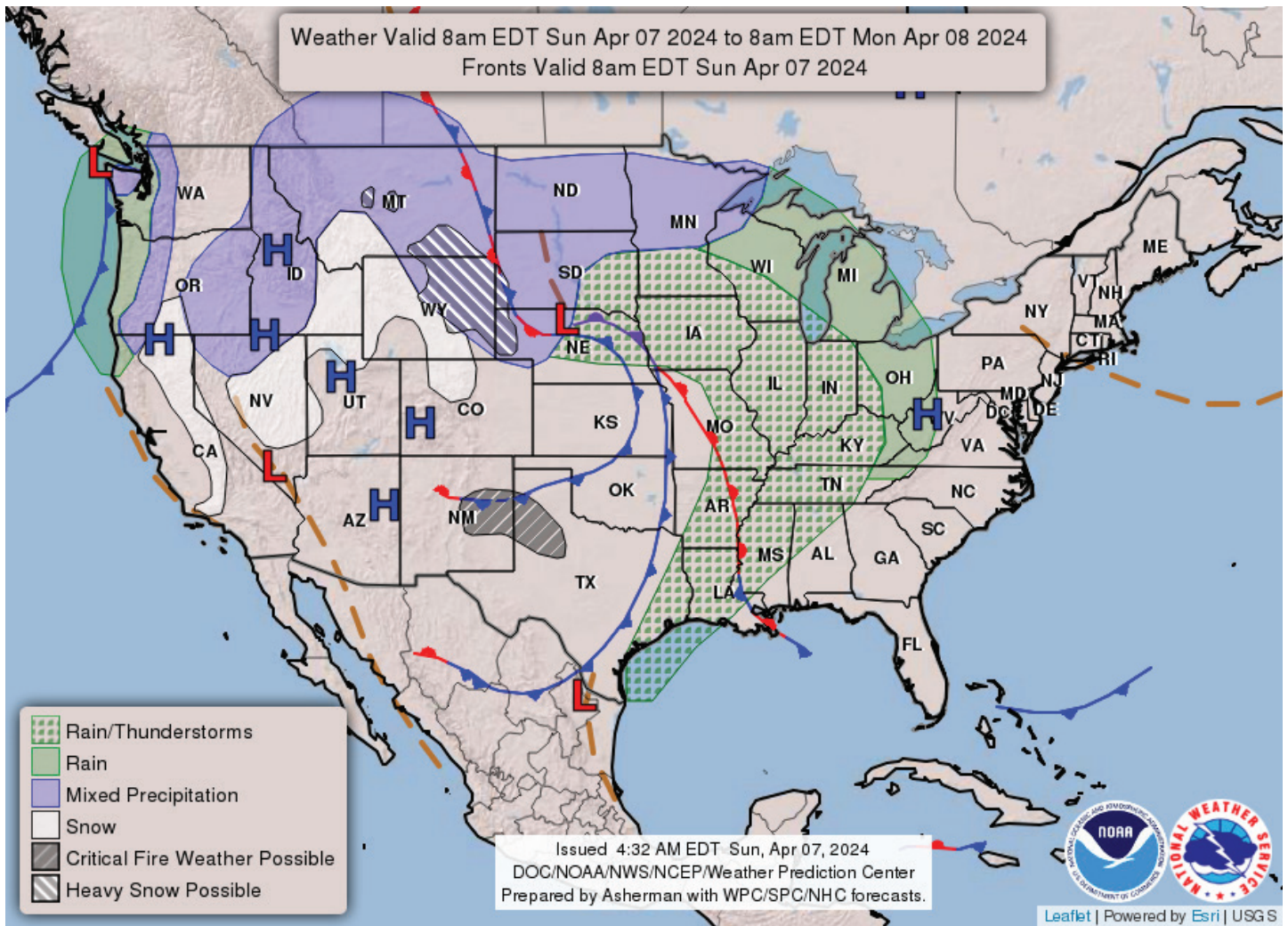
Precip to date in April: 0.00

Average Precip to date: 2.37

Precip Year to Date: 0.85

Sunset Tonight: 8:10:17 pm

Sunrise Tomorrow: 6:56:29 am



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Today in Weather History

April 7, 2001: Ten inches to two feet of snow fell in central South Dakota in a five-day period, beginning April 8th. Many roads became impassable. Several businesses, government offices, and schools closed on the 11th. Twenty-four inches fell at Ree Heights and Gettysburg, 20.0 inches at Faulkton, 18.0 inches at Kennebec, 16.0 inches at Pierre, and 10.0 inches at Doland.

1857 - A late season freeze brought snow to every state in the Union. Even as far south as Houston TX the mercury plunged to 21 degrees. (David Ludlum)

1926: Lightning started a disastrous oil fire at San Luis Obispo, California, which lasted for five days, spread over 900 acres, and burned over six million barrels of oil. Flames reached 1000 feet, and the temperature of the fire was estimated at 2,500 degrees. The fire spawned thousands of whirlwinds with hundreds the size of small tornadoes. One vortex traveled one mile to the east-northeast of the blaze, destroying a small farmhouse and killing two people. Damage totaled \$15 million.

1929 - Record heat prevailed across New England. Hartford CT reported an afternoon high of 90 degrees. (David Ludlum)

1935 - Amarillo, TX, reported dust obscuring visibility for twenty hours. Blowing dust was reported twenty-seven of thirty days in the month. On several days the visibility was reduced to near zero by the dust. (The Weather Channel)

1948: Six tornadoes ripped through Northern Illinois and Indiana; mainly across the southern and eastern suburbs of Chicago. The hardest hit was from a tornado that moved east from near Manteno, IL to near Hebron, Indiana. This storm left four people dead; three in Grant Park, IL and one near Hebron, IN with 67 injuries and over a million dollars damage. Other strong tornadoes in the area moved from near Coal City, IL to Braidwood, IL and from Calumet City, IL into Indiana. Further south, two strong tornadoes occurred across the northern parts of Champaign and Vermilion Counties in Illinois.

1980 - Severe thunderstorms spawned tornadoes which ripped through central Arkansas. The severe thunderstorms also produce high winds and baseball size hail. Five counties were declared disaster areas by President Carter. (The Weather Channel)

1987 - International Falls, MN, with record warm afternoon high of 71 degrees, was warmer than Miami FL, where the high was a record cool 66 degrees. (The National Weather Summary)

1988 - High winds in the Middle Atlantic Coast Region gusted to 172 mph atop Grandfather Mountain NC. Twenty-nine cities in the southwest and north central U.S. reported record high temperatures for the date, including Yankton SD with a reading of 91 degrees. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1989 - Twenty-seven cities in the southwestern U.S. reported record high temperatures for the date. Afternoon highs of 92 degrees in Downtown San Francisco and 104 degrees at Phoenix AZ established records for April. Highs of 78 degrees at Ely NV and 93 degrees at San Jose CA equalled April records. (The National Weather Summary)

1990 - Low pressure brought strong winds to the Alaska peninsula and the Aleutian Islands. Winds gusted to 68 mph at Port Heiden two days in a row. Unseasonably warm weather prevailed across central Alaska. Yakutat reported a record high of 54 degrees. Unseasonably cold weather prevailed over central sections of the Lower Forty-eight states. A dozen cities from Kansas to Indiana and Alabama reported record low temperatures for the date. Evansville IN equalled their record for April with a morning low of 23 degrees. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

2010: The record heat that affected the region on April 6-7 included 93 degrees at the Washington-Dulles Airport on April 6, the earliest 90-degree reading on record. On April 7, Newark, New Jersey, shattered its daily record by seven degrees when the maximum temperature rose to 92 degrees. The Northeast ended up with its second warmest April in 116 years.

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Daily Devotionals

Seeds of Hope

BUT HE FORGIVES AND FORGETS!

Young Mark was preparing to say his prayers before going to bed. His mother had been in his room going over his homework with him. As he knelt to pray he said, "Go away, Mom. I want to talk to God."

"But can't I listen?" she asked.

"Well," he said, "I don't mind telling God about the wrong things I did today because I know He will forgive me and forget what I did. But you'll go on yelling at me forever."

How gracious is our God! His Word declares, "And I will forgive their wrongdoings, and I will never again remember their sins." One of the final characteristics of the New Covenant is that the blood of Jesus not only cleanses us completely but that He will remove them from His memory.

That's probably hard for many of us to accept. We often harbor in our hearts and minds the wrongs that people do against us. Often we seem to roll them around and seek opportunities to get revenge – or at least get even. Not our God.

We know that His grace is sufficient to save us. But believing that He will never allow our sins to enter His memory should bring us a permanent peace.

Prayer: Help us, our Father, to take You at Your Word, and know that as we confess our sins, You not only forgive them but forget them – forever. In Jesus' Name, Amen.

Scripture For Today: And I will forgive their wrongdoings, and I will never again remember their sins. Hebrews 8:12



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

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WINNING NUMBERS

MEGA MILLIONS

WINNING NUMBERS:
04.05.24

20 30 54 63 65 14

MegaPlier: 3x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:
\$97,000,000

NEXT DRAW:

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

LOTTO AMERICA

WINNING NUMBERS:
04.06.24

2 23 32 35 42 7

All Star Bonus: 2x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:
\$2,700,000

NEXT DRAW:

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

LUCKY FOR LIFE

WINNING NUMBERS:
04.06.24

4 13 19 24 43 15

TOP PRIZE:

\$7,000/week

NEXT DRAW: 15 Hrs 38 Mins 45 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

DAKOTA CASH

WINNING NUMBERS:
04.06.24

3 4 28 32 33

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:
\$50,000

NEXT DRAW:

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

POWERBALL

DOUBLE PLAY

WINNING NUMBERS:
04.06.24

16 19 56 59 66 14

TOP PRIZE:
\$10,000,000

NEXT DRAW:

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

POWERBALL

WINNING NUMBERS:
04.06.24

22 27 44 52 69 9

Power Play: 3x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:
\$20,000,000

NEXT DRAW:

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

News from the Associated Press

Yellen says US-China relationship on 'more stable footing' but more can be done to improve ties

By FATIMA HUSSEIN and KEN MORITSUGU Associated Press

BEIJING (AP) — U.S. Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen sent a message of mutual cooperation at a meeting Sunday with Chinese Premier Li Qiang, highlighting the improvement in relations since her visit to China last year while recognizing that major differences remain.

After focusing on trade and economic issues for the first two days of her visit, Yellen turned to the broader U.S.-China relationship in the meeting with Li, one of China's top leaders.

"While we have more to do, I believe that, over the past year, we have put our bilateral relationship on more stable footing," she said in the ornate Fujian room of the Great Hall of the People on the west side of Tiananmen Square.

Yellen, who is regarded favorably in China, is the first Cabinet member to visit since Presidents Joe Biden and Xi Jinping met in California in November in a carefully orchestrated meeting to set the troubled relationship between their countries on a better course.

Li, in remarks before the media before their meeting, said the high media interest in Yellen's visit "shows the high expectation they have ... and also the expectation and hope to grow" the U.S.-China relationship.

China's emergence as an economic and military power has created a rivalry with the long dominant United States.

The U.S. has restricted China's access to advanced semiconductors and other technology, saying it could be used for military purposes. China, still a middle-income country, accuses the U.S. of trying to constrain its economic development.

At their meeting, Li told Yellen that China hopes the U.S. won't politicize economic and trade issues or overstretch the definition of national security, the official Xinhua News Agency said.

Yellen came to China with trade practices that put American companies and workers at an unfair competitive disadvantage at the top of her agenda.

Chinese government subsidies and other policy support have encouraged solar panel and EV makers in China to invest in factories, building far more production capacity than the domestic market can absorb.

While that has driven down prices for consumers, Western governments fear that that capacity will flood their markets with low-priced exports, threatening American and European jobs.

But Li argued that the development of the green energy industry in China would make an important contribution to combating climate change, the Xinhua report said.

The U.S. and China on Saturday agreed to hold "intensive exchanges" on more balanced economic growth, according to a U.S. statement issued after Yellen and Chinese Vice Premier He Lifeng held extended meetings over two days in the southern city of Guangzhou.

They also agreed to start exchanges on combating money laundering. It was not immediately clear when and where the talks would take place.

"As the world's two largest economies, we have a duty to our own countries and to the world to responsibly manage our complex relationship and to cooperate and show leadership on addressing pressing global challenges," Yellen said.

Relations were at a low point when she visited in July in the early stages of efforts to improve ties.

China had cut off talks on a range of issues in anger over a visit by then U.S. House Speaker Nancy Pelosi to Taiwan in 2022. Tensions were further inflamed by a Chinese balloon that traversed America in early 2023 before being shot down by a U.S. fighter jet.

In that context, Yellen's visit is an attempt to build on a fragile stability that has been established.

The end of her trip will overlap with a visit by Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov on Monday and Tuesday that was announced by China's Foreign Ministry on Sunday.

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China's sharp rise in trade with the Kremlin has increased since Russia's invasion of Ukraine in February 2022. While China does not provide weapons to Russia, the U.S. has expressed concern about China's sale of items to Russia that can have military as well as civilian uses.

During a press conference Saturday, Yellen addressed the U.S. relationship with China on the subject of Russia.

"We think there's more to do, but I do see it as an area where we've agreed to cooperate and we've already seen some meaningful progress," she said. "They understand how serious an issue this is to us."

Yellen also met Sunday with Beijing Mayor Yin Yong and told him that "local governments play a critical (economic) role, from boosting consumption to addressing overinvestment," adding that Beijing is particularly important in China.

"I believe that to understand China's economy and its economic future, engagement with local government is essential," Yellen said.

Later Sunday, Yellen met with students and faculty at Peking University.

Yellen says US-China relationship on 'more stable footing' but more can be done to improve ties

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Powerball player wins a \$1.3 billion jackpot, ending more than 3 months without a grand prize

DES MOINES, Iowa (AP) — A Powerball player has won a \$1.3 billion jackpot, ending a winless streak that had stretched more than three months.

The winning numbers drawn early Sunday morning were: 22, 27, 44, 52, 69 and the red Powerball 9.

Until the latest drawing, no one had won Powerball's top prize since New Year's Day, amounting to 41 consecutive drawings without a jackpot winner, tying a streak set twice before in 2022 and 2021.

The \$1.3 billion prize ranks as the eighth largest in U.S. lottery history and is for a sole winner who chooses an annuity, paid over 30 years. Winners who opt for cash would be paid \$608.9 million. The prizes would be subject to federal taxes, and many states also tax lottery winnings.

As the prizes grow, the drawings attract more ticket sales and the jackpots subsequently become harder to hit. The game's long odds for the drawing were 1 in 292.2 million.

Saturday night's scheduled drawing was held up and took place in the Florida Lottery studio just before 2:30 a.m. Sunday to enable one of the organizers to complete required procedures before the scheduled time of 10:59 p.m., Powerball said in a statement.

"Powerball game rules require that every single ticket sold nationwide be checked and verified against two different computer systems before the winning numbers are drawn," the statement said. "This is done to ensure that every ticket sold for the Powerball drawing has been accounted for and has an equal chance to win. Tonight, we have one jurisdiction that needs extra time to complete that pre-draw process."

Powerball is played in 45 states plus Washington, D.C., Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands.

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Even in the age of Google Earth, people still buy globes. Here's why they remain so alluring

By LAURIE KELLMAN Associated Press

LONDON (AP) — Find a globe in your local library or classroom and try this: Close the eyes, spin it and drop a finger randomly on its curved, glossy surface.

You're likely to pinpoint a spot in the water, which covers 71% of the planet. Maybe you'll alight on a place you've never heard of — or a spot that no longer exists after a war or because of climate change. Perhaps you'll feel inspired to find out who lives there and what it's like. Trace the path of totality ahead of Monday's solar eclipse. Look carefully, and you'll find the cartouche — the globemaker's signature — and the antipode (look it up) of where you're standing right now.

In the age of Google Earth, watches that triangulate and cars with built-in GPS, there's something about a globe — a spherical representation of the world in miniature — that somehow endures.

London globemaker Peter Bellerby thinks the human yearning to "find our place in the cosmos" has helped globes survive their original purpose — navigation — and the internet. He says it's part of the reason he went into debt making a globe for his father's 80th birthday in 2008. The experience helped inspire his company, and 16 years later is keeping his team of about two dozen artists, cartographers and woodworkers employed.

"You don't go onto Google Earth to get inspired," Bellerby says in his airy studio, surrounded by dozens of globes in various languages and states of completion. "A globe is very much something that connects you to the planet that we live on."

Or, as Scottish-born American explorer John Muir wrote in 1915: "When we contemplate the whole globe as one great dewdrop, striped and dotted with continents and islands, flying through space with other stars all singing and shining together as one, the whole universe appears as an infinite storm of beauty."

BUILDING A GLOBE AMID BREAKNECK CHANGE?

Beyond the existential and historical appeal, earthly matters such as cost and geopolitics hover over globemaking. Bellerby says his company has experience with customs officials in regions with disputed borders such as India, China, North Africa and the Middle East.

And there is a real question about whether globes — especially handmade orbs — remain relevant as more than works of art and history for those who can afford them. They are, after all, snapshots of the past — of the way their patrons and makers saw the world at a certain point in time. So they're inherently inaccurate representations of a planet in constant flux.

"Do globes play a relevant role in our time? If so, then in my opinion, this is due to their appearance as a three-dimensional body, the hard-to-control desire to turn them, and the attractiveness of their map image," says Jan Mokre, vice president of the International Coronelli Society for the Study of Globes in Vienna. "Perhaps a certain nostalgia effect also plays a role, just as old cars and mechanical watches still exert a certain attraction on people."

Joshua Nall, Director of the Whipple Museum of the History of Science in Cambridge, says a globe remains a display of "the learning, the erudition, the political interests of its owner."

"Sadly, I think globe usage probably is declining, perhaps particularly in the school setting, where digital technologies are taking over," Nall says. "I think now they're perhaps more becoming items of overt prestige. They're being bought as display pieces to look beautiful, which of course they always have been."

HOW, AND HOW MUCH?

Bellerby's globes aren't cheap. They run from about 1,290 British pounds (about \$1,900) for the smallest to six figures for the 50-inch Churchill model. He makes about 600 orbs a year of varying size, framing and ornamentation.

Creating them is a complex process that starts with the construction of a sphere and progresses to the application of fragile petal-shaped panels, called "gores," that are fitted together around the sphere's surface. Artists perched around Bellerby's London studio painstakingly blend and apply paint — dreamy cobalt and mint for the oceans, yellow, greens and ochre for the landscape.

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The imagery painted on the globes runs the gamut, from constellations to mountains and sea creatures. And here, The Associated Press can confirm, be dragons.

WHO BUYS A GLOBE THESE DAYS?

Bellerby doesn't name clients, but he says they come from more socioeconomic levels than you'd think — from families to businesses and heads of state. Private art collectors come calling. So do moviemakers.

Bellerby says in his book that the company made four globes for the 2011 movie, "Hugo." One globe can be seen in the 2023 movie "Tetris," including one, a freestanding straight-leg Galileo model, which features prominently in a scene.

And yes, some of the planet's wealthiest people buy them. The family of German tool and hardware company chairman Reinhold Wurth gave him a Churchill, the largest model, for his 83rd birthday. It is now on display at the Museum Wurth 2 in Berlin.

His granddaughter, Maria Wurth, says in an Instagram video that the piece highlights the history of the company and the magnate's travels.

A 'POLITICAL MINEFIELD'

There is no international standard for a correctly drawn earth. Countries, like people, view the world differently, and some are highly sensitive about how their territory is depicted. To offend them with "incorrectly" drawn borders on a globe is to risk impoundment of the orbs at customs.

"Globemaking," Bellerby writes, "is a political minefield."

China doesn't recognize Taiwan as a country. Morocco doesn't recognize Western Sahara. India's northern border is disputed. Many Arab countries, such as Lebanon, don't acknowledge Israel.

Bellerby says the company marks disputed borders as disputed: "We cannot change or rewrite history."

SPEAKING OF HISTORY, HERE'S THE 'EARTH APPLE'

Scientists since antiquity, famously Plato and Aristotle, posited that the earth is not flat but closer to a sphere. (More precisely, it's a spheroid — bulging at the equator, squashed at the poles).

No one knows when the first terrestrial globe was created. But the oldest known surviving one dates to 1492. No one in Europe knew of the existence of North or South America at the time.

It's called the "Erdapfel," which translates to "earth apple" or "potato." The orb was made by German navigator and geographer Martin Behaim, who was working for the king of Portugal, according to the Whipple Museum in Cambridge. It contained more than just the cartographical information then known, but also details such as commodities overseas, market places and local trading protocols.

It's also a record of a troubled time.

"The Behaim Globe is today a central document of the European world conquest and the Atlantic slave trade," according to the German National Museum's web page on the globe, exhibited there. In the 15th century, the museum notes, "Africa was not only to be circumnavigated in search of India, but also to be developed economically.

"The globe makes it clear how much the creation of our modern world was based on the violent appropriation of raw materials, the slave trade and plantation farming," the museum notes, or "the first stage of European subjugation and division of the world."

TWIN GLOBES FOR CHURCHILL AND ROOSEVELT DURING WWII

If you've got a globe of any sort, you're in good company. During World War II, two in particular were commissioned for leaders on opposite sides of the Atlantic as symbols of power and partnership.

For Christmas in 1942, the United States delivered gigantic twin globes to American president Franklin Roosevelt and British Prime Minister Winston Churchill. They were 50 inches in diameter and hundreds of pounds each, believed to be the largest and most accurate globes of the time.

It took more than 50 government geographers, cartographers, and draftsmen to compile the information to make the globe, constructed by the Weber Costello Company of Chicago Heights, Illinois.

The Roosevelt globe now sits at the Roosevelt Library in Hyde Park, N.Y., and Churchill's globe is at Chartwell House, the Churchill family home in Kent, England, according to the U.S. Library of Congress.

In theory, the leaders could use the globes simultaneously to formulate war strategy. "In reality, however," Bellerby writes, "the gift of the globes was a simple PR exercise, an important weapon in modern warfare."

Rwandans commemorate 30 years since the genocide whose legacy still scars the small country

By RODNEY MUHUMUZA and IGNATIUS SSUUNA Associated Press

KIGALI, Rwanda (AP) — Rwandans are commemorating 30 years since the genocide in which an estimated 800,000 people were killed by government-backed extremists, shattering the small East African country that continues to grapple with the horrific legacy of the massacres.

Rwanda has shown strong economic growth in the years since, but scars remain and there are questions about whether genuine reconciliation has been achieved under the long rule of President Paul Kagame, whose rebel movement stopped the genocide and seized power.

Kagame, who is praised by many for bringing relative stability but vilified by others for his intolerance of dissent, will lead somber commemoration events Sunday in the capital, Kigali. Foreign visitors include a delegation led by Bill Clinton, the U.S. president during the genocide, and Israeli President Isaac Herzog.

Kagame will light a flame of remembrance and lay a wreath at a memorial site holding the remains of 250,000 genocide victims in Kigali.

The killings were ignited when a plane carrying then-President Juvénal Habyarimana, a Hutu, was shot down over Kigali. The Tutsis were blamed for downing the plane and killing the president. and became targets in massacres led by Hutu extremists that lasted over 100 days in 1994. Some moderate Hutus who tried to protect members of the Tutsi minority were also killed.

Rwandan authorities have long blamed the international community for ignoring warnings about the killings, and some Western leaders have expressed regret.

Clinton, after leaving office, cited the Rwandan genocide as a failure of his administration. French President Emmanuel Macron, in a prerecorded video ahead of the Sunday's ceremonies, said on Thursday that France and its allies could have stopped the genocide but lacked the will to do so. Macron's declaration came three years after he acknowledged the "overwhelming responsibility" of France — Rwanda's closest European ally in 1994 — for failing to stop Rwanda's slide into the slaughter.

Rwanda's ethnic composition remains largely unchanged since 1994, with a Hutu majority. The Tutsis account for 14% and the Twa just 1% of Rwanda's 14 million people. Kagame's Tutsi-dominated government has outlawed any form of organization along ethnic lines, as part of efforts to build a uniform Rwandan identity.

National ID cards no longer identify citizens by ethnic group, and authorities imposed a tough penal code to prosecute those suspected of denying the genocide or the "ideology" behind it. Some observers say the law has been used to silence critics who question the government's policies.

Rights groups have accused Kagame's soldiers of carrying out some killings during and after the genocide in apparent revenge, but Rwandan authorities see the allegations as an attempt to rewrite history. Kagame has previously said that his forces showed restraint in the face of genocide.

Kagame is expected to give a speech and a night vigil will be held later on Sunday as part of a week of remembrance activities.

Naphtal Ahishakiye, the head of Ibuka, a prominent group of survivors, told The Associated Press that keeping the memory of the genocide alive helps fight the mentality that allowed neighbors to turn on each other, killing even children. Mass graves are still being discovered across Rwanda 30 years later, a reminder of the scale of the killings .

"It's a time to learn what happened, why it happened, what are the consequences of genocide to us as genocide survivors, to our country, and to the international community," said Ahishakiye.

He said his country has come a long way since the 1990s, when only survivors and government officials participated in commemoration events. "But today even those who are family members of perpetrators come to participate."

Kagame, who grew up a refugee in neighboring Uganda, has been Rwanda's de facto ruler, first as vice president from 1994 to 2000, then as acting president. He was voted into office in 2003 and has since been reelected multiple times. A candidate for elections set for July, he won the last election with nearly

99% of the vote.

Rights activists and others say the authoritarian Kagame has created a climate of fear that discourages open and free discussion of national issues. Critics have accused the government of forcing opponents to flee, jailing or making them disappear while some are killed under mysterious circumstances. Kagame's most serious political rivals are his Tutsi ex-comrades now living in exile.

Though mostly peaceful, Rwanda also has had troubled relations with its neighbors.

Recently, tensions have flared with Congo, with the two countries' leaders accusing one another of supporting armed groups. Relations have been tense with Burundi as well over allegations that Kigali is backing a rebel group attacking Burundi. And relations with Uganda are yet to fully normalize after a period of tensions stemming from Rwandan allegations that Uganda was backing rebels opposed to Kagame.

These Palestinian mothers in Gaza gave birth Oct. 7. Their babies have known only war

By JULIA FRANKEL and WAFAA SHURAFU Associated Press

NUSEIRAT, Gaza Strip (AP) — Rockets streaked through the morning sky in Gaza on Oct. 7 as Amal Al-Taweel hurried to the hospital in the nearby Nuseirat refugee camp, already in labor. After a difficult birth, she and her husband, Mustafa, finally got to hold Ali, the child they spent three years trying to have.

Rola Saqer's water broke that day as she sheltered from Israeli airstrikes in Beit Lahia, a Gaza town near where Hamas militants streamed across the border hours earlier in the attack that kicked off the war. She and her husband, Mohammed Zaqout, had been trying to have a child for five years, and not even the terrifying explosions all around would stop them from going to the hospital to have their baby that night. Saqer gave birth to Masa, a name that means diamond in Arabic.

The families emerged from the hospitals to a changed world. On the babies' second day of life, Israel declared war on Hamas and its fighter jets swooped over the neighborhoods where Ali and Masa were supposed to grow up. In the six months since the children were born, the couples have experienced the trials of early parenthood against the backdrop of a brutal conflict.

The families' homes were leveled by airstrikes, and they've had no reliable shelter and scant access to medical treatment and baby supplies. The infants are hungry, and despite all of the plans the couples made before the war, they fear the lives they had hoped to give their children is gone.

"I was preparing him for another life, a beautiful one, but war changed all of these features," Amal Al-Taweel told The Associated Press on Wednesday. "We barely live day by day, and we don't know what will happen. There is no planning."

Saqer recalled the hope she had before the war.

"This is my only daughter," she said, rocking Masa gently in a cradle. "I prepared many things and clothes for her. I bought her a closet a week before the war. I was also planning her birthdays and everything. The war came and destroyed everything."

FROM NUSEIRAT TO RAFAH

The Al-Taweel family spent the first days of Ali's life going between their home and relatives' houses in search of safety. Nearby buildings kept being struck — first one next to Amal's sister's home, and then one next to her parents' place.

As the family sheltered at home on Oct. 20, Israeli authorities issued an evacuation order warning that a strike was imminent and residents had 10 minutes to leave.

"I had to evacuate. I couldn't take anything; no IDs, no university certificates, no clothes for my child — nothing," Amal Al-Taweel said. "Even milk, diapers, and toys that I bought for my child."

The family found temporary refuge at Amal's parents' house in central Gaza, where 15 family members took shelter.

Not far away, Saqer, her husband and daughter crammed into a relative's two-bedroom house where more than 80 members of her extended family were staying. It became so crowded, she said, that her male relatives built a tent outside so that the women and children could sleep more comfortably indoors.

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As Israeli ground troops advanced on central Gaza in December, both young families headed to Gaza's southernmost city, Rafah, which is now home to hundreds of thousands of displaced Palestinians.

TENT CAMPS, NO FOOD

Like many who have sought refuge in overcrowded Rafah, the Al-Taweel family lived in a tent, where they stayed for over a month.

"It was the worst experience of my life; the worst conditions I have ever lived in," Amal Al-Taweel said.

Israel has severely restricted aid deliveries of food, water, medicine and other supplies into Gaza during the war, which began with Hamas' Oct. 7 attack on southern Israel in which militants killed about 1,200 people and took roughly 250 hostages.

Israel has exacted a terrible toll: More than 33,000 Palestinians have been killed, around two-thirds of them women and children, according to Palestinian health officials whose death count doesn't distinguish between civilians and fighters. Israel's offensive has pushed Gaza into a humanitarian crisis, displacing over 80% of the population and leaving more than 1 million people on the brink of starvation.

Ali, who was diagnosed with gastroenteritis before the family fled to Rafah, had chronic vomiting and diarrhea — signs of malnutrition that the U.N.'s main health agency says are now common in one of every six young Gazan children. He is underweight, at just 5 kilograms (11 pounds).

"I can't even feed myself to properly feed my child," said Amal Al-Taweel. "The boy is losing more weight than he gains."

His parents fretted about the rashes on his face, trying to shield him from near-constant sun exposure in the tent.

Mustafa Al-Taweel spent months waiting tables at a Gaza City cafe to save up for baby food, toys and clothes. Now, he can't buy his son even the simplest foods in Rafah. The war has brought shortages of the most basic necessities, with diapers and formula hard to find or unaffordable. They've had to rely on canned food provided by the U.N.

"His father was working every day to provide him with milk, diapers, and many other things he needed," said Amal Al-Taweel. "Even the toys are gone. There's nothing we can afford to provide him."

Needing help, the Al-Taweels decided to return to Amal's parents' home in central Gaza in February.

Not far from where the Al-Taweels lived in Rafah, Masa and her parents found a spot in the Shaboura refugee camp. They lived in a small tent the couple made by stitching together flour bags, Saqer said.

Muddy water pooled around the tent when it rained, and the area always smelled of sewage. Doing anything involved waiting in line, meaning a trip to the bathroom could take hours.

Masa grew sick. Her skin turned yellowish and she seemed to have a perpetual fever, with sweat beading on her small forehead. Saqer tried to breastfeed but couldn't produce milk because she, too, was malnourished. Sores broke out across her breasts.

"Even when I endure the pain and try to breastfeed my daughter, what she drinks is blood, not milk," she said.

Desperate, Saqer sold aid packets the family received from the U.N. to buy formula for Masa. Eventually, she decided to go back to central Gaza to seek medical treatment for her daughter, leaving her husband behind to mind their tent and setting off in a donkey-pulled cart.

BACK TO CENTRAL GAZA

Both mothers tried their luck at the Al-Aqsa hospital once they arrived in central Gaza. Saqer was lucky — doctors there told her that Masa had a virus and gave the baby medicine.

But they told Amal that Ali needed surgery for a hernia that they couldn't perform. Like most other Gaza hospitals, Al-Aqsa is only conducting life-saving surgeries. After nearly six months of war, Gaza's health sector has been decimated. Only 10 of Gaza's 36 hospitals are still partially functioning. The rest have either shut down or are barely functioning because they ran out of fuel and medicine, were raided by Israeli troops or were damaged by fighting.

As the families ponder the future, they can't imagine that their babies' lives will be close to what they had envisioned. Saqer said that even if her family were able to return to their home in northern Gaza, they would find only rubble where their house once stood.

"The same I suffered in Rafah; I will suffer in the north," she said. "All of our lives will be spent in a tent. It will certainly be a hard life."

A Dubai company's staggering land deals in Africa raise fears about risks to Indigenous livelihoods

By TAIWO ADEBAYO Associated Press

ABUJA, Nigeria (AP) — Matthew Walley's eyes sweep over the large forest that has sustained his Indigenous community in Liberia for generations. Even as the morning sun casts a golden hue over the canopy, a sense of unease lingers. Their use of the land is being threatened, and they have organized to resist the possibility of losing their livelihood.

In the past year, the Liberian government has agreed to sell about 10% of the West African country's land — equivalent to 10,931 square kilometers (4,220 square miles) — to Dubai-based company Blue Carbon to preserve forests that might otherwise be logged and used for farming, the primary livelihood for many communities.

Blue Carbon, which did not respond to repeated emails and calls seeking comment, plans to make money from this conservation by selling carbon credits to polluters to offset their emissions as they burn fossil fuels. Some experts argue that the model offers little climate benefit, while activists label it "carbon colonialism."

Activists say the government has no legal right over the land and that Liberian law acknowledges Indigenous land ownership. The government and Blue Carbon reached an agreement in March 2023 — months after the company's launch — without consulting local communities, which are concerned about a lack of protections.

"There is no legal framework on carbon credits in Liberia, and so we don't have rules and regulations to fight for ourselves as a community," said Walley, whose community, Neezuin, could see about 573 square kilometers signed away to Blue Carbon.

A raft of agreements between at least five African countries and Blue Carbon could give the company control over large swaths of land on the continent. In Kenya, Indigenous populations already have been evicted to make way for other carbon credits projects, according to rights groups like Amnesty International and Survival International.

They have criticized the projects as "culturally destructive," lacking transparency and threatening the livelihoods and food security of rural African populations.

"Many such projects are associated with appalling human rights abuses against local communities at the hands of park rangers," said Simon Counsell, an independent researcher of conservation projects in Kenya, Congo, Cameroon and other countries.

"The majority had involved evictions, most were involved in conflict with local people, and almost none had ever sought or gained the landholders' consent," said Counsell, former director of Rainforest Foundation UK, a nonprofit that supports both human rights and environmental protection.

Africa contributes the least to greenhouse gas emissions, but its vast natural resources, such as forests, are crucial in the fight against climate change. Indigenous populations traditionally rely on forests for their livelihoods, highlighting the tension between climate goals and economic realities.

Cash-strapped governments in Africa are attracted to these kinds of conservation initiatives because they generate badly needed income despite concerns about human rights abuses and transparency.

Blue Carbon has only one project under development in Zimbabwe, which involves approximately 20% of the country's land, according to the company's website.

However, through opaque agreements, the company has potentially secured staggering amounts of land across other countries, including Kenya, Liberia, Tanzania and Zambia, since forming in late 2022.

In Liberia, the government is required to obtain prior, informed consent from communities before using their land for such deals. However, former President George Weah's government moved forward without

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it, according to activists and communities.

Communities only became aware after activists mobilized against the deal following a leak through a network of nongovernmental organizations. Although the agreement said talks with communities would be done last November, locals and activists reported that they did not happen.

"There is no opposition to fighting climate change, but it has to be done in a way that respects people's rights and does not breach the law," said Ambulah Mamey, a Liberian activist who has helped galvanize opposition to the Blue Carbon deal.

After protests from communities and activists, Weah's government halted the deal before the presidential vote last year, but he still lost the election.

"We resolved to vote the George Weah government out to stop the deal, which will devastatingly affect communities, but we don't know if the new government will restart it," said Walley, the community leader. "We are waiting for them."

The new director of Liberia's Environmental Protection Agency, Emmanuel Yarkpawolo, said the Blue Carbon deal was rushed through "a quick process that does not lend itself to a good level of transparency."

He confirmed the deal is on hold and said Liberia is now developing rules for selling carbon credits, which will "emphasize balance between environmental goals and economic well-being of our people and take care of concerns about Indigenous people's rights, including alternative livelihood means."

Blue Carbon in March sent out invitations to developers, asking for proposals for carbon offset projects. The company document, which activists shared with The Associated Press, does not say which countries it is targeting, just that basic land information will be shared with applicants.

The process seems "extraordinarily opaque" given the significant amount of some countries' land involved, said Counsell, the conservation researcher. He raised concerns about whether governments understand it, let alone the people living in those areas.

"They are precisely the kind of opaque and inequitable arrangements that the U.N. should very specifically be guarding against as it continues to develop the rules for a global carbon market," Counsell said in an email.

Blue Carbon was founded by Emirati royal Sheikh Ahmed Dalmook Al Maktoum, whose private holdings include fossil fuel operations. It has not disclosed the governments or companies that will buy the credits generated from its carbon projects.

The effectiveness of carbon offsetting itself is debated. One concern is the concept of "additionality," or the amount of carbon that a project claims it reduces through preventing deforestation. In many cases, it's possible those reductions could have happened anyway.

A study by Counsell and Survival International on one carbon credit initiative, called the Northern Kenya Grassland Carbon Project, says livestock farmers whose livelihoods were upended by the project had operated within "broadly sustainable limits."

This, Walley said, is similar to the practice of communities in Liberia, where they have a duty to conserve forests under government rules. In addition, 40% of Liberia's forestland is already protected.

"This means that the project, in climate terms, has no 'additionality,' and any carbon credits generated do not represent genuine new savings of carbon," Counsell said.

Plus, over time, trees release the carbon they're storing back into the atmosphere through natural aging, forest fires or commercial use, which undermines the idea of forests absorbing carbon permanently, Counsell said.

There is also the problem of a "zero" benefit to the climate. Protecting forests in one area may result in deforestation elsewhere as communities affected by conservation projects move to earn a living.

Powerball lottery's \$1.3 billion jackpot drawing delayed

DES MOINES, Iowa (AP) — The Powerball lottery drawing scheduled for Saturday night has been delayed to complete procedures required before the numbers are announced, the game's organizers said.

The drawing for the game, including an estimated \$1.3 billion jackpot, was delayed to enable one of

the organizers to complete required procedures before the scheduled numbers reveal at 10:59 p.m. ET, Powerball said in a statement.

"Powerball game rules require that every single ticket sold nationwide be checked and verified against two different computer systems before the winning numbers are drawn," the statement said. "This is done to ensure that every ticket sold for the Powerball drawing has been accounted for and has an equal chance to win. Tonight, we have one jurisdiction that needs extra time to complete that pre-draw process."

A spokesperson for the Multi-State Lottery Association told The Associated Press in an email that she did not have an estimate for the length of the delay.

Saturday's jackpot ranks as the eighth largest in U.S. lottery history and the long odds of winning are 1 in 292.2 million. Grand prize winners almost always choose a cash payout, which for Saturday night's drawing would be an estimated \$608.9 million.

Powerball is played in 45 states plus Washington, D.C., Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands.

Following program cuts, new West Virginia University student union says fight is not over

By LEAH WILLINGHAM Associated Press

CHARLESTON, W.Va. (AP) — Sophomore Christian Adams expected he would be studying Chinese when he enrolled at West Virginia University, with a dream of working in labor or immigration law.

He didn't foresee switching his major to politics, a change he made after West Virginia's flagship university in September cut its world language department and dozens of other programs in subjects such as English, math and music amid a \$45 million budget shortfall.

And he certainly didn't expect to be studying — or teaching fellow students — about community organizing.

But the cuts, denounced as "draconian and catastrophic" by the American Federation of Teachers, catalyzed a different kind of education: Adams is co-founder of The West Virginia United Students' Union. The leading oppositional force against the cuts, the union organized protests, circulated petitions and helped save a handful of teaching positions before 143 faculty and 28 majors ultimately were cut.

Disappointed, they say their work is far from done. Led by many first-generation college students and those receiving financial aid in the state with the fewest college graduates, members say they want to usher in a new era of student involvement in university political life.

"Really, what it is for WVU is a new era of student politics," Adams said.

The movement is part of a wave of student organizing at U.S. colleges and universities centering around everything from the affordability of higher education and representation to who has access to a diverse array of course offerings and workplace safety concerns.

The university in Morgantown had been weighed down financially by enrollment declines, revenue lost during the COVID-19 pandemic and an increasing debt load for new building projects. Other U.S. universities and colleges have faced similar decisions, but WVU's is among the most extreme examples of a flagship university turning to such dramatic cuts, particularly to foreign languages.

The union called the move to eliminate 8% of majors and 5% of faculty a failure of university leadership to uphold its mission as a land-grant institution, charged since the 1800s with educating rural students who historically had been excluded from higher education. A quarter of all children in West Virginia live in poverty, and many public K-12 schools don't offer robust language programs at a time when language knowledge is becoming increasingly important in the global jobs market.

As the school continues to evaluate its finances, the union plans to keep a close eye on its budget, mobilize against any additional proposed cuts and prepare alternative proposals to keep curriculum and faculty positions in place.

Another key goal is monitoring and influencing the school's search for its new president after university head E. Gordon Gee retires next year. Gee, the subject of symbolic motions from a faculty group that expressed no confidence in his leadership, said last year the curriculum cuts came at a time of change in

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higher education, and that WVU was "leading that change rather than being its victim."

Higher education nationwide has become "arrogant" and "isolated," he said, warning that without change, schools face "a very bleak future."

Union Assembly of Delegates President and Co-Founder Matthew Kolb, a senior math major, said his group doesn't want a new president who believes running the school as a corporate or business entity is the only option for getting things done properly.

"We know, when push comes to shove, the results of that are 143 faculty getting shoved off a cliff with one vote," he said.

Adams, a north central West Virginia native who was the first in his family to attend college immediately after high school, said he could transfer to another institution and continue his studies in Chinese. But much of the reason he chose WVU was because of a commitment to the state and a desire to improve its socioeconomic outlook.

"A lot of West Virginians feel trapped in West Virginia and feel like they have to leave — not a lot of people choose to stay here," Adams said. "I made the conscious decision to go to WVU to stay here to help improve my state."

The cuts meant reaffirming that commitment, "despite basically being told by my state's flagship university that, 'Your major is irrelevant, it doesn't matter, it's not worth our time or money to teach.'"

Student union organizations have existed for hundreds of years worldwide. Commonly associated in the U.S. with on-campus hubs where students access dining halls, club offices and social events, in the United Kingdom the union also takes on the form of a university-independent advocacy arm lobbying at the institutional and national level.

Members say they envision the West Virginia United Students' Union similar to those in the U.K., and it's a concept they want to help grow.

That has meant a lot of work behind the scenes, strategizing to keep students interested and engaged and building relationships with the university campus workers union, student government and other organizations.

That work with the union helped keep up student morale as they watched faculty scramble to find new jobs and rewrite curriculum, student Felicia Carrara said.

An international studies and Russian studies double major from North Carolina, Carrara said she and many of her peers chose West Virginia University because it was affordable.

"The fact that we would now have to pivot to try and find the scholarships and other money to be able to afford an education anywhere else, or just not get a degree at all or get a degree that's really bare bones. It's just really disheartening," she said.

"When you come to higher ed, you think things are going to be better than they were in high school and in middle school," she said. "And it's very sad finding out that they're not."

Andrew Ross, a senior German and political science double major, will be the last graduate to major in the language.

A 31-year-old nontraditional student who transferred to WVU in 2022 after earning an associate's degree, Ross learned about the proposed cuts days after he returned home from a summer program in Germany he attended with the help of a departmental scholarship.

Ross, now the student union's assembly of delegates vice president, said the cuts "felt like getting slapped in the face." The university told him to drop the German major. He's proud of his effort to finish the degree after twists and turns, but it's bittersweet.

"In some ways and it makes me sad because I hope there isn't someone who is still growing up that can't have this experience — we all deserve it," he said. "This university isn't just failing me, it's failing the state."

UConn's bid for repeat title has reached its final challenge: Purdue and star Zach Edey

By AARON BEARD AP Basketball Writer

GLENDALE, Ariz. (AP) — UConn has blown through the NCAA Tournament again to reach college basketball's final night, this time with a chance to claim the first repeat championship in 17 years.

The final test is facing a Purdue team that spent an entire season proving it had recovered from one of the rarest of NCAA Tournament upsets.

The Huskies and Boilermakers are ready for Monday night's championship game, a matchup set when Purdue ended North Carolina State's wild March Madness run, followed by UConn pushing past Alabama in Saturday night's second semifinal.

"It speaks to the credit of what the coaching staff does — they've constructed a beautiful team, as we see," forward Alex Karaban said.

"They made sure the returners, we weren't complacent, that we wanted to leave a legacy," Karaban added. "And for the new guys, they're hungrier than ever. ... To be one win away against a really good Purdue team, it's going to be a battle and we know that. And it's going to take everything to make sure that we make history."

In addition to that history on the line, there's a pairing of marquee big men in Purdue's 7-foot-4 Zach Edey — the two-time AP national player of the year — and UConn's 7-2 Donovan Clingan.

UConn entered the tournament ranked No. 1 in KenPom's adjusted offensive efficiency by averaging 126.6 points per 100 possessions, while its defense ranked 11th at 94.4 points allowed per 100 possessions. Purdue was ranked fourth offensively (125.0) and 21st defensively (95.9).

The Huskies (36-3) won their fifth championship last season, winning six straight games by at least 13 points each time. And in a been-here-before moment, UConn earned its title-game ticket by beating the Crimson Tide 86-72 for its closest margin thus far in this year's tournament and its 11th straight tournament win dating back to last year.

One more win would put this year's No. 1 overall tournament seed in rare company, becoming the first team to win a repeat NCAA title since Florida did it in 2006 and 2007. It would also make the Huskies only the third to do so since UCLA's run of seven straight championships under John Wooden from 1967-73, the other being Duke in 1991 and 1992 under Mike Krzyzewski.

"It's a great feeling," AP All-America guard Tristen Newton said. "Like you said, not many teams can do this. But we feel like we can make history and win the whole thing."

For Purdue, the story isn't one of sustained dominance, but a massive turnaround from a humiliating moment that has the Boilermakers within reach of the program's first title.

Last March, the Boilermakers became only the second No. 1 seed to lose to a 16 seed by falling to Fairleigh Dickinson. That loss dogged the Boilermakers all year, even as they won the Big Ten regular-season race and spent the entire season looking like a title favorite, with redshirt freshman Cameron Heide noting the team heard chants of "FDU! FDU!" from opposing fans during the year.

Only one other team had faced that challenge: Virginia, which lost to UMBC in 2018. That team went on to win the program's first NCAA title a year later as a No. 1 seed.

Now Purdue (34-4) can follow that path to redemption, down to winning a first NCAA title.

"It's everything we've worked for, everything we thought about," guard Fletcher Loyer said. "A lot of late nights, can't even sleep because you're thinking about it."

"It's been tough. But we fought. We're going to keep fighting. We've got 40 more minutes until we're national champs. We're going to push everybody as far as we can, and we're going to play as hard as we can."

Purdue's first Final Four since 1980 now includes a trip to the program's first title game since falling to UCLA in 1969.

"Everybody wants to talk about winning it," Purdue coach Matt Painter said. "I said, man, you got to get yourself in position before you can win one. It's like winning a national championship, you can talk all you

want, but if you're not going to play on Monday, you don't have a chance.

"Obviously we put ourselves in a position to win one. Got to give our guys credit. They've been able to battle back. They've also been able to handle a lot of adversity."

Victims of Montana asbestos pollution that killed hundreds take Warren Buffet's railroad to court

By MATTHEW BROWN and AMY BETH HANSON Associated Press

LIBBY, Mont. (AP) — Paul Resch remembers playing baseball as a kid on a field constructed from asbestos-tainted vermiculite, mere yards from railroad tracks where trains kicked up clouds of dust as they hauled the contaminated material from a mountaintop mine through the northwestern Montana town of Libby. He liked to sneak into vermiculite-filled storage bins at an adjacent rail yard, to trap pigeons that he would feed, during long days spent by the tracks along the Kootenai River.

Today, Resch, 61, is battling an asbestos-related disease that has severely scarred his left lung. He's easily winded, quickly tires and knows there is no cure for an illness that could suffocate him over time.

"At some point, probably everybody got exposed to it," he said, speaking of asbestos-tainted vermiculite. "There was piles of it along the railroad tracks. ... You would get clouds of dust blowing around downtown."

Almost 25 years after federal authorities responding to news reports of deaths and illnesses descended on Libby, a town of about 3,000 people near the U.S.-Canada border, some asbestos victims and their family members are seeking to hold publicly accountable one of the major corporate players in the tragedy: BNSF Railway.

Hundreds of people died and more than 3,000 have been sickened from asbestos exposure in the Libby area, according to researchers and health officials. Texas-based BNSF faces accusations of negligence and wrongful death for failing to control clouds of contaminated dust that used to swirl from the rail yard and settle across Libby's neighborhoods.

The vermiculite was shipped by rail from Libby for use as insulation in homes and businesses across the U.S.

The first trial among what attorneys say are hundreds of lawsuits against BNSF for its alleged role polluting the Libby community is scheduled to begin Monday.

Attorneys for the railroad — owned by Warren Buffet's Berkshire Hathaway Inc. — deny responsibility.

Resch works at an auto dealership in Libby and his wife is listed as a plaintiff in a pending lawsuit against BNSF in Montana's asbestos claims court. He's uncertain whether his sickness came from the rail yard. The Libby high school track included contaminated vermiculite, as did insulation in the walls and attics of homes he entered during his two decades as a volunteer firefighter.

The plaintiffs for the upcoming trial against BNSF, the estates of Joyce Walder and Thomas Wells, lived near the Libby rail yard and moved away decades ago. Both died of mesothelioma, a rare lung cancer caused by asbestos that is disproportionately common in Libby.

The vermiculite mine several miles away closed down in 1990. Nine years later, the Environmental Protection Agency arrived in Libby. The subsequent cleanup has cost an estimated \$600 million, with most covered by taxpayer money. It's ongoing, but authorities say asbestos volumes in downtown Libby's air are 100,000 times lower than when the mine was operating.

Awareness about the dangers of asbestos grew significantly over the intervening years, and last month the EPA banned the last remaining industrial uses of asbestos in the U.S.

The ban did not include the type of asbestos fiber found in Libby or address so-called "legacy" asbestos that's already in homes, schools and businesses. A long-awaited government analysis of the remaining risks is due by Dec. 1.

Asbestos doesn't burn and resists corrosion, making it long lasting in the environment. People who inhale the needle-shaped fibers can experience health problems as many as 40 years after exposure. Health officials expect to grapple with newly diagnosed cases of asbestos disease for decades.

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During a yearslong cleanup of the Libby rail yard that began in 2003, crews excavated nearly the entire yard, removing about 18,000 tons of contaminated soil. In 2020, BNSF signed a consent decree with federal authorities resolving its cleanup work in Libby, the nearby town of Troy and along 42 miles (68 kilometers) of railroad right-of-way.

Last year, BNSF won a federal lawsuit against an asbestos treatment clinic in Libby that a jury found submitted 337 false asbestos claims that made patients eligible for Medicare and other benefits. The judge overseeing the case ordered the Center for Asbestos Related Disease to pay almost \$6 million in penalties and damages, forcing the facility into bankruptcy. It continues to operate with reduced staff.

Some asbestos victims viewed the case as a ploy to discredit the clinic and undermine lawsuits against the railroad.

In the months leading up to this week's trial, attorneys for BNSF repeatedly tried to deflect blame from the company, including by pointing to the actions of W.R. Grace and Co., which owned the mine from 1963 until it closed. They also questioned whether other asbestos sources could have caused the plaintiffs' illnesses and suggested Walder and Wells would have been trespassing on railroad property.

U.S. District Court Judge Brian Morris blocked BNSF from blaming the conduct of others as a means of escaping liability. He also said the law doesn't support the notion that trespassing reduces a property owner's duty not to cause harm.

Morris has yet to issue a definitive ruling on another key legal issue: the railroad's claim that its obligation to ship goods for paying customers exempts it from liability.

The plaintiffs argue the rail yard in the middle of Libby was used for storage and not transportation, meaning the railway is not exempt. The railroad built a loading facility near the mine, performed economic analyses of vermiculite operations and helped market and develop new uses for the material, the plaintiffs said.

Montana's Supreme Court ruled in a separate case that BNSF and its predecessors were more involved in the mine than simply shipping its product.

The pollution in Libby has led to civil claims from thousands of people who worked at the mine or for the railroad, their family members and others from the area.

BNSF has settled some previous lawsuits for undisclosed amounts, attorneys for plaintiffs said.

Other entities paid substantial settlements. The state of Montana paid \$68 million to about 2,000 plaintiffs who said officials failed to warn them about asbestos exposure. W. R. Grace settled some individual lawsuits for undisclosed amounts of money before filing for bankruptcy reorganization in 2001 and paying \$1.8 billion into an asbestos trust fund to settle future cases. The company paid \$250 million to the EPA for cleanup work and \$18.5 million to the state of Montana for environmental damage.

"I sure hope that they give those folks justice," Resch said about the upcoming trials. "I mean everybody took part in it as far as corporate America goes."

Latter-day Saints president approaches 100th birthday with mixed record on minority support

By HANNAH SCHOENBAUM Associated Press

SALT LAKE CITY (AP) — As he nears his 100th birthday, the oldest-ever president of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints has created a mixed legacy that some churchgoers say has made its global membership feel more included but has left LGBTQ+ and other minority members feeling unsupported.

Russell M. Nelson, a 99-year-old retired heart surgeon turned faith leader, had a conservative track record in his previous position on the faith's leadership panel, which led many to predict he wouldn't make any significant changes as president. But religious scholars now say his six years in office have been anything but stagnant.

"He's shaken up the church in a lot of ways — changed everything from what happens every Sunday at regular worship services to the long-term trajectory of where the church is pointed," said Matthew Bowman, a religion professor at Claremont Graduate Universities.

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Nelson is expected to speak Sunday at the twice-annual Salt Lake City conference of the faith known widely as the Mormon church, which is watched by members worldwide.

The president has embraced becoming a centenarian but told congregants Thursday that he and other elderly church leaders might need accommodations at the conference. He was notably absent from the fall 2023 conference due to a back injury.

"We are called to serve for the remainder of our lives, often long beyond 'retirement age,'" Nelson said. "From my point of view, this is cause for celebration."

Nelson, who notes he has been alive for more than half of the faith's 194-year history, is known for leading the church through the COVID-19 pandemic and urging people to stop referring to Latter-day Saints as "Mormons," a sharp shift after previous church leaders spent millions over decades to promote the moniker.

He severed the faith's century-long ties with the Boy Scouts of America, creating the church's own youth program that also could serve the more than half of its 17 million members who live outside the U.S. and Canada. He appointed non-American leaders to the top governing body and pushed to publish regional hymnbooks that celebrate local music and culture worldwide.

The president shortened Sunday services and launched the construction of more than 150 temples, accelerating a long-running push to dot the world with the faith's lavish houses of worship.

He also forged a formal partnership with the NAACP in a move aimed at shoring up the faith's checkered history on race. Until 1978, the faith banned Black men from the lay priesthood, a policy rooted in the belief that black skin was a curse. The church disavowed the ban in a 2013 essay, saying it was enacted during an era of great racial divide that influenced the church's early teachings. But it never issued a formal apology, leaving it as one of the most sensitive topics for the Utah-based religion.

Nelson has largely avoided taking a position on hot-button issues, sparking frustration among some members.

"He's not a culture warrior," said Patrick Mason, a religion and history professor at Utah State University. "But in terms of church presidents over the past century, I would put him in the the top two or three who, by the time of their death, will have left their mark on the church."

Mason described Nelson's administration as "gentler" than presidents past by welcoming people and trying to maintain members while still applying a strict interpretation of religious doctrine.

Under Nelson, the church insists LGBTQ+ members are welcome but maintains that same-sex marriage is a sin. It also limits the participation of transgender members who pursue gender-affirming medical procedures or change their name, pronouns or how they dress.

Nelson's early actions as church president gave some LGBTQ+ members hope that he might change those policies.

He made waves in 2019 when he rescinded a pair of controversial rules banning baptisms for the children of gay parents and branding same-sex couples as heretics who could face excommunication. His administration later supported a 2022 law protecting same-sex marriage at the federal level because it included what Nelson's top adviser Dallin Oaks called "necessary protections for religious freedom."

Oaks, 91, is Nelson's likely successor and among the most outspoken supporters of the church's opposition to acting on same-sex attraction. He has reminded followers at several past conferences that the church believes children should be raised by a married man and woman.

That message is echoed in what's colloquially known as the "musket fire speech," which recently became required reading for incoming students at Brigham Young University. The speech from a high-ranking church leader calls on faculty and students to take up their intellectual "muskets" to defend the faith's stance on marriage.

Fred Bowers, president of the LGBTQ+ Latter-day Saints support group Affirmation, pointed to the speech as one of many recent examples of how the faith has made LGBTQ+ members feel isolated. Faith leaders tell LGBTQ+ members that God loves them and they are accepted in church, but that support is not reflected in their policies, he said.

"Our members continue to experience trauma and are constantly met with mixed messages," Bowers said. Despite ongoing tensions between church leadership and LGBTQ+ members, Nelson repeatedly has

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instructed congregants to be kind to those whose experiences they might not understand.

"We are to be examples of how to interact with others, especially when we have differences," Nelson said in his conference speech last spring. "One of the easiest ways to identify a true follower of Jesus Christ is by how compassionately that person treats other people."

Zach Edey and Purdue power their way into NCAA title game, beating N.C. State 63-50

By EDDIE PELLIS AP National Writer

GLENDALE, Ariz. (AP) — There was more than one team that came to the Final Four with a dream — more than one team hoping to add its own unforgettable chapter to college basketball's colorful history book.

Zach Edey and Purdue have been thinking big all year, and after snuffing out North Carolina State's magical season with a 63-50 victory Saturday, it's the Boilermakers who find themselves a win away from the program's first NCAA title.

"It's the one we've been talking about all year," said Edey, the 7-foot-4 center who played all 40 minutes and finished with 20 points and 12 rebounds.

For the past three weeks, though, a lot of the country has been caught up in N.C. State. The Wolfpack, 11th-seeded dreamers, were dialing up a classic reboot of 1983, when they won nine straight postseason games to capture an unlikely title that left their frenetic coach, Jim Valvano, running onto the court looking for someone to hug.

In 2024, the Wolfpack went 9 for 9 under similar must-win conditions to get this far.

Only this time, they came two wins short of glory.

"Didn't get the big one," said N.C. State guard DJ Horne, who finished with 20 points. "But it's definitely a big accomplishment in my career."

N.C. State aside, some might call this run by top-seeded Purdue as inconceivable as anything in college hoops this year.

This is a program well-versed in the art of disappointment and missed expectations. Edey returned for his senior season and led the Boilermakers to the Final Four for the first time since 1980 — one season after they became the second No. 1 seed to fall in the first round.

The Boilermakers (34-4), top-seeded again, will play Connecticut, an 86-72 winner over Alabama in the second semifinal, for the title on Monday night.

"The reason I came back is for playing games like this," Edey said. "It's the reason I'm playing college basketball for four years, to finally get this game, big-time."

N.C. State (26-15) poked and jabbed at Edey and gave him fits through the entire slugfest of a game. He still dominated the battle of big men against 6-9, 275-pound Wolfpack forward DJ Burns Jr., who labored to eight points and four assists.

Burns wasn't the only one having trouble finding the basket. The N.C. State team that outscored Duke 55-37 after halftime in the Elite Eight — the team that had, in fact, outscored seven of nine opponents in the second half since its season became a win-or-go-home affair — shot 28.6% over the last 20 minutes this time.

It didn't help that guard Michael O'Connell pulled up lame with a bad left hamstring halfway through the first half. More than that, though, the Wolfpack had too many great looks at open shots that simply would not fall.

"The biggest difference is that some of the shots we normally make we didn't make," Wolfpack coach Kevin Keatts said. "It kind of got away from us a little bit."

It made for some ugly hoops. At one stretch early in the second half, the teams missed 10 straight shots between them.

"Obviously it was one of those grinder games," Purdue coach Matt Painter said.

The shooting troubles cut both ways. Purdue's second-leading scorer this season, Braden Smith, finished 1 for 9 for three points (but also had eight rebounds and six assists). For all his troubles, though, he put

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the final dagger in N.C. State's season.

It came near the end of a stretch during which Horne shot an airball and Edey swatted N.C. State guard Jayden Taylor's shot out of the paint, while on the other end, Fletcher Loyer and then Smith made back-to-back 3s.

It was part of an 8-0 run that pushed Purdue's lead to 20. The only drama left was whether the Wolfpack would surpass their season low in scoring of 52 points. They did not.

Edey, the back-to-back AP Player of the Year, grabbed his 10th rebound with 8:52 left to secure his 29th double-double of the season. But this was no easy stroll through the paint for the nation's leading scorer. N.C. State finished with eight steals. Most came from guards sagging down on Edey and swatting it away.

Burns did OK on Edey. Wolfpack forward Ben Middlebrooks did even better.

In the end, Purdue's big man was just too hard to deal with. On defense, he blocked two shots, altered about five others and his inside presence played into N.C. State's 36% shooting night. On offense, he went 9 for 14 from the field. After the game, he accepted congratulations from none other than Shaquille O'Neal.

"He's a tall guy," Burns said. "If you let him get to his spots, he's going to make his shots. We cleaned it up, but it was a little too late."

And so, a team that had a four-game losing streak and a looming date with the couch before the Atlantic Coast Conference Tournament came close to living out a dream.

Instead, that chance belongs to Purdue.

"It's everything we've worked for, everything we thought about," Loyer said. "A lot of late nights where you can't even sleep because you're thinking about it."

Farmers in India are hit hard by extreme weather.

Some say expanding natural farming is the answer

By SHAWN SEBASTIAN and SIBI ARASU Associated Press

GUNTUR, India (AP) — There's a pungent odor on Ratna Raju's farm that he says is protecting his crops from the unpredictable and extreme weather that's become more frequent with human-caused climate change.

The smell comes from a concoction of cow urine, an unrefined sugar known as jaggery, and other organic materials that act as fertilizers, pesticides and bad weather barriers for his corn, rice, leafy greens and other vegetables on his farm in Guntur in India's southern Andhra Pradesh state. The region is frequently hit by cyclones and extreme heat, and farmers say that so-called natural farming protects their crops because the soil can hold more water, and their more robust roots help the plants withstand strong winds.

Andhra Pradesh has become a positive example of the benefits of natural farming, and advocates say active government support is the primary driver for the state's success. Experts say these methods should be expanded across India's vast agricultural lands as climate change and decreasing profits have led to multiple farmers' protests this year. But fledgling government support across the country for these methods means most farmers still use chemical pesticides and fertilizers, making them more vulnerable when extreme weather hits. Many farmers are calling for greater federal and state investment to help farms switch to more climate change-proof practices.

For many, the benefits of greater investment in natural farming are already obvious: In December, Cyclone Michaung, a storm moving up to 110 kilometers per hour (62 miles per hour) brought heavy rainfall across India's southeastern coast, flooding towns and fields. A preliminary assessment conducted a few weeks later found that 600,000 acres of crops were destroyed in Andhra Pradesh state.

On Raju's natural farm, however, where he was growing paddy at the time, "the rainwater on our farms seeped into the ground in one day," he said. The soil can absorb more water because it's more porous than pesticide-laden soil which is crusty and dry. Planting different kinds of crops throughout the year — as opposed to the more standard single crop farms — also helps keep the soil healthy, he said.

But neighboring farmer Srikanth Kanapala's fields, that rely on chemical pesticides and fertilizers, were flooded for four days after the cyclone. He said seeing Raju's crops hold firm while his failed has made

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him curious about alternative farming methods.

"I incurred huge losses," said Kanapala, who estimates he lost up to \$600 because of the cyclone, a substantial sum for a small farmer in India. "For the next planting season, I plan to use natural farming methods too."

Local and federal government initiatives have resulted in an estimated 700,000 farmers shifting to natural farming in the state according to Rythu Sadhikara Samstha, a government-backed not-for-profit launched in 2016 to promote natural farming. The state of Andhra Pradesh hopes to inspire all of its six million farmers to take up natural farming by the end of the decade.

The Indian federal government's agriculture ministry has spent upwards of \$8 million to promote natural farming and says farmers tilling nearly a million acres across the country have shifted to the practice. In March last year, India's junior minister for agriculture said he hoped at least 25% of farms across India would use organic and natural farming techniques.

But farmers like Meerabi Chundururu, one of the first in the region to switch to natural farming, said more government and political support is needed. Chundururu said she switched to the practice after her husband's health deteriorated, which she believes is because of prolonged exposure to some harmful pesticides.

While the health effects of various pesticides have not yet been studied in detail, farm workers around the world have long claimed extended exposure has caused health problems. In February, a Philadelphia jury awarded \$2.25 billion in damages in a case where a weed killer with Glyphosate — restricted in India since just 2022 — was linked to a resident's blood cancer. In India, 63 farmers died in the western state of Maharashtra in 2017, believed to be linked to a pesticide containing the chemical Diafenthuron, which is currently banned in the European Union, but not in India.

"Right now, not many politicians are talking about natural farming. There is some support but we need more," said Chundururu. She called for more subsidies for seeds such as groundnuts, black gram, sorghum, vegetable crops and maize that can help farmers make the switch.

Farmers' rights activists said skepticism about natural farming among political leaders, government bureaucrats and scientists is still pervasive because they still trust the existing farming models that use fertilizers, insecticides and pesticides to achieve maximum productivity. In the short-term, chemical alternatives can be cheaper and more effective, but in the long term they take a toll on the soil's health, meaning larger quantities of chemicals are needed to maintain crops, causing a cycle of greater costs and poorer soil, natural farming advocates say.

"Agroecological initiatives are not getting adequate attention or budgetary outlays," said Kavitha Kuruganti, an activist who has advocated for sustainable farming practices for nearly three decades. The Indian government spends less than three percent of its total budget on agriculture. It has earmarked nearly \$20 billion in fertilizer subsidies this year, but only \$55 million has been allocated by the federal government to encourage natural farming. Kuruganti said there are a handful of politicians who support the practice but scaling it up remains a challenge in India.

A lack of national standards and guidelines or a viable supply chain that farmers can sell their produce through is also keeping natural farming relatively niche, said NS Suresh, a research scientist at the Center for Study of Science, Technology and Policy, a Bengaluru-based think-tank.

But because the practice helps keep the plants and the soil healthy across various soil types and all kinds of unpredictable weather conditions, it's beneficial for farmers all around India, from its mountains to its coasts, experts say. And the practice of planting different crops year-round means farmers have produce to harvest at any given time, giving an extra boost to their soil and their wallets.

Chundururu, who's been practicing natural farming for four years now, hopes that prioritizing natural farming in the country can have benefits for producers and consumers of crops alike, and other farmers avoid the kind of harms her husband has faced.

"We can provide nutrient-rich food, soil and physical health" to future generations, she said.

Small town businesses embrace total solar eclipse crowd, come rain or shine on Monday

By MARCIA DUNN AP Aerospace Writer

WAXAHACHIE, Texas (AP) — The last time a total solar eclipse passed through this Texas town, horses and buggies filled the streets and cotton fetched 9 cents a pound. Nearly 150 years later, one thing hasn't changed: the threat of clouds blocking the view.

Overcast skies are forecast for Monday's cosmic wonder across Texas, already packing in eclipse chasers to the delight of small town businesses.

As the moon covers the sun, daytime darkness will follow a narrow corridor — from Mexico's Pacific coast to Texas and 14 other states all the way to Maine and the eastern fringes of Canada. The best U.S. forecast: northern New England.

Like other communities along the path of totality, Waxahachie, a half-hour's drive south of Dallas, is pulling out all the stops with a weekend full of concerts and other festivities.

It's the region's first total solar eclipse since 1878. The next one won't be for almost another 300 years. "I feel so lucky that I don't have to go anywhere," the Ellis County Museum's Suzette Pylant said Saturday as she welcomed visitors in town for the eclipse. "I get to just look out my window, walk out my door and look up."

She's praying the weather will cooperate, as are the owners of all the shops clustered around the historic courthouse made of red sandstone and pink granite in the center of town. They're bracing for a few hundred thousand visitors for Monday's 4 minutes, 20 seconds of totality, close to the maximum of 4 minutes, 28 seconds elsewhere on the path.

The Oily Bar Soapery is hosting a Bubble Blackout all weekend, with eclipse-themed soaps and giveaways. Among the handmade soaps: "Luna," "Solar Power," "Mother Earth" and "Hachie Eclipse of the Heart."

The next one is centuries away "so we figured we'd go all out," explained owner Kalee Hume.

Nazir Moosa, who owns the Celebrity Cafe and Bakery, winced when he heard the weather report, but noted: "It's weather. You can't control it."

North of Austin, Williamson County residents hope the eclipse puts the area's new park on the map. The River Ranch County Park, which opened in July on the outskirts of the city of Liberty Hill, is sold out and ready to host hundreds on Monday

"It still has that new park smell," said Sam Gibson, the park's assistant office administrator.

Stacie Kenyon is inviting people to watch the eclipse from her Main Street Marketplace in the heart of Liberty Hill's historic downtown — and escape inside the boutique if it rains.

"We were really hopeful, but now with this weather it is kind of a bummer," Kenyon said. "We will just have to wait and see."

In Waxahachie, there's a sense of déjà vu around the town of 45,000 residents.

A banner in the museum's front window, displaying newspaper headlines from the July 29, 1878, eclipse, detailed the cloudy skies all morning. But just before the moon lined up between the sun and Earth that afternoon, the sky cleared.

Visiting from Campbell, California, Ed Yuhara studied weather patterns before settling on northern Texas to view the eclipse with his wife, Paula, and a few friends. "It turns out it will be the exact opposite," he said while touring the museum.

He was in Oregon for October's "ring of fire" solar eclipse, but got rained out.

Rain or shine, the Yuharas and friend Liz Gibbons plan on celebrating. "It's a visual and physical experience and at my age, which is 75, I will never see one again," Gibbons said.

Totality won't sweep across the U.S. like this again until 2045, sidestepping almost all of Texas.

"It just blows me away," Moosa said as he served up a large breakfast crowd. "The hotels rooms are booked and everything else ... it's very good news for Waxahachie."

Former Ecuadorian VP arrested after police broke into embassy has long faced corruption accusations

By REGINA GARCIA CANO and GABRIELA MOLINA Associated Press

QUITO, Ecuador (AP) — Ecuadorian authorities took the extraordinarily unusual step of breaking into a foreign embassy to arrest a former vice president facing corruption charges. The move earned the administration of President Daniel Noboa swift condemnation from fellow leaders as well as diplomats.

Police on Friday night entered the Mexican Embassy in Ecuador's capital, Quito, to arrest Jorge Glas, who had been residing at the diplomatic facility since December. Noboa's office has defended the decision, while other presidents have said it violated international norms.

Here's a biography of the politician at the center of the diplomatic dispute:

WHO IS JORGE GLAS?

Glas, a career politician, is an electrical engineer by training. He led Ecuador's ministries of telecommunications and strategic sectors coordination before becoming leftist former President Rafael Correa's running mate last decade. He served as Correa's vice president between 2013 and 2017 and for a few months under then-President Lenin Moreno.

Glas' duties as vice president included managing reconstruction efforts following a powerful earthquake in 2016 that killed hundreds of people.

WHY DID HE SEEK POLITICAL ASYLUM AT MEXICO'S EMBASSY IN ECUADOR?

Glas, 54, moved in to the embassy in Dec. 17, seeking asylum because he said he was being politically persecuted. His decision came around the same time authorities ordered him to appear before prosecutors to answer questions in a corruption investigation against him.

Prosecutors are looking into alleged mismanagement of funds meant for the earthquake reconstruction efforts.

The Mexican government granted him political asylum on Friday, just a few hours before police raided the embassy.

WHY WAS GLAS PREVIOUSLY IN CUSTODY?

Glas was previously convicted on bribery and corruption charges in two separate cases, one of which was tied to the Brazilian construction company Odebrecht and earned him a six-year prison sentence.

He was later sentenced to eight years for his role in a scheme that collected bribes for public procurement.

In 2022, Judge Emerson Curipallo in a controversial ruling ordered that Glas be freed from prison. Curipallo is now in custody while authorities investigate his alleged role in what prosecutors say was a bribery scheme for favorable rulings for a drug lord and his relatives.

Joe Brennan, Democratic former governor of Maine and US congressman, dies at 89

By DAVID SHARP Associated Press

PORTLAND, Maine (AP) — Democrat Joseph E. Brennan, whose hardscrabble childhood shaped his working-class views in a political career that included two terms as Maine's governor and two terms in the U.S. House, died Friday evening at his home in Portland. He was 89.

Brennan died with his wife at his side a few blocks from the third-floor tenement housing on Munjoy Hill where his Irish immigrant parents raised a family of eight children, Frank O'Hara, a longtime friend, said Saturday.

Brennan's experience in that neighborhood, a working-class melting pot, stayed with him when he entered politics with a campaign for the Maine Legislature at age 29, O'Hara said.

An Army veteran, Brennan attended Boston College under the GI Bill and graduated from the University of Maine Law School. He served as a county district attorney and state attorney general, in addition to state lawmaker, governor and congressman.

Former Democratic Gov. Joe Baldacci called Brennan "a friend, a mentor and a dedicated servant."

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"He was a man of the highest integrity, who led Maine through difficult times. He believed that he had an obligation to make things better, and he lived that ideal through his commitment to public education and improving the state's economy," Baldacci said.

As attorney general, Brennan participated in negotiations with Wabanaki tribes and the federal government on what became the Maine Indian Land Claims Settlement Act of 1980, which was signed by President Jimmy Carter when Brennan was governor.

Also as governor, Brennan launched education reforms, pressed for tough highway safety measures and helped establish the Finance Authority of Maine.

Current Gov. Janet Mills, a fellow Democrat who was appointed by Brennan in 1980 as the first woman to serve as district attorney, said her selection despite objections from a number of men at the time put her on a path to become Maine's first female governor.

"Gov. Brennan demonstrated for me and others that politics is about building relationships, that public service is not about enriching yourself but about enriching the lives of others, and that the most important relationship is the one we have with the people we serve," she said.

Another key appointment by Brennan was tapping George Mitchell, a federal judge, in 1980 to fill the seat vacated by Democratic U.S. Sen. Edmund Muskie, who resigned to become secretary of state. Mitchell went on to become majority leader in the Senate.

"His family and the people of Maine have lost a great man, and I have lost a dear friend," said Mitchell, who called Brennan "a superb leader and lawyer who understood the importance of a firm and fair system of justice in our democracy."

Ecuadorian police broke into Mexico's embassy, sparking outrage. Why is this such a big deal?

By MEGAN JANETSKY Associated Press

MEXICO CITY (AP) — Diplomatic relations between Mexico and Ecuador dramatically imploded after Ecuadorian police burst into Mexico's embassy in Quito and arrested Jorge Glas, Ecuador's former vice president.

Glas, arrested late Friday, had been convicted on charges of bribery and corruption and remains under investigation for other potential crimes. Following the arrest, leaders from across the Americas voiced outrage at the incident and Mexico's president announced he was breaking diplomatic ties with Ecuador.

But in a region that's no stranger to political explosions, what has provoked such fierce outrage?

International law experts and leaders across the region have said that the move violated long-established international laws that few rulers have dared to breach. It's almost an unprecedented act. To date, there are only a tiny handful of cases of raids on embassies on the books.

By forcing their way into the Mexican embassy to make the arrest, Ecuadorian police effectively intruded onto Mexican sovereign territory, said Natalia Saltalamacchia, a professor on international relations at the Autonomous Technological Institute of Mexico. Mexican President Andrés Manuel López Obrador called the break-in "a flagrant violation of international law and the sovereignty of Mexico."

The law Saltalamacchia, López Obrador and other leaders are citing is an accord dating back to 1963 known as the Vienna Convention on Consular Relations. It sets out clear rules on "diplomatic immunity," which effectively blocks authorities from entering embassies by force, among other things.

By injuring diplomatic personnel within the embassy, Saltalamacchia said, Ecuador's government violated another section of the accords.

"When a state like Ecuador makes decision like that, you're really endangering all the embassies of all the states in the world" by ignoring precedent, Saltalamacchia said. "You enter into a state of anarchy, a sort of jungle law."

Such rules have been established to maintain healthy diplomatic relations around the world, and allow diplomats to carry out their work without fear of retribution. The U.S. State Department notes that diplomatic immunity exists to "ensure the efficient and effective performance of their official missions on

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behalf of their governments.”

The Friday night raid is a move even the region’s most-criticized governments have hesitated to take, and something Ecuador’s own government once declared illegal.

Most notably – and rather ironically – the British government threatened to raid Ecuador’s embassy in 2012 to go after WikiLeaks leader Julian Assange, who was seeking asylum in Ecuador.

“We are deeply shocked by the British government’s threats against the sovereignty of the Ecuadorian embassy and their suggestion that they may forcibly enter the embassy,” said Ecuador’s government at the time. “This is a clear breach of international law and the protocols set out in the Vienna Convention.”

British authorities never made good on their threat, and only a few examples of actual violations have been documented in recent decades.

Saltalamacchia cited the takeover of the American embassy in Iran in 1979, when diplomats were held hostage for 444 days. In Cuba, in 1956 before the Vienna Convention was agreed, nine people were killed in Haiti’s embassy as a result of a raid by Cuban police under the Batista dictatorship.

In 1981, Cuba carried out another raid on Ecuador’s embassy to capture a number of officials seeking political refuge status.

The Organization of American States on Saturday also compared Friday’s break-in to a 2022 incident when Nicaraguan authorities “illegitimately occupied” their own offices in Managua. The OAS also called for a meeting to discuss the Ecuador incident.

While embassies have also been attacked and raided in countries including Lebanon, Argentina, Libya, Indonesia and Thailand, those raids were carried out largely by insurgent groups.

Saltalamacchia said by arresting Glas, Ecuador’s government may have also violated a regional agreement known as the 1954 Convention on Diplomatic Asylum, which allows individuals to seek asylum in embassies.

However, some have defended Ecuador.

Former Ecuadorian ambassador Jorge Icaza told The Associated Press that while he agreed that entering the embassy was illegal, he added it was improper to protect “a criminal who was sanctioned by the Ecuadorian justice (system) in two very evident cases, which is also negative from the point of view of international standards”.

Ecuador’s presidency on Friday night also alleged that Mexico’s government had “abused immunities and privileges granted to the diplomatic mission” and granted “diplomatic asylum contrary to the conventional legal framework.”

Israel finds the body of a hostage killed in Gaza, while talks will resume on a cease-fire

By SAMY MAGDY and SAM METZ Associated Press

CAIRO (AP) — Israel’s military said Saturday it had recovered the body of a 47-year-old farmer who was held hostage in Gaza, while negotiators prepared for another round of talks Sunday on brokering a cease-fire and securing the release of the remaining hostages, six months into the war.

Israel’s army said it found the body of Elad Katzir and believed he was killed in January by militants with Islamic Jihad, one of the groups that entered southern Israel in the Oct. 7 attack, killed more than 1,200 people and took about 250 hostages. Katzir was abducted from Nir Oz, a border community that suffered some of the heaviest losses.

The discovery renewed pressure on Israel’s government for a deal to get the remaining hostages freed, and thousands gathered in Tel Aviv to call for a deal as well as early elections. Hostages’ families have long feared time is running out. At least 36 hostages have been confirmed dead. About half of the original number have been released.

“He could have been saved if a deal had happened in time,” Katzir’s sister Carmit said in a statement. “Our leadership is cowardly and driven by political considerations, and that is why (a deal) did not happen.”

Israelis are divided on the approach by Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and his government. A week ago, tens of thousands of Israelis thronged central Jerusalem in the largest anti-government protest since

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the war began.

Inside Gaza, the toll of Israel's offensive is measured in tens of thousands of deaths and more than a million Palestinians displaced.

"We have arrived at a terrible milestone," the U.N. humanitarian chief Martin Griffiths said in a statement marking six months and noting "the immediate prospect of a shameful man-made famine." He called the prospect of further escalation in Gaza "unconscionable."

Cease-fire negotiations will resume Sunday, according to an Egyptian official and Egypt's state-owned Al Qahera TV. The official spoke on condition of anonymity because they were not authorized to speak publicly about the talks.

U.S. President Joe Biden has sent CIA Director Bill Burns to Egypt. A Hamas delegation will arrive Sunday to join the talks, the militant group said.

Hamas has insisted on linking a phased end to the war to any agreement releasing hostages. It has said it will agree to release 40 as part of an initial six-week cease-fire deal that would include the release of Palestinian prisoners from Israeli jails. Hamas also seeks the return of displaced people to devastated northern Gaza and more aid.

Israel has offered to allow 2,000 displaced Palestinians — mainly women, children and older people — to the north daily during a six-week cease-fire.

The talks come days after international condemnation of Israeli airstrikes that killed seven humanitarian workers with the World Central Kitchen charity. The Israeli military described it as a tragic error. Aid groups said the mistake is hardly an anomaly. The U.N. says at least 190 aid workers were killed in Gaza through the end of March.

Some Israel allies now consider halting arms sales. Biden warned Netanyahu that future U.S. support for the war depends on swift implementation of new steps to protect civilians and aid workers.

"We need security guarantees for us as humanitarians but also for the people we serve," said Marika Guderian with the World Food Program, speaking inside Gaza.

The killings halted aid deliveries on a crucial new sea route for aid directly to Gaza as the U.N. and partners warn of "imminent famine" for 1.1 million people, or half the population. The humanitarian group Oxfam says people in northern Gaza are surviving on an average of 245 calories a day.

In Jabaliya, a refugee camp near Gaza City, families scrounged in the rubble for mallow leaves to make a thin broth to break the daily Ramadan fast. "Life has become miserable. They (daughters) tell me, 'Father, you are feeding us mallow, mallow, mallow every day. We want to eat fish, chicken, canned food. We are craving eggs, or anything,'" said Wael Attar. They shelter in a school as part of the 1.7 million people displaced in Gaza.

Israel has promised to open more border crossings into Gaza and increase the flow of aid. The U.N. says that in March, 85% of trucks with food aid were denied or impeded.

The death toll from the war in Gaza is 33,137, the territory's Health Ministry said. Its toll doesn't differentiate between civilians and combatants, but it has said women and children make up the majority of the dead.

The ministry said the bodies of 46 Palestinians killed in Israeli airstrikes had been brought to hospitals in the past 24 hours — the lowest daily tally in months.

Israel blames Hamas for civilian deaths in Gaza, accusing it of operating in residential communities and public areas like hospitals.

The U.N. said it finally gained access to Gaza's largest hospital, Shifa, following a dayslong Israeli raid and found what the head of the World Health Organization called "an empty shell," with most buildings destroyed. The WHO said numerous shallow graves, and many partially buried bodies, were found just outside the emergency department after the Israeli siege.

The destruction of Shifa and the main hospital in southern Gaza, Nasser, "has broken the backbone of the already ailing health system," the WHO said.

Gaza's southernmost city of Rafah now holds more than half of the territory's 2.3 million people, and

Israel's vow to carry out a ground offensive there has caused weeks of dread and warnings even from Israel's top ally, the United States.

For families of hostages, it's a race against time as Israel's war reaches six-month mark

By SAM MEDNICK Associated Press

JERUSALEM (AP) — It's the last wish of a dying mother, to be with her daughter once more. But six months into Israel's war against Hamas, time is running out for Liora Argamani, who hopes to stay alive long enough to see her kidnapped daughter come home.

"I want to see her one more time. Talk to her one more time," said Argamani, 61, who has stage four brain cancer. "I don't have a lot of time left in this world."

Noa Argamani was abducted from a music festival Oct. 7 when Hamas-led militants stormed into southern Israel, killing some 1,200 people and taking around 250 hostage. The video of her abduction was among the first to surface, images of her horrified face widely shared — Noa detained between two men on a motorcycle, one arm outstretched and the other held down as she screams "Don't kill me!"

There's been little news about Noa, 26. But in mid-January, Hamas released a video of her in captivity. She appears gaunt and under duress, speaking about other hostages killed in airstrikes and frantically calling on Israel to bring her and others home.

Half a year into Israel's war, agonized families such as the Argamanis are in a race against time. In November, a weeklong cease-fire deal saw the release of more than 100 hostages. But the war is dragging on, with no end in sight and no serious hostage deal on the table. Israel says more than 130 hostages remain, with about a quarter of those believed dead, and divisions are deepening in the country over the best way to bring them home.

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has vowed to both eliminate Hamas and bring all the hostages back, but he's made little progress. He faces pressure to resign, and the U.S. has threatened to scale back its support over the humanitarian situation in Gaza.

Israelis are divided into two main camps: those who want the government to put the war on hold and free the hostages, and others who think the hostages are an unfortunate price to pay for eradicating Hamas.

"They have these two goals and the assessment of the type of risk they're willing to take to get the hostages back — this is where you see divisions," said Shmuel Rosner, a senior fellow at the Jewish People Policy Institute and analyst for Israeli public television station Kan News.

On-and-off negotiations mediated by Qatar, the United States and Egypt have yielded little. If a viable deal emerges, decisions will become harder and the divisions sharper, Rosner said.

But for most families and friends whose loved ones are in captivity, there is no choice but to bring them home. Many are concerned in particular about the women held in Gaza and say, based on testimonies from freed hostages, they fear those remaining could be suffering from sexual abuse.

Before a recent parliamentary committee meeting, attendees held posters showing the hostages. Yarden Gonen, whose 23-year-old sister, Romi, also was taken from the Oct. 7 music festival, criticized what she said was the government's inaction.

"What are we fighting for?" she said. "What is more important than this?"

Outside an art installation mimicking the Gaza tunnels where some hostages are believed to be held, Romi's mother said she can't believe it's been half a year, with much of the world wanting to forget or ignore such a horrible situation.

"We are doing everything we can so the world will not forget," Merav Leshem Gonen said. "Every day we wake up and take a big breath, deep breath, and continue walking, continue doing the things that will bring her back."

When Yonatan Levi saw the video of his friend Noa Argamani in captivity, he said he could barely recognize the smart, free spirit of the woman who loved parties and traveling and was studying computer science.

"When I saw that video, I thought maybe she's living physically but has died inside," said Levi, who met

Argamani during a diving course in the southern Israeli city of Eilat.

A few months before her abduction, Argamani asked Levi to help navigate insurance issues for her mom, he said. As an only child, she was a big part of her mother's life and care, and she seemed hopeful she would be OK, Levi said.

But Liora Argamani's cancer has worsened, according to a video released by the Hostages and Missing Families Forum.

In it, Liora and her husband tearfully thumb through childhood photos of Noa. From her wheelchair, Liora addresses the camera — and U.S. President Joe Biden directly. Behind her rests an enlarged photo of Noa's pained face as she's dragged into Gaza, on a posterboard with her words overtop: "DON'T KILL ME!"

"My heart really hurts," Liora, a Chinese immigrant, says slowly in accented Hebrew. "I am asking you, President Joe Biden. ... I am really begging you."

The stress of missing a loved one like Noa is hard on the healthiest of people, and it will only exacerbate a condition like cancer, said Ofrit Shapira Berman, a psychoanalyst who heads a group of health professionals treating freed hostages, families and survivors.

"The fact that so much of her psychic energy is invested in her daughter's trauma leaves her lesser chance to survive," Berman said.

In the video, Noa's father, Yaakov Argamami, strokes the family photo albums and chokes back tears.

"I miss everything about her," he says. "Her hug. The hug I wanted to ..."

Unable to finish, he simply nods and the camera cuts away.

State Republicans killed an Indiana city's lawsuit to stop illegal gun sales. Why?

By ISABELLA VOLMERT Associated Press

INDIANAPOLIS (AP) — Almost 25 years after suing the firearms industry for failing to prevent illegal gun sales, the northwestern Indiana city of Gary won a critical victory last fall when a judge ordered gun manufacturers to hand over years of production and sales records.

But in March, Gov. Eric Holcomb signed a new law retroactively banning cities from bringing such lawsuits, effectively halting the case. Republicans said the gun industry is not responsible for illegal sales. Critics say the legislation shows lawmakers don't consider ending gun crime a priority and reflects their apathy for Gary's majority Black residents.

"There's gun violence everywhere you turn in America," longtime Gary resident Rev. Dena Holland-Neal said. "And someone has to be accountable."

Gary is more racially diverse than the rest of Indiana and, sitting just east of Chicago, is one of its few Democratic strongholds. Most of its estimated 67,970 population is Black in contrast to 10% of people statewide, according to the U.S. Census Bureau.

Hospital chaplain Carmen McKee, who counsels victims of gun violence and their families, said racism underscores the actions of policymakers who dismiss Gary's needs as, "It's just Gary" or "It's just another area of people of color."

"But yet they would not allow it to happen in their area," McKee said.

Gary was among dozens of U.S. cities to sue major gun-makers and sellers in reaction to the out-of-control homicide rates and violent crime of the 1990s. But the other cities' cases fell by the wayside, leaving Gary's as the last suit standing when, in November, a Lake County judge ordered manufacturers to produce decades of business records.

"This case has persevered because it's a valid claim," said Rodney Pol, an attorney on the case and a Democratic state senator representing Gary.

Indiana's Republican-dominated Legislature moved quickly to approve the new law this year, stipulating that only the state's attorney general can bring civil action against a firearm or ammunition manufacturer, and made it retroactive to Aug. 27, 1999, three days before Gary filed its lawsuit.

Rep. Chris Jeter, who wrote the legislation, told the House Committee on Judiciary that the judge's order

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would result in excessive costs for firearms manufacturers, which he said should not be held liable for illegal sales.

"I just think that there's an effort to try to end this use of the court system as a weapon against gun manufacturers," Jeter said.

He made no attempt to hide that Gary was his intended target.

"This bill is an effort to take one last shot to try to eliminate this last pending case," he said.

Jeter did not respond to an Associated Press interview request.

The vocal minority Democratic caucus in the Indiana Legislature decried the new law for favoring firearms companies. State Rep. Ragen Hatcher, a former prosecutor who represents Gary, called it a "slap in the face" for attorneys and judges.

"That is something for the court to decide," Hatcher said.

Days after the governor signed the law, gun manufacturers asked the court to end Gary's suit. The judge stayed the discovery Tuesday until the conflict with the new law is resolved. A status conference is scheduled for May 8.

Attorneys for the defendants either did not respond to messages from the AP or declined to comment on the case.

Several of the gun manufacturers and retailers named in the lawsuit are on the board of the National Shooting Sports Foundation, which lobbies for the firearms and ammunition industries in Indiana and statehouses nationwide.

Lobbying records first reported by ProPublica and The Indianapolis Star show NSSF spent tens of thousands of dollars more on lobbying in Indiana last year than in the previous three years. Reports for this session haven't yet been filed.

"This case is, and always was, frivolous, an abuse of the legal system," Lawrence G. Keane, the senior vice president and general counsel for the group, said in a recent statement.

The Brady Center, a national organization supporting gun-control policy, represents Gary in the lawsuit. Philip Bangle, senior litigation counsel, said Brady plans to challenge the new state law.

For Gary residents and officials, the looming end of the lawsuit is a reminder of how the firearms industry has changed and the continued devastating impact of gun violence.

Technology and other changes over the past 20 years have made it easier to modify and re-sell illegal guns, Gary Deputy Police Chief Brian Evans said.

Violent crime offenders have trended younger during his three decades on the force, and often they are using guns acquired through illegal means, Evans said.

The case has been around for so long that Holland-Neal doubts it's even a topic of conversation among younger residents or recent arrivals. But she worries about the prevalence of firearms in her city and the rising tide of gun violence nationwide.

"There's such a need for this country to figure out some way to put some laws together that address gun violence, that make a difference," she said. "How that's going to happen? I'm honest with you, I have no idea."

Iranian commander renews vow to avenge Syria strike attributed to Israel that killed 2 generals

ISFAHAN, Iran (AP) — A top military commander Saturday renewed Iran's promise to retaliate after an airstrike earlier this week widely blamed on Israel destroyed Iran's consulate in Syria, killing 12 people, including two elite Iranian generals.

Gen. Mohammad Bagheri, Iran's joint chief of staff, told mourners gathered for the funeral of Gen. Mohammad Reza Zahdi that Iran will decide when and how to stage an "operation" to take revenge. Zahdi was the highest ranking commander slain in Monday's attack.

"The time, type, plan of the operation will be decided by us, in a way that makes Israel regret what it did," he said. "This will definitely be done."

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The attack on an Iranian diplomatic compound was a significant escalation in a long-running shadow war between the two archenemies, and Israel has been bracing for an Iranian response.

In all, 12 people were killed in the strike: Seven Iranian Revolutionary Guard members, four Syrians and a Hezbollah militia member.

On Friday, the commander of Iran's powerful Revolutionary Guard, Gen. Hossein Salami, warned that "our brave men will punish the Zionist regime," escalating threats against Israel.

Tensions have flared against the backdrop of the six-month-old Israel-Hamas war in Gaza, and raised renewed fears of a broader regional conflict. The Islamic militant group Hamas, which has ruled Gaza for 17 years, is one of Iran's proxies, along with Lebanon's Hezbollah militia and Yemen's Houthi rebels.

Both Hezbollah and the Houthis have carried out attacks along the fringes of the Gaza war, with Hezbollah engaging in daily cross-border exchanges with Israel and the Houthis frequently targeting Red Sea shipping.

Bagheri made the comments in Isfahan, Zehedi's hometown, about 440 kilometers (270 miles) south of the capital Tehran.

New York City's skyscrapers are built to withstand most earthquakes

By PHILIP MARCELO Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — The ground rumbled Friday beneath New York City, home to famous skyscrapers like the Empire State Building and One World Trade Center. Though buildings that can reach above 100 stories might seem especially vulnerable to earthquakes, engineering experts say skyscrapers are built with enough flexibility to withstand moderate shaking.

The 4.8 magnitude quake on Friday morning was centered about 45 miles (72 kilometers) west of the city in New Jersey. New York Gov. Kathy Hochul said Saturday there had since been at least 25 aftershocks, some of which were felt in New York City. But no major damage had been reported to the city's roads, mass transit system or its 1.1 million buildings.

Operators of the iconic 103-floor Empire State Building posted "I AM FINE" on Friday on the building's X account.

New York's skyscrapers have been generally built to withstand winds and other impacts far greater than the earthquakes generally seen on the East Coast, said Elisabeth Malsch, a managing principal at Thornton Tomasetti, a New York engineering firm that's done major work on the Empire State Building, Chrysler Building and the Brooklyn Bridge, among other major city landmarks.

"The earthquake that we design for is one that's unlikely to happen. It's a thousand-year event," she explained. "So we don't expect it to happen more than once in a thousand years."

Skyscrapers, by design, are less susceptible to the ground-shaking action of earthquakes than shorter structures because they're made to sway ever so slowly and slightly to protect themselves against powerful, hurricane force winds, Malsch said.

"Taller buildings just are more flexible because they're designed for the push and pull from the wind, which has a bigger effect on tall buildings than the push and pull of an earthquake does," she explained. "So regardless of when it was designed, the wind continually tests them. It's a double check that they're strong enough and flexible enough to handle earthquakes."

Even the oldest skyscrapers are, by necessity, made of high strength concrete and steel to withstand the gravitational load on the massive structures, added Ahmad Rahimian, an executive vice president at the engineering firm WSP Global who was involved in the construction of One World Trade Center, this hemisphere's tallest building, and The Shard in London, which is Europe's tallest building.

"High-rise buildings can be one of the safest places you can be in an earthquake," he said.

The skyscrapers of New York City are generally built to withstand an earthquake of 6.5 magnitude and larger, Rahimian said.

More modern high-rises also have dampers located on their roofs that can balance the sway and help absorb any shock from extreme events, said Borys Hayda, a managing principal at DeSimone Consulting Engineering, a New York firm that's been involved in renovating some of Manhattan's major hotels, theaters

and other landmark buildings.

"Even though there is only a small possibility for earthquakes here in New York, we as engineers have to design for all types of potential risk," he said.

Christiania, Copenhagen's hippie oasis, wants to rebuild without its illegal hashish market

By JAN M. OLSEN Associated Press

COPENHAGEN, Denmark (AP) — The now-aging hippies who took over a derelict naval base in Copenhagen more than 50 years ago and turned it into a freewheeling community known as Christiania want to boot out criminals who control the community's lucrative market for hashish by ripping up the cobblestoned street where it openly changes hands.

Over the years, there have been many attempts to halt the illegal hashish sales which have often ended in violent clashes between criminal gangs and police, with trading then quickly resuming. On Saturday, residents started digging up Pusher Street, after which they can receive government money earmarked for the area's renovation.

Just after 10 a.m., two children living in Christiania, Emilia and Sally, lifted the first cobblestone from the infamous street in a symbolic move. A large crowd gathered at the scene erupted in applause as the heavy stone was showed around.

Danish Justice Minister Peter Hummelgaard, who was present at the ceremony, said he believes that the excavation of Pusher Street and the individual cobblestones has high symbolic value.

"For more than 40 years, Christiania and the illegal sale of drugs out here has been a huge thorn in the side of the established society," Hummelgaard told Danish broadcaster TV2. "But now we have reached the point where the Christianians have also had enough of the (criminal) gangs."

The plan is to create "a new Christiania without the criminal hashish market," said Mette Prag, coordinator of a new public housing project in the enclave. Prag, who has lived in Christiania for 37 years, likened it to "a village."

"We don't want the gangsters anymore," said Hulda Mader, who has lived in Christiania for 40 years. Once the illegal trade is gone, "there might be some people selling hashish afterward, but it's not going to be in the open."

After the cobblestones are removed, new water pipes and a new pavement will be laid on Pusher Street and nearby buildings will be renovated. That is the first step in an overall plan to turn the hippie oasis into an integrated part of the Danish capital area, although "the free state" spirit of creativity and community life is to be maintained.

For years, Danish authorities have been breathing down the necks of the downtown community.

In 1971, squatters took over the abandoned military facility and set up a neighborhood dedicated to the flower-power ideals popular at the time of free cannabis, limited government influence, no cars and no police. Since then, successive Danish governments have wanted to close Christiania because of the open sale of hashish, among other things, often leading to tense relations.

To begin with, the residents, called Christianites, disregarded laws by building houses without permits and often ignoring utility bills. Outsiders could only move into the community if they were related to someone already living there.

The residents eventually were given the right to use the land, but not to own it. After more than four decades of locking horns with authorities, they were given control over their homes in 2011, when the state sold the 84-acre (24-hectare) enclave for 125.4 million kroner (\$18.2 million) to a foundation owned by its inhabitants. Currently, nearly 800 adults and about 200 children live there, according to Prag, with up to 25% of the residents above the age of 60.

The following year, it was decided to erect public housing for up to 300 people. Construction is expected to start in 2027.

Prag said they want "younger people, more families" to move in who are willing to participate in com-

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munity activities to keep the spirit of Christiania alive, complete with buildings painted in psychedelic colors and stray dogs.

Over the years, Christiania has become one of Copenhagen's biggest tourist attractions, a magnet for Danes as well as foreigners. Some come to be offended by the open sale of hashish — authorities for years tolerated the hashish trade on Pusher Street — and others to buy weed. Christiania banned hard drugs in 1980.

In 2004, police began cracking down on drug-related activities — worth millions according to police — controlled by the Hells Angels and the outlawed Loyal to Family. Even when police arrested dealers and fined customers, the illegal sales resumed soon afterward.

In August of last year, drug-related tensions escalated when when a turf war apparently led to a shooting in which one man died and several people were wounded.

Residents also have tried to stop the sales on Pusher Street themselves by tearing down the dealers' booths, but they mushroomed back. Residents blocked access to the street with huge shipping containers, but masked men removed them.

Fed up with criminals, residents decided in August that something had to be done, knowing that the government had said that getting rid of the organized hashish sales was "an important prerequisite" before Christiania could get 14.3 million kroner (\$2.1 million) earmarked for the renovation work.

Now, Christiania hopes that, by inviting ordinary people to come and help dig up Pusher Street, the sales will stop once and for all, and the community can remain an alternative yet legal part of Copenhagen without criminals.

"You can come and have a cobblestone" as a souvenir, Mader said with a smile.

Anonymous users are dominating right-wing discussions online. They also spread false information

By ALI SWENSON and MELISSA GOLDIN Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — The reposts and expressions of shock from public figures followed quickly after a user on the social platform X who uses a pseudonym claimed that a government website had revealed "skyrocketing" rates of voters registering without a photo ID in three states this year — two of them crucial to the presidential contest.

"Extremely concerning," X owner Elon Musk replied twice to the post this past week.

"Are migrants registering to vote using SSN?" Georgia Rep. Marjorie Taylor Greene, an ally of former President Donald Trump, asked on Instagram, using the acronym for Social Security number.

Trump himself posted to his own social platform within hours to ask, "Who are all those voters registering without a Photo ID in Texas, Pennsylvania, and Arizona??? What is going on???"

State election officials soon found themselves forced to respond. They said the user, who pledges to fight, expose and mock "wokeness," was wrong and had distorted Social Security Administration data. Actual voter registrations during the time period cited were much lower than the numbers being shared online.

Stephen Richer, the recorder in Maricopa County, Arizona, which includes Phoenix, refuted the claim in multipleX posts while Jane Nelson, the secretary of state in Texas, issued a statement calling it "totally inaccurate."

Yet by the time they tried to correct the record, the false claim had spread widely. In three days, the pseudonymous user's claim amassed more than 63 million views on X, according to the platform's metrics. A thorough explanation from Richer attracted a fraction of that, reaching 2.4 million users.

The incident sheds light on how social media accounts that shield the identities of the people or groups behind them through clever slogans and cartoon avatars have come to dominate right-wing political discussion online even as they spread false information.

The accounts enjoy a massive reach that is boosted by engagement algorithms, by social media companies greatly reducing or eliminating efforts to remove phony or harmful material, and by endorsements from high-profile figures such as Musk. They also can generate substantial financial rewards from X and

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other platforms by ginning up outrage against Democrats.

Many such internet personalities identify as patriotic citizen journalists uncovering real corruption. Yet their demonstrated ability to spread misinformation unchecked while disguising their true motives worries experts with the United States in a presidential election year.

They are exploiting a long history of trust in American whistleblowers and anonymous sources, said Samuel Woolley, director of the Propaganda Research Lab at the University of Texas at Austin.

"With these types of accounts, there's an allure of covertness, there's this idea that they somehow might know something that other people don't," he said. "They're co-opting the language of genuine whistleblowing or democratically inclined leaking. In fact what they're doing is antithetical to democracy."

The claim that spread online this past week misused Social Security Administration data tracking routine requests made by states to verify the identity of individuals who registered to vote using the last four digits of their Social Security number. These requests are often made multiple times for the same individual, meaning they do not necessarily correspond one-to-one with people registering to vote.

The larger implication is that the cited data represents people who entered the U.S. illegally and are supposedly registering to vote with Social Security numbers they received for work authorization documents. But only U.S. citizens are allowed to vote in federal elections and illegal voting by those who are not is exceedingly rare because states have processes to prevent it.

Accounts that do not disclose the identities of those behind them have thrived online for years, gaining followers for their content on politics, humor, human rights and more. People have used anonymity on social media to avoid persecution by repressive authorities or to speak freely about sensitive experiences. Many left-wing protesters adopted anonymous online identities during the Occupy Wall Street movement of the early 2010s.

The meteoric rise of a group of right-wing pseudonymous influencers who act as alternative information sources has been more recent. It's coincided with a decline in public trust in government and media through the 2020 presidential election and the COVID-19 pandemic.

These influencers frequently spread misinformation and otherwise misleading content, often in service of the same recurring narratives such as alleged voter fraud, the "woke agenda" or Democrats supposedly encouraging a surge of people through illegal immigration to steal elections or replace whites. They often use similar content and reshare each other's posts.

The account that posted the recent misinformation also has spread bogus information about the Israel-Hamas war, sharing a post last fall that falsely claimed to show a Palestinian "crisis actor" pretending to be seriously injured.

Since his takeover of Twitter in 2022, Musk has nurtured the rise of these accounts, frequently commenting on their posts and sharing their content. He also has protected their anonymity. In March, X updated its privacy policy to ban people from exposing the identity of an anonymous user.

Musk also rewards high engagement with financial payouts. The X user who spread the false information about new voter registrants has racked up more than 2.4 million followers since joining the platform in 2022. The user, in a post last July, reported earning more than \$10,000 from X's new creator ad revenue program. X did not respond to a request for comment, which was met with an automated reply.

Tech watchdogs said that while it's critical to maintain spaces for anonymous voices online, they shouldn't be allowed to spread lies without accountability.

"Companies must vigorously enforce terms of service and content policies that promote election integrity and information integrity generally," said Kate Ruane, director of the Free Expression Project at the Center for Democracy and Technology.

The success of these accounts shows how financially savvy users have deployed the online trolling playbook to their advantage, said Dale Beran, a lecturer at Morgan State University and the author of "It Came from Something Awful: How a Toxic Troll Army Accidentally Memed Donald Trump into Office."

"The art of trolling is to get the other person enraged," he said. "And we now know getting someone enraged really fuels engagement and gives you followers and so will get you paid. So now it's sort of a business."

Some pseudonymous accounts on X have used their brands to build loyal audiences on other platforms, from Instagram to the video-sharing platform Rumble and the encrypted messaging platform Telegram. The accounts themselves — and many of their followers — publicly promote their pride in America and its founding documents.

It's concerning that many Americans place their trust in these shadowy online sources without thinking critically about who is behind them or how they may want to harm the country, said Kara Alaimo, a communications professor at Farleigh Dickinson University who has written about toxicity on social media.

"We know that foreign governments including China and Russia are actively creating social media accounts designed to sow domestic discord because they think weakening our social fabric gives their countries a competitive advantage," she said. "And they're right."

East Coast earthquakes aren't common, but they are felt by millions. Here's what to know

By ADITHI RAMAKRISHNAN AP Science Writer

DALLAS (AP) — East Coast residents were jolted Friday by a 4.8-magnitude earthquake centered near Lebanon, New Jersey, with weak rumblings felt as far away as Baltimore and the Massachusetts-New Hampshire border. No life-threatening injuries or major damage have been reported.

Here's what to know about earthquakes on the East Coast.

How are earthquakes measured?

The Richter scale, developed by Charles F. Richter in the 1930s, is no longer widely used. According to the U.S. Geological Survey, as more seismograph stations were installed worldwide to calculate the size of an earthquake, Richter's method was valid only for certain distance and frequency ranges.

Seismometers are instruments used to record the ground's motion. Magnitudes are measures of an earthquake's size. They range from 2.5 or less, which are usually not felt, to 8.0 or higher, which can cause great damage.

How often do New York City and the East Coast get earthquakes?

Earthquakes large enough to be felt by a lot of people are relatively uncommon on the East Coast. Since 1950 there have been about 20 quakes with a magnitude above 4.5, according to the United States Geological Survey. That's compared with over 1,000 on the West Coast.

That said, East Coast quakes like the one experienced Friday do happen.

"There's a history of similar-sized earthquakes in the New York region over the last few hundred years," said Jessica Thompson Jobe from the USGS' Earthquake Hazards Program.

When was the last big East Coast quake?

In 2011, a 5.8 magnitude earthquake near Mineral, Virginia, shook East Coast residents over a wide swath from Georgia to Maine and even southeastern Canada. The USGS called it one of the most widely felt quakes in North American history.

The quake cost \$200 to \$300 million in property damages, including to the Washington Monument in Washington, D.C.

What's the difference between East and West Coast quakes?

The West Coast lies on a boundary where sections of Earth's crust rub together, causing stress and slippage along fault lines that generate earthquakes relatively often.

East Coast quakes like Friday's are caused by compression over time of hard, brittle rock deep underground, according to Robert Thorson, an earth sciences professor at the University of Connecticut. "It's like having a big block of ice in a vise and you are just slowly cranking up the vise," he said. "Eventually, you're going to get some crackling on it."

These East Coast quakes can be harder to pinpoint. And they tend to affect a broader area. That's because colder, harder East Coast rocks are better at spreading the rattling energy from an earthquake.

The distribution of cities across the East Coast also means that more people are around to experience

the effects of a quake.

"We also have population centers over a large part of the northeast," said Leslie Sonder, a geophysicist at Dartmouth College, "So a lot of people around here feel the earthquake."

How do you stay safe during a quake?

USGS experts say there is a risk of aftershocks for weeks to months, which are expected after any earthquake. They recommend paying attention to emergency messaging from local officials.

To keep safe from shakes while sleeping, remove any furniture or objects that could fall and injure you or others.

If you feel shaking, drop where you are. Cover your head and neck with one arm, crawl under a table for shelter and hold on. If there's no shelter nearby, grasp your head and neck with both hands until the shaking stops.

New US-China talks will address a top American complaint about Beijing's economic model, Yellen says

By FATIMA HUSSEIN and KEN MORITSUGU Associated Press

GUANGZHOU, China (AP) — U.S. Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen said Saturday that upcoming U.S.-China talks will tackle a top Biden administration complaint that Beijing's economic model and trade practices put American companies and workers at an unfair competitive disadvantage.

"I think the Chinese realize how concerned we are about the implications of their industrial strategy for the United States, for the potential to flood our markets with exports that make it difficult for American firms to compete," Yellen told reporters after the announcement during her trip to China.

"It's not going to be solved in an afternoon or a month, but I think they have heard that this is an important issue to us," she said.

The two sides will hold "intensive exchanges" on more balanced economic growth, according to a U.S. statement issued after Yellen and Chinese Vice Premier He Lifeng held extended meetings over two days in the southern city of Guangzhou. They also agreed to start exchanges on combating money laundering. It was not immediately clear when and where the talks would take place.

Yellen, who arrived later in Beijing after starting her five-day visit in one of China's major industrial and export hubs, said the talks would create a structure to hear each other's views and try to address American concerns about manufacturing overcapacity in China.

China's official Xinhua News Agency said the two sides had agreed to discuss a range of issues including balanced growth of the United States, China and the global economy as well as financial stability, sustainable finance and cooperation in countering money laundering.

Xinhua said China had responded fully on the issue of production capacity, but the report did not provide details. China also expressed grave concern over American trade and economic measures that restrict China, according to the agency.

Chinese government subsidies and other policy support have encouraged solar panel and EV makers in China to invest in factories, building far more production capacity than the domestic market can absorb.

The massive scale of production has driven down costs and ignited price wars for green technologies, a boon for consumers and efforts to reduce global dependence on fossil fuels. But Western governments fear that that capacity will flood their markets with low-priced exports, threatening American and European jobs.

"It's going to be critical to our bilateral relationship going forward and to China's relationship with other countries that are important, and this provides a structured way in which we can continue to listen to one another and see if we can find a way forward that will avoid conflict," Yellen told reporters.

The exchanges on balanced growth and money laundering will be held under the framework of existing economic and financial working groups that were set up after Yellen met He in July.

Yellen struck a positive note on joint efforts to address U.S. concerns about Chinese companies selling goods to Russia following its invasion of Ukraine.

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"We think there's more to do, but I do see it as an area where we've agreed to cooperate and we've already seen some meaningful progress," she said.

Earlier state media coverage of her trip had characterized U.S. concerns about overcapacity as a possible pretext for tariffs. In a commentary published Friday night, Xinhua wrote that while Yellen's trip is a good sign that the world's two largest economies are maintaining communication, "talking up 'Chinese overcapacity' in the clean energy sector also smacks of creating a pretext for rolling out more protectionist policies to shield U.S. companies."

Yellen told reporters during an Alaska refueling stop en route to China that the U.S. "won't rule out" tariffs to respond to China's heavily subsidized manufacturing of green energy products.

The U.S. has made efforts through legislation and executive orders to wean itself off certain Chinese technologies in order to build out its domestic manufacturing capabilities. Many members of the White House and Congress view the actions as important to maintaining national security.

The \$280 billion CHIPS and Science Act passed in 2022 aims to boost the semiconductor industry and scientific research in a bid to create more high-tech jobs in the United States and help it better compete with China. Additionally, last August, U.S. President Joe Biden signed an executive order to block and regulate high-tech U.S.-based investments going toward China.

Yellen will hold meetings in Beijing with more senior officials and economists on Sunday and Monday.

Today in History: April 7, civil war erupts in Rwanda

By The Associated Press undefined

Today in History

Today is Sunday, April 7, the 98th day of 2024. There are 268 days left in the year.

Today's Highlight in History:

On April 7, 1994, civil war erupted in Rwanda, a day after a mysterious plane crash claimed the lives of the presidents of Rwanda and Burundi; in the months that followed, hundreds of thousands of minority Tutsi and Hutu moderates were slaughtered by Hutu extremists.

On this date:

In 1862, Union forces led by Gen. Ulysses S. Grant and Maj. Gen. Don Carlos Buell defeated the Confederates at the Battle of Shiloh in Tennessee.

In 1915, jazz singer-songwriter Billie Holiday, also known as "Lady Day," was born in Philadelphia.

In 1922, the Teapot Dome scandal had its beginnings as Interior Secretary Albert B. Fall signed a secret deal to lease U.S. Navy petroleum reserves in Wyoming and California to his friends, oilmen Harry F. Sinclair and Edward L. Doheny, in exchange for cash gifts.

In 1945, during World War II, American planes intercepted and effectively destroyed a Japanese fleet, which included the battleship Yamato, that was headed to Okinawa on a suicide mission.

In 1949, the Rodgers and Hammerstein musical "South Pacific" opened on Broadway.

In 1954, President Dwight D. Eisenhower held a news conference in which he spoke of the importance of containing the spread of communism in Indochina, saying, "You have a row of dominoes set up, you knock over the first one, and what will happen to the last one is the certainty that it will go over very quickly." (This became known as the "domino theory," although Eisenhower did not use the term.)

In 1957, shortly after midnight, the last of New York's electric trolleys completed its final run from Queens to Manhattan.

In 1959, a referendum in Oklahoma repealed the state's ban on alcoholic beverages.

In 1962, nearly 1,200 Cuban exiles tried by Cuba for their roles in the failed Bay of Pigs invasion were convicted of treason.

In 1966, the U.S. Navy recovered a hydrogen bomb that the U.S. Air Force had lost in the Mediterranean Sea off Spain following a B-52 crash.

In 1984, the Census Bureau reported Los Angeles had overtaken Chicago as the nation's "second city" in terms of population.

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In 2012, a massive avalanche engulfed a Pakistani military complex in a mountain battleground close to the Indian border; all 140 people on the base died.

In 2017, President Donald Trump concluded a two-day summit with Chinese President Xi Jinping (shee jihn-peeng) at Mar-a-Lago in Florida, saying he had developed an "outstanding" relationship with the Chinese leader.

In 2020, acting Navy Secretary Thomas Modly resigned after lambasting the officer he'd fired as the captain of the USS Theodore Roosevelt, which had been stricken by a coronavirus outbreak; James McPherson was appointed as acting Navy secretary.

In 2022, the Senate confirmed Ketanji Brown Jackson to the Supreme Court, shattering a historic barrier by securing her place as the first Black female justice.

In 2023, Palestinian assailants carried out a pair of attacks, killing three people and wounding at least six as tensions soared after days of fighting at the Al-Aqsa Mosque, Jerusalem's most sensitive holy site.

Today's Birthdays: Country singer Bobby Bare is 89. Former California Gov. Jerry Brown is 86. Movie director Francis Ford Coppola is 85. Actor Roberta Shore is 81. Singer Patricia Bennett (The Chiffons) is 77. Singer John Oates is 76. Former Indiana Gov. Mitch Daniels is 75. Singer Janis Ian is 73. Country musician John Dittrich is 73. Actor Jackie Chan is 70. College and Pro Football Hall of Famer Tony Dorsett is 70. Actor Russell Crowe is 60. Christian/jazz singer Mark Kibble (Take 6) is 60. Actor Bill Bellamy is 59. Rock musician Dave "Yorkie" Palmer (Space) is 59. Rock musician Charlie Hall (The War on Drugs) is 50. Former football player-turned-analyst Tiki Barber is 49. Actor Heather Burns is 49. Christian rock singer-musician John Cooper (Skillet) is 49. Actor Kevin Alejandro is 48. Retired baseball infielder Adrian Beltre is 45. Actor Sian Clifford is 42. Rock musician Ben McKee (Imagine Dragons) is 39. Christian rock singer Tauren Wells is 38. Actor Ed Speleers is 36.