

# Groton Daily Independent

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## Tuesday, April 16

Senior Menu: Baked turkey crunch with dressing, Italian blend vegetables, carrot bars, corn muffin.  
School Breakfast: Waffles.  
School Lunch: Pizza burgers, cooked broccoli.  
Thrift Store open 3 p.m. to 6 p.m.  
Food Pantry open 4 p.m. to 8 p.m.  
City Council meeting, 7 p.m.  
St. John's Lutheran: Quilting, 9 a.m.  
United Methodist: Bible Study, 10 a.m.

"The only real mistake is the one from which we learn nothing."

-JOHN POWELL



## Wednesday, April 17

Senior Menu: Chicken fried steak, mashed potatoes and gravy, Oriental blend vegetables, cinnamon apple sauce, whole wheat bread.  
School Breakfast: Egg bake.  
School Lunch: tacos.  
FCCLA Banquet at GHS Arena Lobby 6 p.m.  
Groton CM&A: Kids' Club, Youth Group and Adult Bible Study begins at 7 pm  
Emmanuel Lutheran: Pastor at Rosewood Court; Confirmation. 6 p.m.; League, 6:30 p.m.  
United Methodist: Coffee Hour, 9:30 a.m.; Groton Ad Council, 7 p.m.

## Thursday, April 18

Senior Menu: Spaghetti with meat sauce, corn, garlic toast, fudge cake squares, fruit.  
School Breakfast: pop tarts.  
School Lunch: Corndogs, baked beans.  
Girls Golf at Milbank, 10 a.m.

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

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

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

The Federal Bureau of Investigation has reportedly launched a criminal probe into last month's collapse of the Francis Scott Key Bridge in Baltimore. The investigation will focus on whether the crew departed the port knowing the Singapore-based cargo ship had system issues, violating federal maritime law. The March 26 crash killed six members of a repair crew and halted shipping traffic in the Port of Baltimore. Tesla is planning to lay off over 14,000 employees—more than 10% of its global workforce—in its first large-scale layoffs in over a year, according to an internal memo this week. The company's electric vehicle sales have begun to stagnate amid a decline in demand and increased competition from Chinese carmakers. Tesla's shares fell over 5% on the news.

Hannah Gutierrez-Reed, the armorer who handled the weapons on the set of the Western film "Rust," was sentenced to 18 months in prison yesterday for the October 2021 shooting death of the film's cinematographer, Halyna Hutchins.

## Sports, Entertainment, & Culture

Indiana Fever take Iowa's Caitlin Clark with top pick in 2024 WNBA Draft; see complete list of draft picks. NBA Play-In Tournament kicks off today.

"The Gates" to premiere in January 2025 on CBS and will be first daytime network soap opera in over 30 years to primarily feature a Black family.

Kenya's Hellen Obiri and Ethiopia's Sisay Lemma win women's and men's titles at 128th Boston Marathon.

## Science & Technology

Stanford University releases its annual artificial intelligence index report, finds AI systems now match or exceed human performance on a number of basic tasks. OpenAI's GPT-4 cost \$78M to train, Google's Gemini cost \$191M; see full report.

New RNA-based vaccine shown effective against all strains of a virus, may eliminate need for annual boosters against illnesses like the common flu.

Astrophysicists resolve mystery of Pluto's heart-shaped structure, conclude it was created with a 400-mile-wide planetary object early in its history; study also suggests Pluto has no subsurface ocean.

## Business & Markets

US stock markets close lower (S&P 500 -1.2%, Dow -0.7%, Nasdaq -1.8%) as Middle East tensions weigh on investor sentiment. US retail sales rise 0.7% month-over-month in March, up from economist forecast of 0.3% and the second consecutive monthly rise.

Goldman Sachs tops earnings and revenue expectations, reports 28% increase in first quarter profits of over \$4B, or \$11.58 per share—the highest earnings per share since the third quarter of 2021.

Salesforce shares fall 7% on reports of potential deal to buy data-management firm Informatica, valued at \$10B. Trump Media and Technology Group shares fall 18% as it eyes issuing more shares. Live Nation shares fall in after-hours trading on report of possible Justice Department antitrust suit.

## Politics & World Affairs

Former President Donald Trump's criminal hush money trial in Manhattan begins; first day concludes with no jurors selected, more than 50 in the jury pool dismissed.

US Supreme Court allows Idaho law banning gender-affirming care for minors to broadly take effect—excluding plaintiffs who challenged the law—while appeals process plays out. Supreme Court rejects hearing appeal over whether a Black Lives Matter demonstration leader can be sued for an injury to a police officer caused by a different protester.

At least four people, including a bishop and a priest, wounded in a knife attack during a church service in Sydney, Australia; police arrest teenage suspect, treating attack as terrorism.

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15 N Main St. - Ste. 101  
Downtown Groton

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



**Living Heart Fitness Center**

Neglect your muscles and  
you'll pay the price

## EMPLOYMENT

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

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## Groton City Council Meeting Agenda

April 16, 2024 – 7:00pm

City Hall – 120 N Main Street

(IF YOU WOULD LIKE TO CALL IN TO THIS MEETING, PLEASE MAKE PRIOR ARRANGEMENTS TO DO SO BY CALLING CITY HALL 605-397-8422)

1. Approval of Agenda
2. Public Comments - pursuant to SDCL 1-25-1  
(Public Comments will offer the opportunity for anyone not listed on the agenda to speak to the council. Speaking time will be limited to 3 minutes. No action will be taken on questions or items not on the agenda.)
3. Cemetery Road Discussion – Andrea Eisenbeisz
4. Open Soda Bids
5. March Finance Report
6. Minutes
7. Bills
8. June 10-14, 2024 – HR/FO School in Spearfish, SD – Douglas Heinrich
9. Executive session personnel & legal 1-25-2 (1) & (3)
10. Adjournment



## Open House Bridal Shower

*honoring*

# Jessica Bjerke

*Saturday, April 20, 2024*

*1:00pm - 3:00pm*

*Olive Grove Golf Course*

*Registered at Target and Amazon*





## Reconstruction Project Scheduled to Begin on U.S. Highway 12 in Edmunds County

BOWDLE, S.D. – On Monday, April 22, 2024, asphalt concrete paving work is scheduled to begin on U.S. Highway 12 from Bowdle to Roscoe. The contractor will set signs and cold mill asphalt concrete. Paving will begin Monday, April 22, 2024.

The asphalt paving and cold milling of asphalt concrete operations will reduce traffic to one lane. Traffic is being controlled with flaggers at the paving and milling closure. Reduced speeds can be expected around paving equipment in the work zones.

The primary contractor for this \$5.3 million construction project is Anderson Western, Inc., of Bismarck, ND. The expected completion date for the asphalt concrete paving is Friday, June 14, 2024, with an overall project completion date of Friday, Nov. 1, 2024.

## Bridge Repair Work Scheduled to Begin on S.D. Highway 27 Near Britton

ABERDEEN, S.D. – On Friday, April 19, 2024, bridge repair work is scheduled to begin on S.D. Highway 27 approximately two miles south of Britton. The contractor will set signs and concrete barriers first. Bridge work will begin on Monday, April 22, 2024.

The bridge work will reduce traffic to one lane. Traffic is being controlled with stop signs at the bridge.

The primary contractor for this \$1.8 million project is BX Civil & Construction, Inc., of Dell Rapids, SD. The expected completion date for the bridge repair is Friday, June 28, 2024, with an overall completion date of Friday, Oct. 11, 2024.



**The wind has been doing a number on the Groton American Legion fence. The extreme wind did this damage this morning. A wind gust of 47 mph was recorded earlier this morning.** (Photo by Paul Kosel)

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April 8-14, 2024

We are back in the legislative session after a two-week in-state work period, which I spent back in South Dakota. While I was home, I was able to visit McIntosh, Sioux Falls, Watertown and Pierre. On Monday, I traveled back to Washington, DC to hit the ground running on a busy week. It's fly-in season in Washington, which means that we had



dozens of South Dakotans from across the state in the office this week to talk about everything from insurance to agriculture to Ellsworth Air Force Base. It's been fun to see so many familiar faces out here! We also kept busy with hearings, votes and classified briefings. Read more in my Weekly Round[s] Up:

South Dakotans I met with: Box Elder city leadership; the 2024 Class of South Dakota Ag and Rural Leadership; Barry Dunn, President of South Dakota State University; leaders from the Standing Rock Sioux Tribe, including Chairwoman Janet Alkire; South Dakota Alzheimer's Association; Bret Afdahl, Director of the South Dakota Division of Banking; Brett Hanson with the Northwestern Lumber Association; members of the South Dakota Trucking Association; Allen Merrill of Merrill Farms; and Independent Insurance Agents of South Dakota.

Visited with South Dakotans from: Aberdeen, Box Elder, Brookings, Canton, Chamberlain, Clark, Dell Rapids, Emery, Fairburn, Fort Pierre, Frederick, Gettysburg, Hartford, Howard, Milbank, Mitchell, Mobridge, Parker, Philip, Pierre, Platte, Rapid City, Salem, Sioux Falls, Sisseton, Timber Lake, Tulare, Vermillion, Volga, Watertown, Whitewood and Yankton.

Other meetings: Dr. Vetri Velan, Researcher at Lawrence Berkeley National Laboratory who works closely with the Sanford Underground Research Facility near Lead, SD; and Bob Frenzel, CEO of Xcel Energy. We had a joint session of Congress this week where we heard from Japanese Prime Minister Fumio Kishida. We had our Senate Bible Study, where our verse of the week was 1 Corinthians 4:1.

I was the keynote speaker at the Independent Insurance Agents of America's Legislative Conference here in DC where I spoke to hundreds of insurance agents and small business owners from across the country. I also spoke to TechNet and companies like Google on the work I am doing in the Senate to harness the advanced technology of AI.

Votes taken: 10 – most of these votes were on nominations to federal judge positions in Nebraska, Michigan and Utah. We also voted on a Congressional Review Act (CRA) to overturn the Department of Transportation's emissions rule that would force state transportation departments to measure greenhouse gas emissions on the federal highway system. I voted to overturn this rule.

Letter to USPS Postmaster: I led a letter with the South Dakota congressional delegation to the United States Postal Service (USPS) Postmaster General Louis DeJoy urging the Postal Service to avoid downsizing or significantly reorganizing mail processing operations in South Dakota. You can read more about this, along with the full text of the letter, [here](#).

Hearings: Five. I attended two hearings in the Select Committee on Intelligence. We also had three hearings in the Senate Armed Services Committee. In our first SASC hearing of the week, I had the opportunity to ask Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin about spectrum and Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff General CQ Brown about the B-21 Raider stealth bomber. You can watch a clip of that hearing [here](#). At Wednesday's SASC hearing, I asked General Timothy Haugh, commander of U.S. Cyber Command and Director of the National Security Agency, about FISA Section 702 reauthorization. You can watch a clip of that [here](#).

Classified briefings: I attended two classified briefings this week. One was our biweekly cyber education seminar. The other was a briefing with SASC's Subcommittee on Seapower.

My staff in South Dakota visited: Aberdeen, Baltic, Fort Pierre, Mitchell, Newell, Valley Springs and Watertown.

Steps taken this past week: 43,868 steps or 21.2 miles

## **A compelling arts experience for everyone**

**By Jim Speirs, Executive Director, Arts South Dakota**

The arts touch the lives of everyone in South Dakota—and the biennial State Arts Conference is a celebration for anyone who enjoys our state’s creative culture. The conference runs June 7-8 in Sioux Falls at the Washington Pavilion. Now is the time to mark your calendar and look forward to making new friends and learning new ways to advocate for the arts in your community.

This year’s conference in Sioux Falls explores the impact of the arts on health and healing, local and state government, accessibility and inclusion, and in the everyday lives of people of all ages. National arts leaders, artists, creators and folks like you who work to make the arts happen in our communities will all be on hand for keynote addresses, learning workshops and informal interactions. You have a lot to talk about with these people—and this is your chance to join the conversation! For a complete program of opportunities at this year’s State Arts Conference, check out the list at [ArtsSouthDakota.org](https://ArtsSouthDakota.org). Every session is packed with information that will improve your ability to advocate, create and enjoy the arts. You’ll be connecting with old friends, forging new creative bonds and sharing a memorable experience!

When people gather at cultural happenings like the 2024 State Arts Conference, new lines of communication are formed, innovative alliances are created and the state becomes more connected, as we make our creative community stronger. Please join me in Sioux Falls to help build the future of the arts across South Dakota and celebrate our unique creative environment. It’s going to be a great time—I hope to see you there!

To check out the schedules, performances, speakers and learning opportunities, and to register for the 2024 State Arts Conference, visit [ArtsSouthDakota.org](https://ArtsSouthDakota.org).





## Winter Sports Awards



**Groton Area senior Lane Tietz shakes hands with JV and C Team Boys Basketball Coach Kyle Gerlach while accepting the Offensive Player of the Year award during Monday evening's Winter Sports Award event. Tietz was also named to the all-conference and all-state teams and received the most valuable player for the Groton Area varsity team.** (Photo by Elizabeth Varin)



**Groton Area Head Boys Basketball Coach Brian Dolan discusses progress throughout the team's season during the Winter Sports Award event Monday evening. "It was a fun year, and it was a fun group of guys," he said. "...Every group leaves a place in your heart when they leave, and this group is no different."** (Photo by Elizabeth Varin)



**Groton Area senior Holden Sippel receives the Scout Team Player of the Year from JV and C Team Boys Basketball Coach Kyle Gerlach during Monday evening's Winter Sports Award event.** (Photo by Elizabeth Varin)



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From left: Boys basketball players awarded plaques at Monday evening's Winter Sports Award event include Holden Sippel (Scout Team Player of the Year and Academic All-State), Keegen Tracy (Most Improved Player of the Year), Ryder Johnson (Third Team NEC All-Conference) and Lane Tietz (Offensive Player of the Year, Most Valuable Player of the Year, First Team NEC All-Conference, First Team All-State). Not pictured is Jacob Zak, who was named Defensive Player of the Year and Second Team NEC All-Conference. (Photo by Elizabeth Varin)



From left: Boys Basketball JV and C Team players awarded plaques include Ethan Kroll ("C" Defensive Player of the Year), Gage Sippel ("JV" Defensive Player of the Year) and Teylor Diegel ("JV" Offensive Player of the Year). Not pictured are "C" Team Offensive Player of the Year Easton Weber and "C" Team Defensive Player of the Year Karson Zak. (Photo by Elizabeth Varin)



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**Groton Area Cheer Coach Aubray Miller discusses how the season went for the team during Monday evening's Winter Sports Award event.** (Photo by Elizabeth Varin)



**Groton Area senior Cadence Feist smiles after receiving the Most Valuable Cheerleader during Monday's event.** (Photo by Elizabeth Varin)



**From left: Spirit of Su winners Cadence Feist, Shea Jandel, Anna Bisbee, Hannah Monson, Breslyn Jeschke, Emma Schinkel, Abby Jensen and Paisley Mitchell post with medals awarded to them during Monday evening's Winter Sports Award event.** (Photo by Elizabeth Varin)



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From left: Cheer Team award winners include Paisley Mitchell (Most Dedicated), Cadence Feist (Most Valuable), Anna Bisbee (Captain of the Year) and Natalia Warrington (Most Improved). (Photo by Elizabeth Varin)



From left: Most spirited cheerleaders include Teagan Hanten (freshman), Breslyn Jeschke (sophomore), Emma Schinkel (senior) and Dee Palmelay (junior). (Photo by Elizabeth Varin)



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**Groton Area Head Girls Basketball Coach Matt Locke reviews the team's season during Monday evening's Winter Sports Award event.** (Photo by Elizabeth Varin)



**Girls basketball player Rylee Dunker smiles after receiving an award during Monday evening's Winter Sports Award event.** (Photo by Elizabeth Varin)



**Award winners Sydney Leicht (Offensive MVP, Third Team NEC All-Conference and Academic All-State) and Emily Clark (Tiger Award and Academic All-State) pose with their awards after Monday evening's Winter Sports Award event.** (Photo by Elizabeth Varin)



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From left: Girls basketball award winners include Jerica Locke (Defensive MVP), Sydney Leicht (Offensive MVP, Third Team NEC All-Conference and Academic All-State), Emily Clark (Tiger Award and Academic All-State) and Rylee Dunker (Hustle/Heart). (Photo by Elizabeth Varin)



Groton Area Athletic Director Alexa Schuring welcomes the crowd to the Winter Sports Award on Monday evening. (Photo by Elizabeth Varin)



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**Groton Area Head Wrestling Coach Darin Zoellner and Assistant Wrestling Coach Ryan Scepaniak review the past season during Monday evening's Winter Sports Award event.**

(Photo by Elizabeth Varin)



**Wrestler Christian Ehresmann smiles as he receives the award for Most Valuable Wrestler during Monday evening's Winter Sports Awards.** (Photo by Elizabeth Varin)



**Wrestler Liza Krueger received the Most Valuable Female Wrestler Award, NEC Conference Champion and All-Area Wrestling Team honors.**

(Photo by Elizabeth Varin)



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Isaiah and Noah Scepianiak surprised Groton Area Assistant Wrestling Coach Ryan Scepianiak with a "Thank You" from the team.

(Photo by Elizabeth Varin)



Isaiah and Noah Scepianiak surprised Groton Area Assistant Wrestling Coach Ryan Scepianiak with a "Thank You" from the team.

(Photo by Elizabeth Varin)



Back row from left: Groton Area wrestling award winners include Christian Ehresmann (Most Valuable Male Wrestler, NEC Conference Champion and All-Area Wrestling Team), Korbin Kucker (Most Inspirational and Region Champion), Karter Moody (First Year Wrestler), Gavin Englund (Most Improved Wrestler), Charlie Frost (First Year Wrestler), Walker Zoellner (Hardest Worker). Front row awardees include Liza Krueger (Most Valuable Female Wrestler, NEC Conference Champion and All-Area Wrestling Team), Donovan Block (JH Most Valuable Wrestler) and Wyatt Hagen (Most Dedicated). (Photo by Elizabeth Varin)

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## Girls win four events, boys two at Britton Track Meet

Two relay teams in both divisions were winners at the Britton Track Meet held Monday. The girls 800m relay team, the boy 400m relay team and the boys and girls 3200m relay teams were all winners.

Individually, Taryn Traphagen won the 400m dash and Emma Kutter won the shot put out-throwing the runnerup by nearly five feet.

### Boy's Division

#### 100 Meters

8. Keegen Tracy, 12.76
23. Logan Warrington, 13.90

#### 1600 Meters

15. Garrett Schultz, 6:15.53

#### 300m Hurdles

6. Tristin McGannon, 50.96

#### 4x100 Relay

1. Lane Tietz, Colby Dunker, Tristin McGannon, Gage Sippel, 47.30

#### 4x200 Relay

2. Lane Tietz, Keegen Tracy, Colby Dunker, Gage Sippel, 1:38.37

#### 4x800 Relay

1. Blake Pauli, Keegen Tracy, Lane Tietz, Colby Dunker, 9:04.63

#### Shot Put

4. Holden Sippel, 41' 1.5
5. Logan Ringgenberg, 38' 9
10. Karter Moody, 34' 7
33. Drew Thurston, 27' 7

#### Discus

3. Logan Ringgenberg, 125' 8
5. Holden Sippel, 114' 3
16. Karter Moody, 91' 2
28. Drew Thurston, 66' 2

#### Triple Jump

12. Tristin McGannon, 31' 9.5

### Girl's Division

#### 100 Meters

16. Kayla Lehr, 15.55

#### 400 Meters

1. Taryn Traphagen, 1:04.52
5. Ashlynn Warrington, 1:08.23
7. Elizabeth Fliehs, 1:08.65

#### 100m Hurdles

2. McKenna Tietz, 18.52
4. Emerlee Jones, 20.00
5. Talli Wright, 20.15
6. Teagan Hanten, 20.84
7. Hannah Sandness, 20.99

#### 4x100 Relay

2. Jerica Locke, Rylee Dunker, McKenna Tietz, Kella Tracy, 54.08

#### 4x200 Relay

1. Laila Roberts, Rylee Dunker, Jerica Locke, Kella Tracy, 1:53.56

#### 4x800 Relay

1. Taryn Traphagen, Faith Traphagen, Ashlynn Warrington, Kella Tracy, 10:46.46

#### Shot Put

1. Emma Kutter, 32' 7.75
11. Faith Fliehs, 27' 10
18. Avery Crank, 25' 2.5
25. Ashley Johnson, 22' 9.75
38. Emma Davies, 19' 3.5

#### Discus

15. Avery Crank, 73' 5
20. Emma Kutter, 69' 9
22. Faith Fliehs, 68' 1.5
25. Ashley Johnson, 61' 9
37. Emma Davies, 36' 1

#### High Jump

8. Emerlee Jones, 4' 4

#### Long Jump

14. Teagan Hanten, 12' 10

#### Triple Jump

7. Emerlee Jones, 29' 5.5
12. Teagan Hanten, 27' 1



## That's Life by Tony Bender: Things on my mind

### So long, Lloyd

Ninety three. Lloyd Omdahl continued to write columns until he died Sunday at 93. Me, I've been writing a weekly column for more than half my life, but I've got a long way to go to catch Lloyd. My entree into North and South Dakota newspapers came coincidentally about the time my columnist hero, Wayne Lubenow, died in an unfortunate tumble down the stairs. Exits and entrances.

Ninety three. There are days that I wonder if I'm just being my naturally absent-minded self or if it's the inevitable toll of age. Did I say inevitable? I'm not sure you can say that in Lloyd's case. If there was anyone with more institutional knowledge about North Dakota history and government, I don't know who that might be.

A columnist's role is to inform, entertain, and educate. Lloyd did it all. Every week. That may not sound like much but a column on a deadline is no small commitment. Is it harder than writing a novel? Well, if you're not feeling inspired, if you're bereft of ideas, a novel can wait.

I smile when someone tells me, "I'm going to write a book, someday," because almost none of them will. Writing a book is like giving yourself a college education. "Writing even a bad book, is an accomplishment," a writer told me once.

Then there are the would-be columnists. I'll tell you right now that everyone has at least one good column in them. But after a few weeks, it feels like watching a drowning man. The fact that Lloyd could bring something fresh to the opinion page each week was remarkable. At 93? Impressive.

We all bring our own energy into the world. Lloyd's was shiny, positive, fun.

You did good, Lloyd. Double space and watch your commas.

### O.J. Simpson

The curious case of O.J. Simpson ended last week with his death. I remain conflicted. Not everything seemed to add up in murder case. The slow-motion chase. His mad dash from L.A. to Chicago the night of the murders. Was he covering for his son? Some aspects of the case are murky.

The reaction from many black Americans who cheered at his acquittal was perhaps the first dent in the obliviousness white Americans had about the judicial system in America. In the minds of some, it wasn't a matter of justice being served, it came down to "We finally won one."

If you remember, the O.J. Case was preceded by the savage Rodney King police beating. Twenty years later when Colin Kaepernick knelt to protest police brutality, white America still hadn't put the pieces together.

Are you like me; when those great Naked Gun comedies are on television, do you struggle to watch them because O.J. is in them? Kevin Spacey movies are over for me, too, because of his creepy behavior, whether convicted or not. And putting Ray Lewis on television as an NFL commentator after his involvement in a double murder at the 2000 Super Bowl, offends me.

Again, we don't know what his involvement was, but he was clearly covering something up.

On the field, he was one of the greatest NFL linebackers ever. Just as O.J. Simpson was one of the best running backs to ever play the game. But how do we get past the taint? And should we?

### Romance at 70

In case you missed it, last week the two lovebirds from the Golden Bachelor, grandpa's version of spin the bottle, announced their divorce after three months of marriage. Three months? Some one night stands that last longer than that. I've spent more time in couples counseling.

I don't want to disparage winter romances. Or even blizzard romances with icebergs, but this botoxed couple just seemed a little, well, creepy. Not that dating on national television would attract creepy people.

I long ago came to the conclusion that dating is all that men and women should do. We should live alone during the week and date on weekends. Or just get a dog. Or a cat. Or a rhinoceros. Or a rabid raccoon. Maybe I'm jaded. Perhaps I'm tired. It would make for better television, though.

Until next week...



## SOUTH DAKOTA SEARCHLIGHT

<https://southdakotasearchlight.com>

### **2024 South Dakota State Fair will start a day earlier, increasing admission costs**

**BY: MAKENZIE HUBER - APRIL 15, 2024 5:00 PM**

The South Dakota State Fair will start a day earlier this year, increasing weeklong admission prices because of the additional day.

The fair, held in Huron at the end of August each year, will start on the Wednesday before Labor Day and end on Labor Day. The "necessary and beneficial" extra day will allow for expanded programming and more flexible scheduling, South Dakota State Fairgrounds Manager Peggy Besch told legislators at Monday's Rules Review Committee meeting at the Capitol in Pierre.

Scheduling within a five-day week has become a "significant challenge," Besch added.

"Open Class, 4-H and FFA exhibits, which are the backbone of our agricultural heritage, often find themselves squeezed into tight timeslots stretching from early morning well into evening," Besch said. "This leaves little room for families to immerse themselves in the diverse array of experiences that the state fair has to offer."

With the approval of the committee, weeklong admission to the fair for adults increased from \$40 to \$50, and weeklong admission for children between 6 and 15 years old increased from \$20 to \$25. Prepaid family value packs, which include four adult passes, increased from \$130 to \$160. Camper packages also increased by \$30 for each package.

Besch said a one-day addition was "strongly endorsed" at a meeting during the 2023 state fair.

"The proposal to shift the official start day of the fair to Wednesday is not merely a logistical adjustment, but a strategic move to enhance the vitality and inclusivity of this cherished tradition," Besch said.

There were no opponents to the additional day or the increase in admission costs.

A 2023 increase in daily admission costs was meant to support the increasing cost of running the fair, which sits on 190 acres and has more than 100 buildings. The committee rejected a proposed rule in 2022 to increase admission and camping fees, which were meant to offset rising costs.

Attendance at last year's state fair was 178,246.

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

### **Trump on trial: Former president faces criminal charges of falsifying business records**

**BY: ZACHARY ROTH - APRIL 15, 2024 3:37 PM**

NEW YORK — The trial of former President Donald Trump kicked off Monday in a lower Manhattan courtroom, marking the first time in U.S. history that an ex-president has been tried on criminal charges.

Trump, the presumptive Republican nominee for president, appeared in the state of New York courtroom, where he is charged with falsifying business records to conceal a sex scandal involving a porn star.

The case, brought by Manhattan District Attorney Alvin Bragg, is one of four state and federal indictments the former president is facing. But because of delays in the other cases, it may be the only one that goes

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to trial before the November election, significantly boosting its potential political impact.

Jury selection began Monday afternoon, and is expected to last around two weeks.

But before potential jurors were brought in to the courtroom, Justice Juan Merchan announced rulings on several motions.

Merchan said he would reject a motion from Trump's defense team which cited alleged conflicts of interest involving the judge's family and asked him to step down from the case.

"There is no agenda here," Merchan said, adding: "We want to follow the law. We want justice to be done."

But Merchan said he would not allow the prosecution to introduce evidence about allegations that Trump committed sexual assaults, calling the claims "rumors."

Bragg's team wanted jurors to hear the claims, made in the leadup to the 2016 election, to bolster their case that Trump schemed to hide evidence of an affair, because he was worried about losing support from women voters.

Merchan also said he would not allow the jury to hear the "Access Hollywood" tape, but that prosecutors could introduce into evidence comments made by Trump and caught on the tape. In the recording, which emerged shortly before the 2016 election, Trump brags about grabbing women's genitals, adding: "When you're a star, they let you do it."

Prosecutors asked Merchan Monday to fine Trump for violating an April 1 gag order imposed by the judge. In recent social media posts, Trump attacked Michael Cohen, his former fixer, and the porn star Stormy Daniels.

Merchan said he would hear arguments April 23 on that issue.

Cohen, a former lawyer who has fallen out with Trump, is expected to be a key witness in the case, and Daniels also may testify. Defense lawyers have not yet said whether Trump will testify in his own defense.

## Payments to Daniels

At the center of the case are payments totaling \$130,000 to Daniels, made by Cohen in the closing weeks of the 2016 election campaign. Cohen admitted in his plea deal the payments were aimed at buying Daniels' silence about an affair she says she had with Trump a decade earlier.

Trump faces 34 felony counts, and he could face a maximum of four years in prison if convicted. But Merchan also could sentence him to probation without prison time.

Legal experts have noted a major challenge facing Bragg: In New York state, falsifying business records on its own is a misdemeanor, not a felony. But it becomes a felony if the falsification was done to conceal another crime.

Bragg alleges that Trump intended to conceal state and federal campaign finance violations. The payments, prosecutors allege, were illegal and unreported donations to Trump's campaign, because if Daniels' story became public, it could have damaged Trump's image when voters went to the polls.

Bragg also alleges that Trump intended to conceal a tax crime stemming from how Cohen was reimbursed for the payments to Daniels.

Prosecutors don't need to prove beyond a reasonable doubt that Trump committed these alleged underlying crimes. But they do need to show that Trump intended to conceal them — something defense lawyers are expected to strongly contest.

## Political effect

The most important impact of any Trump conviction could be political. Most polling averages currently give Trump a very slim lead over President Joe Biden. But there is some evidence that if Trump were to be convicted of a felony, a small but significant slice of the electorate would be less likely to support him.

Though the charges in the case may seem simultaneously salacious and dry — prosecutors will present reams of sometimes arcane corporate documents — democracy advocates say it in fact involves important principles, and centers on a scheme to undermine a fair election.

"This is not a case solely about hush money payments," Norm Eisen, a legal analyst and prominent

Trump critic who was Democratic co-counsel for the U.S. House Judiciary Committee during Trump's first impeachment, told reporters Thursday. "It's about Trump's alleged actions to hide information from voters to cover up election interference."

In a small park outside the Manhattan Criminal Court, Trump supporters gathered Monday to affirm their loyalty to the former president, and to lambaste the trial — as Trump himself has frequently done — as a politically motivated witch hunt.

"What's happening in that courtroom is a total sham," said Steve Merczynski, of New York City, who wore a hand-embroidered scarf declaring "MAGA again."

"This is all run by the Biden criminal administration," Merczynski added. (There is no evidence that the Biden administration influenced the prosecution.)

Another Trump supporter, Dion Cini, said he didn't want to judge Trump's personal life.

"I've been to Thailand three times," said Cini, a New Yorker who was once banned from Disney World for holding a Trump 2020 flag on Splash Mountain. "What do you think I do in Thailand, just sit in a chair? No, I go out and have fun and meet women. That's what we do as men."

Among the few anti-Trump demonstrators was Marc Leavitt, who stood on a park bench as he played the national anthem and other patriotic songs on a flute.

"I think the rule of law should proceed appropriately, and that's what's happening today," said Leavitt. "And that's a very good thing for America."

*Zachary Roth is the National Democracy Reporter for States Newsroom.*

## Water from arsenic-laced wells could protect the Pine Ridge reservation from wildfires

**BY: TAYLAR DAWN STAGNER, GRIST - APRIL 15, 2024 1:41 PM**

With decades of experience, Reno Red Cloud knows more than anyone about water on the Pine Ridge Reservation in South Dakota. As climate change makes fire season on the reservation — which covers more than 2 million acres — more dangerous, he sees a growing need for water to fight those fires.

Red Cloud is the director of water resources for the Oglala Sioux Tribe and he recently received nearly \$400,000 in federal funding to revive old wells that have been dormant for decades. He thinks the wells can produce over a million gallons of water a day. But there's one catch: They have elevated levels of arsenic.

"We have to look at using these wells," he said. "They are just sitting there. Instead of plugging them, like a Band-Aid, let's utilize them for the future of drought mitigation."

The Oglala Sioux's water needs have doubled in recent years, with longer and hotter summers and, of course, drought. With more wildfires on the horizon, the water Red Cloud envisions could not only add to the quality of life for those on the reservation, but he sees this as a climate solution for reservations across the nation.

"We think other reservations could do the same," he said.

Arsenic can't be seen, smelled, or tasted. It is a natural element found in the upper parts of the Earth's crust, and while a big dose of it is fatal, the more common issue is consumption of low levels of arsenic over long periods of time.

Jaymie Meliker, a professor at Stony Brook University in New York and an authority on arsenic in drinking water, said the water Red Cloud wants to use should be safe to use to fight fires.

"Nothing is really toxic," he said. "One of the first things they teach you in toxicology is [that] it's the dose that makes the poison."

He said the concentration of arsenic in the soil is measured in parts per million while in the water it is measured in parts per billion. It's "still a thousandfold as small as the levels that are already in the soil, back into the soil. I don't see a big risk from that at all."

The wells were installed in the 1970s when the United States Department of Housing and Urban Develop-



ment funded and developed them for home projects on reservation land. Back then, the acceptable level of arsenic in a water supply was 50 parts per billion, and then in 2001 the Environmental Health Agency changed it to 10 parts per billion. When that happened, the pumps were plugged up and there were no plans to use them.

Understandingly, some in the area are hesitant when they hear about arsenic. The water many drink on Pine Ridge is pumped in from the Missouri River but the reservation has many private wells with elevated levels of arsenic. Tribes throughout the U.S. are disproportionately affected by elevated levels of arsenic in their private wells, such as those on the Navajo Nation.

A paper outlining a two-year study on arsenic in drinking water among Indigenous communities in the Northern Plains confirmed that those populations have higher levels of arsenic in their water. Prolonged arsenic exposure can lead to cardiovascular disease, diabetes, cancers, and other serious health conditions.

The World Health Organization offers guidelines on the subject, saying, "Low-arsenic water can be used for drinking, cooking and irrigation purposes, whereas high-arsenic water can be used for other purposes such as bathing and washing clothes."

A funding summary of the tribes project said there was speculation on if the water should be used for agriculture and livestock. So, even though Red Cloud is interested in potentially using this water for livestock and agriculture, there is still more research to be done to look at the viability of these wells for other uses.

Red Cloud helped write the 2020 Oglala Sioux's Drought Adoption Plan. New water sources were the first solution to mitigate drought in that report. He hopes that other tribes look at their old wells on reservation lands to see if they can help mitigate drought — or if it's better to just plug them up and let them sit.

"The bottom line is we're looking to deal with extended drought and the increasing intensity of wildfires," he said.

*Taylor Dawn Stagner is Grist's 2023-2024 Indigenous Affairs reporting fellow.*

## Trump makes one last presidential immunity argument to the U.S. Supreme Court

**BY: JACOB FISCHLER - APRIL 15, 2024 5:50 PM**

Hours after Donald Trump sat in a New York courtroom and became the first former president in U.S. history to be a defendant in a criminal trial Monday, his attorneys filed a brief with the U.S. Supreme Court renewing his claim of absolute presidential immunity in another criminal case against him.

In a reply brief responding to Justice Department special counsel Jack Smith's argument last week that former presidents should not be immune from criminal prosecution, Trump's attorneys, led by D. John Sauer of St. Louis, repeated their claim that the framers of the Constitution intended presidents to be immune from prosecution unless they were first impeached and removed from office.

Smith argued last week that because impeachment was inherently political, former presidents must be legally accountable under a separate, apolitical process in courts. Calling Trump's argument "a radical departure from democracy," Smith said the absolute immunity standard would place the president above the law.

Impeachment was insufficient on its own, Smith said, because a president may escape conviction in the U.S. Senate simply because of the partisan makeup of that chamber.

But Trump's attorneys said Monday that Smith's argument missed the point of impeachment as a check and balance on executive power. The process is intended to be political, and difficult to achieve, they wrote.

"That is the point," they wrote. "The Framers required a nationwide political consensus — reflected in a two-thirds vote of the Senate — before authorizing the potentially Republic-shattering act of prosecuting a President for his official acts."

The Supreme Court case is part of a pretrial effort by Trump's attorneys to dismiss a federal criminal case accusing him of pressuring state officials, the Justice Department and then-Vice President Mike Pence to

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overturn the 2020 election results, then allowing a mob of supporters to storm the U.S. Capitol.

Trump, who is again the presumptive Republican nominee for president, has claimed “absolute immunity” from prosecution for his role, saying it was part of his official duties to guard against election fraud.

Trump and his allies brought dozens of suits alleging election fraud, but presented no evidence that fraud had virtually any impact on the 2020 results.

Trump won acquittal in a 2021 Senate trial for the same actions he’s accused of in the underlying federal criminal case when only seven of the 50 GOP senators at the time voted with all Democrats for conviction. Two-thirds of the Senate must vote to impeach.

## **‘Malfeasance may go unpunished’**

The framers of the Constitution wanted a strong executive and were willing to trade some criminal accountability of the president to gain it, Trump’s attorneys wrote Monday. The system of impeachment was part of that goal, they said.

“When the Framers erected the formidable hurdle of impeachment and conviction, they assumed the risk that some Presidential misfeasance might go unpunished,” they wrote.

Presidents are subject to common prosecution for private acts, Trump’s attorneys wrote, but can only be prosecuted for official acts through impeachment.

Trump has long contended his actions on and leading up to Jan. 6, 2021, seeking to block the certification of his election loss in November 2020 should be considered official acts.

Trump’s legal team also said Monday that federal criminal courts, with judges appointed and confirmed by the elected branches of government, were not apolitical alternatives to impeachment, as Smith suggested.

They referred to three other criminal charges the former president faces, which they said were “hyper-politicized.”

“In light of not one, but four, hyper-politicized prosecutions pending against President Trump — in addition to politically motivated civil cases — this argument cannot be taken seriously,” they wrote.

The brief came on the first day of the first criminal case against Trump to go to trial. That case, in New York state, alleges Trump falsified business records to hide hush money payments made to an adult film star during his first run for the White House in 2016.

He is also accused in Georgia state court of conspiring to overturn the 2020 election results in that state.

And a federal grand jury in South Florida indicted him for mishandling and storing in unsecured areas classified documents from his time in office.

Trump has sought to employ the criminal allegations to his political advantage, using them to reinforce his message that he is being targeted by a corrupt system.

## **Oral arguments soon**

The Trump team’s reply brief was the last from either party before oral arguments, scheduled for April 25.

Trump will not be at the Supreme Court for the arguments, as he will be expected at his trial in New York. Judge Juan Merchan, who is overseeing that case, denied Trump’s requested absence that day to attend the Supreme Court hearing, according to reports.

The case arrived at the Supreme Court after the trial judge in the case, Tanya Chutkan, a federal judge for the District of Columbia, in December rejected Trump’s motion to dismiss the charges under the presidential immunity argument.

Trump appealed that ruling, but a unanimous federal appeals court upheld Chutkan’s decision in February.

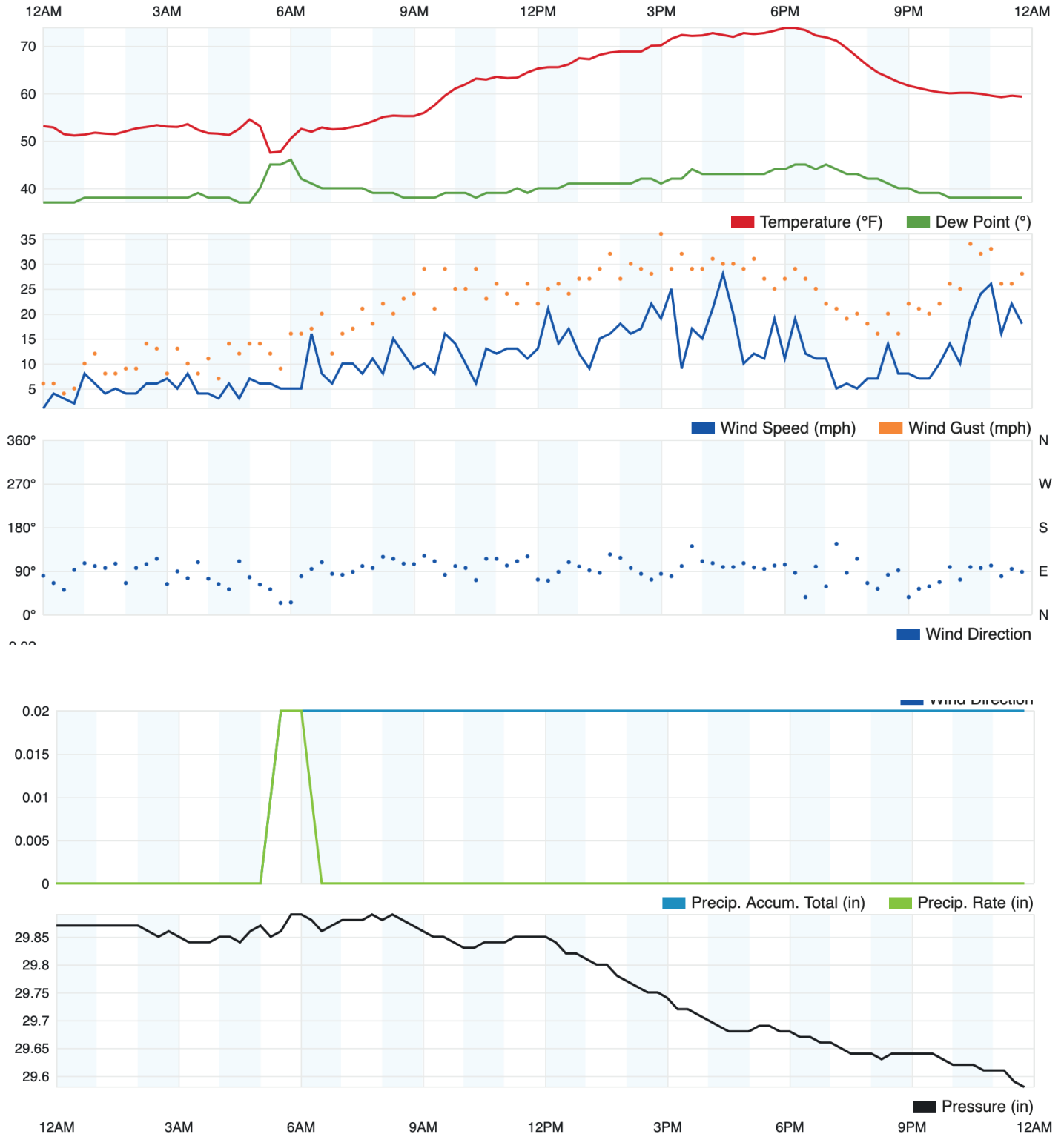
The trial has been on hold while the appeal on the immunity claim is pending.

*Jacob covers federal policy as a senior reporter for States Newsroom. Based in Oregon, he focuses on Western issues. His coverage areas include climate, energy development, public lands and infrastructure.*

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## Yesterday's Groton Weather Graphs





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Tuesday	Tuesday Night	Wednesday	Wednesday Night	Thursday
				
Showers and Breezy	Showers	Breezy. Chance Showers then Mostly Sunny	Partly Cloudy and Breezy then Partly Cloudy	Mostly Sunny and Breezy
High: 61 °F↓	Low: 42 °F	High: 57 °F	Low: 33 °F	High: 48 °F

## Showers & Storms Today. Cooler Thursday through Saturday

**Today**

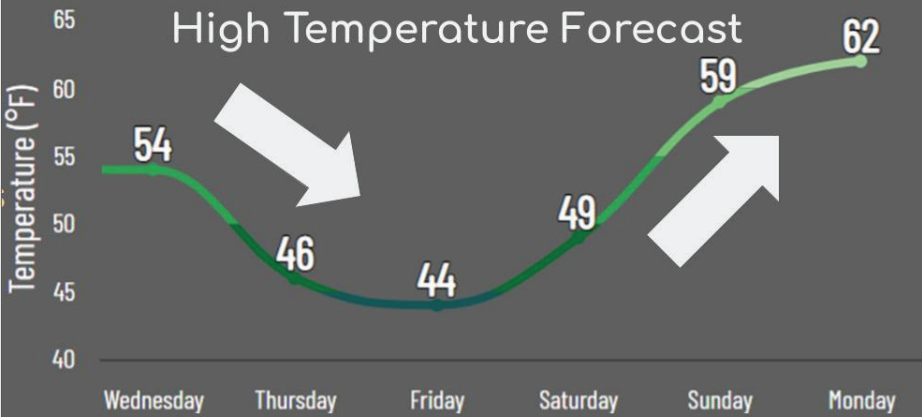
**Rain Showers**

Thunderstorms ending west to east through this evening

Highs in the 50s



Strongest winds during the day today out of the east 40-50 mph over northeastern SD



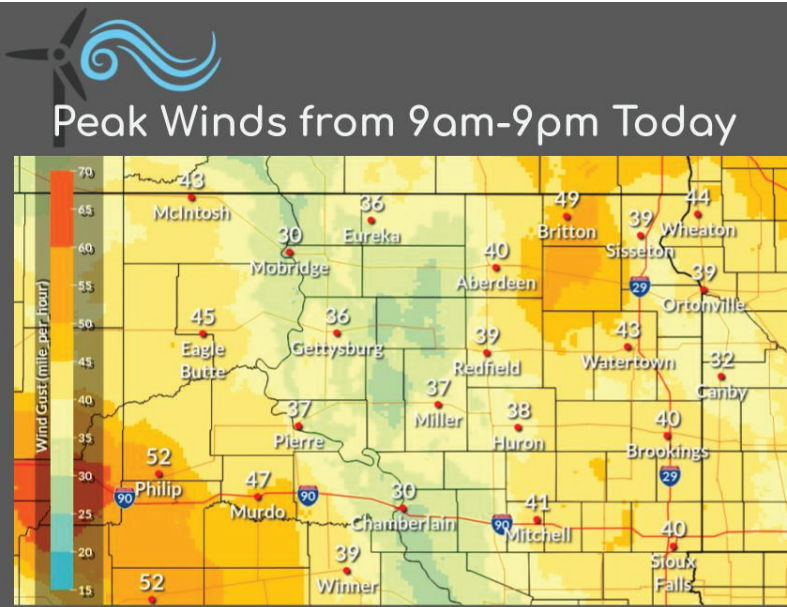
Aberdeen, SD  
Check out your specific forecast at [weather.gov/aberdeen](https://weather.gov/aberdeen)



Rain showers will continue today. Thunderstorms will end over central South Dakota late this afternoon, and over eastern South Dakota and west central Minnesota over the evening hours. The strongest winds during the daytime hours today will be over northeastern South Dakota, gusting 40 to 50 mph out of the east. High temperatures will fall into the 40s to low 50s Thursday through Saturday, before rebounding back into the 50s Sunday and Monday.

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Peak Winds from 9am-9pm Today

Strongest winds today out of the east  
40-50 mph over northeastern SD



Aberdeen, SD  
Check out your specific forecast at [weather.gov/aberdeen](http://weather.gov/aberdeen)

	Maximum Wind Gust Forecast (mph)													
	4/16 Tue							4/17 Wed						
	9am	12pm	3pm	6pm	9pm	12am	3am	6am	9am	12pm	3pm	6pm	9pm	
Aberdeen	39	37	30	25	26	26	29	31	35	35	32	31	24	
Britton	45	49	48	37	25	22	26	30	35	35	36	32	25	
Brookings	38	37	32	26	21	21	29	33	37	37	36	28	17	
Chamberlain	22	22	26	32	33	37	36	35	33	32	29	24	21	
Clark	43	44	40	35	21	28	35	38	37	35	33	30	22	
Eagle Butte	31	38	41	46	41	40	40	37	38	37	37	37	32	
Ellendale	40	39	36	25	22	26	26	31	37	37	33	30	23	
Eureka	36	35	29	24	23	26	33	35	35	38	38	35	28	
Gettysburg	26	24	29	33	36	37	41	39	35	33	35	32	29	
Huron	33	33	30	23	25	31	37	36	37	38	36	29	21	
Kennebec	26	23	32	44	43	44	43	38	37	31	29	28	23	
McIntosh	30	37	43	43	37	38	43	40	44	46	46	45	37	
Milbank	38	40	40	31	23	18	24	33	32	33	31	26	20	
Miller	28	25	25	26	31	35	38	37	35	33	30	28	22	
Mobridge	28	24	29	31	32	32	33	30	33	36	35	35	31	
Murdo	24	36	45	48	45	43	40	36	35	32	30	30	26	
Pierre	22	23	36	43	41	40	38	30	30	30	31	31	28	
Redfield	36	33	28	24	26	31	33	35	35	35	32	30	22	
Sisseton	36	38	39	32	21	18	28	33	35	35	33	30	22	
Watertown	41	43	40	35	25	20	30	37	36	35	33	31	21	
Webster	47	48	49	41	30	24	32	40	39	38	38	36	24	
Wheaton	38	41	44	39	28	18	18	24	29	30	29	26	18	

The strongest winds during the daytime hours today will be over northeastern South Dakota, gusting 40 to 50 mph out of the east. Any thunderstorms could be capable of producing brief winds above 50 mph this morning. Winds will remain elevated with gusts of 30 to 40 mph across much of the area through Wednesday afternoon.



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## Yesterday's Groton Weather

High Temp: 74 °F at 6:01 PM

Low Temp: 47 °F at 5:31 AM

Wind: 37 mph at 3:18 PM

Precip: : 0.02

Day length: 13 hours, 39 minutes

## Today's Info

Record High: 91 in 1913

Record Low: 14 in 1953

Average High: 58

Average Low: 32

Average Precip in April.: 0.79

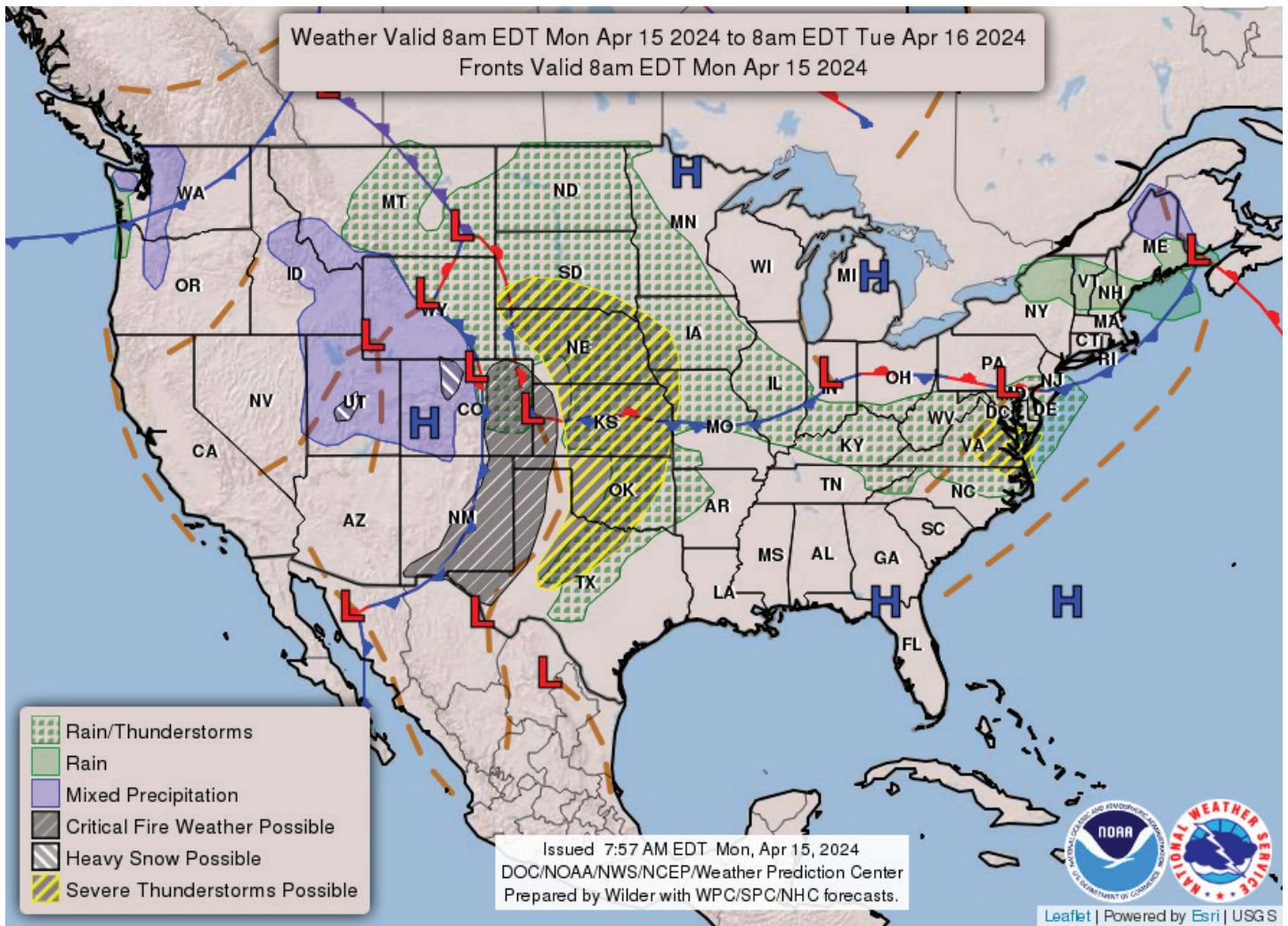
Precip to date in April: 1.21

Average Precip to date: 2.85

Precip Year to Date: 2.16

Sunset Tonight: 8:21:54 pm

Sunrise Tomorrow: 6:40:22 am





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## Today in Weather History

April 16, 1967: Severe thunderstorms moved through areas of central and eastern South Dakota, producing large hail, damaging winds, and even a few tornadoes. The event began in the mid-afternoon hours and lasted into the evening. One of the tornadoes, an F1, formed over Lake Poinsette in Hamlin County. From there it moved from southwest to northeast, toward the northern shore, then made a loop and traveled toward the southeast. Two trailer houses and a few small buildings were damaged. 11 people were injured when a trailer house was turned over to one side, and then turned over on the other side. In Brown County, the storms produced hail 1.75 inches in diameter and 61mph winds.

April 16, 1976: A deepening low-pressure system moved northward out of Nebraska and across western South Dakota. Winds of 60 to 80 mph were reported across the area with gusts over 90 mph in southwest Minnesota. Some recorded wind speeds included 62 mph at Sioux Falls, 70 mph at Brookings, and 82 mph at Watertown. Many buildings were damaged, and many roofs were blown off and at Sioux Falls, and Huron airports planes were overturned. Across southwest Minnesota, many trees were uprooted, and several trucks were blown off of the highway. Across the area, many, barns, outbuildings, sheds, and older structures were demolished.

April 16, 2000: Heavy snow of 6 to 9 inches fell across parts of central and northeast South Dakota during the morning hours. The heavy snow caused many roads to become slushy and difficult to travel. The heavy snow also downed some tree branches. Some snowfall amounts included 6 inches at Ferney, Miller, and Webster; 7 inches at Agar, Mellette, and Twin Brooks; 8 inches at Gettysburg, and 9 inches at Faulkton.

1849: Charleston, South Carolina recorded their latest freeze ever with a temperature of 32 degrees while 6 inches of snow fell at Wilmington, North Carolina. Snow fell as far south as Milledgeville, Georgia. A damaging hard freeze occurred from Texas to Georgia devastating the cotton crop.

1851: "The Lighthouse Storm" of 1851 struck New England on this date. Heavy gales and high seas pounded the coasts of New Hampshire and eastern Massachusetts. The storm arrived at the time of a full moon, and high tide was producing unusually high storm tides. The storm was so named because it destroyed the lighthouse at Cohasset, Massachusetts. Two assistant lighthouse keepers were killed there when the structure was swept away by the storm tide. [Click HERE](#) for more information.

1880 - A tornado near Marshall, MO, carried the heavy timbers of an entire home a distance of twelve miles. (The Weather Channel)

1933 - Franklin Lake, NH, was buried under 35 inches of snow. (Sandra and TI Richard Sanders - 1987)

1960 - A wind gust of 70 mph was measured at the Stapleton International Airport in Denver CO, their highest wind gust of record. (The Weather Channel)

1987 - A slow moving storm system produced heavy rain over North Carolina and the Middle Atlantic Coast States. More than six inches of rain drenched parts of Virginia, and flooding in Virginia claimed three lives. Floodwaters along the James River inundated parts of Richmond VA. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1988 - A storm in the northeastern U.S. produced a foot of snow at Pittsburg VT. Severe thunderstorms produced baseball size hail and spawned five tornadoes in the Southern High Plains Region. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1989 - A cold front, ushering sharply colder air into the north central U.S., brought snow to parts of Montana and North Dakota. At midday the temperature at Cutbank MT was just 22 degrees. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

2008: Typhoon Neoguri forms over the South China Sea on the 15th and rapidly intensifying to attain typhoon strength by the 16th, reaching its peak intensity on the 18th with maximum sustained winds near 109 mph. More than 120,000 people are evacuated from Hainan when heavy rains cause flash floods in low-lying areas. Three fatalities are attributed to the storm, though 40 fishermen are reported missing. Neoguri made landfall in China earlier than any other tropical cyclone on record, about two weeks before the previous record set by Typhoon Wanda in 1971.

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Daily Devotionals

## Seeds of Hope

### LEADING BY EXAMPLE

The military is known for orderliness. Rarely does one see a uniform that is wrinkled or grounds that are unkempt. But there once was an exception.

When General George Marshall took command of the Infantry School at Fort Benning, Georgia before World War II, he found the post in a condition that was unacceptable to him. Having power beyond imagination and control over every individual assigned there, his options were unlimited. He could speak the word, and everyone would fall in line and make the installation glow in the dark. But he did not do that.

Instead of issuing orders to get the post up to his standards, he got out his lawnmower, rake, shovel and paintbrushes and began to make his quarters the example.

And it worked. Soon the officers next door did the same. Then their neighbors and on and on it went until it reached the last home on the grounds. Fort Benning became the example for the Army.

Often the best way to encourage someone to do the right thing is to become an example for them to follow. Paul gave that advice to Timothy: "Be an example to all believers." Paul gives that advice to us!

Prayer: Help us, Father, to live as You lived, to walk as You walked and to talk as You talked so that we will always be Your examples in this world. In Jesus' Name, Amen.

Scripture For Today: Be an example to all believers in what you say, in the way you live, in your love, your faith, and your purity. 1 Timothy 4:12



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: 04.12.24

1 12 14 18 66 16

MegaPlier: 2x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:

**\$148,000,000**

NEXT DRAW: 17 Hrs 25 Mins 59 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

### LOTTO AMERICA

WINNING NUMBERS: 04.15.24

2 12 18 23 52 4

All Star Bonus: 2x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:

**\$2,900,000**

NEXT DRAW: 1 Days 16 Hrs 40 Mins 59 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

### LUCKY FOR LIFE

WINNING NUMBERS: 04.15.24

11 24 25 44 46 4

TOP PRIZE:

**\$7,000/week**

NEXT DRAW: 16 Hrs 55 Mins 59 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

### DAKOTA CASH

WINNING NUMBERS: 04.13.24

11 16 23 29 35

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:

**\$58,000**

NEXT DRAW: 1 Days 16 Hrs 56 Mins 0 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

### POWERBALL

DOUBLE PLAY

WINNING NUMBERS: 04.15.24

3 25 52 60 64 17

TOP PRIZE:

**\$10,000,000**

NEXT DRAW: 1 Days 17 Hrs 25 Mins 0 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

### POWERBALL

WINNING NUMBERS: 04.15.24

7 16 41 56 61 23

Power Play: 3x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:

**\$78,000,000**

NEXT DRAW: 1 Days 17 Hrs 24 Mins 59 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)



## News from the Associated Press

### Salvage crews race against the clock to remove massive chunks of fallen Baltimore bridge

By LEA SKENE Associated Press

SPARROWS POINT, Md. (AP) — Nearly three weeks since Baltimore's Francis Scott Key Bridge collapsed under the impact of a wayward cargo ship, crews are using the largest crane on the Eastern Seaboard to haul the wreckage to a nearby salvage yard.

The heaviest section so far weighed about 450 tons (408 metric tons). In the salvage yard Monday morning, workers disassembled the metal trusses by attacking them with propane torches and a pair of giant shears that sliced them into more manageable pieces. Rising from the water nearby was the Chesapeake 1000, a floating crane with a storied history that includes helping the CIA retrieve part of a sunken Soviet submarine.

The Key Bridge took five years to construct in the 1970s. Now, it's a race against the clock to dismantle the remnants of a fallen Baltimore landmark.

On March 26, six construction workers plunged to their deaths in the collapse. Four bodies have since been recovered.

Salvage crews are hoping to recover the two remaining bodies once more of the debris has been removed. They're also working toward their goal of opening a temporary channel later this month that would allow more commercial traffic to resume through the Port of Baltimore, which has remained largely closed since the March 26 collapse. Officials plan to reopen the port's main channel by the end of May.

So far, over 1,000 tons (907 metric tons) of steel have been removed from the waterway. But the work is tedious, dangerous and incredibly complex, leaders of the operation said Monday during a visit to the salvage yard at Tradepoint Atlantic, the only maritime shipping terminal currently operating in the Port of Baltimore.

The facility, which occupies the site of a former Bethlehem Steel plant northeast of Baltimore, has ramped up operations to accommodate some of the ships originally scheduled to dock at the port's other terminals.

Before removing any pieces of the bridge, divers are tasked with surveying the murky underwater wreckage and assessing how to safely extract the various parts. Coming up with a roadmap is among the biggest challenges, said Robyn Bianchi, an assistant salvage master on the project.

"There's a lot of debris, there's rebar, there's concrete," she said. "We don't know what dangers are down there, so we have to be very methodical and slow with that."

At the same time, crews are working to remove some containers from the cargo ship Dali before lifting steel spans off its bow and refloating the vessel.

"It presents a dynamic hazard," said Joseph Farrell, CEO of Resolve Marine, which is working on refloating the ship. He said once that happens, the Dali will return to the Port of Baltimore. "Getting it out of there is a priority."

### Torch and sandals: What to know about the flame-lighting ceremony in Greece for the Paris Olympics

By NICHOLAS PAPHITIS Associated Press

ANCIENT OLYMPIA, Greece (AP) — A priestess prays to a dead sun god in front of a fallen Greek temple. If the sky is clear, a flame spurts that will burn in Paris throughout the world's top sporting event. Speeches ensue.

On Tuesday, the flame for this summer's Paris Olympics will be lit at the birthplace of the ancient Olympic Games in southern Greece in a meticulously choreographed ceremony.

It will then be carried through Greece for more than 5,000 kilometers (3,100 miles) before being handed

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over to French organizers at the Athens venue used for the first modern Olympics in 1896.

Here's a look at the workings and meaning of the elaborate ceremony held among the ruins of Ancient Olympia ahead of each modern Olympiad.

COULDN'T THE FRENCH JUST LIGHT IT IN PARIS?

Couldn't the Academy Awards just be announced in a conference call?

The pageantry at Olympia has been an essential part of every Olympics for nearly 90 years since the Games in Berlin. It's meant to provide an ineluctable link between the modern event and the ancient Greek original on which it was initially modelled.

Once it's been carried by any means imaginable to the host city — it's been beamed down by satellite, lugged up Mount Everest and towed underwater — the flame kindles a cauldron that burns in the host Olympic stadium until the end of the games. Then it's used for the Paralympics.

SO HOW'S IT LIT?

An actor playing an ancient Greek priestess holds a silver torch containing highly combustible materials over a concave mirror. The sun's rays bounce off every inch of the burnished metal half-globe and come together at one extremely hot point, which ignites the torch.

This happens inside the archaeological site at Olympia, before the ancient temple of Hera — wife of Zeus, king of the Greek gods, whose own ruined temple lies close by.

The flame is eventually used to light the first runner's torch — champagne-colored this year for France — and a long relay through Greece leads to the April 26 handover at the Panathenaic stadium in Athens.

NEED IT BE SO COMPLICATED?

Flames and sandals make for an impressive spectacle, and while the priestess' largely tongue-in-cheek prayer to Apollo might not be answered, the parabolic mirror works well.

The idea was the result of Greek-German cooperation ahead of the 1936 Olympics in Nazi Germany, which were heavy on fanfare — and swastikas. It was based on a mechanism mentioned by ancient writers in a non-Olympic context, and served the desire to blend the games of antiquity with the modern revival.

The 1936 innovations included a torch relay all the way to Berlin, and have been followed, with modifications, ever since. An initial idea to do the relay flame in hollow plant stalks — a nod to the Greek myth of Prometheus who stole fire from the gods — was ditched as impractical.

DID THIS HAPPEN AT THE ANCIENT GAMES?

No. But then modern athletes don't compete naked, or, when victorious, receive olive wreaths and the right to a marble statue in their name — and, for three-times winners, in their actual likeness.

Also, there's no brief cessation of warfare to allow the modern games to go ahead, women not only attend but compete as well, and rich sponsors — or heads of state — don't reap the glory for their chariot teams' wins.

According to ancient Greek tradition, the games of antiquity, held every four years in honor of Zeus, started in 776 B.C. They were the most important of the major Greek sporting festivals, where events included running, wrestling and horse racing. Up to 40,000 spectators could attend.

Like in most preindustrial societies, life in ancient Greece was deeply physical and a well-exercised body was seen as the mark of a gentleman.

The games continued, with minor blips, until the new Christian authorities in Greece banned them as part of the reprehensible pagan past, in A.D. 393.

COULD ANYTHING SPOIL THE SHOW?

Rain. Heavy cloud cover. Then the mirror wouldn't work. But ceremony organizers in Olympia hold several rehearsals in the days leading up to the official lighting, which provide a backup flame should the big day prove sunless.

Potential protests are a worse headache. Twice this century — during the lighting ceremonies for the Beijing Summer and Winter Games — human-rights activists disrupted the ceremony inside the fenced and heavily guarded archaeological site. Even after the embarrassment of the first incident in 2008, Greek police were unable to anticipate and prevent the second, 14 years later.

The flame-lighting, with its broad TV coverage — although the official stream shies from showing any



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form of protest — is a magnet for activists who want to grab headlines. And even if ancient Olympia can, in theory at least, be efficiently guarded, the route of the torch relay through Greece is too long to be protest-proof.

The 2008 incidents at Olympia and abroad led to the scrapping of torch relays outside Greece and the host country.

Further along the road, while the torches are designed to stay lit, there have been hitches in the past. During the relay for the 2014 Sochi Games, wind blew out the torch, which was sneakily rekindled with a lighter. The same quick fix was used at Montreal in 1976, when rain extinguished the Olympic cauldron.

## China's economy grew 5.3% in first quarter, beating expectations

By ZEN SOO AP Business Writer

HONG KONG (AP) — China's economy expanded at a faster than expected pace in the first three months of the year, helped by policies aimed at stimulating growth and stronger demand, the government said Tuesday.

The world's second-largest economy expanded at a 5.3% annual pace in January-March, beating analysts' forecasts of about 4.8%, official data show. Compared to the previous quarter, the economy grew 1.6%.

China's economy has struggled to bounce back from the COVID-19 pandemic, with a slowdown in demand and a property crisis weighing on its growth.

The better-than-expected data Tuesday came days after China reported its exports sank 7.5% in March compared to the year before, while imports also weakened. Inflation cooled, reflecting deflationary pressures resulting from slack demand amid a crisis in the property sector.

Industrial output for the first quarter was up 6.1% compared to the same time last year, and retail sales grew at an annual pace of 4.7%. Fixed investment, in factories and equipment, grew 4.5% compared to the same period a year earlier.

The strong growth in January-March was supported by "broad manufacturing outperformance," festivities-boosted household spending due to the Lunar New Year holidays and policies that helped boost investments, according to China economist Louise Loo of Oxford Economics.

"However, 'standalone' March activity indicators suggest weakness coming through post-Lunar New Year," she said. "External demand conditions also remain unpredictable, as seen in March's sharp export underperformance."

Loo noted that an unwinding of excess inventory, normalization of household spending after the holidays and a cautious approach to government spending and other stimulus will affect growth in this quarter.

Policymakers have unveiled a raft of fiscal and monetary policy measures as Beijing seeks to boost the economy. China has set an ambitious gross domestic product (GDP) growth target of about 5% for 2024.

Such strong growth usually would push share prices across the region higher. But on Tuesday, Asian shares fell sharply after stocks retreated on Wall Street.

The Shanghai Composite index lost 1.4% and the Hang Seng in Hong Kong lost 1.9%. The benchmark for the smaller market in Shenzhen, in southern China, lost 2.8%.

Stronger growth in the region's biggest economy normally would be seen as a positive for its neighbors, which increasingly rely on demand from China to power their own economies. However, strong growth figures are also viewed as a signal that the government will hold back on further stimulus.

## Pro-Palestinian demonstrators shut down airport highways and key bridges in major US cities

By SOPHIA TAREEN Associated Press

CHICAGO (AP) — Pro-Palestinian demonstrators blocked roadways in Illinois, California, New York and the Pacific Northwest on Monday, temporarily shutting down travel into some of the nation's most heavily used airports, onto the Golden Gate and Brooklyn bridges and on a busy West Coast highway.

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In Chicago, protesters linked arms and blocked lanes of Interstate 190 leading into O'Hare International Airport around 7 a.m. in a demonstration they said was part of a global "economic blockade to free Palestine," according to Rifqa Falaneh, one of the organizers.

Traffic in the San Francisco Bay Area was snarled for hours as demonstrators shut down all vehicle, pedestrian and bike traffic on the Golden Gate Bridge and chained themselves to 55-gallon drums filled with cement across Interstate 880 in Oakland. Protesters marching into Brooklyn blocked Manhattan-bound traffic on the Brooklyn Bridge. In Eugene, Oregon, protesters blocked Interstate 5, shutting down traffic on the major highway for about 45 minutes.

Protesters say they chose O'Hare in part because it is one of the largest airports. Among other things, they've called for an immediate cease-fire in the war between Israel and Hamas.

Anti-war protesters have demonstrated in Chicago near daily since Hamas' Oct. 7 attack on southern Israel that killed around 1,200 people. Israeli warplanes and ground troops have since conducted a scorched-earth campaign on the Gaza Strip.

The Israeli offensive has killed more than 33,700 Palestinians, according to the Gaza health ministry. The ministry does not differentiate between civilians and combatants in its count but says women and children make up two-thirds of the dead.

O'Hare warned travelers on the social platform X to take alternative forms of transportation with car travel "substantially delayed this morning due to protest activity."

Some travelers stuck in standstill traffic left their cars and walked the final leg to the airport along the freeway, trailing their luggage behind them.

Among them was Madeline Hannan from suburban Chicago. She was headed to O'Hare for a work trip to Florida when her and her husband's car ended up stalled for 20 minutes. She got out and "both ran and speed walked" more than a mile (1.6 kilometers). She said she made it to the gate on time, but barely.

"This was an inconvenience," she said in a telephone interview from Florida. "But in the grand scheme of things going on overseas, it's a minor inconvenience."

While individual travelers may have been affected, operations at the airport appeared near normal with delays of under 15 minutes, according to the Chicago Department of Aviation.

Inbound traffic toward O'Hare resumed around 9 a.m.

Near Seattle, the Washington State Department of Transportation said a demonstration closed the main road to Seattle-Tacoma International Airport. Social media posts showed people holding a banner and waving Palestinian flags while standing on the highway, which reopened about three hours later.

About 20 protesters were arrested at the Golden Gate Bridge demonstration and traffic resumed shortly after noon, according to the California Highway Patrol. The agency said officers were making arrests at two points on the interstate, including one spot where roughly 300 protesters refused orders to disperse.

"Attempting to block or shut down a freeway or state highway to protest is unlawful, dangerous, and prevents motorists from safely reaching their destinations," the agency said in a statement.

Oregon State Police said 52 protesters were arrested for disorderly conduct following the Interstate 5 protest in Eugene, Oregon, about 110 miles (177 kilometers) south of Portland. Six vehicles were towed from the scene.

New York Police made numerous arrests, saying 150 protesters were initially involved in the march around 3:15 p.m., but that number quickly grew. The bridge was fully reopened by 5 p.m.

In Chicago, dozens of protesters were arrested, according to Falaneh. Chicago police said Monday that "multiple people" were taken into custody after a protest where people obstructed traffic, but they did not have a detailed count.



## Charges against Trump and Jan. 6 rioters at stake as Supreme Court hears debate over obstruction law

By MARK SHERMAN Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — The Supreme Court on Tuesday is taking up the first of two cases that could affect the criminal prosecution of former President Donald Trump for his efforts to overturn his election loss in 2020. Hundreds of charges stemming from the Capitol riot also are at stake.

The justices are hearing arguments over the charge of obstruction of an official proceeding. That charge, stemming from a law passed in the aftermath of the Enron financial scandal more than two decades ago, has been brought against 330 people, according to the Justice Department. The court will consider whether it can be used against those who disrupted Congress' certification of Joe Biden's 2020 presidential election victory over Trump.

The former president and presumptive nominee for the 2024 Republican nomination is facing two charges in the case brought by special counsel Jack Smith in Washington that could be knocked out with a favorable ruling from the nation's highest court. Next week, the justices will hear arguments over whether Trump has "absolute immunity" from prosecution in the case, a proposition that has so far been rejected by two lower courts.

The first former U.S. president under indictment, Trump is on trial on hush money charges in New York and also has been charged with election interference in Georgia and with mishandling classified documents in Florida.

In Tuesday's case, the court is hearing an appeal from Joseph Fischer, a former Pennsylvania police officer who has been indicted on seven counts, including obstruction, for his actions on Jan. 6, 2021, when a mob of Trump supporters stormed the Capitol in a bid to keep Biden, a Democrat, from taking the White House. Lawyers for Fischer argue that the charge doesn't cover his conduct.

The obstruction charge, which carries up to 20 years behind bars, is among the most widely used felony charges brought in the massive federal prosecution following the deadly insurrection.

Roughly 170 Jan. 6 defendants have been convicted of obstructing or conspiring to obstruct the Jan. 6 joint session of Congress, including the leaders of two far-right extremist groups, the Proud Boys and Oath Keepers. A number of defendants have had their sentencings delayed until after the justices rule on the matter.

Some rioters have even won early release from prison while the appeal is pending over concerns that they might end up serving longer than they should have if the Supreme Court rules against the Justice Department. That includes Kevin Seefried, a Delaware man who threatened a Black police officer with a pole attached to a Confederate battle flag as he stormed the Capitol. Seefried was sentenced last year to three years behind bars, but a judge recently ordered that he be released one year into his prison term while awaiting the Supreme Court's ruling.

The high court case focuses on whether the anti-obstruction provision of a law that was enacted in 2002 in response to the financial scandal that brought down Enron Corp. can be used against Jan. 6 defendants.

Fischer's lawyers argue that the provision was meant to close a loophole in criminal law and discourage the destruction of records in response to an investigation. Until the Capitol riot, they told the court, every criminal case using the provision had involved allegations of destroying or otherwise manipulating records.

But the administration says the other side is reading the law too narrowly, arguing it serves "as a catchall offense designed to ensure complete coverage of all forms of corrupt obstruction of an official proceeding," including Fischer's "alleged conduct in joining a violent riot to disrupt the joint session of Congress certifying the presidential election results."

Smith has argued separately in the immunity case that the obstruction charges against Trump are valid, no matter the outcome of Fischer's case.

Most lower court judges who have weighed in have allowed the charge to stand. Among them, U.S. District Judge Dabney Friedrich, a Trump appointee, wrote that "statutes often reach beyond the principal evil that animated them."

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But U.S. District Judge Carl Nichols, another Trump appointee, dismissed the charge against Fischer and two other defendants, writing that prosecutors went too far. A divided panel of the federal appeals court in Washington reinstated the charge before the Supreme Court agreed to take up the case.

While it's not important to the Supreme Court case, the two sides present starkly differing accounts of Fischer's actions on Jan. 6. Fischer's lawyers say he "was not part of the mob" that forced lawmakers to flee the House and Senate chambers, noting that he entered the Capitol after Congress had recessed. The weight of the crowd pushed Fischer into a line of police inside, they said in a court filing.

Sen. Tom Cotton of Arkansas and Reps. Jim Jordan of Ohio, Lauren Boebert of Colorado, Matt Gaetz of Florida and Marjorie Taylor Greene of Georgia are among 23 Republican members of Congress who say the administration's use of the obstruction charge "presents an intolerable risk of politicized prosecutions. Only a clear rebuke from this Court will stop the madness."

The Justice Department says Fischer can be heard on a video yelling "Charge!" before he pushed through a crowd and "crashed into the police line." Prosecutors also cite text messages Fischer sent before Jan. 6 saying things might turn violent and social media posts after the riot in which he wrote, "we pushed police back about 25 feet."

More than 1,350 people have been charged with Capitol riot-related federal crimes. Approximately 1,000 of them have pleaded guilty or been convicted by a jury or judge after a trial.

## **Donald Trump brings his campaign to the courthouse as his criminal hush money trial begins**

By JILL COLVIN and MICHAEL R. SISAK Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — Former President Donald Trump began his day as a criminal defendant lashing out at the judge and prosecutors, casting himself as a victim and angrily posting on social media.

In other words: a familiar routine.

But inside the courtroom, which was closed to TV cameras, Trump was a different man — reserved and muted in a stark departure from his feisty approach to other legal troubles.

The contrast spoke to the gravity of his situation. Trump is now the first former president ever to stand trial on criminal charges and faces the prospect, if he loses, of becoming the first major American presidential candidate in history to run as a convicted felon.

Trump is accused in the case of falsifying business records to hide alleged hush money payments made to a porn star to keep her from going public during his 2016 campaign with allegations of an affair.

The trial is expected to last at least six weeks and Trump, the presumptive Republican presidential nominee, is required to attend every day court is in session — a schedule that will dramatically alter his daily life and his ability to campaign in battleground states.

So Trump instead brought his campaign to the courthouse, delivering statements before and after the day's proceedings, which he again cast as nothing more than a politically motivated effort by his rivals to hinder his campaign.

"This is political persecution," he steamed after arriving with a phalanx of lawyers and several senior aides, but without his wife or other family members. "This is an assault on our country," he went on.

Trump is already well practiced in the art of campaigning from the courtroom. In addition to appearances related to his four criminal trials, Trump this year voluntarily attended most days of his civil fraud trial as well as a defamation case brought by the writer E. Jean Carroll, who had accused Trump of rape.

Those two trials did not end well for Trump: The former president was found liable in both cases, and now owes over half a billion dollars, including interest.

During those hearings, Trump was often admonished by the judges, who instructed him to be quiet or answer questions more succinctly. At one point, the judge in the Carroll suit threatened to kick Trump out of the courtroom for speaking loudly. Another day he stormed out. Trump also openly sparred with the judge in his civil fraud case, including from the witness stand.

Such behavior would not be tolerated in a criminal courtroom and Judge Juan Merchan made clear



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Trump could be sent to jail and prosecuted separately if he were to engage in such disruptive behavior.

On Monday, Trump did not.

At times, he was seen whispering and passing notes with Todd Blanche, his lead attorney. But during other stretches, Trump slouched forward, casting his gaze toward the ceiling, or leaned back in his chair with his arms folded and his eyes closed.

Every movement was memorialized by a small pool of reporters inside. As he entered the courtroom, Trump "paused for a split second" and "licked his lips" before walking up the courtroom's center aisle. When he was introduced as the defendant, Trump turned and gave prospective jurors "a little tight-lipped smirk." Later, when he exited the courtroom for a break, Trump glared at a New York Times reporter who earlier had reported Trump had fallen asleep in his chair.

While his body language was carefully parsed, he was seen more than heard.

During the first day of his trial, Trump said just five words on the record — "Yes" once, and "Yes, sir" twice — as he was read his so-called "Parker warnings" informing him that his right to be present at the trial could be revoked if he acted out and that he could be sent to jail for disruptive behavior.

It remains unclear how long Trump's restraint will last as the trial drags on.

The sterile, fluorescent-lit courtroom is a world away from the gilded Mar-a-Lago club where he has taken up residency in his post-presidential life. There he is surrounded by doting staff and ardent supporters who deliver standing ovations every night as he enters the dining room.

In the courtroom, Trump was introduced to jurors not as president — as his aides still call him — but "Mr. Donald J. Trump" — and faced restraints, including the prospect that he might not be granted permission to attend his youngest son's high school graduation.

The judge has not ruled on the matter, but did bar Trump from traveling to Washington next Thursday, when the Supreme Court will take up his argument that, as a former president, he is immune from prosecution.

"We think that it is important for the court to remind Mr. Trump that he is a criminal defendant and that he is under the court's supervision," one prosecutor, Christopher Conroy, said.

With Trump stuck in New York for the foreseeable future, aides have been planning rallies and other political events on weekends and on Wednesdays, when court is not supposed to be in session. Merchan said Monday that Wednesdays could be added if the trial falls behind schedule.

Aides are also considering possible events around New York after court ends for the day. Trump has often talked about wanting to campaign in his home state, even though New York remains overwhelmingly Democratic.

He is also expected to continue to speak from the courthouse and hold press conferences to spin each day's proceedings, as he has in his other trials.

While Trump has complained about being taken off the campaign trail, he has been keeping a relatively light schedule of public events since he locked up the GOP nomination last month, with most of his rallies scheduled on weekends anyway. Instead, he has been focused on fundraising as he tries to close the gap with his Democratic rival, President Joe Biden.

He is also expected to rely more heavily on surrogates. On Monday, allies including North Dakota Gov. Doug Burgum, tech entrepreneur Vivek Ramaswamy and Florida Rep. Byron Donalds — all potential vice presidential or cabinet picks — fanned out across cable networks to blast the case.

Trump's indictments proved beneficial during the primaries, helping him rake in tens of millions of dollars from angry supporters and denying his GOP rivals the media spotlight as they were trying to gain traction.

It's unclear, however, how a criminal trial and possible conviction resonate with the broader general election audience, which includes more moderate and independent voters that could decide the race.

Half of Americans say they would consider Trump unfit to be president if he is convicted in the case, according to new AP-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research poll.

But many are also skeptical he can get a fair shake from jurors selected in the cases. The poll found just 2 in 10 U.S. adults are extremely or very confident jurors can be fair and impartial when evaluating

the former president. About 4 in 10 are not very or not confident at all

The details of the case are salacious — involving a porn star, tabloids and hush money payments. But the case is widely seen as posing less of a legal risk to Trump than his other cases, which accuse him of conspiring to overturn the results of the 2020 election and of charges under the Espionage Act over his hoarding of classified documents that could lead to serious jail time.

But the hush money case could be the only one that makes it to trial before November's vote.

Biden's campaign, meanwhile, ignored Monday's proceedings as his aides seek to avoid the appearance of judicial interference.

Campaign officials said Monday that they will instead focus on continuing to present a political split-screen between the two men, with the president focused on governing and Trump focused on himself.

That contrast was especially striking this weekend, as Iran launched an attack against Israel and Biden worked to prevent a wider Middle East escalation, speaking by phone with Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and Jordan's King Abdullah II.

He'll spend the week campaigning in battleground Pennsylvania, with events planned in Scranton, Pittsburgh and Philadelphia, as Trump remains in court.

## Trump trial: Why can't Americans see or hear what is going on inside the courtroom?

By DAVID BAUDER AP Media Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — It's a moment in history — the first U.S. president facing criminal charges in an American courtroom. Yet only a handful of observers are able to see or even hear what is going on.

Instead, most of the nation is getting news of former President Donald Trump's hush money trial second-hand. Starting with preliminary motions and jury selection Monday, reporters in a Manhattan courtroom must convey what is being said to the outside world after the fact.

That's all because New York state law regarding media coverage of court proceedings is one of the most restrictive in the country. Last week's death of O.J. Simpson, whose murder trial beamed live from a California courtroom captivated a nation three decades ago, was a telling reminder of how New York is behind the times — or, at least, a holdout.

WHY WON'T NEW YORK LET ME SEE IT?

Regulations limiting media coverage in courtrooms date back nearly a century, when the spectacle of bright flashbulbs and camera operators standing on witness tables during the 1935 trial of the man accused of kidnapping and killing Charles Lindbergh's baby son horrified the legal community, according to a 2022 report by the New York-based Fund for Modern Courts.

Rules to enforce decorum spread nationally, amended to account for the invention of television, as defense lawyers worried that video coverage would harm their cases, the report said.

Yet an interest in open government chipped away at these laws and — slowly, carefully — video cameras began to be permitted in courts across the country, often at the discretion of judges presiding in individual cases.

New York allowed them, too, on an experimental basis between 1987 and 1997, but they were shut down. Lobbyists for defense lawyers remain strong in New York and hold particular sway among lawyers in the state Assembly, said Victor Kovner, a former New York City corporation counsel who advocates for open courtrooms.

New York and Louisiana are the only states remaining that completely restrict video coverage, the Fund for Modern Courts said.

To Kovner and others, that's outrageous.

"We're the media capital of the world, we like to think, and the fact that cameras aren't permitted in one of our three branches of government is unacceptable," said New York State Sen. Brad Hoylman-Sigal, who has sponsored a bill to try to change that.

"It's one of the most consequential trials of our modern age," the senator said. "I think the public has a

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right to see exactly what happens in that courtroom.”

WAIT — I SAW A PICTURE OF TRUMP IN COURT AT THE TRIAL’S START

That’s because the presiding judge, Juan M. Merchan, permitted a handful of still photographers to shoot photos of Trump before the day’s proceedings started. Once court was called into session, courtroom sketch artists — a dying communications form — hold sway.

There is actually some video coverage of the trial, available on monitors in an overflow room adjacent to the main courtroom. It was packed Monday with reporters, court officers and a few members of the public, including Ron Sinibaldi, a former accountant from Long Island who lined up outside the courthouse before midnight for a seat.

“I read presidential biographies,” Sinibaldi said. “I go to presidential libraries. I’m here for the history.”

HOW CAN THOSE INVOLVED GET AROUND THE RESTRICTIONS?

In a hallway outside of the courtroom, a limited number of cameras and a small pool of reporters are positioned to capture remarks of anyone involved in the trial who want to address the outside world. That included Trump, even before the proceedings started.

Absent live coverage of the trial, how often the former president chooses to take advantage of those cameras and whether news organizations carry his remarks either live, taped or not at all will play a big role in how the case is perceived publicly.

MSNBC carried his remarks live on Monday morning. “They’re trying to grab the narrative regardless of the outcome,” CNN reporter Phil Mattingly said of the Trump defense team.

HOW ARE JOURNALISTS COVERING THE TRIAL HANDLING IT?

With some difficulty. CNN stationed a team on the streets of Manhattan outside the courtroom, where a truck festooned with pro-Trump flags frequently drove by, blaring horns and music from loudspeakers. Reporters sometimes struggled to be heard. “It is kind of a circus down here,” CNN’s Kaitlan Collins said.

Commentators and experts, many of them with experience in jury selection, offered opinions from outside the courtroom or from studios. Fox News analyst Jonathan Turley said “most cities, at least those outside of New York,” will see the case as a weaponization of criminal justice.

With estimates that jury selection could take two weeks, and no way of showing it, journalists will have a lot of time to fill unless they turn their attention elsewhere.

WILL OTHER TRUMP CASES BE TELEVISED?

Georgia, where Trump faces charges of election meddling, gives judges discretion over whether to allow television cameras. Superior Court of Fulton County Judge Scott McAfee has said he will make all hearings and trials in that case available for broadcast. That has already included hearings on whether Fulton County District Attorney Fani Willis would be allowed to argue the case.

Federal courts do not allow cameras in criminal cases. Trump is facing separate federal cases for election interference and mishandling classified documents, although it is not clear when, or if, trials will take place.

The feds offer one glimmer of hope: The U.S. Supreme Court permits audio of oral arguments to be broadcast outside of the courtroom. But there’s no indication that this would apply to Trump’s case. New York’s law does not allow audio coverage of his hush money trial.

Proponents of legislation to open up New York courts to electronic media coverage are hoping the attention paid to the Trump case may boost their proposals. The idea is being considered as part of current negotiations over the New York state budget so, theoretically, a new law could even affect the Trump trial if it is passed and goes into effect immediately.

Given New York state’s history, it’s best not to count on it.



## Trump will return to court after first day of hush money criminal trial ends with no jurors picked

By MICHAEL R. SISAK, JENNIFER PELTZ, JAKE OFFENHARTZ and ALANNA DURKIN RICHER Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — Donald Trump will return to a New York courtroom Tuesday as a judge works to find a panel of jurors who will decide whether the former president is guilty of criminal charges alleging he falsified business records to cover up a sex scandal during the 2016 campaign.

The first day of Trump's history-making trial in Manhattan ended with no one yet chosen to be on the panel of 12 jurors and six alternates. Dozens of people were dismissed after saying they didn't believe they could be fair, though dozens of other prospective jurors have yet to be questioned.

It's the first of Trump's four criminal cases to go to trial and may be the only one that could reach a verdict before voters decide in November whether the presumptive Republican presidential nominee should return to the White House. It puts Trump's legal problems at the center of the closely contested race against President Joe Biden, with Trump painting himself as the victim of a politically motivated justice system working to deprive him of another term.

Trump has pleaded not guilty to 34 felony counts of falsifying business records as part of an alleged effort to keep salacious — and, he says, bogus — stories about his sex life from emerging during his 2016 campaign. On Monday, Trump called the case brought by Manhattan District Attorney Alvin Bragg a "scam" and "witch hunt."

The charges center on \$130,000 in payments that Trump's company made to his then-lawyer, Michael Cohen. He paid that sum on Trump's behalf to keep porn actor Stormy Daniels from going public with her claims of a sexual encounter with Trump a decade earlier. Trump has denied the sexual encounter ever happened.

Prosecutors say the payments to Cohen were falsely logged as legal fees. Prosecutors have described it as part of a scheme to bury damaging stories Trump feared could help his opponent in the 2016 race, particularly as Trump's reputation was suffering at the time from comments he had made about women.

Trump has acknowledged reimbursing Cohen for the payment and that it was designed to stop Daniels from going public about the alleged encounter. But Trump has previously said it had nothing to do with the campaign.

Jury selection could take several more days — or even weeks — in the heavily Democratic city where Trump grew up and catapulted to celebrity status decades before winning the White House.

Only about a third of the 96 people in the first panel of potential jurors brought into the courtroom on Monday remained after the judge excused some members. More than half of the group was excused after telling the judge they could not be fair and impartial and several others were dismissed for other reasons that were not disclosed. Another group of more than 100 potential jurors sent to the courthouse Monday was not yet brought into the courtroom for questioning.

## Characters enter the public domain. Winnie the Pooh becomes a killer. Where is remix culture going?

By ANDREW DALTON AP Entertainment Writer

LOS ANGELES (AP) — The giant stuffed bear, its face a twisted smile, lumbers across the screen. Menacing music swells. Shadows mask unknown threats. Christopher Robin begs for his life. And is that a sledgehammer about to pulverize a minor character's head?

Thus unfolds the trailer for the 2023 movie "Winnie the Pooh: Blood and Honey," a slasher-film riff on A.A. Milne's beloved characters, brought to you by ... the expiration of copyright and the arrival of the classic children's novel into the American public domain.

We were already living in an era teeming with remixes and repurposing, fan fictions and mashups. Then began a parade of characters and stories, led by Winnie the Pooh and Mickey Mouse with many more to

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follow, marching into the public domain, where anyone can do anything with anything and shape it into a new generation of stories and ideas.

After a two-decade drought brought on by congressional extensions of the copyright period in 1998, works again began entering the public domain — becoming available for use without licensing or payment — in 2019. The public began to notice in 2022, when Winnie the Pooh was freed for use as the 95-year copyright period elapsed on the novel that introduced him.

That made possible “Blood and Honey” — not to mention a sequel that dropped last month, a forthcoming third and plans for a “Poohiverse” of twisted public domain characters including Bambi and Pinocchio. Pooh going public was followed this year by a moment many thought would never come: the copyright expiration on the original version of Mickey Mouse, as he appeared in the 1928 Walt Disney short, “Steamboat Willie.”

The mouse and the bear are but the beginning. The heights of 20th century pop culture — Superman among them — lie ahead.

Classic characters, new stories, fresh mashups. Will it be all be a bonanza for makers? Are we entering a heyday of cross-generational collaboration or a plummet in intellectual property values as audiences get sick of seeing variations of the same old stories?

Does a murderous Pooh bear have something to show the 21st century entertainment world?

COULD THIS MAKE A BIG DIFFERENCE?

Films from Hollywood’s early talkie era have started to become public. King Kong, who has one of his enormous feet in the public domain already because of complications between companies that own a piece of him, will shed his remaining chains in 2029. Then, in the 2030s, Superman will soar into the public domain, followed in quick succession by Batman, the Joker and Wonder Woman.

The possibility of new stories is vast. So is the possibility of repetition. Classic stories and characters could get, well a bit tiresome.

“I don’t feel like it’s going to make that big a difference,” says Phil Johnston, an Oscar nominee who co-wrote Disney’s 2011 “Wreck It-Ralph” and co-wrote and co-directed its sequel, 2018’s “Ralph Breaks the Internet.”

“Like, ‘Winnie the Pooh Blood and Honey’ was a novelty, made a bit of a splash, I guess. But if someone makes ‘Steamboat Willie’ (into) a jet ski movie or something, who cares?” he says. “If there’s some great new idea behind it, maybe. But there’s nothing I’m looking at where I’m thinking, ‘Oh, my God, now that ‘The Jazz Singer’ is available, I’m going to redo that.’”

Many creators were clearly anxious to do something with “The Great Gatsby,” which has been subject to several reinterpretations in very different flavors since it became public in 2021, says Jennifer Jenkins, a professor of law and director of Duke’s Center for the Study of Public Domain.

“We have our feminist retellings of ‘The Great Gatsby’, where Jordan gets to tell the story from her perspective, Daisy gets to tell the story from her perspective,” Jenkins says. “We got prequels, we got sequels, we’ve got musicals, TV shows, we’ve got the zombie version because we always do. These are things that you can do with public domain work. These are things that you can do with Mickey Mouse.”

But the newly available works and characters are arriving after years of parent corporations demanding that every creation be tied to their intellectual property. And with some big, “Barbie”-sized exceptions, the returns are growing thinner, and artists themselves are a little sick of it.

“The biggest limiting factor right now is that almost everything that anyone wants is has to be from existing IP,” says Johnston, whose newest project is an animated adaptation of Roald Dahl’s “The Twits” for Netflix. “And that that the notion of an original idea is somehow scary, certainly to a marketing entity, because they just have to work harder to get it into the public’s consciousness. That’s the bummer.”

And while Shakespeare, Dickens and Austen have been public-domain gold mines at various times, other properties have proven more problematic. The forthcoming “Wicked,” starring Ariana Grande and Cynthia Erivo, will be yet another attempt at using the public-domain work of author Frank Baum’s Oz — filtered through a hit novel and Broadway show — to glom onto the classic status of the 1939 “Wizard of Oz” film.

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Previous tries led to little success, and most were outright flops, most recently 2013's "Oz the Great and Powerful," from Disney.

(In an odd quirk of the "Wizard of Oz" rights, the film's most famous artifact, Dorothy's ruby slippers, are still the intellectual property of MGM via the 1939 film. In Baum's book, the shoes were silver.)

## IN THE BEGINNING, DISNEY LED THE WAY WITH PUBLIC DOMAIN SUCCESS

Some of the most effective use ever of public domain properties came from Disney itself in its early decades, turning time-tested folktales and novels into modern classics with "Snow White," "Pinocchio" and "Cinderella." It would later become the primary protector of the most valuable rights in entertainment, from the Marvel universe to the Star Wars galaxy to its homegrown content.

That has meant a major flowering through the years of fan art and fan fiction, with which the company has a mixed relationship.

"When you look at how the Disney organization actually engages with fan art, there's a lot of looking the other way," says Cory Doctorow, an author and activist who advocates for broader public ownership of works. "I always thought that there was so much opportunity for collaboration that was being missed there."

He gives as an example binders full of fan-fiction biographies of the ghosts at Disney World's Haunted Mansion, maintained by the teens who work there, which he observed when working on a project with the company's so-called Imagineers.

"Some of it actually is now part of the lore," Doctorow says. "I think that creatively that is an organization that really embraces that. I think commercially it's an organization that has really struggled with it."

When the law extending copyright by 20 years passed in 1998, musicians including Bob Dylan were among the key figures who had implored Congress to act. Younger generations of musicians, who came up awash in sampling and remixing, made no discernible outcry for another extension. In part this could be because in the streaming era, many of them make little off recorded music.

Jimmy Tamborello, who records and performs electronic music under the name Dntel and as part of The Postal Service — a group whose very name caused trademark headaches with the official version at its inception — says artists are generally happy to allow others to turn their work into new things. The problem is companies that come between them, and get most of the financial benefit.

"There's always a corporation involved," Tamborello says. "I think no one would care if it was just artists to artists. I feel like it would be nice if it was more open, more free. It seems like it has more to do with respecting the original work."

He says it was "really exciting" when the rapper Lil Peep used his hook from The Postal Service's best known song, "Such Great Heights" on a track released on YouTube and Soundcloud even before he made the proper legal arrangements to use it on an album.

Johnston says age and experience have made him feel less possessive about his own work.

"Earlier in my career, everything was an affront. Everything made me angry and like, 'That was that was my idea! I should have had credit for that!'" he says. "I don't want to say I'm just easy and breezy about it, but I think there are so few truly original ideas. .... We all kind of will have similar thoughts at a certain point. So it doesn't particularly bother me."

His attitude changes if the re-maker is not an artist but artificial intelligence. That was a key issue in last year's Hollywood writers and actors strikes — and is yet another facet of remix culture that, alongside copyright expirations, could change the faces of some of history's most renowned characters in ways no one has ever considered.

"If a writer feels for me, it's fine," Johnston says. "If an AI steals from me, that sucks."



## Only 1 in 3 US adults think Trump acted illegally in New York hush money case, AP-NORC poll shows

By THOMAS BEAUMONT and AMELIA THOMSON-DEVEAUX Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — The first criminal trial facing former President Donald Trump is also the one in which Americans are least convinced he committed a crime, a new AP-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research poll finds.

Only about one-third of U.S. adults say Trump did something illegal in the hush money case for which jury selection began Monday, while close to half think he did something illegal in the other three criminal cases pending against him. And they're fairly skeptical that Trump is getting a fair shake from the prosecutors in the case — or that the judge and jurors can be impartial in cases involving him.

Still, half of Americans would consider Trump unfit to serve as president if he is convicted of falsifying business documents to cover up hush money payments to a woman who said he had an affair with her.

While a New York jury will decide whether to convict Trump of felony charges, public opinion of the trial proceedings could hurt him politically. The poll suggests a conviction could hurt Trump's campaign. Trump enters a rematch with President Joe Biden as the first presumptive nominee of a major party — and the first former president — to be under indictment. A verdict is expected in roughly six weeks, well before the Republican National Convention where he will accept the GOP nomination.

Trump has made the prosecutions against him a centerpiece of his campaign and argued without evidence that Biden engineered the cases. That argument helped him consolidate GOP support during the Republican primary, but a conviction might influence how many Americans — including independent voters and people long skeptical of Trump — perceive his candidacy.

"Any conviction should disqualify him," said Callum Schlumpf, a 31-year-old engineering student and political independent from Clifton, Texas. "It sets a bad example to the rest of the world. I think it misrepresents us, as a country, as to what we believe is important and virtuous."

Yet, a cloud of doubt hangs over all the proceedings. Only about 3 in 10 Americans feel that any of the prosecutors who have brought charges against Trump are treating the former president fairly. And only about 2 in 10 Americans are extremely or very confident that the judges and jurors in the cases against him can be fair and impartial.

"It's very obvious political persecution," said Christopher Ruff, a 46-year-old political independent and museum curator from Sanford, North Carolina. "I'm no fan of Trump in any way, shape or form. Didn't vote for him, never will. But it's obviously all political."

Consistent with AP-NORC polls conducted over the past year, the new poll found that about half of Americans say Trump did something illegal regarding the classified documents found at his Florida home, and a similar share think he did something illegal regarding his alleged attempt to interfere in Georgia's vote count in the 2020 presidential election. The poll also found that nearly half of Americans believe he did something illegal related to his effort to overturn the results of the 2020 election.

Prosecutors in New York will argue that Trump falsified his company's internal records to hide the true nature of a payment to his former lawyer, Michael Cohen. Cohen alleges he was directed by Trump to pay adult film actress Stormy Daniels \$130,000 one month before the 2016 election to silence her claims about an extramarital affair with Trump.

Trump has pleaded not guilty to the 34-count indictment and denied any affair with Daniels.

The poll found that 35% of Americans say Trump has done something illegal with regard to the hush money allegations. Slightly fewer, about 3 in 10, think he did something unethical without breaking the law. Fourteen percent think he did nothing wrong at all. Those numbers haven't shifted meaningfully in the year since he was first charged in the case.

Republicans are much less likely than Democrats and independents to say Trump committed a crime in the hush money case.

"He's done nothing wrong," said Louie Tsonos, a 43-year-old sales representative and Republican from Carleton, Michigan, a suburb of Detroit. "Because Trump has a lot of money and fame, they want to de-

stroy his reputation. Or at least they are trying to.”

Fewer than one in 10 Republicans say Trump did something illegal in the case, while 4 in 10 Republicans think he did something unethical but did not break the law. About 3 in 10 Republicans, like Tsonos, say he did nothing wrong.

By contrast, about 6 in 10 Democrats and roughly 3 in 10 independents believe he did something illegal.

Monica Brown, a Democrat from Knoxville, Tennessee, thinks Trump did something unethical, though not illegal, in the New York criminal case under way. But a conviction would ruin his credibility to serve as president, she said.

“I don’t believe any president – whether it’s Donald Trump or anyone else – should have a criminal conviction on his record,” said Brown, a 60-year-old veterinary technician and social worker. “Even if it’s related to something like hush money, what respect are they going to get from anyone? Citizens of the country or world leaders, they aren’t going to respect you.”

Nearly 6 in 10 Republicans say they would consider Trump fit to be president even if he were to be convicted of falsifying business documents in the hush money case. About 8 in 10 Democrats say Trump would not be fit to serve in the event of a conviction. About half of independents think he would be unfit to serve, with 22% saying he would be fit and 30% saying they didn’t know enough to say.

“I don’t think any of that stuff has any relevance to his ability to lead this country,” said Jennifer Solich, a Republican from York, Pennsylvania, and retired nuclear engineer who believes Trump would be fit to serve if convicted in the New York case. “There may be some unethical aspects to it. I just think it’s more trivial than what we’re facing as a nation.”

## **Salman Rushdie’s ‘Knife’ is unflinching about his brutal stabbing and uncanny in its vital spirit**

By HILLEL ITALIE AP National Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — In Salman Rushdie’s first book since the 2022 stabbing that hospitalized him and left him blind in one eye, the author wastes no time reliving the day he thought might be his last.

“At a quarter to eleven on August 12, 2022, on a sunny Friday morning in upstate New York, I was attacked and almost killed by a young man with a knife just after I came out on stage at the amphitheater in Chautauqua to talk about the importance of keeping writers safe from harm,” Rushdie writes in the opening paragraph of the memoir “Knife,” published Tuesday.

At just over 200 pages, “Knife” is a brief work in the canon of Rushdie, among the most exuberant and expansive of contemporary novelists. “Knife” is also his first memoir since “Joseph Anton,” the 2012 publication in which he looked back on the fatwa, the death decree, issued more than 20 years earlier by Iran’s Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini because of the alleged blasphemy in Rushdie’s novel “The Satanic Verses.”

Rushdie was initially driven into hiding, and for years lived under constant protection. But the threat had seemingly receded and he had for some time been enjoying his preferred life of travel, social engagement and a free imagination, out at play in such recent novels as “Quichotte” and “Victory City.”

As Rushdie observes in “Knife,” subtitled “Meditations After an Attempted Murder,” he had sometimes pictured his “public assassin” turning up. But the timing of the 2022 attack seemed not just startling, but “anachronistic,” the rising of a “murderous ghost from the past,” returning to settle a score Rushdie thought long resolved. He refers to August 11, 2022, as his “last innocent evening.”

But in many ways, “Knife” is as notable for the spirit it shares with his other books as it is for the blunt and horrifying descriptions of the attack that did, and did not, change his life.

In the book’s first chapter, Rushdie praises the “pure heroism,” the physical courage of the Chautauqua Institution event moderator Henry Reese, who grabbed the assailant. But if another kind of heroism is hope and determination (and humor) in the wake of trauma, then “Knife” is a heroic book, documenting Rushdie’s journey from lying in his own blood to a return to the same stage 13 months later and attaining a state of “wounded happiness.”

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## LOVE AND MARRIAGE

Part of the story of "Knife" is that Rushdie's life, even over these past two years, is about more than an act of murderous violence. He dedicates a chapter to meeting and marrying the poet Rachel Eliza Griffiths, who greeted him during a PEN America event in 2017 and revealed a "dazzling smile" Rushdie found himself unable to forget. She had been in New York City when she learned of the stabbing, and hurried on a private plane to be with him, having been told he was unlike to survive.

"I wasn't dead," Rushdie wrote. "I was in surgery."

## A DEPARTED FRIEND

As Rushdie recovered, he learned that his dear friend and fellow author Martin Amis was gravely ill with cancer. Rushdie and Amis were part of a circle of gifted friends from Britain that also included Christopher Hitchens and Ian McEwan. In what proved to be a farewell email, Rushdie praised the "generosity and kindness" of Amis' encouragement after the knife attack and celebrated such Amis novels as "London Fields" and "Money."

Amis died in May 2023.

## 'THE A.'

Rushdie's charged assailant is Hadi Matar, but the author refers to him as "The A.," short for "The Ass" (or "Asinine man"). He does allow his imagination to expend itself on an unlikely dialogue with the fellow being he knows only through a momentous span of 27 seconds. Why even pretend to speak with his would-be killer? "I'm not looking for an apology. I do wonder how he feels, now that he has had time to think things over," Rushdie writes.

Matar's trial was delayed from January after a judge ruled he was allowed to seek the memoir's manuscript and related materials.

## THE HEALING

He will leave the hospital, "grow stronger in body and mind," return to the events he attended so often before, like the annual PEN America gala. He will feel heartened by supportive messages, a "worldwide avalanche" — not just from friends, but heads of state, such as President Joe Biden, who will issue a statement citing Rushdie's commitment to "sharing ideas without fear."

The nearness of death, Rushdie writes, can make you feel a "great loneliness." Words from others "make you feel that you're not alone, that maybe you haven't lived and worked in vain."

## House Speaker Mike Johnson pushes towards a vote on aid for Israel, Ukraine and Taiwan

By STEPHEN GROVES and LISA MASCARO Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — House Speaker Mike Johnson is pushing toward action this week on aid for Israel, Ukraine and Taiwan, unveiling an elaborate plan Monday to break the package into separate votes to squeeze through the House's political divides on foreign policy.

Facing an outright rebellion from conservatives fiercely opposed to aiding Ukraine, the Republican speaker's move on the foreign aid package was a potentially watershed moment, the first significant action on the bill after more than two months of delay. But Johnson's intention to hold four separate votes on parts of the package also left it open to being significantly altered from the \$95 billion aid package the Senate passed in February.

It's unclear if the House could end up with a package that is similar to the Senate's bill or something significantly different, which could complicate the months-long, painstaking effort to get Congress to approve military funding for Ukraine.

"We will let the House work its will," Johnson told reporters.

But as the House has struggled to act, conflicts around the world have escalated. Israel's military chief said Monday that his country will respond to Iran's weekend missile strike. And Ukraine's military head warned over the weekend that the battlefield situation in the country's east has "significantly worsened in recent days," as warming weather has allowed Russian forces to launch a fresh offensive.



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"There are precipitating events around the globe that we're all watching very carefully and we know the world is watching us to see how we react," Johnson said.

President Joe Biden, hosting Czech Prime Minister Petr Fiala at the White House, called on the House to take up the Senate funding package immediately. "They have to do it now," he said.

Johnson and Biden spoke Monday, according to a person familiar with the call and granted anonymity to discuss it.

Democrats in the House could be open to helping Johnson pass the aid in parts, and may even be agreeable to some of the additional measures being discussed by Republicans, such as providing some of the Ukraine economic assistance as loans.

But Johnson would lose the Democratic support he needs if he strays too far into Republican-only priorities. Any overhaul to the package also risks setbacks in the Senate, where a bulk of Republicans oppose the aid for Ukraine and Democrats have become increasingly alarmed at Israel's campaign in Gaza.

As House members returned to the Capitol Monday evening, Johnson huddled with fellow GOP lawmakers to lay out his strategy to gain House approval for the funding package. He said he would push to get the package to the House floor under a single debate rule that allows for separate votes on aid for Ukraine, Israel, Taiwan and other foreign policy proposals.

Johnson said those proposals would structure some of the funding for Kyiv as loans, allow the U.S. to seize frozen Russian central bank assets and place other sanctions on Iran.

The GOP meeting was filled with lawmakers at odds in their approach to the conflict with Russia: Republican defense hawks, including the top lawmakers on national security committees, are pitted against populist conservatives who are fiercely opposed to continued support for Kyiv's fight.

As often happens, the meeting turned into a free-for-all of ideas as Republicans tried to put their own stamp on the package but rarely found any unity. Yet Johnson's plan won over significant Republican support, said Rep. Greg Steube, R-Fla., as he left the meeting.

"I don't like it," he said. "But I'm clearly in the minority."

Still, Johnson's support for Ukraine aid could further incite the populist conservatives who are already angry at his direction as speaker.

Rep. Marjorie Taylor Greene, R-Ga., is already threatening to oust him as speaker. As she entered the closed-door Republican meeting on Monday, she said her message to the speaker was simple: "Don't fund Ukraine."

But Greene did not indicate whether she would move for a quick vote on her motion to remove the speaker if the Ukraine aid is approved.

"I'm thinking it over," she said.

Another unknown was how Donald Trump, the Republican presidential frontrunner who has railed against overseas aid, would respond to the proposal. Johnson met with Trump on Friday at his club in Florida.

"I don't spend my time worrying about motions to vacate," Johnson said Monday. "We're having to govern here, and we're going to do our job."

Democrats had pressured Johnson to simply take up the Senate-passed bill that would provide a total of \$95 billion for the U.S. allies, as well as humanitarian support for civilians in Gaza and Ukraine.

"The House must rush to Israel's aid as quickly as humanly possible, and the only way to do that is passing the Senate's supplemental ASAP," said Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer.

House Democratic Leader Hakeem Jeffries pledged in a letter to lawmakers to do "everything in our legislative power to confront aggression" around the globe, and he cast the situation as similar to the lead-up to World War II.

"The gravely serious events of this past weekend in the Middle East and Eastern Europe underscore the need for Congress to act immediately," Jeffries said. "We must take up the bipartisan and comprehensive national security bill passed by the Senate forthwith."

Democrats have also circulated a last-ditch option, known as a discharge petition, that could force a floor vote on the aid without the speaker's approval. The petition has gained 195 lawmakers' signatures, leaving it about a dozen votes shy of the majority it would need.

But Republican supporters of the Senate's Ukraine package appeared encouraged by Johnson's plan, even though they hadn't yet seen the details.

South Dakota Sen. Mike Rounds said the House proposal could "significantly delay" the aid because it is four different measures that would have to be sent back to the Senate, and it's unclear whether the Senate could combine them into one. Still, he said, "It's OK because we can still respond to it."

Senate Republican Leader Mitch McConnell on Monday afternoon urged the House to take up the Senate bill.

He said in a floor speech, "We cannot hope to deter conflict without demonstrating resolve and investing seriously in American strength."

## **Israeli military tells Palestinians not to return to north Gaza after witnesses say troops killed 5**

By WAFYA SHURAFYA and SAMY MAGDY Associated Press

DEIR AL-BALAH, Gaza Strip (AP) — The Israeli military renewed warnings on Monday for Palestinians not to return to northern Gaza, a day after witnesses and medical officials said Israeli troops opened fire and killed five people among throngs of displaced residents trying to walk back to their homes in the devastated area.

Hundreds of thousands of Palestinians were driven from the north after Israeli forces first launched their offensive there soon after Hamas' Oct. 7 attack on southern Israel. In the months of fighting since, vast parts of the north have been flattened, including much of Gaza City. After months of Israeli restrictions on aid to the north, some 300,000 who remained there are on the brink of famine, according to the United Nations.

Still, many Palestinians have wanted to go back, saying they are sick of the conditions they endured in displacement. For months, families have been crammed into tent camps, schools-turned-shelters and homes of relatives throughout the south of the Gaza Strip. Some also fear remaining in Rafah, Gaza's southernmost town, as Israel says it plans to attack it eventually to root out Hamas.

Late Monday, Defense Minister Yoav Gallant met with top officials to work on preparations for the Rafah invasion, his office said. The international community, including the United States, have voiced strong objections to the planned offensive, saying it will endanger the estimated 1.4 million Palestinians sheltered in Rafah.

Gallant's office said Monday's meeting included plans for evacuating civilians and expanding deliveries of food and medical equipment to Gaza.

Israel, which has reduced the number of its troops across Gaza, has repeatedly rejected calls to let Palestinians back to the north of the territory, saying Hamas militants continue to operate there. The military says it has loosened the militants' control over the north, but it is still carrying out airstrikes and raids against what it says are reorganizing militants. Last month, Israeli troops raided Gaza's main hospital, Shifa, in two weeks of fighting that left the facility in ruins.

Israeli military spokesman Avichay Adraee wrote on X, formerly Twitter, that Palestinians should stay in southern Gaza because the north is a "dangerous combat zone."

People appeared to be heeding the new warning, especially after Sunday's shootings.

On Sunday, thousands of Palestinians tried going up Gaza's coastal road back to the north, most on foot and some on the backs of donkey carts. Some said they had heard rumors that Israeli troops were allowing people to enter the north.

"We want our homes. We want our lives. We want to return, whether with a truce or without a truce," said Um Nidhal Khatab, who was among those trying to return home.

Several witnesses said Israeli troops opened fire as the crowds neared checkpoints at Wadi Gaza, the line that the military has drawn separating northern Gaza from the rest of the territory. Five people were killed and 54 wounded, according to officials at nearby Awda Hospital in central Gaza, where the casualties were brought.

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The Israeli military had no immediate comment. It was not clear what triggered the shooting.

Farida Al-Ghoul, 27, said that as she and her family neared the checkpoint, she saw a woman rushing back with blood on her telling them not to continue. Ignoring her, they kept going ahead, but soon there was heavy gunfire and shelling around them. She said she saw Israeli troops shooting.

She and another witness said the troops were letting some women and children through to go north but opened fire when some young men tried to pass.

"People on the side were falling down," al-Ghoul said. "When we saw these scenes, we decided to turn back and never try again."

Karam Abu Jasser said he, his wife and four children, were among the crowd and they heard gunshots and shelling from up ahead at the checkpoint. "People were panicked, especially women and children. There were many women and children. We ran away," Abu Jasser said, speaking from a shelter in central Gaza.

He said his family wanted to return home to the Jabalia refugee camp in the north, even though they know their house was hit and damaged.

"We'll have to live in a tent, but it will be at our home," he said. "There is bombing everywhere in Gaza. If we will die, it's better to die in our home."

The return of the population to northern Gaza has been a key sticking point between Israel and Hamas in negotiations underway for a cease-fire deal that would bring the release of hostages taken by Hamas in the Oct. 7 attack.

Israel wants to try to delay the return to prevent militants from regrouping in the north, while Hamas says it wants a free flow of returnees, a full withdrawal of all Israeli troops from Gaza and an end to the war.

"The permanent ceasefire is the only guarantee to protect our people and stop the flow of blood and massacres," Izzat al-Risheq, a top Hamas official, said in a statement.

The war has had a staggering toll on civilians in Gaza, with most of the territory's 2.3 million people displaced by the fighting and living in dire circumstances, often in tents and with little food and no end in sight to their misery. Large swaths of the urban landscape have been damaged or destroyed, leaving many displaced Palestinians with nowhere to return to.

Six months of fighting in Gaza have pushed the tiny Palestinian territory into a humanitarian crisis, leaving more than 1 million people on the brink of starvation.

Famine is said to be imminent in the hard-hit north, where aid has struggled to reach because of the fighting. Israel has opened a new crossing for aid trucks into the north as it ramps up aid deliveries to the besieged enclave. However, the United Nations says the surge of aid is not being felt in Gaza because of persistent distribution difficulties.

The U.N. food agency on Monday said it managed to deliver fuel and wheat flour to a bakery in isolated Gaza City in the north for the first time since the war started.

The conflict started on Oct. 7, when Hamas killed 1,200 people, mostly civilians, in a surprise attack and incursion into southern Israel. Around 250 people were seized as hostages by the militants and taken to Gaza. A deal in November freed about 100 hostages, leaving about 130 in captivity, although Israel says about a quarter of those are dead.

Israeli bombardments and ground offensives in Gaza have killed more than 33,700 Palestinians and wounded over 76,200, the Gaza Health Ministry says. Women and children make up around two-thirds of the dead, according to the ministry, whose count doesn't differentiate between civilians and combatants.

Israel says it has killed over 12,000 militants during the war, but it has not provided evidence to back up the claim.

## **Caitlin Clark taken No. 1 in the WNBA draft by the Indiana Fever, as expected**

By DOUG FEINBERG AP Basketball Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — Caitlin Clark admitted she was a bit nervous before being chosen with the No. 1 pick in the WNBA draft by the Indiana Fever, even though it was no surprise.



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"I dreamed of this moment since I was in second grade, and it's taken a lot of hard work, a lot of ups and downs, but more than anything, just trying to soak it in," Clark said.

The former Iowa star became a household name among basketball fans during her record-breaking college career, and she will now try and help revive the Indiana franchise along with last season's No. 1 pick, Aliyah Boston, who previously played with Clark on a USA Basketball Under-19 team.

"Obviously going to an organization that has, in my eyes, one of the best post players in the entire world," Clark said. "My point guard eyes just light up at that. And obviously, Aliyah has been one of my teammates before. I'm excited. I can't wait."

The Fever taking Clark had been a foregone conclusion since she announced on Feb. 29 she would turn pro. Nearly 17,000 tickets were claimed to watch the draft at Gainbridge Fieldhouse in Indianapolis, home to the Fever and the NBA's Indiana Pacers.

Clark has helped bring millions of fans to the women's game with her signature shots from the midcourt logo and passing ability. The NCAA's all-time scoring leader was a big reason why a record 18.9 million viewers tuned in to the national championship game, which Iowa lost to unbeaten South Carolina. The Hawkeyes were also the national runners-up to LSU a year earlier.

It's been a whirlwind few weeks for Clark. After the title game, she flew to Los Angeles to receive the John R. Wooden Award and then came to New York for an appearance on "Saturday Night Live."

"I think obviously the course of the last few weeks has been pretty insane in my life, the last two months playing basketball as long as I possibly could in my college career," Clark said. "I think the biggest thing is I'm just very lucky to be in this moment, and all these opportunities and these things, they're once in a lifetime."

Clark, who wore a white Prada jacket and skirt, hugged her parents and brothers and Iowa coach Lisa Bluder after she was drafted.

The draft was held at the Brooklyn Academy of Music in front of 1,000 fans, who bought all the tickets within 15 minutes of them going on sale a few months ago.

Los Angeles chose Stanford's Cameron Brink at No. 2. She'll get to stay in California and gives the Sparks a two-way player.

"When they called my name, a huge wave of emotions hit me," Brink said. "I saw my mom tearing up and my dad and it hit home."

A prolific scorer, Brink was also the Naismith Defensive Player of the Year. The Sparks needed to replace franchise player Nneka Ogwumike, who left for Seattle in free agency. Brink's godmother, Sonya Curry, is the mother of Golden State Warriors star Stephen Curry.

"I FaceTimed Steph five minutes before the show started and he said have fun with it," Brink said. "He can share so much great advice since he's been through this. Make stuff like this fun as it can be stressed."

Chicago had the third pick and chose South Carolina's Kamilla Cardoso before the Sparks were on the clock again and selected Tennessee's Rickea Jackson.

Cardoso had a busy week, helping the Gamecocks win the national championship to complete an undefeated season. She took part in the team's championship parade on Sunday before traveling to New York.

Dallas took Ohio State guard Jacy Sheldon with the fifth pick. Washington drafted Aaliyah Edwards of UConn sixth before Chicago took LSU's Angel Reese at No. 7, pairing her with Cardoso.

"She's a great player and I'm a great player. Nobody's going to get no rebounds on us," the 6-foot-7 Cardoso said, laughing.

Minnesota, which had swapped picks with Chicago, drafted Alissa Pili of Utah eighth.

A pair of French guards, Carla Leite and Leila Lacan, went next to Dallas and Connecticut, respectively.

New York drafted Ole Miss' Marquasha Davis at No. 11 and Atlanta closed out the first round by taking Australian Nyadiew Puoch.

THE CHAMPS ARE HERE

Two-time defending champion Las Vegas didn't have a first-round pick, but made the most of three second-round choices. The Aces chose Syracuse guard Dyaisha Fair, who finished as the third-leading scorer in NCAA Division I history, with the 16th pick. Two picks later, they chose Iowa's Kate Martin. The

team closed out the round drafting Virginia Tech's Elizabeth Kitley, who is recovering from a torn ACL. She's out for the season and showed up on crutches.

#### HEADING TO PHOENIX

Charisma Osborne was the last of the 15 players invited to the draft to get chosen, going with the first pick of the third round to Phoenix. Osborne, who played at UCLA, said getting chosen so late didn't faze her. "I was nervous the entire night. My feelings didn't change," she said. "I heard my name and was so excited. I can't wait to get to work in Phoenix."

## Much of central US faces severe thunderstorm threat and possible tornadoes

Associated Press undefined

WASHINGTON (AP) — Tens of millions of Americans stretching from Lincoln, Nebraska, to Baltimore could face strong thunderstorms Monday night through Wednesday, with tornadoes possible in some states.

A large storm system hitting much of the central U.S. over the next few days is expected to bring severe thunderstorms to Kansas and Nebraska on Monday evening, the National Weather Service's Storm Prediction Center said.

The two states could see strong tornadoes, too, while parts of Oklahoma, Missouri and Virginia face a slight risk.

Severe scattered thunderstorms are also expected to bring strong winds, hail and flash flooding.

#### WHAT AREAS ARE MOST AT RISK?

After moving through the Great Plains, NWS says the the storm system could move into the Mississippi Valley, Great Lakes and Ohio Valley areas on Tuesday and bring "severe weather and isolated flash flooding."

Southern Iowa, Northern Missouri and Central Illinois face the largest threat of "significant hail and tornado potential," on Tuesday the agency said.

The risk of tornadoes forming Monday evening over parts of Kansas and Nebraska will increase with the development of a few, discrete supercells, NWS said. Those are the tall, anvil-shaped producers of tornadoes and hail that have a rotating, powerful updraft of wind often lasting for hours.

#### WHEN IS TORNADO SEASON AND IS IT CHANGING?

May is generally considered the midpoint of tornado season, said Harold Brooks, a tornado scientist at the National Severe Storms Laboratory.

Brooks said late April to the middle of May is when the strongest tornadoes that cause fatalities usually appear.

"There's a lot of uncertainty in those estimates," Brooks added, because of how much each tornado season varies year to year.

Some scientists believe that over the past few decades, tornadoes in the U.S. have been shifting — with more spinning up in states along the Mississippi River and farther east. But scientists aren't entirely sure why that's happening.

One possible factor could be that the western Great Plains are getting drier thanks to climate change, said Joe Strus, a meteorologist with the National Weather Service, "and so your precipitation has shifted east a little bit."

## Bureau of Prisons to close California women's prison where inmates have been subjected to sex abuse

By MICHAEL R. SISAK, MICHAEL BALSAMO and CHRISTOPHER WEBER Associated Press

LOS ANGELES (AP) — The beleaguered federal Bureau of Prisons said Monday it will close a women's prison in California known as the "rape club" despite attempts to reform the troubled facility after an Associated Press investigation exposed rampant staff-on-inmate sexual abuse.

Bureau of Prisons Director Colette Peters said in a statement to the AP that the agency had "taken unprecedented steps and provided a tremendous amount of resources to address culture, recruitment and

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retention, aging infrastructure and — most critical — employee misconduct.”

“Despite these steps and resources, we have determined that FCI Dublin is not meeting expected standards and that the best course of action is to close the facility,” Peters said. “This decision is being made after ongoing evaluation of the effectiveness of those unprecedented steps and additional resources.”

The announcement of Dublin’s closure represents an extraordinary acknowledgement by the Bureau of Prisons that its much-promised efforts to improve the culture and environment there have not worked. Many attempts to stem the problems at Dublin have come after the AP investigation revealed a pattern of abuse and mismanagement that crossed years, even decades.

Just 10 days before the closure announcement, a federal judge took the unprecedented step of appointing a special master to oversee the prison.

## ADVOCATES WANT PRISONERS FREED

FCI Dublin, about 21 miles (34 kilometers) east of Oakland, is one of six women-only federal prisons and the only one west of the Rocky Mountains. It currently houses 605 inmates — 504 inmates in its main prison and another 101 at an adjacent minimum-security camp. That figure is down from a total of 760 prisoners in February 2022.

The women currently housed at the prison will be transferred to other facilities, Peters said, and no employees will lose their jobs.

Advocates have called for inmates to be freed from FCI Dublin, which they say is not only plagued by sexual abuse but also has hazardous mold, asbestos and inadequate health care.

Last August, eight FCI Dublin inmates sued the Bureau of Prisons, or BOP, alleging the agency had failed to root out sexual abuse. Amaris Montes, a lawyer for the plaintiffs, had said inmates continued to face retaliation for reporting abuse, including being put in solitary confinement and having belongings confiscated.

Montes said she and her clients had suspected closure might be a possibility, but the suddenness of the decision so quickly after the special master appointment came as a shock. “It’s a signal that the prison knows that they are not meeting constitutional standards to keep people safe from sexual assault and sexual harassment,” Montes said Monday.

Montes said timing on the closure and transfer of inmates was still being worked out, but she hoped it would be done in a measured way.

“I think that the BOP is quick to try to transfer accountability and move accountability elsewhere as the way to remedy the issue. And that would mean, you know, moving people quickly without addressing people’s needs right now.” Many of the incarcerated women have physical and mental health issues that need to be dealt with, she said, while other inmates might be considered for release.

A former Dublin inmate who is a whistleblower in the civil lawsuit said Monday that the abruptly announced closure “just feels wrong” because it undermines the long process of getting justice for the women who endured abuse and appalling conditions.

“We’ve worked so hard to get a special master in there to clean house, so to speak,” said the woman, who spoke on condition of anonymity because of her status as a whistleblower in an ongoing lawsuit. The AP doesn’t name victims of sexual abuse without their consent. “And pretty much the minute after that happened, they say they’re just going to close it down.”

She said it would be inhumane to transfer hundreds of inmates to prisons across the country, away from their families. “What the women have gone through at this facility, the abuse they suffered, that was punishment,” she said. “They’re all low security. Send them home, send them to supervised relief. Let them be productive members of society.”

On Monday, two buses moved around the parking lot of FCI Dublin. Prison staff moved baggage and carts of supplies between the buildings and buses. An AP reporter did not see any inmates leaving the facility.

## A HISTORY OF ABUSE ALLEGATIONS — AND CONVICTIONS

Last month, the FBI again searched the prison and the Bureau of Prisons again shook up its leadership after a warden sent to help rehabilitate the facility was accused of retaliating against a whistleblower inmate. Days later, a federal judge overseeing lawsuits against the prison, said she would appoint a special



master to oversee the facility's operations.

An AP investigation in 2021 found a culture of abuse and cover-ups that had persisted for years at the prison. That reporting led to increased scrutiny from Congress and pledges from the Bureau of Prisons that it would fix problems and change the culture at the prison.

Since 2021, at least eight FCI Dublin employees have been charged with sexually abusing inmates. Five have pleaded guilty. Two were convicted at trial, including the former warden, Ray Garcia. Another case is pending.

All sexual activity between a prison worker and an inmate is illegal. Correctional employees have substantial power over inmates, controlling every aspect of their lives from mealtime to lights out, and there is no scenario in which an inmate can give consent.

Inmate advocates worry that some of the safety concerns at FCI Dublin could persist at the other women's prisons. "The problem isn't solved by shipping these girls to new facilities," said another former Dublin inmate and whistleblower who spoke on condition of anonymity. "These facilities still have the same issues."

Montes said the civil litigation will continue despite the imminent closure.

"The BOP is the defendant in the case. It's not FCI Dublin," she said. "And so we are in the mindset that this did not end our case — that they still have a responsibility to our clients to keep them safe."

## **Trump Media stock slides again to bring it more than 66% below its peak as euphoria fades**

NEW YORK (AP) — The stock price for Donald Trump's social media company slid again Monday, pushing it more than 66% below its peak set late last month.

Trump Media & Technology Group closed down 18.4% at \$26.61 as more of the euphoria that surrounded the stock fades. It's a sharp comedown since nearing \$80 after the owner of Truth Social merged with a shell company to get its stock trading on the Nasdaq under the symbol "DJT," for Trump's initials.

Part of the decline may be due to criticism that the stock price had zoomed way past what skeptics said the money-losing company is worth, particularly one with tough odds for success. But another part is also likely because of action Trump Media took Monday.

The company filed documents with the U.S. Securities and Exchange Commission that open the door for the future potential sale of millions of shares. The document, called an S-1, relates to warrants held by investors that can be transformed into shares of stock, as well as shares held by company insiders.

The filing also includes all the shares held by the former president. Trump, though, remains under a "lock-up" deal that largely restricts him from selling his shares for another roughly five months. His son, Donald Trump Jr., who is a director on the board, and CEO Devin Nunes, are also bound by the lock-up.

Typically, all shares of stock held by insiders subject to lock-up deals are included in such filings, according to Jay Ritter, an expert on initial public offerings of stock at the University of Florida's Warrington College of Business.

The filing does not necessarily mean any investors are planning to sell their shares, Sarasota, Florida-based Trump Media & Technology Group said in a statement.

Trump Media got its place on the Nasdaq after merging with a company called Digital World Acquisition Corp., which was essentially a pile of cash looking for a target to merge with. It's an example of what's called a special purpose acquisition company, or SPAC, which can give young companies quicker and easier routes to getting their shares trading publicly.

S-1 filings are typically filed quickly after a SPAC deal closes, usually within 15 or 30 days, said Kristi Marvin, founder of SPACInsider.com, which specializes in SPAC deals.

The exercise of warrants referenced in Trump Media's S-1 filing would increase the number of shares outstanding for the company. That in turn could put downward pressure on the stock price. When something becomes more available, it tends to fall in price unless demand for it picks up accordingly.

The drop in Trump Media's stock price over the last few weeks hurts its shareholders, who experts say are mostly smaller-pocketed investors rather than big institutions. Several users of Truth Social have said

they bought shares to show their support of the former president.

The drop also puts a huge hit on Trump's finances directly. He could personally own nearly 114.8 million shares, depending on the company's performance. That would be worth \$3.15 billion at its current price. On March 27, that was worth nearly \$7.6 billion.

On Monday, Trump arrived at a New York court for the start of jury selection in his hush-money trial. It's the first trial of any former U.S. commander in chief.

## Owners of a Colorado funeral home where 190 decaying bodies were found are charged with COVID fraud

By JESSE BEDAYN, COLLEEN SLEVIN and MATTHEW BROWN Associated Press/Report for America  
DENVER (AP) — A couple who owned a Colorado funeral home where authorities last year discovered 190 decaying bodies were indicted on federal charges that they misspent nearly \$900,000 in pandemic relief funds on vacations, cosmetic surgery, jewelry and other personal expenses, according to court documents unsealed Monday.

The indictment reaffirms accusations from state prosecutors that Jon and Carie Hallford gave families dry concrete instead of cremated ashes and alleges the couple buried the wrong body on two occasions.

The couple also collected more than \$130,000 from families for cremations and burial services they never provided, the indictment said.

The 15 charges brought by the federal grand jury are in addition to more than 200 criminal counts already pending against the Hallfords in Colorado state court for corpse abuse, money laundering, theft and forgery.

The federal offenses carry potential penalties of 20 years in prison and \$250,000 in fines, the indictment said.

On Monday, the owners of the Return to Nature Funeral Home in Colorado Springs entered a federal courtroom bound in shackles as they made an initial appearance before U.S. Magistrate Judge Scott Varholak.

Assistant U.S. Attorney Tim Neff argued the couple were a flight risk, after they allegedly fled to Oklahoma last October when the decaying bodies were first discovered and before their arrest on state charges on Nov. 8.

"They simply evaporated from the community," Neff said.

The judge did not immediately decide if the couple should be released pending trial. He set an arraignment hearing for Thursday.

Carie Hallford's attorney, Chaz Melihercik, said he would argue against detention at the next hearing. Jon Hallford's public defender, Kilie Latendresse, told the judge that he had been following his bond conditions in the state case and that detention was unnecessary.

The new charges and accusations triggered more anguish for families who sent their loved ones to the funeral home.

Every new revelation about the case is a jolt to Tanya Wilson, who hired Return to Nature to cremate her mother's remains. Wilson spread the ashes with family in Hawaii. After the grim discovery, Wilson was told those ashes weren't actually her mother, whose body has since been identified among the 190 decaying bodies.

Hundreds of family members, like Wilson, had thought they put their loved one's to rest, or clutched their ashes close, only to have that healing torn away.

"I honestly feel like I have whiplash, and I can't hold onto one emotion long enough to be able to process it," Wilson said over the phone.

Before the new indictment was unsealed, public records showed the Hallfords had been plagued by debt — facing evictions and lawsuits for unpaid cremations even as they spent lavishly on themselves.

The indictment alleges the couple used \$882,300 in pandemic relief funds to buy items that also included a vehicle, dinners, tuition for their child and cryptocurrency. The fraud involved three loans obtained between March 2020 and October 2021, authorities said.

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Previously released court documents from the state abuse of corpse case reveal more details about what they were spending money on.

They bought a GMC Yukon and an Infiniti that together were worth over \$120,000 — enough to cover cremation costs twice over for all of the bodies found in their business' facility last October, according to previous court testimony from FBI Agent Andrew Cohen.

"That is just thoroughly disgusting for a lack of a better term, just reading about all the money that they had," said Wilson. "Just the price of the two vehicles that he bought ... it was enough to just do right by these families."

The Hallfords also paid for trips to California, Florida and Las Vegas, as well as \$31,000 in cryptocurrency, laser body sculpting and shopping at luxury retailers like Gucci and Tiffany & Co., according to court documents.

The couple have not yet entered pleas to the state's abuse of corpse charges.

The Hallfords left in their wake a trail of unpaid bills, disgruntled landlords and unsettled business disputes.

The couple once claimed to a former landlord that they would settle their rent when they were paid for work they had done for the Federal Emergency Management Agency during the COVID-19 pandemic. The business' website featured logos for FEMA and the Department of Defense.

FEMA has said they did not have any contracts with the funeral home. A defense department database search also showed no contracts with Return to Nature.

The company failed to pay more than \$5,000 in 2022 property taxes at one of its locations, public records show. Then last year, the business was slapped with a \$21,000 judgement for not paying for "a couple hundred cremations," according to public records and attorney Lisa Epps with Wilbert Funeral Services crematory.

The Hallfords' alleged lies, money laundering, forgery and manipulation over the past four years devastated hundreds of grieving family members.

The 190 bodies were discovered last year in a bug-infested storage building in the small town of Penrose, about two hours south of Denver. Some of the remains had languished since 2019.

An investigation by The Associated Press found that the Hallfords likely sent fake ashes and fabricated cremation records to families who did business with them. They appear to have written on death certificates given to families, along with ashes, that the cremations were performed by Wilbert Funeral Services, which denied performing them for the funeral home at that time.

As the decomposing bodies were identified, families learned that the ashes they'd received could not have been the remains of their loved ones. Court documents allege at least some were dry concrete.

As far back as 2020, there were concerns raised about the business's improper storage of bodies. But there was no follow-up by regulators, letting the collection of bodies grow to nearly 200 over the following three years.

Colorado has some of the weakest funeral home regulations in the country. Funeral home operators in the state don't have to graduate high school, let alone study mortuary science or pass an exam.

The Hallfords case and others in recent years spurred Colorado lawmakers to introduce legislation to strengthen oversight with rules that are in line with or exceed those in other states. Those bills are currently moving through the state Legislature.

## **Trump's historic hush money trial gets underway; 1st day ends without any jurors being picked**

By JENNIFER PELTZ, MICHAEL R. SISAK, ERIC TUCKER and JAKE OFFENHARTZ Associated Press  
NEW YORK (AP) — The historic hush money trial of Donald Trump got underway Monday with the arduous process of selecting a jury to hear the case charging the former president with falsifying business records in order to stifle stories about his sex life.

The day ended without any jurors being chosen. The selection process was scheduled to resume Tuesday.

The first criminal trial of any former U.S. president began as Trump vies to reclaim the White House,



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creating a remarkable split-screen spectacle of the presumptive Republican nominee spending his days as a criminal defendant while simultaneously campaigning for office. He's blended those roles over the last year by presenting himself to supporters, on the campaign trail and on social media, as a target of politically motivated prosecutions designed to derail his candidacy.

"It's a scam. It's a political witch hunt. It continues, and it continues forever," Trump said after exiting the courtroom, where he sat at the defense table with his lawyers.

After a norm-shattering presidency shadowed by years of investigations, the trial amounts to a reckoning for Trump, who faces four indictments charging him with crimes ranging from hoarding classified documents to plotting to overturn an election. Yet the political stakes are less clear because a conviction would not preclude him from becoming president and because the allegations in this case date back years and are seen as less grievous than the conduct behind the three other indictments.

The day began with pretrial arguments — including over a potential fine for Trump — before moving in the afternoon into jury selection, where the parties will decide who might be picked to determine the legal fate of the former, and potentially future, American president.

After the first members of the jury pool, 96 in all, were summoned into the courtroom, Trump craned his neck to look back at them, whispering to his lawyer as they entered the jury box.

"You are about to participate in a trial by jury. The system of trial by jury is one of the cornerstones of our judicial system," Judge Juan Merchan told the jurors. "The name of this case is the People of the State of New York vs. Donald Trump."

Trump's notoriety would make the process of picking 12 jurors and six alternates a near-herculean task in any year, but it's likely to be especially challenging now, unfolding in a closely contested presidential election in the heavily Democratic city where Trump grew up became a celebrity decades before winning the White House.

Underscoring the difficulty, only about a third of the 96 people in the first panel of potential jurors remained after the judge excused some members. More than half the group was excused after telling the judge they could not be fair and impartial. At least nine more were excused after raising their hands when Merchan asked if they could not serve for any other reason.

A female juror was excused after saying she had strong opinions about Trump. Earlier in the questionnaire, the woman, a Harlem resident, indicated she could be neutral in deciding the case. But when asked whether she had strong opinions about the former president, the woman answered matter-of-factly, "Yes."

When Merchan asked her to repeat the response, she replied, "Yeah, I said yes." She was dismissed.

Merchan has written that the key is "whether the prospective juror can assure us that they will set aside any personal feelings or biases and render a decision that is based on the evidence and the law."

No matter the outcome, Trump is determined to benefit from the proceedings, casting the case, and his indictments elsewhere, as a broad "weaponization of law enforcement" by Democratic prosecutors and officials. He maintains they are orchestrating sham charges in hopes of impeding his presidential run.

He's lambasted judges and prosecutors for years, a pattern of attacks that continued Monday as he entered court after calling the case an "assault on America."

"This is political persecution. This is a persecution like never before," he said.

The judge denied a defense request to recuse himself from the case after Trump's lawyers claimed he had a conflict of interest. He also said prosecutors could not play for the jury the 2005 "Access Hollywood" recording in which Trump was captured discussing grabbing women sexually without their permission. However, prosecutors will be allowed to question witnesses about the recording, which became public in the final weeks of the 2016 campaign.

Prosecutors with the Manhattan district attorney's office also asked Merchan to fine Trump \$3,000 over social media posts they said violated the judge's gag order limiting what he can say publicly about witnesses. Last week, he used his Truth Social platform to call his former lawyer Michael Cohen and the adult film actor Stormy Daniels "two sleaze bags who have, with their lies and misrepresentations, cost our Country dearly!"

Trump lawyer Todd Blanche maintained Trump was simply responding to the witnesses' statements. "It's not as if President Trump is going out and targeting individuals. He is responding to salacious, repeated vehement attacks by these witnesses," Blanche said.

Merchan setting a hearing for next week on the request.

Trump has pleaded not guilty to 34 felony counts of falsifying business records. Prosecutors say the alleged fraud was part of an effort to keep salacious — and, Trump says, bogus — stories about his sex life from emerging during his 2016 campaign.

The charges center on payments Trump's company made to Cohen to reimburse him for \$130,000 he paid to keep Daniels from going public, a month before the election, with her claims of a sexual encounter with the married mogul a decade earlier.

Prosecutors say the payments to Cohen were falsely logged as legal fees in order to cloak their actual purpose. Trump's lawyers say the disbursements indeed were legal expenses, not a cover-up.

After decades of fielding and initiating lawsuits, the businessman-turned-politician now faces a trial that could result in up to four years in prison if he's convicted, though a no-jail sentence also would be possible.

Trump's attorneys lost a bid to get the hush money case dismissed and repeatedly sought to delay it, prompting a flurry of last-minute appeals court hearings last week.

Among other things, Trump's lawyers maintain that the jury pool in overwhelmingly Democratic Manhattan has been tainted by negative publicity about Trump and that the case should be moved elsewhere.

An appeals judge turned down an emergency request to delay the trial while the change-of-venue request goes to a group of appellate judges, who are set to consider it in the coming weeks.

Manhattan prosecutors have countered that a lot of the publicity stems from Trump's own comments and that questioning will tease out whether prospective jurors can put aside any preconceptions they may have. There's no reason, prosecutors said, to think that 12 fair and impartial people can't be found amid Manhattan's roughly 1.4 million adult residents.

The prospective jurors will be known only by number, as the judge has ordered that their names be kept secret from everyone except prosecutors, Trump and their legal teams.

They're being asked 42 questions about their backgrounds, hobbies and news habits, whether they hold strong beliefs about Trump that would prevent them from being impartial and about attendance at Trump or anti-Trump rallies.

Based on the answers, the attorneys can ask a judge to eliminate people "for cause" if they meet certain criteria for being unable to serve or can't be unbiased. The lawyers also can use "peremptory challenges" to nix 10 potential jurors and two prospective alternates without giving a reason.

## **Israel's military chief says that Israel will respond to Iran's weekend missile attack**

By JOSEF FEDERMAN Associated Press

JERUSALEM (AP) — Israel's military chief said Monday that his country will respond to Iran's weekend attack, but he did not elaborate on when and how as world leaders urged against retaliation, trying to avoid a spiral of violence in the Middle East.

The Iranian attack on Saturday came in response to a suspected Israeli strike two weeks earlier on an Iranian consular building in the Syrian capital of Damascus that killed two Iranian generals. It marked the first time Iran has launched a direct military assault on Israel despite decades of enmity dating back to the country's 1979 Islamic Revolution.

Iran launched hundreds of drones, ballistic missiles and cruise missiles at Israel in the attack. The Israeli military said that 99% of the drones and missiles were intercepted, by Israel's own air defenses and warplanes and in coordination with a U.S.-led coalition of partners.

Israeli military chief Lt. Gen. Herzl Halevi said Monday that Israel is considering its next steps but that the Iranian strike "will be met with a response."

Halevi gave no details. The army's spokesman, Rear Adm. Daniel Hagari, said Israel will respond "at the

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time that we choose.”

Both men spoke at the Nevatim air base in southern Israel, which Hagari said suffered only light damage in the Iranian attack.

Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has been huddling with top officials to discuss a possible response. For a second straight day, the government made no announcements on any decisions.

In a conversation with U.S. House Majority Leader Steve Scalise, Netanyahu said that “Israel will do whatever is required to defend itself,” the prime minister’s office announced.

While Israeli leaders have hinted at retaliation, the government is under heavy international pressure not to further escalate the conflict — especially after the Iranian strike caused such little damage.

The U.S. has urged Israel to show restraint as it seeks to build a broad diplomatic response.

While Maj. Gen. Pat Ryder, Pentagon press secretary, said any response is up to Israel to decide, he added: “We don’t want to see escalation, but we obviously will take necessary measures to protect our forces in the region.”

Pressed at a briefing about whether such a response would jeopardize stability in the region, Ryder said the U.S. will “stay in close consultation with our Israeli partners, as we have done throughout the weekend. Again, we don’t seek wider regional conflict.”

The U.S. also has been working in recent years to strengthen ties between Israel and moderate Arab states in an alliance to counter Iran.

Much of that cooperation has been under the umbrella of the U.S. Central Command, which oversees U.S. military operations in the Middle East. Centcom works closely with militaries across the region, including Israel, Jordan, Saudi Arabia and other Arab countries.

The U.S., Britain and Jordan — a key American ally in the region — have all said their air forces helped intercept the Iranian missiles and drones. Halevi said France and “other partners” were involved, and he noted that “Iran’s attack has created new opportunities for cooperation in the Middle East.”

The Iranian weapons also flew through Saudi skies, according to a map released by the Israeli military. Israel says most of the interceptions took place outside of Israeli airspace, indicating at least tacit cooperation with the Saudis.

A unilateral Israeli strike could strain these behind-the-scenes contacts, particularly with countries like Saudi Arabia that do not have official diplomatic relations with Israel. It also could risk opening a new front with Iran at a time when Israel is bogged down in a six-month war inside Gaza against Hamas militants.

Israel and Iran have been on a collision course throughout the Gaza war. The war erupted after Hamas and Islamic Jihad, two militant groups backed by Iran, carried out a devastating cross-border attack on Oct. 7 that killed 1,200 people in Israel and kidnapped 250 others.

Israel’s offensive in Gaza has killed over 33,700 Palestinians, according to local health officials, and caused widespread devastation.

Throughout the war, Israel has traded fire across its northern border with Lebanon’s Iranian-backed Hezbollah militant group, while Iranian-backed militias in Iraq and Yemen have also attacked Israel. The friction has kept up fears of a potentially destructive all-out war between Israel and Hezbollah, or a broader direct confrontation between Israel and Iran.

World leaders pressed Israel not to strike Iran.

British Prime Minister Rishi Sunak said “all sides must show restraint” to avoid a rising spiral of violence in the Middle East. French President Emmanuel Macron said Paris will try to “convince Israel that we must not respond by escalating.”

In Washington, U.S. National Security Council spokesman John Kirby declined to say Monday whether the U.S. had been or expects to be briefed on any Israeli response plans. “We will let the Israelis speak to that,” he said.

“We are not involved in their decision-making process about a potential response,” Kirby said.

U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken said the U.S. doesn’t seek escalation but said it would continue to support Israel’s security. He pledged to step up the diplomatic efforts against Iran.

“Strength and wisdom need to be different sides of the same coin,” he said.



## Ship that caused bridge collapse had apparent electrical issues while still docked, AP source says

By ERIC TUCKER, LEA SKENE and SARAH BRUMFIELD Associated Press

BALTIMORE (AP) — Hours before leaving port, the massive container ship that caused the deadly collapse of a Baltimore bridge experienced apparent electrical problems, a person with knowledge of the situation told The Associated Press on Monday, the same day FBI agents boarded the vessel amid a criminal investigation into the circumstances leading up to the catastrophe.

The Dali departed Baltimore's port early on March 26 laden with cargo destined for Sri Lanka. It lost power before reaching open water and struck one of the supports for Francis Scott Key Bridge, causing the span to collapse into the Patapsco River and sending six members of a road repair crew plummeting to their deaths. Two of the victims are still unaccounted for.

Authorities announced Monday evening the recovery of a fourth body from a construction vehicle in the underwater wreckage. The person's identity wasn't released per their family's request, officials said.

While the ship was docked in Baltimore, alarms went off on some of its refrigerated containers, indicating an inconsistent power supply, according to the person with knowledge of the situation who was not authorized to publicly comment and spoke to AP on condition of anonymity.

Officials with the National Transportation Safety Board have said their investigation will include an inquiry into whether the ship experienced power issues before starting its voyage.

Board Chair Jennifer Homendy said last week the investigation is focused on the ship's electrical system generally. The ship experienced power issues moments before the crash, as is evident in videos that show its lights going out and coming back on.

Homendy said information gleaned from the vessel's voyage data recorder is relatively basic, "so that information in the engine room will help us tremendously."

The FBI is now conducting a criminal investigation into the bridge collapse that is focused on the circumstances leading up to it and whether all federal laws were followed, according to a different person familiar with the matter. The person wasn't authorized to discuss details of the investigation publicly and spoke to the AP on the condition of anonymity.

FBI agents were aboard the cargo ship on Monday conducting court-authorized law enforcement activity, the agency said in a statement. It didn't elaborate and said it wouldn't comment further on the investigation, which was first reported by The Washington Post.

Meanwhile, Mayor Brandon Scott issued a statement Monday announcing a partnership with two law firms to "launch legal action to hold the wrongdoers responsible" and mitigate harm to the people of Baltimore. He said the city needs to act quickly to protect its own interests.

Scott said the city "will take decisive action to hold responsible all entities accountable for the Key Bridge tragedy," including the owner, operator and manufacturer of the cargo ship Dali, which began its journey roughly a half-hour before losing power and veering off course.

The Dali is managed by Synergy Marine Group and owned by Grace Ocean Private Ltd., both of Singapore. Danish shipping giant Maersk chartered the Dali.

Synergy and Grace Ocean filed a court petition soon after the collapse seeking to limit their legal liability — a routine procedure for cases litigated under U.S. maritime law. Their joint filing seeks to cap the companies' liability at roughly \$43.6 million. It estimates that the vessel itself is valued at up to \$90 million and was owed over \$1.1 million in income from freight. The estimate also deducts two major expenses: at least \$28 million in repair costs and at least \$19.5 million in salvage costs.

"Due to the magnitude of the incident, there are various government agencies conducting investigations, in which we are fully participating," Synergy spokesperson Darrell Wilson said in a statement Monday. "Out of respect for these investigations and any future legal proceedings, it would be inappropriate to comment further at this time."

The companies filed their petition under a provision of an 1851 maritime law that allows them to seek to limit their liability to the value of the vessel's remains after a casualty.

Attorneys for some of the victims and a worker who survived the collapse argued Monday that the companies that own and manage the ship are taking advantage of an "archaic law" in attempting to protect their assets.

"Imagine telling that to grieving families ... while they're planning a funeral, the owner of the boat is in court," attorney L. Chris Stewart said during a news conference in Baltimore.

The road crew "absolutely had zero warning" in the moments before the collapse, Stewart said, even though a last-minute mayday call from the ship's pilot allowed nearby police officers to stop traffic from trying to cross the span. Three of the workers' bodies are still missing, as crews continue the dangerous work of removing massive chunks of steel from the river.

Julio Cervantes, who survived falling from the bridge, narrowly escaped drowning by rolling down his work vehicle's window and fighting through the frigid water despite being unable to swim, attorneys said. He clung to debris until he was rescued.

"This was all preventable," Stewart said. "That is why we were brought in to investigate and find out what has happened and give these families a voice."

The investigations come amid concerns about the safety of thousands of U.S. bridges and days after more than two dozen river barges broke loose and struck a closed span in Pittsburgh.

## **IAEA warns that attacks on a nuclear plant in Russian-controlled Ukraine put the world at risk**

By MICHAEL WEISSENSTEIN Associated Press

UNITED NATIONS (AP) — Russia and Ukraine on Monday traded blame before the United Nations Security Council for the attacks on Europe's largest nuclear power plant, which the head of the International Atomic Energy Agency said have put the world "dangerously close to a nuclear accident."

Without attributing blame, IAEA Director General Rafael Mariano Grossi said his agency has been able to confirm three attacks against the Zaporizhzhia Nuclear Power Plant since April 7.

"These reckless attacks must cease immediately," he told the Security Council. "Though, fortunately, they have not led to a radiological incident this time, they significantly increase the risk ... where nuclear safety is already compromised."

The remote-controlled nature of the drones that have attacked the plant means that it is impossible to definitively determine who launched them, Grossi told reporters after the meeting.

"In order to say something like that, we must have proof," he said. "These attacks have been performed with a multitude of drones."

Zaporizhzhia sits in Russian-controlled territory in southeastern Ukraine and has six nuclear reactors.

Fears of a nuclear catastrophe have been at the forefront since Russian troops occupied the plant shortly after invading in February 2022. Continued fighting between Russian and Ukrainian forces — as well as the tense supply situation at the plant — have raised the specter of a disaster.

Ukraine and its allies on Monday again blamed Russia for dangers at the site, with the United States saying, "Russia does not care about these risks."

"If it did, it would not continue to forcibly control the plant," U.S. deputy ambassador Robert Wood told the Security Council, which met at the initiative of the U.S. and Slovenia.

Russia, for its part, said Ukraine was to blame for the attacks.

"The IAEA's report does not pinpoint which side is behind the attacks," Russia's U.N. Ambassador Vassily Nebenzia said. "We know full well who it is."

"Over the last few months, such attacks not only resumed," Nebenzia said, "they significantly intensified."

Ukraine's ambassador to the U.N., Sergiy Kyslytsya, called the attacks "a well-planned false flag operation by the Russian Federation," which he alleged Russia had designed to distract the world from its invasion of its neighbor.

The Zaporizhzhia facility is one of the 10 biggest nuclear plants in the world. Fighting in the southern part of Ukraine where it is located has raised the specter of a potential nuclear disaster like the one at

Chernobyl in 1986, where a reactor exploded and blew deadly radiation across a vast area.

Neither Russia nor Ukraine in recent months has been able to make significant advances along the 1,000-kilometer (620-mile) front line crossing eastern and southern Ukraine. Drones, artillery and missiles have featured heavily in what has become a war of attrition.

Russia and Ukraine have frequently traded accusations over the Zaporizhzhia plant.

The most recent strikes did not compromise the facility, which is designed to withstand a commercial airliner crashing into it, the IAEA said.

The plant's six reactors have been shut down for months, but it still needs power and qualified staff to operate crucial cooling systems and other safety features.

## **Supreme Court allows Idaho to enforce its ban on gender-affirming care for transgender youth**

WASHINGTON (AP) — The Supreme Court is allowing Idaho to enforce its ban on gender-affirming care for transgender youth while lawsuits over the law proceed, reversing lower courts.

The justices' order Monday allows the state to put in a place a 2023 law that subjects physicians to up to 10 years in prison if they provide hormones, puberty blockers or other gender-affirming care to people under age 18. Under the court's order, the two transgender teens who sued to challenge the law still will be able to obtain care.

The court's three liberal justices would have kept the law on hold. Justice Ketanji Brown Jackson wrote that it would have been better to let the case proceed "unfettered by our intervention."

Justice Neil Gorsuch of the conservative majority wrote that it is "a welcome development" that the court is reining in an overly broad lower court order.

A federal judge in Idaho had blocked the law in its entirety after determining that it was necessary to do so to protect the teens, who are identified under pseudonyms in court papers.

Lawyers for the teens wrote in court papers that the teens' "gender dysphoria has been dramatically alleviated as a result of puberty blockers and estrogen therapy."

The American Civil Liberties Union, representing the teens and their families, called the Supreme Court's order "an awful result for transgender youth and their families across the state. Today's ruling allows the state to shut down the care that thousands of families rely on while sowing further confusion and disruption."

Idaho Attorney General Raúl Labrador said in a statement that the law "ensures children are not subjected to these life-altering drugs and procedures. Those suffering from gender dysphoria deserve love, support, and medical care rooted in biological reality. Denying the basic truth that boys and girls are biologically different hurts our kids."

Gender-affirming care for youth is supported by every major medical organization, including the American Medical Association, the American Academy of Pediatrics and the American Psychiatric Association.

Medical professionals define gender dysphoria as psychological distress experienced by those whose gender expression does not match their gender identity.

The action comes as the justices also may soon consider whether to take up bans in Kentucky and Tennessee that an appeals court allowed to be enforced in the midst of legal fights.

At least 23 states have enacted laws restricting or banning gender-affirming medical care for transgender minors, and most of those states face lawsuits. A federal judge struck down Arkansas' ban as unconstitutional. Montana's ban also is temporarily on hold.

The states that have enacted laws restricting or banning gender-affirming medical care for transgender minors are Alabama, Arkansas, Arizona, Florida, Georgia, Idaho, Indiana, Iowa, Kentucky, Louisiana, Mississippi, Missouri, Montana, Nebraska, North Carolina, North Dakota, Ohio, Oklahoma, South Dakota, Tennessee, Texas, Utah and West Virginia.



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## It's Tax Day. And your refund may be big this year

By FATIMA HUSSEIN Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — On this Tax Day, refunds are looking a bit bigger for taxpayers.

According to the latest IRS statistics, the average income tax refund so far this season is \$3,011, up \$123 from last year. Two out of three taxpayers expect to receive a refund.

The IRS is promoting the customer service improvements the agency rolled out since receiving tens of billions in new funding dollars through Democrats' Inflation Reduction Act. Getting refunds out faster — to some people in just over a week — is part of the promotion.

So far, the IRS has delivered more than \$200 billion in refunds through early April, and the latest agency numbers show that 101 million people have filed returns this tax season.

At least one prominent person did not get a refund. President Joe Biden on Monday released the tax returns he filed with his wife, Jill, showing that he still owed the IRS \$334 and the state of Delaware \$1,480. But Jill Biden qualified for a \$433 refund from Virginia, where she teaches. The Bidens earned \$619,976 and paid a federal income tax rate of 23.7%.

From cutting phone wait times to digitizing more documents and improving the "Where's My Refund" tool to show more account details in plain language, agency leaders are trying to bring attention to what's been done to repair the image of the IRS as an outdated and maligned tax collector.

The promotion also in part is meant to quickly normalize a more efficient and effective IRS before congressional Republicans threaten another round of spending cuts to the agency. So time is of the essence for both taxpayers and the agency.

"This filing season, the IRS has built off past successes and reached new milestones," Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen said on a Friday call with reporters. "It's showing that when it has the resources it needs, it will provide taxpayers the service they deserve."

"It's clear that we're seeing historic improvements in taxpayer service levels, and the agency is rebounding from some very tough and lean years during the past decade," said IRS Commissioner Daniel Werfel.

For most people, April 15 is the last day to submit tax returns or to file an extension.

The IRS says call wait times have been cut down to three minutes this tax season, compared with the average 28 minutes in 2022. That has saved taxpayers 1.4 million hours of hold time and the agency has answered 3 million more calls compared with the same time frame. Also, the updated "Where's My Refund" tool giving more specific information about taxpayers' refunds in plain language was rolled out to 31 million views online.

Werfel told The Associated Press earlier this year that the agency's agenda is to deliver "better service for all Americans so that we can ease stress, frustration and make the tax filing process easier — and to increase scrutiny on complex filers where there's risk of tax evasion."

"When we do that," Werfel said, "not only do we make the tax system work better because it's easier and more streamlined to meet your tax obligations. But also we collect more money for the U.S. Treasury and lower our deficit. The IRS is a good investment."

Major new initiatives in recent months have included an aggressive pursuit of high-wealth earners who don't pay their full tax obligations, such as people who improperly deduct personal flights on corporate jets and those who just don't file at all.

This also is the first tax season that the IRS has rolled out a program called Direct File, the government's free electronic tax return filing system available to taxpayers in 12 states who have simple W-2 forms and claim a standard deduction.

If Direct File is successful and scaled up for the general public's use, the program could drastically change how Americans file their taxes and how much money they spend completing them. That is, if the agency can see the program through its development in spite of threats to its funding.

The Inflation Reduction Act initially included \$80 billion for the IRS.

However, House Republicans have successfully clawed back some of the money. They built a \$1.4 billion reduction to the IRS into the debt ceiling and budget cuts package passed by Congress last summer. A separate agreement will take an additional \$20 billion from the IRS over the next two years to divert to

other nondefense programs.

Government watchdogs warn IRS funding cuts will reduce the amount of revenues the U.S. collects.

The non-partisan Congressional Budget Office reported in February that a \$5 billion rescission from the IRS would reduce revenues by \$5.2 billion over the next 10 years and increase the cumulative deficit by \$0.2 billion. A \$20 billion rescission would reduce revenues by \$44 billion and a \$35 billion rescission would reduce revenues by \$89 billion and increase the deficit by \$54 billion.

## Tax Day reveals a major split in how Joe Biden and Donald Trump would govern

By JOSH BOAK and JILL COLVIN Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Tax Day reveals a major split in how Joe Biden and Donald Trump would govern: The presidential candidates have conflicting ideas about how much to reveal about their own finances and the best ways to boost the economy through tax policy.

Biden, the sitting Democratic president, released his income tax returns on the IRS deadline of Monday. Filing jointly with his wife, Jill, he reported gross income of \$619,976 and paid a federal income tax rate of 23.7%.

On Tuesday, Biden is scheduled to deliver a speech in Scranton, Pennsylvania, about why the wealthy should pay more in taxes to reduce the federal deficit and help fund programs for the poor and middle class.

Biden is proud to say that he was largely without money for much of his decades-long career in public service, unlike Trump, who inherited hundreds of millions of dollars from his father and used his billionaire status to launch a TV show and later a presidential campaign.

"For 36 years, I was listed as the poorest man in Congress," Biden told donors in California in February. "Not a joke."

In 2015, Trump declared as part of his candidacy, "I'm really rich."

The Republican former president has argued that voters have no need to see his tax data and that past financial disclosures are more than sufficient. He maintains that keeping taxes low for the wealthy will supercharge investment and lead to more jobs, while tax hikes would crush an economy still recovering from inflation that hit a four-decade peak in 2022.

"Biden wants to give the IRS even more cash by proposing the largest tax hike on the American people in history when they are already being robbed by his record-high inflation crisis," said Karoline Leavitt, press secretary for the Trump campaign.

The split goes beyond an ideological difference to a very real challenge for whoever triumphs in the November election. At the end of 2025, many of the tax cuts that Trump signed into law in 2017 will expire — setting up an avalanche of choices about how much people across the income spectrum should pay as the national debt is expected to climb to unprecedented levels.

Including interest costs, extending all the tax breaks could add another \$3.8 trillion to the national debt through 2033, according to an analysis last year by the Committee for a Responsible Federal Budget.

Biden would like to keep the majority of the tax breaks, based on his pledge that no one earning less than \$400,000 will have to pay more. But he released a budget proposal this year with tax increases on the wealthy and corporations that would raise \$4.9 trillion in revenues and trim forecasted deficits by \$3.2 trillion over 10 years.

Still, he's telling voters that he's all for letting the Trump-era tax cuts lapse.

"Does anyone here think the tax code is fair? Raise your hand," Biden said Tuesday at a speech in Washington's Union Station to a crowd predisposed to dislike Trump's broad tax cuts that helped many in the middle class but disproportionately favored wealthier households.

"It added more to the national debt than any presidential term in history," Biden continued. "And it's due to expire next year. And guess what? I hope to be president because it expires — it's going to stay expired."

Trump has called for higher tariffs on foreign-made goods, which are taxes that could hit consumers in

the form of higher prices. But his campaign is committed to tax cuts while promising that a Trump presidency would reduce a national debt that has risen for decades, including during his Oval Office tenure.

"When President Trump is back in the White House, he will advocate for more tax cuts for all Americans and reinvigorate America's energy industry to bring down inflation, lower the cost of living, and pay down our debt," Leavitt said.

Most economists say Trump's tax cuts could not generate enough growth to pay down the national debt. An analysis released Friday by Oxford Economics found that a "full-blown Trump" policy with tax cuts, higher tariffs and blocking immigration would slow growth and increase inflation.

Among Biden's proposals is a "billionaire minimum income tax" that would apply a minimum rate of 25% on households with a net worth of at least \$100 million.

The tax would directly target billionaires such as Trump, who refused to release his personal taxes as presidents have traditionally done. But six years of his tax returns were released in 2022 by Democrats on the House Ways and Means Committee.

In 2018, Trump earned more than \$24 million and paid about 4% of that in federal income taxes. The congressional panel also found that the IRS delayed legally mandated audits of Trump during his presidency, with the panel concluding the audit process was "dormant, at best."

Biden has publicly released more than two decades of his tax returns. His tax filings provide key financial details on mortgage interest payments (\$20,525) and the \$20,477 donated to 17 different charities, including \$5,000 to the Beau Biden Foundation and \$2,100 to St. Joseph on the Brandywine, the Catholic church he attends in Delaware.

Trump has maintained that his tax records are complicated because of his use of various tax credits and past business losses, which in some cases have allowed him to avoid taxes. He also previously declined to release his tax returns under the claim that the IRS was auditing him for pre-presidential filings.

His finances recently received a boost from the stock market debut of Trump Media, which controls Trump's preferred social media outlet, Truth Social. Share prices initially surged, adding billions of dollars to Trump's net worth, but investors have since soured on the company and shares by Friday were down more than 50% from their peak.

The former president is also on the hook for \$542 million due to legal judgments in a civil fraud case and penalties owed to the writer E. Jean Carroll because of statements made by Trump that damaged her reputation after she accused him of sexual assault.

In the civil fraud case, New York Judge Arthur Engoron looked at the financial records of the Trump Organization and concluded after looking at the inflated assets that "the frauds found here leap off the page and shock the conscience."

## The Latest | First day of Trump's hush money trial adjourns with no jurors selected

By The Associated Press undefined

NEW YORK (AP) — The first day of Donald Trump's historic hush money trial ended Monday after hours of pretrial motions and an initial jury selection process that saw dozens of prospective jurors excused after they said they could not be fair or impartial. The court ultimately adjourned without any jurors being seated, with the selection process resuming on Tuesday.

The process involves selecting 12 jurors, plus six alternates. Trump's notoriety would make that a near-herculean task in any year, but the process is especially challenging now — unfolding as Trump vies to reclaim the White House during a hotly contested presidential election year and in the city where he grew up.

The trial's start marks an extraordinary moment in American history — it's the first criminal trial of any former U.S. commander-in-chief and the first of Trump's four indictments to go to trial.

Trump is accused of falsifying internal Trump Organization records as part of a scheme to bury stories



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that he feared could hurt his 2016 campaign, particularly as his reputation was suffering at the time from comments he had made about women.

The allegations focus on payoffs to two women, porn actor Stormy Daniels and Playboy model Karen McDougal, who said they had extramarital sexual encounters with Trump years earlier, as well as to a Trump Tower doorman who claimed to have a story about a child he alleged Trump had out of wedlock. Trump says none of these supposed sexual encounters occurred.

Currently:

- Here's what to know about the hush money case
- How a hush money scandal tied to a porn star led to Trump's first criminal trial
- A jury of his peers: A look at how jury selection will work in Donald Trump's first criminal trial
- Tracking the criminal and civil cases against Donald Trump

Here is the latest:

**JUDGE: TRUMP CAN'T SKIP TRIAL TO ATTEND SCOTUS ARGUMENTS NEXT WEEK**

Judge Juan M. Merchan on Monday declined a request from Donald Trump's lawyers to take April 25 off from the hush money trial to allow the former president to attend U.S. Supreme Court arguments on his claim of presidential immunity in another of his four criminal cases.

Defense lawyer Todd Blanche said Trump's situation deserved accommodation. "It's not very often that you have someone who has multiple criminal indictments at the same time," he added.

Merchan said that as a criminal defendant, Trump "is required to be here. He is not required to be at the Supreme Court."

In response, Trump rolled his eyes, scowled and stood up to leave, as court was adjourning for the day.

**MAN EXCUSED FROM JURY PANEL TO ALLOW HIM TO ATTEND HIS CHILD'S JUNE WEDDING**

In a tender moment Monday afternoon, Judge Juan M. Merchan preemptively excused a man from jury selection for Donald Trump's hush money trial rather than forcing him to possibly miss his child's wedding on the West Coast in June.

The middle-aged man raised the issue as he was about to answer the jury questionnaire.

"I think we should be done by then but I can't promise," Merchan told the man. "Only you can decide if you want to roll the dice. But if you're with us, you're with us 'til the end."

As the man contemplated the potential conflict, Merchan offered to let him go. "I think, to be on the safe side, we should excuse," Merchan said. "Congratulations," the judge added, wishing him well on his child's impending nuptials as he exited the jury box.

**OVER HALF OF FIRST GROUP OF POTENTIAL JURORS EXCUSED AFTER SAYING THEY CAN'T BE FAIR, IMPARTIAL**

More than half of the first group of prospective jurors in Donald Trump's hush money case were excused after telling the judge they couldn't be fair and impartial. At least nine more prospective jurors were excused after raising their hands when Judge Juan M. Merchan asked if they could not serve for any other reason. Those reasons were not disclosed.

It's not unusual for potential jurors to want to be excused for a variety of reasons, including having strong feelings about the defendant.

To make the trial more efficient, Merchan said he would prefer to dismiss jurors immediately if they indicated, at the start, that they couldn't be fair and impartial. That's a departure from a more common practice of questioning jurors more closely, individually, to see if their claimed lack of impartiality was true.

Trump's lawyers have argued to an appeals court that he cannot find a fair and impartial jury in Manhattan and therefore the case should be moved elsewhere.

Roughly 100 other potential jurors waited to be called into the courtroom late Monday afternoon. Merchan has said a total of about 200 jurors are in the courthouse for possible selection.

**JUROR QUESTIONNAIRE ASKS ABOUT NEWS HABITS, HOBBIES AND MORE**

A randomly selected group of 18 prospective jurors in Donald Trump's hush money trial on Monday afternoon began sifting through a litany of preselected questions, touching on their educational backgrounds, news habits, hobbies and ability to be neutral.

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Both of the first two prospective jurors said they lived in midtown Manhattan, had never attended a Trump rally and felt they could be impartial.

On a question about whether she had any strong beliefs about the former president, the first respondent paused briefly, then said, "No."

As the jurors ticked through the list of questions, Trump held a stapled stack of papers close to his face, appearing to follow along with the answers.

## JURORS TO BE SELECTED FROM POOL OF NEARLY 200 PEOPLE

Jury selection in Donald Trump's hush money trial began Monday afternoon with an explanation of the case from Judge Juan M. Merchan and the duties of jurors during the trial.

"The jury's responsibility is to evaluate the testimony and all of the evidence presented at the trial. The trial is the opportunity for you to decide if the defendant is guilty or not guilty," he said.

Some of the 96 prospective panelists craned their necks to get a look at Trump as they were seated in the back of the courtroom. One giggled and put her hand over her mouth, raising her eyebrows as she exchanged a glance with her neighbor.

About 100 other potential jurors were waiting elsewhere in the building ahead of defense and prosecution efforts to winnow the overall group down to just over a dozen people.

Trump, meanwhile, looked straight ahead, expressionless, with his head slightly cocked to the side.

Outside the courthouse, crowds had dwindled to just over a dozen people. Earlier in the day, dozens of the former president's supporters had waved flags with slogans like "Trump or Death" and "Trump 2024 Save America."

Twenty-one-year-old Jay Finkle, a native New Yorker, said he voted for Trump in 2020 and the charges against him don't affect his plans to vote for him again. "Yeah, this doesn't matter at all," he said.

## JURY SELECTION UNDERWAY AFTER HOURS OF PRETRIAL ARGUMENTS

Jury selection in Donald Trump's hush money trial got underway with a group of 96 prospective jurors filing into court mid-afternoon on Monday.

The selection marked the start of the trial and an extraordinary moment in U.S. history. It's the first criminal trial of any former U.S. commander-in-chief and the first of Trump's four indictments to go to trial.

The names of all jurors will be kept secret, except to the legal parties. During selection, prospective jurors will be referred to by an assigned number rather than their names.

Twelve jurors and six alternates will be chosen to hear the case. Judge Merchan has written that the key in choosing a juror is "whether the prospective juror can assure us that they will set aside any personal feelings or biases and render a decision that is based on the evidence and the law."

Merchan said once the panel is finalized, he will get two lists: one containing the jurors' numbers, the other containing their names and their numbers. The judge said he will then give one copy of each list to the prosecution and one copy of each list to Trump's defense team.

The lists are "not to be photographed or duplicated, in any way copied in any way shape or form," Merchan warned.

## MERCHAN TO HOLD HEARING NEXT WEEK ON PROSECUTORS' REQUEST TO FINE TRUMP

The judge overseeing Donald Trump's hush money trial will hold a hearing April 24 on prosecutors' request to fine Trump \$3,000 over three social media posts that they say violated the judge's gag order barring him from attacking witnesses.

Judge Juan M. Merchan said Trump's lawyers have until April 19 to file their written response. Trump's lawyer has said the former president's comments did not violate the gag order.

The gag order bars Trump from commenting publicly about witnesses, prosecutors, court staff and jurors.

## BOMB THREATS UNDER INVESTIGATION

Police are investigating a bomb threat at the home of Manhattan District Attorney Alvin Bragg from Monday morning. A police spokesperson said a 911 caller reported the threat shortly before 9 a.m.

Another bomb threat made to the New York Public Library's Stephen A. Schwarzman Building was unfounded and there was no disruption to service, a library spokesperson said.

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## PROSECUTORS ASK JUDGE TO FINE TRUMP \$3K OVER SOCIAL MEDIA POSTS ABOUT WITNESSES

Prosecutors have asked Judge Juan M. Merchan to fine Donald Trump \$3,000 over three social media posts they say violated a gag order that bars Trump from commenting on witnesses.

The gag order, imposed March 26, bars the ex-president from commenting publicly about witnesses, prosecutors, court staff and jurors. It was later expanded to bar him from talking publicly about relatives of the judge and Manhattan District Attorney Alvin Bragg, though Trump is free to speak about the officials themselves. Trump's attorneys are fighting the order in an appeals court.

Last week, Trump used his Truth Social platform to call two important witnesses — his former lawyer Michael Cohen and the adult film actor Stormy Daniels — "two sleaze bags who have, with their lies and misrepresentations, cost our Country dearly!"

Prosecutors also called for Trump to be ordered to take down the "offending" posts.

"The defendant has demonstrated his willingness to flout the order. He's attacked witnesses in the case," said Christopher Conroy, one of the trial prosecutors.

One of Trump's lawyers, Todd Blanche, maintained that the three posts in question don't violate the gag order. He said Trump was just responding to the witnesses' own public statements.

## JUDGE BLOCKS DETAIL OF McDOUGAL'S STORY AND PLAYING OF 'ACCESS HOLLYWOOD TAPE'

Judge Juan M. Merchan on Monday agreed to bar prosecutors from eliciting testimony to the effect that Donald Trump's wife Melania was pregnant while former Playboy model Karen McDougal claimed to have had an affair with him.

Prosecutors can still tell jurors about alleged efforts to suppress McDougal's story.

McDougal was paid \$150,000 in 2016 by the parent company of the National Enquirer for the rights to her story about her alleged 10-month affair with Trump in the mid-2000s. Trump has denied any affair took place.

The charges in the case pertain only to \$130,000 in hush money payments made, through Trump's then-lawyer Michael Cohen, to porn actor Stormy Daniels. She alleged a 2006 sexual encounter with Trump.

But prosecutors also plan to bring up McDougal's claims and payment, arguing that it's important context for what they have called a scheme "to influence the 2016 presidential election by identifying and purchasing negative information" about Trump.

Merchan on Monday also blocked playing of the infamous "Access Hollywood" tape, in which Trump described grabbing women sexually without their permission. But Merchan said prosecutors will be able to present internal campaign emails that Assistant District Attorney Joshua Steinglass said contained "powerful evidence of the campaign's reaction to the incendiary language contained" in the video.

## MERCHAN DENIES REQUEST TO EXPAND JUROR QUESTIONNAIRE

Shortly after court convened Monday, Donald Trump's attorneys asked Judge Juan M. Merchan to expand the already extensive questionnaire filled out by prospective jurors to weed out people who oppose the former president. Merchan declined the request, dismissing the notion that the jury questions were slanted to the benefit of prosecutors.

Over the coming days, the defense and the prosecution will both jockey for potential advantages as a jury pool of regular people is winnowed down to a panel of 12, plus six alternates.

"There is no asymmetry in the questionnaire when looked through the lens of what we're trying to accomplish," Merchan said. "This is by far the most exhaustive questionnaire this court has ever used," he added.

## JUDGE TO ALLOW INTRODUCTION OF EVIDENCE ABOUT NATIONAL ENQUIRER PLOY

The National Enquirer helped boost former President Donald Trump's 2016 candidacy by identifying and suppressing negative stories — a practice known as "catch and kill."

Judge Merchan said on Monday that such material would be permitted under a state law allowing evidence of alleged prior bad acts.

Trump and his then-lawyer Michael Cohen met with ex-National Enquirer publisher David Pecker at Trump Tower in August 2015 to discuss the supermarket tabloid's role in helping his presidential run. Assistant District Attorney Joshua Steinglass told the judge the meeting was the root of a scheme to suppress three



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potentially damaging stories about Trump, including porn actor Stormy Daniels' claims she had a sexual encounter with him in 2006.

Steinglass said the evidence will show that Trump approved, rejected or suggested changes to flattering National Enquirer stories about him and stories attacking his 2016 Republican primary opponents that were "timed perfectly to achieve maximum impact."

Trump lawyer Todd Blanche argued the evidence "would do nothing but confuse the jury about the actual crime charged."

## MERCHAN REJECTS ANOTHER REQUEST TO RECUSE HIMSELF

As the court day started, Judge Juan M. Merchan turned down a request that Donald Trump's lawyers had filed asking the judge to recuse himself — a move they also unsuccessfully made earlier in the case.

The Trump legal team pointed largely to the judge's daughter's work as a political consultant whose firm has worked for prominent Democrats, including President Joe Biden.

Trump's lawyers have argued that the daughter's job represents a conflict of interest for Merchan, and they also claimed she had posted an image of Trump behind bars on social media. The court system said she had closed the social media account before the photo was posted.

Trump's attorneys also argued that an interview Merchan gave to The Associated Press last month violated judicial rules about not making out-of-court comments about a pending case.

The article, which largely concerned Merchan's oversight of Manhattan's mental health court, reported that he declined to discuss the Trump case but said preparations for the historic trial were "intense."

Merchan added that he was striving "to make sure that I've done everything I could to be prepared and to make sure that we dispense justice," emphasizing his confidence in court staffers.

"There's no agenda here," the judge said in the interview. "We want to follow the law. We want justice to be done."

## TRUMP'S LAWYERS REQUEST DAYS OFF TO ATTEND HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATIONS

Donald Trump's lawyers have requested that the trial not be held on May 17 so that the former president may attend his son Barron's high school graduation. A Trump lawyer has also requested the trial not be held June 3 so that he could attend his own son's graduation.

Judge Juan M. Merchan said he was not prepared to rule on either request, but that if the trial proceeds as planned he's willing to adjourn for one or both days.

"It really depends on how we're doing on time and where we are in the trial," Merchan said.

## LIVESTREAM OF PROCEEDINGS LIMITED TO ONE ROOM IN COURTHOUSE

Only one room can watch a livestream of the proceedings in Donald Trump's hush money case — and it's in the courthouse.

A pair of video monitors are airing the proceeding to an overflow room adjacent to the main courtroom. The room was packed Monday morning with press, court officers and a few members of the public.

Among the attendees was prominent Trump critic and attorney George Conway, who is reporting for The Atlantic. Conway was married to Kellyanne Conway while she served as a senior presidential adviser in the Trump White House.

Ron Sinibaldi, a former accountant from Long Island, said he began lining up at the courthouse just before midnight to ensure he could get inside "for the historic day."

"I read presidential biographies, I go to presidential libraries, I'm here for the history," Sinibaldi said. "If they were doing this to Jimmy Carter, I'd be here too."

## MEDIA OUTNUMBER TRUMP SUPPORTERS OUTSIDE COURTHOUSE

Donald Trump supporters rallied outside the courthouse Monday morning ahead of the start of Trump's hush money trial, but members of the media outnumbered them.

Dozens of Trump supporters were outside the courthouse and roughly 40 other individuals were there protesting against the former president.

One group of demonstrators carried a banner that read, "No one is above the law."

Another group chanted that the judge overseeing Trump's trial, Juan M. Merchan, should recuse himself.

Trump had unsuccessfully pushed for the judge to remove himself from the case.

## TRUMP CONTINUES TO PAINT HIMSELF AS A VICTIM AHEAD OF TRIAL

In the hours before Donald Trump's expected arrival at the courthouse, his campaign continued to telegraph how they intend to characterize the trial.

At 6 a.m., the former president's campaign issued a lengthy press release attacking Bragg as "George Soros's Favorite DA" and labeling the historic proceedings as "The NY Biden Trial." It's another indication of how Trump has and will continue to personally vilify those who have brought the case, painting himself as the victim of a politically motivated effort by his rivals to tarnish his candidacy.

Trump has been busy posting on his Truth Social platform this morning, blasting the trial as "rigged" and complaining about the gag order that he has been placed under.

"I want my VOICE back. This Crooked Judge has GAGGED me. Unconstitutional! The other side can talk about me, but I am not allowed to talk about them! Rigged Trial!" he posted.

## **Beyoncé is bringing her fans of color to country music.**

### **Will they be welcomed in?**

By GARY GERARD HAMILTON Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — Dusty, worn boots. Horses lapping up water. Sweat dripping from the foreheads of every shade of Black skin as country classics blare through giant speakers. These moments are frequently recreated during Taylour Coleman's family gatherings at their central Texas ranch. For her, Beyoncé's country album, "Act II: Cowboy Carter," was the granting of an unlikely wish.

"There is something to be said about the biggest artist in the world coming home to the genre that... we all kind of love but never really felt welcome into — it's really hard to put that to words," said the 35-year-old native of Houston's Third Ward, the same area Beyoncé lived in as a child. Loving artists like Miranda Lambert and Shania Twain, Coleman hoped this moment would come. "I was praying then that one day she would make a country album...Beyoncé is more country than a lot of people making country music today."

Beyoncé's latest project is not only No. 1 on the Billboard 200 for the second consecutive week, but she became the first Black woman to top Billboard's country album chart.

"There's nothing that that girl can't do...that's inspiring to me," said country superstar Lainey Wilson, who took home the country album Grammy in February. "I'm excited to see the fans that didn't know they liked country music find out that maybe they like it a little bit."

Beyoncé's steamrolling into country music — and her motivation behind it — has reignited discussions about the genre's origins and its diversity. But with increased interest from Beyoncé's fans at a fever pitch, is Nashville prepared and willing to welcome them in? And will these new listeners of color and others curious about the hoopla stay or will their interest in the genre wane?

#### POWER PLAY

"I will be honest with you: I think that it's a Beyoncé thing. I don't know that it's a country music happening because that would mean the industry would have to do something...I think it's one of those cultural moments for Black people, specifically Black women," said country artist Rissi Palmer, host of the Apple Music radio show Color Me Country which has created a centralized community where fans of color can enjoy the genre.

"It's really funny to me to see a lot of country radio programmers trying to take credit for what just happened with Beyoncé. That wasn't country radio...that was her power, her money and...the acknowledgment of her brand. The fandom did that," Palmer said.

Tanner Davenport, co-director of Black Opry — and proud BeyHive member — worries the massive achievements of "Cowboy Carter" could have unintended consequences, such as country music executives not feeling an urgency to platform existing and future Black artists. Black Opry was founded by Holly G in April 2021, as she examined her relationship with the genre during the social justice movement sparked by the murder of George Floyd. The organization aims to amplify Black voices in country, Americana, blues

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and folk music.

"Once 'Act II' has ran its course and gone away, there are going to be programmers... looking back at this moment and saying, 'We've already done this. We've given a Black woman a No. 1,'" said Davenport. "If they can really start to dial into the audience a bit more, I think they can start to see progress within this and capitalize on this moment because I think there's a huge undermining of the Black dollar and how far it can go."

## NOT AN ANOMALY

Reyna Roberts' parents filled their house with music. Roberts, a rising country artist featured on "Cowboy Carter" with vocal credits on "Blackbird" and "Tyrant," said some questioned her musical aspirations.

"People are always so surprised. But I'm like my parents played country, they played trap, they played rock, they played classical, they played blues...Anything that I'm creating is all truly authentic," said Roberts, who hit a career breakthrough in 2020 after shout-outs from superstar Carrie Underwood and Mickey Guyton, who in 2021 became the first Black woman to co-host the Academy of Country Music Awards. (Charley Pride, who died in 2020, was the first Black co-host of the CMA Awards in 1975.)

Roberts is part of a new generation of artists, like Shaboozey, Tanner Adell and Willie Jones, who are fusing country with other genres like hip-hop.

While Wilson, one of the biggest artists in the genre, hopes some Queen Bey fans will explore country, a significant percentage of Black listeners already exists. A 2021 Country Music Association self-commissioned study, "Country Music's Multicultural Opportunity," examining potential audience expansion opportunities, revealed that 26% of Black respondents said they listen weekly.

"I don't think they have gotten to the point where they feel as safe to be at country shows... the broad listenership in country music is going to be reflected in the streaming world," said Davenport. He says the Black Opry is strategizing ways to capitalize on Beyoncé's momentum so curious fans can find spaces "where they can exist and not feel threatened."

## FEELING UNWELCOME

Safety and feeling comfortable in a country music environment is often on the minds of Black country musicgoers. Davenport was in the audience during Beyoncé's 2016 CMA performance with The Chicks which sparked a much-documented racist online backlash, and is widely believed to be the genesis for "Cowboy Carter" with the superstar expressing in an Instagram post, "I did not feel welcomed."

During the performance, Davenport says a woman near him yelled, "They need to get that Black b--- off stage," adding, "I started to realize, OK, this is truly a space in which I don't feel comfortable in, and I don't feel safe in."

That same CMA multicultural study found that 20% of concert attendees of color experienced racial profiling or harassment. The polling also included non-country music listeners, and up to 31% of that segment noted that they don't listen because they "wouldn't be safe/comfortable at live events."

Monica Wisdom understands.

In the early '90s, the St. Louis native attended a concert by one of her favorite artists, Reba McEntire. Wisdom, 55, says McEntire's performance was on fire, but the atmosphere and crowd were ice cold.

"They were very unwelcoming...You saw the eye rolls and you heard the comments and the whispers, like, 'What are you doing here?'" recalled Wisdom, the founder of Black Women Amplified, a women's empowerment group. "I said if this is what country music is, I don't want any parts of it. So, I stopped listening to it."

And Wisdom hasn't attended a country music concert since.

While popular artists like Wilson, the legendary Dolly Parton, Maren Morris, Jason Isbell and more have publicly voiced the need for inclusion, their allyship can sometimes be overshadowed. In 2021, Morgan Wallen, then already a huge star, was caught on camera using the N-word as his "Dangerous: The Double Album" record sat at No. 1 on the Billboard 200 for three consecutive weeks. Although there were repercussions, many fans rallied around him boosting his popularity. Jason Aldean's "Try That in a Small Town" also experienced a surge last year as the music video swirled in controversy.

"That's the problem that the industry has in trying to retain and foster a real Black country audience,"



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said Palmer, whose first meetings with major labels in the early 2000s were sight-unseen due to her team's concerns that her race might present an obstacle. In 2007, Palmer became the first Black woman in 20 years to reach Billboard's Hot Country Songs chart with "Country Girl." She remembers performing at shows with Confederate flags in the crowd but singing anyway as a form of resistance. Concerns from music labels included her hairstyle and even the ethnicity of her love interests in music videos.

Palmer says the perception of racism is a "hard connotation to overcome, and you have to do a lot of work. You have to do a lot of answering for that and possibly asking for forgiveness...I don't know that the industry is prepared to do that."

## IDENTITY

"I do think that there is this sense that country music is white music," said Coleman, who didn't always express her love for country music as a teen. "It was not cool to be country...for the longest time, especially growing up, I was trying to fit in with everybody else. " It's a sentiment many Black fans have echoed, including Palmer.

The genre might not seem relatable to fans of color because they don't see themselves. In the CMA multicultural study, respondents noted feeling that country music isn't interested in attracting them and not seeing enough Black, Latino or Asian artists.

"It's hard to be in a space if you don't see a representation of yourself," said the 26-year-old Roberts, whose song "Louisiana" was inspired by Beyoncé's "Daddy Lessons." "My mindset was even though I don't see representation, I will make sure that there's representation."

In a frequently cited 2021 study published by Jada Watson, a University of Ottawa musicologist, data revealed artists of color received just 1.5% of country radio airplay between 2002-2020. During that period, with nearly 15,000 songs played within the format, only three of the 13 Black artists were women. No songs by Black women reached the top 20 on country radio charts.

"There's so much unloving in the world of Black people, especially Black women, that you have to find the spots where you're loved," said Wisdom, who grew up loving Parton and Kenny Rogers and watching McEntire's "Reba" TV sitcom. "I didn't find that in country music."

## THE BEYONCÉ BOOST

Fans and experts seem to agree that Beyoncé has created an education on Black country trailblazers like Linda Martell and Rhiannon Giddens, and is providing an immeasurable amount of attention toward existing artists.

"It's really great for them...The rising tide lifts all boats," said iconic singer Wynonna Judd, who mentors several established and rising Black female singers. "What I think of professionally is how this has to be a blessing to so many women in the business that are... wanting to be heard."

Before "Cowboy Carter" officially announced featured musicians, searches, streams and social media impressions rose exponentially for many current Black country artists such as Roberts, Guyton, Adell, Tiera Kennedy, Brittney Spencer, Shaboozey and others due to media stories and curiosity. Since the album has dropped, the numbers have risen even more.

"The fact that Beyoncé has been able to create this conversation for more people to be included in this space and talked about, it's been really cool," said Shaboozey, who's featured on "Spaghettii" and "Sweet Honey Buckin." "To see her just kind of coming in here has been honestly beneficial to me and plenty of other artists."

But Davenport, who noted the Black Opry will honor pioneering songwriter Alice Randall for the organization's anniversary this month, says while country is more diverse, progress has been too incremental, and Nashville hasn't made good on promises made following the social justice uprising.

"I don't think things are going to change overnight... at this point now, it feels like a repeat of what happened in 2021 after George Floyd was murdered," said Davenport, referring to the current backlash against diversity and inclusion efforts. "There's been no progress. I mean, you can see it on the charts. You can see it on the (festival) lineups." While fans say country music has a lot to fix, they realize they have to do their part.

"Fans, though, have to take a responsibility and support the artists," said Wisdom, whose love for coun-

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try music was rekindled after watching the Peabody-award winning series "High on the Hog: How African American Cuisine Transformed America," which featured a Black cowboys episode. "We have to go to these shows, we have to buy their music."

## DISAPPEARING ACT / RECLAMATION

The scope of Beyoncé's country music impact might not be realized for years, but there's an optimism that the curiosity about Black country artists will continue.

"I hope that when Beyoncé moves on to 'Act III' that some of the people are going to stay... There are women that we stand on the shoulders of, and I want to make sure that we acknowledge all of them," said Palmer, whose Color Me Country Artist Grant fund provides micro grants to artists of color pursuing careers in country, Americana and roots music. "I'm glad everyone is excited about Beyoncé. I'm glad that she's having the milestones that she's having — all of that. Also, just remember there were people that were here before."

Despite Beyoncé never explicitly saying so, many fans believe "Cowboy Carter" — as well as her previous album, the dance-themed "Renaissance" — are meant to reclaim genres whose foundations are rooted in Black culture. But with the passage of time, along with systemic inequalities, is reclamation even possible?

"Hope springs eternal, right? I mean, that's what my entire career at this point is focused on, making sure that the whole story is told," said Palmer. "This is a big moment of visibility for Black artists in country music that have been here — the past, the present and the future. But I think Nashville has got a lot of self-introspection and a lot of self-examination to do." —

Associated Press journalist Leslie Ambriz in Los Angeles contributed reporting.

Follow Associated Press journalist Gary Gerard Hamilton at @GaryGHamilton on all his social media platforms.

## The Civil War raged and fortune-seekers hunted for gold. This era produced Arizona's abortion ban

By CHRISTINE FERNANDO Associated Press

As Union and Confederate armies clashed in a bloody fourth year of the Civil War, President Abraham Lincoln tasked one man to create the legal code for Arizona, almost 50 years before the territory became a state.

New York judge William Thompson Howell wrote 500 pages that spanned provisions on dueling, accidental homicides by ax and age of consent that would govern the newly formed territory of fewer than 7,000 people. But tucked within the "Howell Code," just after the section on duels, was an abortion law criminalizing the administering of "any medicinal substances ... with the intention to procure the miscarriage of any woman then being with child."

That was 160 years ago. Last week, that same 1864 provision was resurrected by the Arizona Supreme Court, which upheld the near-total ban on abortion with no exceptions for rape or incest, a decision in one of the nation's most important presidential battleground states that quickly rippled across the political landscape.

The law's revival is just the latest instance of long-dormant restrictions influencing current abortion policies after the U.S. Supreme Court overturned *Roe v. Wade*, a landmark 1973 decision that granted a federal right to abortion.

"This is just one more example of a century-old zombie law coming back to life," said Jessica Arons, senior policy counsel at the American Civil Liberties Union. "This is what the U.S. Supreme Court set the stage for when *Roe* fell."

Growth in Arizona in the 1860s was driven by miners who were seeking fortunes in a burgeoning gold and silver industry, while settlers increasingly were encroaching on tribal lands.

Arizona's 1864 code elaborately describes restrictions on duels, ruling any person involved in the fighting of a duel would be imprisoned for one to three years and meting out punishments for "mayhem" for those who "unlawfully cut out or disable the tongue, put out an eye, slit the nose, ear or lip, or disable

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any limb or member of another.”

Howell’s code includes exceptions for homicides, such as when “a man is at work with an axe, and the head flies off and kills a bystander or where a parent is moderately correcting his child ... and happens to occasion death.” The code also appears to set the age of consent at 10 years old, proclaiming, “Every person of the age fourteen years and upwards, who shall have carnal knowledge of any female child under the age of ten years, either with or without her consent, shall be adjudged guilty of the crime of rape.”

Meanwhile, William Claude Jones, who presided over the 1st Arizona Territorial Legislative Assembly in 1864, was described by a biographer as a “pursuer of nubile females” and had throughout his life married a 12-year-old, a 15-year-old and a 14-year-old, according to a 1990 biography in the Journal of Arizona History.

“That’s the period of time that this abortion law is from,” said Prof. Barbara Atwood, law professor at University of Arizona’s law school. “The code reads as if you’re going back to this time of this barbaric, wild west.”

The state’s Civil War-era law is now likely to become one of the strictest abortion bans nationwide, a dynamic that already is shaping the races for president and U.S. Senate. Attorney General Kris Mayes decried the decision and noted that it came from era decades before women even had the right to vote.

Mayes, a Democrat, said the court’s ruling “will go down in history as a stain on our state.”

Similar words came from the White House as President Joe Biden called it a “cruel ban” resurrected from history.

Some Arizona Republicans also criticized the ruling, though in more muted language. Republican state Sen. T.J. Shope called it “disappointing.”

While many states repealed their pre-Roe abortion laws after the 1973 ruling that granted a constitutional right to abortion, about a dozen states, including Arizona, kept theirs on the books. These laws often were referred to as “trigger laws” because the overturning of Roe would put them into effect.

Several legal experts said Arizona’s law is likely the oldest state abortion ban that soon may be enforced. But century-old abortion restrictions passed by all-male legislatures during time periods when women couldn’t vote — and scientific knowledge of pregnancy and abortion were limited — have influenced post-Roe abortion policies in Alabama, Arkansas, Michigan, Mississippi, Oklahoma, Texas, West Virginia and Wisconsin.

The laws tend to be more severe. They often don’t include exceptions for rape and incest, call for the imprisonment of providers and ban the procedure in the first few weeks of pregnancy. Some have since been repealed while others are being challenged in court.

“These century-old laws are really having a tangible impact on women’s lives today,” said Jessie Hill, a law professor at Case Western Reserve University School of Law in Cleveland. “And they’ve really contributed to the post-Dobbs uncertainty across America.” The U.S. Supreme Court’s 2022 ruling in Dobbs v. Jackson Women’s Health Organization overturned Roe.

In Michigan, a 1931 law would have criminalized abortion except when a woman’s life was in danger. But Michigan voters in 2022 overwhelmingly voted to enshrine abortion rights into the state’s constitution and earlier that year a judge ruled the 93-year-old law was unconstitutional. The law was formally repealed by a 2023 statute.

“New Mexico and Michigan realized the threat of these zombie laws and took action,” said Arons of the ACLU. “In Michigan, it was a major driver for pursuing a constitutional amendment enshrining abortion rights.”

An 1849 abortion ban is now at the center of a lawsuit in Wisconsin that is expected to make its way to the state supreme court, which has a new liberal majority. In other states, such as Mississippi, Oklahoma and Texas, newer abortion laws have been layered onto older restrictions still on the books.

Abortion rights advocates also are warning about another 19th century law called the Comstock Act that could have national impacts. It’s been revived by anti-abortion groups seeking to use it to block the mailing of the abortion pill mifepristone nationwide. Medication abortions account for most abortions in the U.S.

Originally passed in 1873, the Comstock Act was intended to prohibit the mailing of contraceptives,



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"lewd" writings and any "instrument, substance, drug, medicine, or thing" that could be used in an abortion, though its scope has been narrowed by federal courts and Congress.

Mary Ruth Ziegler, a law professor at the University of California, Davis School of Law, said anti-abortion groups are pressuring Republicans to wield the law to block abortions even in states where it is currently legal, by barring the mailing of any drugs or equipment required for abortions.

"The Comstock Act means what happened in Arizona is possible for all of us across the country," Ziegler said.

There also are long-dormant laws in many states related to contraception and same-sex marriage that have not been revived, she added.

"This is just a reminder that laws on the books that may seem irrelevant and antiquated can come back and be enforced," she said.

## **Ethiopia's Sisay Lemma wins Boston Marathon in runaway. Kenya's Hellen Obiri repeats in women's race**

By JIMMY GOLEN AP Sports Writer

BOSTON (AP) — Sisay Lemma scorched the first half of the Boston Marathon course on Monday, setting a record pace to build a lead of more than half of a mile.

Then the weather heated up, and the 34-year-old Ethiopian slowed down.

After running alone for most of the morning, Lemma held on down Boylston Street to finish in 2 hours, 6 minutes, 17 seconds — the 10th fastest time in the race's 128-year history. Lemma dropped to the pavement and rolled onto his back, smiling, after crossing the finish line.

"Until halfway through I was running very hard and very good. But after that it was getting harder and harder," said Lemma, who failed to finish twice and came in 30th in three previous Boston attempts. "Several times I've dropped out of the race before. But today I won, so I've redeemed myself."

Hellen Obiri defended her title, outkicking Sharon Lokedi on Boylston Street to finish in 2:27:37 and win by eight seconds; two-time Boston champion Edna Kiplagat completed the Kenyan sweep, finishing another 36 seconds back.

Obiri also won New York last fall and is among the favorites for the Paris Olympics. She is the sixth woman to win back-to-back in Boston and the first since Catherine "the Great" Ndereba won four in six years from 2000 to '05.

"Defending the title was not easy. Since Boston started, it's only six women. So I said, 'Can I be one of them? If you want to be one of them, you have to work extra hard,'" she said. "And I'm so happy because I'm now one of them. I'm now in the history books in Boston."

Lemma, the 2021 London champion, arrived in Boston with the fastest time in the field — just the fourth person ever to break 2:02:00 when he won in Valencia last year. And he showed it on the course Monday, separating himself from the pack in Ashland and opening a lead of more than half of a mile.

Lemma ran the first half in 1:00:19 — 99 seconds faster than Geoffrey Mutai's course record pace in 2011, when his 2:03:02 was the fastest marathon in history. Fellow Ethiopian Mohamed Esa closed the gap through the last few miles, finishing second by 41 seconds; two-time defending champion Evans Chebet was third.

Each winner collected a gilded olive wreath and \$150,000 from a total prize purse that topped \$1 million for the first time.

On a day when sunshine and temperatures rising into the mid-60s left the runners reaching for water — to drink, and to dump over their heads — Obiri ran with an unusually large lead pack of 15 through Brookline before breaking away in the final few miles.

Emma Bates of Boulder, Colorado, finished 12th — her second straight year as the top American. Again, she found herself leading the race through the 30-kilometer mark, slapping hands as she ran past the Wellesley College students chanting her name before fading on the way out of Heartbreak Hill.

"I thought last year was crazy loud, but this year surpassed that completely," Bates said. "It was such

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a nice day for the spectators. Not so nice for the runners; it was pretty hot.”

CJ Albertson of Fresno, California, was the top American man in seventh, his second top-10 finish.

Switzerland’s Marcel Hug righted himself after crashing into a barrier when he took a turn too fast and still coasted to a course record in the men’s wheelchair race. It was his seventh Boston win and his 14th straight major marathon victory.

Hug already had a four-minute lead about 18 miles in when he reached the landmark firehouse turn in Newton, where the course heads onto Commonwealth Avenue on its way to Heartbreak Hill. He spilled into the fence, flipping sideways onto his left wheel, but quickly restored himself.

“It was my fault,” Hug said. “I had too much weight, too much pressure from above to my steering, so I couldn’t steer.”

Hug finished in 1:15:33, winning by 5:04 and breaking his previous course record by 1:33. Britain’s Eden Rainbow-Cooper, 22, won the women’s wheelchair race in 1:35:11 for her first major marathon victory; she is the third-youngest woman to win the Boston wheelchair race.

The otherwise sleepy New England town of Hopkinton celebrated its 100th anniversary as the starting line for the world’s oldest and most prestigious marathon, sending off a field of 17 former champions and nearly 30,000 other runners on its way. Near the finish on Boylston Street 26.2 miles (42.2 kilometers) away, officials observed the anniversary of the 2013 bombing that killed three and wounded hundreds more.

Sunny skies and minimal wind greeted the runners, with temperatures in the 40s as they gathered in Hopkinton rising to 69 as the stragglers crossed the finish line in the afternoon. As the field went through Natick, the fourth of eight cities and towns on the route, athletes splashed water on themselves to cool off.

“We couldn’t ask for a better day,” former New England Patriots tight end Rob Gronkowski, the grand marshal, said before climbing into an electric car that would carry him along the course. “The city of Boston always comes out to support, no matter the event. The weather is perfection, the energy is popping.”

The festivities began around 6 a.m., when race director Dave McGillivray sent about 30 Massachusetts National Guard members off. Lt. Col. Paula Reichert Karsten, one of the marchers, said she wanted to be part of a “quintessential Massachusetts event.”

The start line was painted to say “100 years in Hopkinton,” commemorating the 1924 move from Ashland to Hopkinton to conform to the official Olympic Marathon distance. The announcer welcomed the gathering crowds to the “sleepy little town of Hopkinton, 364 days of the year.”

“In Hopkinton, it’s probably the coolest thing about the town,” said Maggie Agosto, a 16-year-old resident who went to the start line with a friend to watch the race.

The annual race on Patriots’ Day, the state holiday that commemorates the start of the Revolutionary War, also fell on One Boston Day, when the city remembers the victims of the 2013 finish line bombings. Before the race, bagpipes accompanied Gov. Maura Healey, Boston Mayor Michelle Wu and members of the victims’ families as they laid a pair of wreaths at the sites of the explosions.

## Only 26% of Americans say they get at least eight hours of sleep, new Gallup poll says

By DEEPTI HAJELA and LINLEY SANDERS Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — If you’re feeling — YAWN — sleepy or tired while you read this and wish you could get some more shut-eye, you’re not alone. A majority of Americans say they would feel better if they could have more sleep, according to a new poll.

But in the U.S., the ethos of grinding and pulling yourself up by your own bootstraps is ubiquitous, both in the country’s beginnings and our current environment of always-on technology and work hours. And getting enough sleep can seem like a dream.

The Gallup poll, released Monday, found 57% of Americans say they would feel better if they could get more sleep, while only 42% say they are getting as much sleep as they need. That’s a first in Gallup polling since 2001; in 2013, when Americans were last asked, it was just about the reverse — 56% saying they got the needed sleep and 43% saying they didn’t.

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Younger women, under the age of 50, were especially likely to report they aren't getting enough rest. The poll also asked respondents to report how many hours of sleep they usually get per night: Only 26% said they got eight or more hours, which is around the amount that sleep experts say is recommended for health and mental well-being. Just over half, 53%, reported getting six to seven hours. And 20% said they got five hours or less, a jump from the 14% who reported getting the least amount of sleep in 2013. (And just to make you feel even more tired, in 1942, the vast majority of Americans were sleeping more. Some 59% said they slept eight or more hours, while 33% said they slept six to seven hours. What even IS that?)

## THE REASONS AREN'T EXACTLY CLEAR

The poll doesn't get into reasons WHY Americans aren't getting the sleep they need, and since Gallup last asked the question in 2013, there's no data breaking down the particular impact of the last four years and the pandemic era.

But what's notable, says Sarah Fioroni, senior researcher at Gallup, is the shift in the last decade toward more Americans thinking they would benefit from more sleep and particularly the jump in the number of those saying they get five or less hours.

"That five hours or less category ... was almost not really heard of in 1942," Fioroni said. "There's almost nobody that said they slept five hours or less."

In modern American life, there also has been "this pervasive belief about how sleep was unnecessary — that it was this period of inactivity where little to nothing was actually happening and that took up time that could have been better used," said Joseph Dzierzewski, vice president for research and scientific affairs at the National Sleep Foundation.

It's only relatively recently that the importance of sleep to physical, mental and emotional health has started to percolate more in the general population, he said.

And there's still a long way to go. For some Americans, like Justine Broughal, 31, a self-employed event planner with two small children, there simply aren't enough hours in the day. So even though she recognizes the importance of sleep, it often comes in below other priorities like her 4-month-old son, who still wakes up throughout the night, or her 3-year-old daughter.

"I really treasure being able to spend time with (my children)," Broughal says. "Part of the benefit of being self-employed is that I get a more flexible schedule, but it's definitely often at the expense of my own care."

## THERE'S A CULTURAL BACKDROP TO ALL THIS, TOO

So why are we awake all the time? One likely reason for Americans' sleeplessness is cultural — a long-standing emphasis on industriousness and productivity.

Some of the context is much older than the shift documented in the poll. It includes the Protestants from European countries who colonized the country, said Claude Fischer, a professor of sociology at the graduate school of the University of California, Berkeley. Their belief system included the idea that working hard and being rewarded with success was evidence of divine favor.

"It has been a core part of American culture for centuries," he said. "You could make the argument that it ... in the secularized form over the centuries becomes just a general principle that the morally correct person is somebody who doesn't waste their time."

Jennifer Sherman has seen that in action. In her research in rural American communities over the years, the sociology professor at Washington State University says a common theme among people she interviewed was the importance of having a solid work ethic. That applied not only to paid labor but unpaid labor as well, like making sure the house was clean.

A through line of American cultural mythology is the idea of being "individually responsible for creating our own destinies," she said. "And that does suggest that if you're wasting too much of your time ... that you are responsible for your own failure."

"The other side of the coin is a massive amount of disdain for people considered lazy," she added.

Broughal says she thinks that as parents, her generation is able to let go of some of those expectations. "I prioritize ... spending time with my kids, over keeping my house pristine," she said.



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But with two little ones to care for, she said, making peace with a messier house doesn't mean more time to rest: "We're spending family time until, you know, (my 3-year-old) goes to bed at eight and then we're resetting the house, right?"

## THE TRADEOFFS OF MORE SLEEP

While the poll only shows a broad shift over the past decade, living through the COVID-19 pandemic may have affected people's sleep patterns. Also discussed in post-COVID life is "revenge bedtime procrastination," in which people put off sleeping and instead scroll on social media or binge a show as a way of trying to handle stress.

Liz Meshel is familiar with that. The 30-year-old American is temporarily living in Bulgaria on a research grant, but also works a part-time job on U.S. hours to make ends meet.

On the nights when her work schedule stretches to 10 p.m., Meshel finds herself in a "revenge procrastination" cycle. She wants some time to herself to decompress before going to sleep and ends up sacrificing sleeping hours to make it happen.

"That applies to bedtime as well, where I'm like, 'Well, I didn't have any me time during the day, and it is now 10 p.m., so I am going to feel totally fine and justified watching X number of episodes of TV, spending this much time on Instagram, as my way to decompress,'" she said. "Which obviously will always make the problem worse."

## Your morning coffee may be more than a half million years old

By ADITHI RAMAKRISHNAN AP Science Writer

That coffee you slurped this morning? It's 600,000 years old.

Using genes from coffee plants around the world, researchers built a family tree for the world's most popular type of coffee, known to scientists as *Coffea arabica* and to coffee lovers simply as "arabica."

The researchers, hoping to learn more about the plants to better protect them from pests and climate change, found that the species emerged around 600,000 years ago through natural crossbreeding of two other coffee species.

"In other words, prior to any intervention from man," said Victor Albert, a biologist at the University at Buffalo who co-led the study.

These wild coffee plants originated in Ethiopia but are thought to have been first roasted and brewed primarily in Yemen starting in the 1400s. In the 1600s, Indian monk Baba Budan is fabled to have smuggled seven raw coffee beans back to his homeland from Yemen, laying the foundation for coffee's global takeover.

Arabica coffee, prized for its smooth and relatively sweet flavor, now makes up 60% - 70% of the global coffee market and is brewed by brands such as Starbucks, Tim Horton's and Dunkin'. The rest is robusta, a stronger and more bitter coffee made from one of arabica's parents, *Coffea canephora*.

To piece together arabica coffee's past, researchers studied genomes of *C. canephora*, another parent called *Coffea eugenioides*, and more than 30 different arabica plants, including a sample from the 1700s — courtesy of the Natural History Museum in London — that Swedish naturalist Carl Linnaeus used to name the plant.

The study was published Monday in the journal *Nature Genetics*. Researchers from Nestlé, which owns several coffee brands, contributed to the study.

The arabica plant's population fluctuated over thousands of years before humans began cultivating it, flourishing during warm, wet periods and suffering through dry ones. These lean times created so-called population bottlenecks, when only a small number of genetically similar plants survived.

Today, that renders arabica coffee plants more vulnerable to diseases like coffee leaf rust, which cause billions of dollars in losses every year. The researchers explored the makeup of one arabica variety that is resistant to coffee leaf rust, highlighting sections of its genetic code that could help protect the plant.

The study clarifies how arabica came to be and spotlights clues that could help safeguard the crop, said Fabian Echeverria, an adviser for the Center for Coffee Research and Education at Texas A&M University who was not involved with the research.

Exploring arabica's past and present could yield insight into keeping coffee plants healthy – and coffee cups full – for future early mornings.

## Israel orders eviction of Palestinian family from east Jerusalem property, reigniting a legal battle

By JACK JEFFERY Associated Press

JERUSALEM (AP) — An Israeli court on Monday ordered the eviction of a Palestinian family in a contested neighborhood of east Jerusalem, the latest in a legal saga that has come to symbolize the conflicting claims to the holy city.

The Sheikh Jarrah neighborhood has been the focus of a long-running battle between government-backed Israeli settlers and longtime Palestinian residents. It's part of a broader trend of settlers encroaching on Palestinian neighborhoods in contested east Jerusalem, and previous attempts at evictions in Sheikh Jarrah have led to violent clashes and helped spark an 11-day war between Israel and Hamas in 2021.

According to Monday's ruling, the Diab family was given until July to vacate the house in Sheikh Jarrah. The family said it would appeal.

The Israeli magistrate court described the case as a simple dispute over real estate, ruling that the extended Diab family was squatting in a property owned by Jews and had no legal rights to it. Palestinians say they have lived in the homes for decades.

The case against the family was launched by Nahalat Shimon Ltd, a Jewish settler organization that for years has been involved in legal efforts to evict Palestinian families from Sheikh Jarrah.

Israel captured east Jerusalem in the 1967 Mideast war and annexed the area in a move that is not internationally recognized. Israel considers the entire city its capital, while the Palestinians seek east Jerusalem, home to the city's most sensitive holy sites, as the capital of their future independent state.

Nahalat Shimon is trying to seize the property under an Israeli law allowing Jews to reclaim properties that were Jewish before Israel was established in 1948. Jordan controlled the area between 1948 and the 1967 war.

There is no equivalent right in Israel for hundreds of thousands of Palestinians who fled or were forced from their homes during the war surrounding Israel's establishment.

Saleh Diab, one of the men in the family, said his family of 20 has been living in the Sheikh Jarrah property since 1955. He told The Associated Press he was shocked by decision and thought his family was protected under a 2022 Supreme Court decision that halted the planned evictions of four other Palestinian families in the same area.

Monday's decision comes at a time of heightened tensions in Jerusalem over Israel's ongoing war against Hamas in Gaza.

A high-profile eviction case in Sheikh Jarrah helped spark the 11-day war in May 2021. Israel's firebrand National Security Minister, Itamar Ben-Gvir, played a key role in rallying demonstrations in support of the settlers as an opposition lawmaker at the time.

In his current position, Ben-Gvir oversees the nation's police force.

## With 'functional' beverages, brands rush to quench a thirst for drinks that do more than taste good

By DEE-ANN DURBIN and LOUISE DIXON Associated Press

Supermarket beverage aisles are starting to look a lot more like a pharmacy.

There are sodas made with mushrooms that supposedly improve mental clarity and juices packed with bacteria that claim to enhance digestive health. Water infused with collagen carries the promise of better skin, and energy drinks offer to help burn body fat.

Welcome to the frenzy of functional beverages – drinks designed to do more than just taste good or hydrate. What started in the late 1980s with caffeine- and vitamin-laced energy drinks like Red Bull has

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grown into a multi-billion-dollar industry. Hundreds of brands are vying for consumers' attention with increasingly exotic ingredients and wellness-focused marketing.

Feeling stressed? Try a drink with ashwagandha, a shrub long used in herbal medicine. Want to enhance your workout? There are drinks containing chromium, a mineral that may boost metabolism. Want to get in a party mood without alcohol? Multiple companies are making non-alcoholic spirits and beers infused with ingredients like guayusa, a leaf containing caffeine and antioxidants.

Consumer intelligence company NielsenIQ counted 53,000 UPC symbols in the U.S. functional beverage category last year, including all of the different flavors of energy drinks, sports drinks, sodas, waters, shakes and teas that are sold on the premise of enhancing mental or physical health.

Nutritionists say the general trend of consumers seeking out healthier beverages is a good one. But experts also say people should be cautious and read ingredient labels, especially if they are pregnant, taking medication or have other health issues. And they should avoid empty calories and sugars that they're not going to burn off. A 16-ounce Monster energy drink has nearly as much sugar as a regular Coke, for example.

"Someone who's running a marathon has different needs than someone who's commuting to work," said Martha Field, an assistant professor in the division of nutritional sciences at Cornell University.

The U.S. Food and Drug Administration regulates ingredients and requires drink labels to be truthful, and the Federal Trade Commission can step in if companies make false claims. In 2013, the FTC determined that Pom Wonderful pomegranate juice was deceptively advertised as clinically proven to treat, prevent or reduce the risk of heart disease and prostate cancer.

But functional beverage makers generally make less specific claims, and the science behind them is sometimes inconclusive. SkinTe, a sparkling tea, says it "supports skin hydration and elasticity" with 3,000 milligrams of collagen in a 12-ounce can. But last year, Harvard Medical School researchers said there's not yet solid evidence that collagen drinks or supplements enhance skin, hair or nail growth.

Negative reactions can also happen. Panera Bread faces at least two lawsuits claiming its highly caffeinated Charged Lemonade led to the deaths of people with heart conditions.

"It's important to remember that everything has the potential to be both toxic and safe, depending on the amounts. The dose makes the poison," said Joe Zagorski, a toxicologist for the Center of Research on Ingredient Safety at Michigan State University. "Since it's difficult to determine the amount of specific compounds in many of these beverages, it's better to proceed cautiously than to over-consume."

In some ways, there's nothing new about humans seeking added benefits from their drinks. Ancient Egyptians and Romans sipped chamomile tea for its perceived healing effects. In 1935, a Japanese microbiologist introduced Yakult, a fermented milk drink now sold around the world as a way to improve gut health.

In the last half-century, beverages ranging from Ovaltine to wheatgrass juice had their moments as praised nutritional supplements. What's different now is social media, which allows the speedy spread of information about less familiar ingredients, Cornell's Field said.

Two of the latest to generate a buzz are adaptogens, which are plants and mushrooms that have been shown to help the body respond to stress and fatigue, and nootropics, which are natural or synthetic cognitive enhancers like caffeine, ginkgo and amino acids.

Trends ebb and flow within the category. U.S. sales of prebiotic and probiotic drinks more than tripled last year, while sales in the more mature kombucha category rose just 8%, according to data compiled by consulting firm AlixPartners.

"Consumer savviness on functionality of ingredients has really increased," said Sherry Frey, vice president of wellness at NielsenIQ.

For some, the health claims in functional drinks are secondary. Amy Cassels, a health and fitness coach from Magnolia, Texas, said functional drinks appeal to her because they typically contain natural ingredients, like fruit juice as a sweetener. She enjoys Poppi, a prebiotic soda, as a once-a-day treat.

"When I drink something like that, I do not believe that I am nurturing my health by drinking that. But



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"I'm not harming my health either," Cassels said. "It's a guilt-free indulgence."

A sizeable share of the beverages-with-benefits market is geared toward people who want to curb or cut their alcohol intake. London-based Three Spirit makes non-alcoholic drinks with more than 60 ingredients, including guayusa and schisandra, an Asian berry, that it says mimic the sense of relaxation and social lubrication that drinkers get from beer, wine and spirits.

"Fundamentally, alcohol is the ultimate functional drink," Three Spirit Co-Founder Dash Lilley said. "People don't just drink for flavor. It helps people socialize, helps people unwind, helps people perk up. So we thought we could do that really well by coming at it from a new angle."

Randy Burt, a managing director at AlixPartners who studies food and beverage, said functional drinks align with a decades-long shift consumers have been making toward healthier diets and habits. He doesn't see demand for the drinks slowing down. Euromonitor, a market research company, expects global sales of functional beverages to grow 7% each year through 2027.

In the U.S., sales of functional beverages jumped 54% to \$9.2 billion between March 2020 and March 2024, according to NielsenIQ. That was faster than the 43% growth for the non-alcoholic beverage market overall. Functional beverages now make up about 10% of the total U.S. non-alcoholic beverage market.

Frey said sales slowed a little in the U.S. last year, which she partly attributed to the relatively high cost of functional beverages. Twelve 12-ounce cans of Olipop, a prebiotic soda, sell for \$35.99 on Amazon.com; a 12-pack of Dr. Pepper costs \$6.48.

"Consumers are making trades, saying 'Maybe I'll still purchase this, but I won't purchase it as frequently,'" she said.

Henry Chen, the founder and CEO of South San Francisco, California-based ALO Drink, a line of beverages made with aloe vera plants, said the increasing number of brands and promised health benefits is overwhelming for consumers. Chen suspects shoppers eventually will tire of purpose-driven drinks in favor of simpler libations.

"There are just too many narrowly specific functional needs that brands are claiming to address, too many esoteric ingredients that you need a science degree to understand being added to foods and beverages," he said.

Even better might be bypassing the functional beverage aisle altogether, said Corrie Whisner, an associate professor at Arizona State University's College of Health Solutions.

"At the end of the day, if someone would ask me, 'Should I be drinking these for my health?' I would probably say no and stick to whole foods as much as possible," Whisner said. "Just eat real food. Then you know what you're getting."

## Retail sales surge 0.7% in March as Americans seem unfazed by higher prices with jobs plentiful

By ANNE D'INNOCENZIO AP Business Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — Americans boosted spending at a hotter-than-expected pace in March, underscoring how shoppers remain resilient despite inflationary pressures and other economic challenges.

Retail sales rose 0.7% last month — almost double what economists had forecast — after rising 0.9% in February, according to Commerce Department data released Monday. The February figure was revised upward. That comes after sales fell 1.1% in January, dragged down in part by inclement weather. Excluding gas prices, which have been on the rise, retail sales still rose a solid 0.6%.

The national average gas price Monday was \$3.63 per gallon, per AAA, up 6 cents from a week ago, and up 19 cents from last month, but they're still 3 cents below where they were at this point last year.

The snapshot offers only a partial look at consumer spending and doesn't include many services, including travel and hotel lodges. But the lone services category - restaurants - registered an uptick of 0.4%.

Government retail data isn't adjusted for inflation, which ticked up 0.4% from February to March, according to the latest government report. So retailers had a solid sales gain accounting for inflation.

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"Retail sales aren't increasing just because prices are going up," said Ted Rossman, senior industry analyst at Bankrate. "Americans are actually buying more stuff. This is one of the strongest retail sales reports we've seen in the past couple of years."

Futures jumped seconds after the retail report landed, while bond prices slipped given the strong economic signals that the U.S. consumer is sending.

Sales at general merchandise stores rose 1.1%, while online sales was up 2.7%. Department stores had a 1.1% decline. Furniture stores and electronics and appliance stores also posted sales declines.

A strong jobs market and rising wages have fueled household spending, which also has become choppy in the face of rising credit costs and higher prices.

America's employers delivered another strong report in March, adding 303,000 workers to their payrolls and fueling hopes that the economy can plow through higher prices without succumbing to a recession despite high interest rates.

Last month's job growth rose from a revised 270,000 in February and far exceeded the 200,000 jobs that economists had predicted. By any measure, it amounted to a major burst of hiring, and it underscored the economy's ability to withstand the pressure of high borrowing costs resulting from the Federal Reserve's interest rate hikes. With Americans continuing to spend, many companies have continued hiring to meet steady demand.

However, inflation has remained stubborn, lifted last month by higher prices for gasoline, rents, auto insurance and other items, new data showed last week. That as well the strong retail sales report will likely delay a cut by the Federal Reserve to interest rates that many had anticipated at the next meeting of the U.S. Federal Reserve's monetary policy-making arm in a couple of weeks. Andrew Hunter, deputy chief U.S. economist at Capital Economics, doesn't think any rate cut will happen until September.

Prices outside the volatile food and energy categories rose 0.4% from February to March, the same accelerated pace as in the previous month. Measured from a year earlier, these core prices are up 3.8%, unchanged from the year-over-year rise in February. The Fed closely tracks core prices because they tend to provide a good barometer of where inflation is headed.

But some economists expect spending to moderate due to lessening optimism about economic prospects, still high costs of living and elevated borrowing costs.

"Consumers are becoming highly selective in their spending choices with many pulling back from pricier, non-discretionary products to focus on value and essentials and the lower-income cohort continues to be pressured," said Mickey Chadha, Moody's Ratings vice president of corporate finance. "Purposeful consumers are postponing their major shopping decisions."

## **Analysis: Iran upends decades of shadow warfare in direct attack on Israel as tensions mount at home**

By JON GAMBRELL Associated Press

DUBAI, United Arab Emirates (AP) — Iran's direct attack on Israel over the weekend upended decades of its shadowy warfare by proxy, something Tehran has used to manage international repercussions for its actions. But with both economic and political tensions at home boiling, the country's Shiite theocracy chose a new path as changes loom for the Islamic Republic.

Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei will mark his 85th birthday Friday, with no clear successor in sight and still serving as the final arbiter of every decision Iran makes. Coming to power in the wake of Iran's devastating eight-year war with Iraq in the 1980s, Khamenei preached for years about "strategic patience" in confronting his government's main rivals, Israel and the United States, to avoid open combat.

That saw Iran invest more deeply in regional militia forces to harass Israel — such as Hamas in the Gaza Strip or Lebanon's Hezbollah militia — and contain the U.S., like with the militias that planted devastating improvised explosives that killed American troops during the Iraq war. That's extended even into impoverished Yemen, where Iran's arming of the Houthi rebels empowered their takeover of the capital and

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checkmated a Saudi-led coalition still trapped in a yearslong war there.

That strategy changed Saturday. After days of warnings, Iran launched 170 bomb-carrying drones, more than 30 cruise missiles and more than 120 ballistic missiles toward Israel, according to an Israeli count. Those weapons included the same bomb-carrying drones Iran supplied to Russia for its grinding war on Ukraine.

Despite Israel and the U.S. describing 99% of those projectiles being shot down, Iran has called the attack a success. Iranian Foreign Minister Hossein Amirabdollahian said Monday the attack was "to deter, punish and warn the Zionist regime." Khamenei himself had called for Iran to "punish" Israel as well.

The trigger for the attack came April 1, when a suspected Israeli strike hit a consular annex building by Iran's Embassy in Damascus, Syria, killing at least 12, including a top commander of Iran's paramilitary Revolutionary Guard's expeditionary Quds Forces.

However, for years, Iran and Israel have been targeting each other's interests across the Middle East.

Israel is suspected of assassinating Iranian nuclear scientists and sabotaging atomic sites in the Islamic Republic. In Syria, Israel has repeatedly bombed airports likely to interrupt Iranian weapons shipments, as well as killed other Guard officers. Meanwhile, Iran is suspected of carrying out a host of bombings and gun attacks targeting Jews and Israeli interests over the decades.

But the embassy attack struck a nerve with the Iranian government.

"Attacking our consulate is like attacking our soil," Khamenei said April 10.

It also comes amid a moment filled with uncertainty for Iran. As Khamenei grows older, power has become ever-more consolidated in the country.

Hard-liners control every lever of power within both security services and political bodies, with none of the relative moderates who once shepherded Iran's nuclear deal with world powers into existence.

That includes former President Hassan Rouhani, who led the effort. Authorities barred Rouhani earlier this year from running again to hold his seat on the Assembly of Experts, the 88-cleric body that will pick Iran's next supreme leader.

The hard-liners' grip on power has seen voter turnout drop to its lowest level since the 1979 Islamic Revolution. Their stranglehold also leaves them as the only political faction to blame as the public remains incensed by Iran's collapsing economy.

The nuclear deal's demise, after former President Donald Trump unilaterally withdrew America from the accord in 2018, has seen Iran's rial currency tumble. The rial now seesaws near record lows, trading Monday at 658,000 to the dollar — down from 32,000 at the time the agreement was reached nearly a decade ago.

Already, prosecutors in Tehran have begun a criminal investigation into the Jahan-e Sanaat newspaper and a journalist over a story on the possible economic impact of Iran's attack on Israel. The judiciary's Mizan news agency described the report as "disturbing the psychological security of society and making the country's economic atmosphere turbulent."

His case comes as other journalists and activists report being summoned by authorities, portending a new crackdown on any sign of dissent in the country.

There are also signs that authorities appear to be preparing for a new push at enforcing the country's mandatory headscarf, or hijab, laws for women.

"The Tehran police — as in all other provinces — will start to confront all lawbreaking with regard to the hijab," said Tehran police chief Brig. Gen. Abbas Ali Mohammadian, according to the semiofficial ISNA news agency.

Some women in Tehran still walk through the streets with their hair uncovered, a continued protest since the nationwide 2022 demonstrations over the death of Mahsa Amini, arrested by police for not wearing a hijab to their liking. United Nations investigators say Iran was responsible for Amini's death and violently put down largely peaceful protests in a monthslong security crackdown that killed more than 500 people and saw over 22,000 detained.

A new push for hijab enforcement may reignite that anger, particularly in Tehran. Meanwhile, rumors



persist that the government may soon raise the country's heavily subsidized gasoline prices. A price increase in 2019 grew into nationwide antigovernment protests that reportedly saw over 300 people killed and thousands arrested.

Those tensions, coupled with hard-liners' grip on power and Khamenei's age, signal more changes loom for the country. And while Iran said of its attack Saturday that "the matter can be deemed concluded" even before missiles reached Israel, that doesn't mean there won't be further retaliation from the country.

## Paris prepares for 100-day countdown to the Olympics. It wants to rekindle love for the Games

By JOHN LEICESTER Associated Press

PARIS (AP) — In Paris' outskirts, a bright-eyed young girl is eager for the Olympic and Paralympic Games to end.

That's because the swimming club where 10-year-old Lyla Kebbi trains will inherit an Olympic pool. It will be dismantled after the Games and trucked from the Olympic race venue in Paris' high-rise business district to Sevrans, a Paris-area town with less glitter and wealth. There, the pieces will be bolted back together and — voila ! — Kebbi and her swim team will have a new Olympic-sized pool to splash around in.

"It's incredible !" she says. "I hope it's going to bring us luck," adds her mother, Nora.

In 100 days as of Wednesday, the Paris Olympics will kick off with a wildly ambitious waterborne opening ceremony. But the first Games in a century in France's capital won't be judged for spectacle alone. Another yardstick will be their impact on disadvantaged Paris suburbs, away from the city-center landmarks that are hosting much of the action.

By promising socially positive and also less polluting and less wasteful Olympics, the city synonymous with romance is also setting itself the high bar of making future Games generally more desirable.

Critics question their value for a world grappling with climate warming and other emergencies. Potential host cities became so Games-averse that Paris and Los Angeles were the only remaining candidates in 2017 when the International Olympic Committee selected them for 2024 and 2028, respectively.

After scandals and the \$13 billion cost of the pandemic-delayed Tokyo Games in 2021, unfulfilled promises of beneficial change for host Rio de Janeiro in 2016 and the 2014 Winter Games in Sochi tarnished by Russian doping and President Vladimir Putin's subsequent land grabs in Ukraine, the Switzerland-based IOC has mountains of skepticism to dispel.

Virtuous Summer Games in Paris could help the long-term survival of the IOC's mega-event.

### SPREADING BENEFITS BEYOND CENTRAL PARIS

The idea that the July 26-Aug. 11 Games and Aug. 28-Sept. 8 Paralympics should benefit disadvantaged communities in the Seine-Saint-Denis region northeast of Paris was built from the outset into the city's plans.

Seine-Saint-Denis is mainland France's poorest region. Thanks to generations of immigration, it also is vibrantly diverse, counting 130 nationalities and more than 170 languages spoken by its 1.6 million inhabitants. For Seine-Saint-Denis kids facing racial discrimination and other barriers, sports are sometimes a route out. World Cup winner Kylian Mbappé honed his silky soccer skills as a boy in the Seine-Saint-Denis town of Bondy.

Once heavily industrialized, Seine-Saint-Denis became grim and scary in parts after many jobs were lost. Rioting rocked its streets in 2005 and again last year. Members of an Islamic extremist cell that killed 130 people in the French capital in 2015 hid after the carnage in an apartment in the town of Saint-Denis and were killed in a shootout with heavily armed SWAT teams. That drama unfolded just a 15-minute walk from the Olympic stadium that will host track and field and rugby and the closing ceremonies.

Concretely, the Games will leave a legacy of new and refurbished sports infrastructure in Seine-Saint-Denis, although critics say the investment still isn't enough to catch it up with better equipped, more prosperous regions.

Mamitiana Rabarijaona grew up close to the Olympic stadium, built originally for the 1998 soccer World Cup. He says it didn't provide much of a boost for Seine-Saint-Denis residents. He believes the Olympics

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will be "a big party" and he will be among 45,000 volunteers who'll be helping. But he is not expecting Olympic-related investments to magically erase Seine-Saint-Denis' many difficulties.

"It's like lifting the carpet and brushing the dust underneath," he said. "It doesn't make it go away."

Seine-Saint-Denis got the new Olympic village that will become housing and offices when the 10,500 Olympians and 4,400 Paralympians have left. It also is home to the Games' only purpose-built competition venue, an aquatics center for diving, water polo and artistic swimming events. Other competition venues already existed, were previously planned or will be temporary.

"We really were driven by the ambition of sobriety and above all not to build sports facilities that aren't needed and which will have no reason to exist after the Games," Marie Barsacq, the organizing committee's legacy director, said in an interview.

The hand-me-down 50-meter pool for Sevran will be a significant upgrade. The Seine-Saint-Denis town of 51,000 people was whacked by factory closures in the 1990s. Its existing 25-meter pool is nearly 50 years old.

Other Seine-Saint-Denis towns are also getting new or renovated pools — particularly welcome for the region's children, because only half of them can swim.

"The ambition for these Olympic Games ... is that they benefit everyone and for the longest time possible," said Sevran Mayor Stéphane Blanchet. The Olympics, Blanchet said, can't "carry on just passing though and then moving on without thinking about tomorrow."

## PARIS' COSTS COMPARE FAVORABLY

At close to 9 billion euros (\$9.7 billion), more than half from sponsors, ticket sales and other non-public funding, Paris' expenses so far are less than for the last three Summer Games in Tokyo, Rio and London in 2012.

Including policing and transport costs, the portion of the bill for French taxpayers is likely to be around 3 billion euros (\$3.25 billion), France's body for auditing public funds said in its most recent study in July.

Security remains a challenge for the city repeatedly hit by deadly extremist violence. The government downsized ambitions to have 600,000 people lining the River Seine for the opening ceremony. Citing the risk of attacks, it shelved a promise that anyone could apply for hundreds of thousands of free tickets. Instead, the 326,000 spectators will either be paying ticket-holders or have been invited.

Privacy advocates are critical of video surveillance technology being deployed to spot security threats. Campaigners for the homeless are concerned that they will be swept off streets. Many Parisians plan to leave, to avoid the disruptions or to rent their homes to the expected 15 million visitors. With trade unions pushing for Olympic bonuses, strikes are also possible.

And all this against an inflammable backdrop of geopolitical crises including but not limited to the Israel-Hamas war and Russia's invasion of Ukraine. As a consequence, the IOC isn't allowing athletes from Russia and ally Belarus to parade with other Olympians at the opening ceremony.

Still, Olympics fans expect big things of Paris. They include Ayaovi Atindehou, a 32-year-old trainee doctor from Togo studying in France. The Olympic volunteer believes the Games can bridge divisions, even if just temporarily.

"The whole world without racial differences, ethnic differences, religious differences. We will be all together, shouting, celebrating," he said. "We need the Olympic Games."

## **Biden administration agrees to provide \$6.4 billion to Samsung for making computer chips in Texas**

By JOSH BOAK Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — The Biden administration has reached an agreement to provide up to \$6.4 billion in direct funding for Samsung Electronics to develop a computer chip manufacturing and research cluster in Texas.

The funding announced Monday by the Commerce Department is part of a total investment in the cluster that, with private money, is expected to exceed \$40 billion. The government support comes from the

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CHIPS and Science Act, which President Joe Biden signed into law in 2022 with the goal of reviving the production of advanced computer chips domestically.

"The proposed project will propel Texas into a state of the art semiconductor ecosystem," Commerce Secretary Gina Raimondo said on a call with reporters. "It puts us on track to hit our goal of producing 20% of the world's leading edge chips in the United States by the end of the decade."

Raimondo said she expects the project will create at least 17,000 construction jobs and more than 4,500 manufacturing jobs.

Samsung's cluster in Taylor, Texas, would include two factories that would make four- and two-nanometer chips. Also, there would be a factory dedicated to research and development, as well as a facility for the packaging that surrounds chip components.

The first factory is expected to be operational in 2026, with the second being operational in 2027, according to the government.

The funding also would expand an existing Samsung facility in Austin, Texas.

Lael Brainard, director of the White House National Economic Council, said Samsung will be able to manufacture chips in Austin directly for the Defense Department as a result. Access to advanced technology has become a major national security concern amid competition between the U.S. and China.

In addition to the \$6.4 billion, Samsung has indicated it also will claim an investment tax credit from the U.S. Treasury Department.

The government has previously announced terms to support other chipmakers including Intel and Taiwan Semiconductor Manufacturing Co. in projects spread across the country.

## Today in History: April 16

### Martin Luther King Jr. writes 'Letter From Birmingham Jail'

By The Associated Press undefined

Today is Tuesday, April 16, the 107th day of 2024. There are 259 days left in the year.

Today's Highlight in History:

On April 16, 1963, Martin Luther King Jr. wrote his "Letter from Birmingham Jail" in which the civil rights activist responded to a group of local clergymen who had criticized him for leading street protests; King defended his tactics, writing, "Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere."

On this date:

In 1789, President-elect George Washington left Mount Vernon, Virginia, for his inauguration in New York.

In 1889, comedian and movie director Charles Chaplin was born in London.

In 1945, a Soviet submarine in the Baltic Sea torpedoed and sank the ship the MV Goya, which Germany was using to transport civilian refugees and wounded soldiers; it's estimated that up to 7,000 people died.

In 1947, the cargo ship Grandcamp, carrying ammonium nitrate, blew up in the harbor in Texas City, Texas; a nearby ship, the High Flyer, which was carrying ammonium nitrate and sulfur, caught fire and exploded the following day; the blasts and fires killed nearly 600 people.

In 1972, Apollo 16 blasted off on a voyage to the moon with astronauts John W. Young, Charles M. Duke Jr. and Ken Mattingly on board.

In 1977, Alex Haley, author of the best-seller "Roots," visited the Gambian village of Juffure, where, he believed, his ancestor Kunte Kinte was captured as a slave in 1767.

In 1996, Britain's Prince Andrew and his wife, Sarah, the Duchess of York, announced they were in the process of divorcing.

In 2003, Michael Jordan played his last NBA game with the Washington Wizards, who lost to the Philadelphia 76ers, 107-87.

In 2007, in one of America's worst school attacks, a college senior killed 32 people on the campus of Virginia Tech before taking his own life.

In 2010, the U.S government accused Wall Street's most powerful firm of fraud, saying Goldman Sachs