

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, April 26, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 305 ~ 1 of 89

- [1- Upcoming Events](#)
- [2- 1440 News Headlines](#)
- [3- Jail Benefit Lunch Ad](#)
- [3- Queen of Hearts](#)
- [4- Middle School awards from Aberdeen Band Contest at Spring Concert](#)
- [8- Pennington County Fatality](#)
- [8- Fall River County Double Fatality](#)
- [9- SD News Watch: SD Senate's GOP power balance at stake: 5 primary races to watch](#)
- [9- Witte Exteriors Ad](#)
- [12- Remington Letter to the Editor](#)
- [13- Five relay teams, Tietz are winners at Sisseton](#)
- [14- SD Search Light: Water advocates ask state Supreme Court to block city of Custer discharges into French Creek](#)
- [16- SD Search Light: More public colleges admit high schoolers even before they've applied](#)
- [18- SD Search Light: U.S. House GOP bars earmarks for certain non-profits, after controversy over LGBTQ projects](#)
- [19- SD Search Light: U.S. Supreme Court floats return to trial court for Trump in presidential immunity case](#)
- [23- Weather Pages](#)
- [28- Daily Devotional](#)
- [29- Subscription Form](#)
- [30- Lottery Numbers](#)
- [31- News from the Associated Press](#)

Friday, April 26

Senior Menu: Taco salad, Mexican rice with beans, breadstick, cherry fluff.

School Breakfast: Bagel bits.

School Lunch: Lasagna, corn, tea buns.

Saturday April 27

Thrift Store open 10 a.m. to 1 p.m.

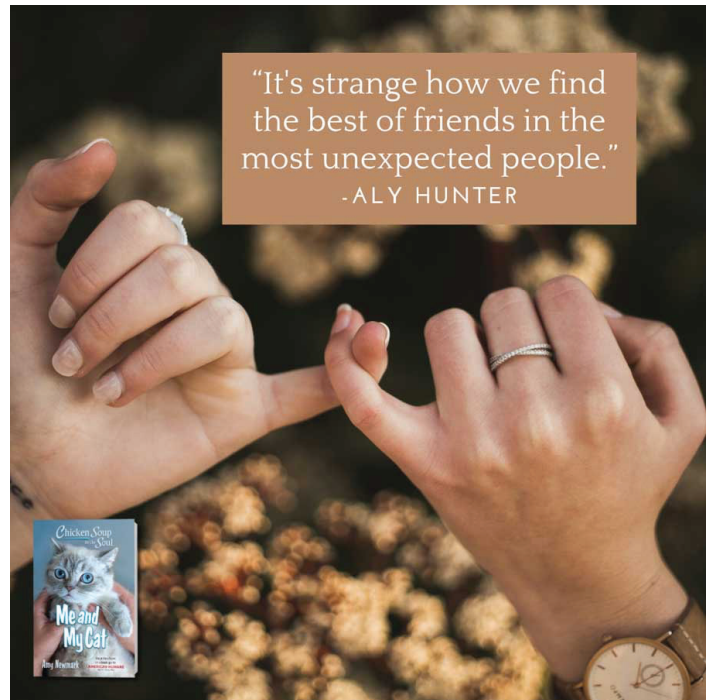
Catholic: SEAS Confession, 3:45-4:15 p.m.; SEAS Mass, 4:30 p.m.

High School Baseball: Varsity vs. Howard at 2 p.m. in Groton.

Sunday, April 28

Groton CM&A: Sunday School at 9:15 a.m., Worship Service at 10:30 a.m.

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



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

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

Emmanuel Lutheran: Worship, 9 a.m.; Sunday School, 10:15 a.m.; Piano Recital, noon; choir, 6 p.m.

St. John's Lutheran: Worship at St. John's at 9 a.m. and Zion at 11 a.m.; Sunday School, 9:45 a.m.

High School Baseball at Volga. Varsity at 2 p.m., Junior Varsity at 4 p.m.

Monday, April 29

Senior Menu: Baked cod, macaroni and cheese, spinach salad with tomatoes fruit cocktail, whole wheat bread.

School Breakfast: Pancake on stick.

School Lunch: Garlic cheese bread, cooked carrots.

FFA Banquet, GHS Gym, 6 p.m.

Pantry Open 11 a.m. to 3 p.m.

Emmanuel Lutheran: Bible Study 6:30 a.m.

JH Track at Groton Area, 2 p.m.

OPEN: Recycling Trailer in Groton

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

© 2024 Groton Daily Independent

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, April 26, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 305 ~ 2 of 89

1440

In partnership with **smartasset**[™]

A New York appeals court panel voted 4-3 to overturn the 2020 rape conviction of Hollywood executive Harvey Weinstein yesterday, ordering a new trial. The 72-year-old Weinstein will be moved to a prison in California where he was separately convicted of sex crimes in 2022 and sentenced to 16 years.

The Federal Communications Commission voted yesterday to reinstate Obama-era net neutrality rules. The regulations treat internet service as a public utility, like telecoms or water. As a result, the rules require broadband companies to treat all data equally without favoring or charging more for different websites (see breakdown). The FCC first enacted net neutrality rules in 2015, warning that without them, broadband companies could throttle—or charge extra for “fast lane” access to—sites like Netflix and YouTube.

Haitian Prime Minister Ariel Henry has officially resigned, and a new transitional council has been sworn in, amid a period of escalating gang violence that has claimed over 1,500 lives so far this year in the Caribbean nation. Economy and Finance Minister Michel Patrick Boisvert will act as the interim prime minister.

Sports, Entertainment, & Culture

Chicago Bears take former USC star QB Caleb Williams with No. 1 pick in NFL Draft; Washington Commanders take QB Jayden Daniels with the No. 2 pick. Rounds two and three begin tonight (7 pm ET, ABC/ESPN); see complete pick tracker.

Satirical news site The Onion sold to new Chicago-based company five years after being purchased by G/O Media, who also recently sold Deadspin and The AV Club.

Billie Eilish, Green Day, and Duran Duran among more than 280 musical acts asking US Congress to support “Fans First Act,” which would reform the ticket-buying process for concerts and live events.

Science & Technology

Chinese researchers release the most detailed geological maps of the moon to date; effort took a decade to complete and captured more than 12,000 craters and 17 different rock types.

Researchers transplant brain tissue from rats into mice, successfully growing functional neurons; cross-species study sheds light on the flexibility of brain development.

“Megaraptor” footprints uncovered by paleontologists in southeastern China; 95-million-year-old species was roughly 6 feet high at the hip and 16 feet long.

Business & Markets

US stock markets close lower (S&P 500 -0.5%, Dow -1.0%, Nasdaq -0.6%) following slowdown in US gross domestic product growth. US economy expands at 1.6% annual rate in first quarter of 2024, below economist estimates of more than 2% growth and down from 3.4% in previous quarter.

Alphabet posts better-than-expected Q1 revenue and earnings, announces first-ever cash dividend and \$70B stock buyback. Microsoft tops revenue and earnings estimates, fueled by AI demand. Intel shares fall in after-hours trading on weaker-than-expected outlook for current quarter.

Southwest Airlines to end service at four airports beginning in August, limit overall hiring as part of cost-cutting measures; airline reports wider-than-expected Q1 loss.

Politics & World Affairs

US Supreme Court appears skeptical of former President Donald Trump’s appeal for blanket immunity from criminal prosecution for actions conducted while president but appears open to granting some immunity; decision due by June.

Pro-Palestinian protests continue across US campuses; USC cancels graduation ceremony, Columbia University warns students to clear encampments by today. Hamas official says militant group is willing to agree to truce of at least five years with Israel in exchange for establishing an independent Palestinian state.

US births fall to 3.59 million in 2023, a 2% drop from the previous year and the lowest figure since 1979, per new Centers for Disease Control and Prevention data; fertility rate—the average number of children a woman gives birth to in a lifetime—drops to record low of 1.62.

Why 1440? The printing press was invented around the year 1440, spreading knowledge to the masses and changing the course of history. More facts: In every day, there are 1,440 minutes. We’re here to make each one count.

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, April 26, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 305 ~ 3 of 89

GROTON HISTORIC JAIL RESTORATION BENEFIT BRUNCH



SUNDAY,
APRIL 28TH
8AM-1PM
COMMUNITY
CENTER

Queen of Hearts

The eighth week of the Queen of Hearts drawing was held Thursday night. The jackpot was \$11,369. Ticket sales for the week were \$1,675 with 10 percent of that as a consolation prize. Dennis and Shirley Larson got the consolation prize of \$167. Their number was 40 with the Jack of Hearts.

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, April 26, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 305 ~ 4 of 89

Middle School awards from Aberdeen Band Contest



Students received excellent ratings at the Aberdeen band contest. Left to right are Jameson Penning, clarinet; Chloe Witchey, flute; Andi Gauer, alto saxophone; GraceLynn Hubbs Mullner, trumpet; Adeline Kotzer, flute; Tenley Frost, flute; Shaydon Wood, trumpet; and Wyatt Morehouse, snare drum. (Photo by Paul Kosel)



Students received excellent plus ratings at the Aberdeen band contest. Pictured left to right are Eli Heilman, baritone; Zach Flihs, saxophone; Lincoln Shilhanek, saxophone; Ryder Schwan, mallets; and Owen Sperry, snare drum. (Photo by Paul Kosel)

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, April 26, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 305 ~ 5 of 89



Students received superior ratings at the Aberdeen band contest. Pictured left to right are Xzavier Klebsch, alto sax; Ryder Schwan, snare drum; Connor Kroll, bass clarinet; Haden Harder, clarinet; Logan Olson, trombone; Asher Zimmerman, trombone; Kolton Antonsen, snare drum; Wesley Borg, tenor sax; Jordan Schwan, snare drum; Liam Lord, tuba; Fernando Nava, mallets; Gavin Hanten, snare and mallets; Kason Oswald, trumpet; Arianna Dinger, flute; TC Schuster, tuba; Aspen Beto, clarinet; and Rowin Jansen van Rensburg, trumpet.

(Photo by Paul Kosel)



Students received superior plus ratings at the Aberdeen band contest. Pictured left to right are Hudson Eichler, snare and mallets; Liam Johnson alto sax; Amelia Ewalt, flute; and Novalea Warrington, flute. (Photo by Paul Kosel)

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, April 26, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 305 ~ 6 of 89



These students received superior ratings on their ensembles at the Aberdeen band contest. Trombone duet: Rylie Rose and Libby Cole. Mixed Duet: Addison Hoeft, alto sax; and Makenna Krause, marimba. (Photo by Paul Kosel)

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, April 26, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 305 ~ 7 of 89



The middle school boys sang, "Give Me a Song of a Lad That is Gone," at the middle school spring concert held Thursday. (Photo by Paul Kosel)



The middle school girls sang, "Pure Imagination." (Photo by Paul Kosel)



The middle school band performed, "Afterburn: Relaunch," "Advance March" and "Junkyard Jam." (Photo by Paul Kosel)

Pennington County Fatality

What: Single vehicle fatal crash
Where: 12881 SD Highway 244, three miles west of Keystone, SD
When: 1:48 p.m., Wednesday, April 24, 2024

Driver 1: Male, 87, fatal injuries
Vehicle 1: 2023 Nissan Terrain
Seat Belt Use: Yes

Pennington County, S.D.- An 87-year-old man died Wednesday afternoon in a single-vehicle crash three miles west of Keystone, SD.

The name of the person involved has not been released pending notification of family members.

Preliminary crash information indicates the driver of a 2023 Nissan Terrain was traveling eastbound on SD Highway 244 when the vehicle left the roadway, entering the south ditch. The vehicle struck an embankment which caused the vehicle to roll, coming to final rest on its top. The driver was pronounced deceased at the scene.

Fall River County Double Fatality

What: Single vehicle fatal crash
Where: SD Highway 471, mile marker 25, 3 miles south of Edgemont, SD
When: 7:54 a.m., Wednesday, April 24, 2024

Driver 1: Male, 55, fatal injuries
Vehicle 1: 2001 Ford F250
Seat Belt Use: No

Passenger 1: Male, 64, fatal injuries
Seat Belt Use: No

Fall River County, S.D.- Two men died Wednesday morning in a single-vehicle crash three miles south of Edgemont, SD.

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

Preliminary crash information indicates the driver and passenger of a 2001 Ford F250 were headed southbound on SD Hwy. 471 when the vehicle ran off the roadway then returned to the southbound lane, over-corrected and went off the roadway again, down an embankment, and rolled several times. The occupants were not wearing seatbelts and both sustained fatal injuries.

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

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

SD Senate's GOP power balance at stake: 5 primary races to watch

By Stu Whitney

South Dakota News Watch

SIOUX FALLS, S.D. – In the Senate chamber of the South Dakota Legislature, a little institutional knowledge goes a long way.

Extreme measures emanating from the House of Representatives are often killed in Senate committees or amended on the floor, establishing an "adult in the room" element of political perspective in Pierre.

The question, of course, is which perspective has the upper hand. South Dakota Republicans are dealing with an intraparty schism between establishment "moderates" with pro-business views and far-right factions such as the Freedom Caucus, touting limited government and election reform.

Control of the Senate in deep-red South Dakota is not a party equation, though Democrats would love to reduce the GOP's 31-4 edge in seats. Power is calculated by conservative ideologies and voting blocs within the Republican caucus, and there's ground to be gained heading into the June 4 primary elections.

"These primaries will likely dictate the political philosophy of Senate leadership moving forward," said veteran Watertown legislator Lee Schoenbeck, the outgoing Senate president pro tempore who is not running for re-election.

Schoenbeck is one of 14 senators – 13 Republicans and one Democrat – who have either reached their term limits or decided not to run in 2024. The list includes five members of the influential Senate Appropriations Committee, including longtime Canton legislator Jim Bolin and state GOP chair John Wiik.

That means at least 40% of the Senate's 35 members will be new when seated for the 2025 legislative session, though some will likely have previous experience in the House.

The leadership void is notable, said Schoenbeck, but "the nature and design of the Senate is that there's turnover and then new people rise to the challenge."

18 Senate primaries on GOP side

Intraparty friction was evident in the nature of bills killed in Senate committees last session, from efforts to criminalize drag shows to codifying the disclosure of cast vote records from machine tabulators. More far-right influence could move similar bills onto the floor, widening the party divide.

The changing of the guard and its political consequence has sparked competition.

There are Republican Senate primaries in 18 districts coming in June, compared to 15 in 2022. There is just

Storm Damage To Your Roof?



WITTE
EXTERIORS LLC

Specializing in Asphalt and Wood Shingles

Call for an estimate

Zack Witte ~ 605-695-7874

Webster, SD

No Contracts!

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, April 26, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 305 ~ 10 of 89

one primary on the Democratic side, allowing those candidates to focus on the Nov. 5 general election. Senate Majority Leader Casey Crabtree of Madison faces a District 8 primary challenge from Minnesota transplant and Elkton resident Rick Weible, a prominent adviser to the South Dakota Canvassing electoral activist group.

Crabtree is expected to survive that race, but other ideological clashes are too close to call. Schoenbeck has been active behind the scenes recruiting and financially supporting establishment candidates to stem the tide against far-right contenders he once labeled "whack-a-doodles."

Bolin also expects to get involved, pointing to the future of the Senate and its reputation as a chamber that values policy discussion over partisan drama.

"The Senate has been a legislative body that moves along pretty efficiently, without a lot of blowups," said Bolin, who is term-limited in District 16. "It would be nice to keep it that way."

With that in mind, here are five Republican Senate primaries that could help define the upper chamber in the 2025 session and beyond.

District 3 (Brown County)

There's a generational battle brewing in Aberdeen, where 70-year-old retired businessman Carl Perry is looking to shift from the House to Senate.

Perry served three terms in Pierre and now seeks the Senate seat formerly held by political ally Al Norstrup, who is term-limited and toggling back to the House.

Seeking to break the cycle is Katie Washnok, president of Aberdeen Chamber of Commerce Board of Directors and chairman of the Brown County Republicans.

Washnok, who owns a motorcycle customization business with her husband, is taking the business-friendly and "fresh ideas" lane against Perry, who embraced landowner rights against carbon pipeline projects during the 2024 session.

Washnok has cited finding new water sources for the Aberdeen community as her top priority.

She's well-connected in GOP circles and speaks from the perspective of a young woman raising a family. Perry keeps a high profile at Aberdeen events and might have the edge with older voters, but he'll have to run on his record in Pierre.

"There is some stomach up here for a change in blood," said Jon Schaff, a political science professor at Northern State University in Aberdeen. "There's a sense that (District 3's) legislative delegation has been ineffective and simply warming a seat. The question is whether Washnok can turn that into a winning message."

District 4 (Clark, Codington, Deuel, Grant, Hamlin and Roberts counties)

Nowhere is the trend of establishment vs. far right more pronounced than in this district of rural counties surrounding Watertown, where longtime state Rep. Fred Deutch is running for Senate.

He seeks the seat formerly held by Wiik, the state GOP chair, who was elected in 2016 and is term-limited.

Deutsch, a retired chiropractor, has built a political profile around anti-transgender legislation such as the bathroom bill of 2016 that aimed to bar trans students from using school restrooms that don't match their biological sex.

The proposed legislation made national headlines and was vetoed by then-Gov. Dennis Daugaard.

Deutsch also sought unsuccessfully in 2020 to make it a felony for medical professionals to provide transgender health care to minors, clashing with much of the South Dakota medical community. A separate measure restricting gender-affirming care for minors passed in 2023.

His opponent is Stephanie Sauder, a longtime educator and former mayor of Bryant who was elected to the House in 2022. Sauder has the support of Gov. Kristi Noem, who has talked publicly about Sauder babysitting her as a farm kid in Castlewood.

Noem's daughter, Cassidy, as well as Crabtree and House Speaker Hugh Bartels were part of a November 2023 fundraiser for Sauder at the home of Schoenbeck, crystallizing the candidate's establishment

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, April 26, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 305 ~ 11 of 89

credentials.

Sauder supported pro-ethanol pipeline legislation in the 2024 session in the face of protests over eminent domain, further endearing herself to mainstream Republicans.

District 16

(Lincoln, Turner and Union counties)

This is another case of a conservative legislator getting term-limited from the House and seeking new horizons in the Senate, potentially changing the makeup of the chamber.

The candidate is Kevin Jensen, a former House majority whip who unsuccessfully challenged Wiik for Republican party chair last year. The former Canton School Board member and "lifetime member" of the National Rifle Association also supported primary challenges to Noem and Schoenbeck in 2022.

Jensen has opposed plans to build a state men's prison in rural Lincoln County and also criticized pipeline projects using eminent domain for carbon capture. He received a score of 74% from the Greater Sioux Falls Chamber of Commerce on support of business-related bills in 2023, compared to 100% for Bolin.

Jensen faces a stiff challenge for the seat that Bolin held as part of his 16 years as a legislator. The sprawling district map includes Canton, Lennox and Beresford and stretches westward to Marion, offering a contrast in constituencies.

Jensen's opponent, Eric Hohman, is a fixture in the Canton community, where he was publisher of the Sioux Valley News and served on the school board and community foundation. He manages credit services at First Premier Bank and is expected to have the financial support needed for a competitive race.

"There's a pretty clear division between these two," said Bolin, adding that the race could hinge on hand-to-hand campaigning to engage voters. "There's a lot of ground to cover in this district."

District 25

(Minnehaha and Moody counties)

Political campaigns are made by seizing the moment. For Jordan Youngberg, a former state senator looking for a return to Pierre, this district north of Sioux Falls that includes Dell Rapids, Flandreau and Garretson represented an opportunity.

Youngberg, a Dell Rapids native who now lives with his family in Colman, previously served District 8, which includes Lake, Miner, Moody and Sanborn counties. He rose to Senate majority whip but resigned in 2020, after which Noem appointed Crabtree to fill the seat.

Youngberg is challenging District 25 incumbent Tom Pischke, whose voting record makes him one of the most conservative members of the Senate, according to Citizens for Liberty, a Rapid City-based organization that supports limited government.

The group gave Pischke a 2024 voting approval mark of 80%, second among all senators behind Julie Frye-Mueller of Rapid City. He scored 90.5% in 2023. The Greater Sioux Falls Chamber of Commerce gave Pischke a score of 56% on business-related bills in 2023, last among Sioux Falls-area senators.

Pischke made headlines for his defense of Frye-Mueller, his seatmate in Pierre, when she was censured by the Senate in February 2023 for workplace harassment involving a Legislative Research Council staffer. The staffer said Frye-Mueller harshly criticized the staffer's decision to have her baby vaccinated, saying the baby could "get Down syndrome or autism" or even die.

Pischke threatened to file a criminal complaint against Schoenbeck and the other 26 senators who initially voted to suspend Frye-Mueller, but Hughes County prosecutors declined to take the case.

It was not the only run-in for Pischke, who served three House terms before winning his Senate seat in 2022. He was banned from the House floor in March 2024 for placing a bottle of syrup on another lawmaker's desk after that legislator motioned to defeat a commemoration co-sponsored by Pischke to celebrate Aunt Jemima as a "true American success story that was erased from history."

District 30:

(Custer, Fall River and Pennington counties)

Frye-Mueller has represented one of South Dakota's most conservative districts since 2016, when she entered the House along with fellow Republican Tim Goodwin.

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, April 26, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 305 ~ 12 of 89

She switched over to the Senate in 2020 and survived a tough primary against Goodwin in 2022 to stay there, trumpeting election reform, landowner rights and anti-vaccine legislation.

She holds a perfect rating from Citizens for Liberty, the Rapid City-based organization for which her husband serves as an unpaid lobbyist. That runs counter to her score of 42% on business-related bills in 2023 from Elevate Rapid City, a contrast that could rise to the surface this primary season.

Frye-Mueller is facing challenges from Republicans Forrest Foster and Amber Hulse, with Hulse drawing much of the attention so far. She's a former Miss South Dakota who interned at the White House during the Trump administration and has a law degree from Georgetown University.

Hulse, a Hot Springs native who also clerked for Noem when she was the state's U.S. Representative, talked about "fresh leadership" in announcing her candidacy in December 2023.

There's no secret among moderate Republicans that turning down the drama surrounding Frye-Mueller would be welcomed. Whether the voters in District 30 agree could be a sign of where the Senate is headed for the next two years.

This story was produced by South Dakota News Watch, an independent, nonprofit news organization. Read more in-depth stories at sdnewswatch.org and sign up for an email every few days to get stories as soon as they're published. Contact Stu Whitney at stu.whitney@sdnewswatch.org

Remington Letter to the Editor

Dear Editor,

My name is Glenna Remington and I am 33 year resident of Groton, SD. I am voting for Logan Manhart for State House on June 4th because he supports what is right for Groton. He supports law enforcement, private property rights, he is pro-life, and supports fiscal responsibility. I have known Logan for many years and he works hard every day speaking with constituents in District 1 about the issues facing our region. He is a fine young man and I trust his good, godly judgment to represent us in Pierre. Please join me in voting for Logan Manhart for State House in the June 4th Republican Primary.

Sincerely,

Glenna Remington

Brown County Federation of Republican Women VP

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, April 26, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 305 ~ 13 of 89

Five relay teams, Tietz are winners at Sisseton

Five relay teams and McKenna Tietz were all winners at the Sisseton Track Meet held Thursday. Tietz was a double winner, winning both hurdle events. The relay teams that won were the boys and girls 1600m medley relay, the girls 400m relay, the girls 800m relay and the girls 1600m relay.

Boy's Division

100 Meters: 2. Keegen Tracy, 11.57.

200 Meters: 2. Keegen Tracy, 23.30, 19. Logan Warrington, 28.17.

400 Meters: 2. Keegen Tracy, 53.05, 13. Logan Warrington, 1:03.66.

800 Meters: 6. Jayden Schwan, 2:28.24, 10. Tristin McGannon, 2:35.42, 11. Garrett Schultz, 2:37.44.

300m Hurdles: 4. Tristin McGannon, 50.74

4x800 Relay: 3. Lane Tietz, Colby Dunker, Blake Pauli, Jayden Schwan, 9:20.69

SMR 1600m: 1. Lane Tietz, Colby Dunker, Keegen Tracy, Blake Pauli, 3:59.25

Shot Put: 3. Logan Ringgenberg, 41' 1, 5. Holden Sippel, 40' 6.5, 6. Karter Moody, 39' 10, 23. Drew Thurston, 27' 9.5.

Discus: 2. Logan Ringgenberg, 118' 6.25, 9. Holden Sippel, 103' 0, 13. Karter Moody, 90' 0.75, 28. Drew Thurston, 62' 5.

Javelin: 5. Colby Dunker, 115' 8, 9. Holden Sippel, 96' 9, 12. Karter Moody, 88' 4.

Triple Jump: 7. Tristin McGannon, 29' 9.

Girl's Division

100 Meters: 8. Elizabeth Fliehs, 14.30, 9. Kayla Lehr, 14.56.

200 Meters: 7. Kayla Lehr, 30.30, 9. Elizabeth Fliehs, 30.65.

400 Meters: 3. Ashlynn Warrington, 1:08.05, 5. Elizabeth Fliehs, 1:10.68.

800 Meters: 3. Faith Traphagen, 2:36.57, 5. Ashlynn Warrington, 2:45.33

100m Hurdles: 1. McKenna Tietz, 17.83, 3. Hannah Sandness, 20.34, 6. Emerlee Jones, 20.66, 10. Talli Wright, 25.22.

300m Hurdles: 1. McKenna Tietz, 51.55, 2. Emerlee Jones, 53.91, 3. Talli Wright, 55.52, 5. Teagan Hanten, 56.64.

4x100 Relay: 1. Laila Roberts, Jerica Locke, McKenna Tietz, Rylee Dunker, 54.10

4x200 Relay: 1. Laila Roberts, Rylee Dunker, Jerica Locke, Taryn Traphagen, 1:52.30

4x400 Relay: 1. Jerica Locke, Kella Tracy, Taryn Traphagen, McKenna Tietz, 4:21.69

SMR 1600m: 1. Laila Roberts, Rylee Dunker, Kella Tracy, Taryn Traphagen, 4:41.09

Shot Put: 3. Emma Kutter, 32' 10, 11. Faith Fliehs, 27' 8.5, 15. Avery Crank, 25' 0, 23. Ashley Johnson, 22' 8.

Discus: 6. Faith Fliehs, 79' 7.75, 11. Avery Crank, 74' 2.75, 19. Ashley Johnson, 64' 6.5, 21. Emma Kutter, 62' 10.75.

Javelin: 7. Emma Kutter, 74' 9, 10. Ashley Johnson, 72' 9, 12. Avery Crank, 61' 2, 15. Faith Fliehs, 40' 4.

High Jump: 6. Emerlee Jones, 4' 4.

Long Jump: 15. Teagan Hanten, 11' 1.75.

Triple Jump: 5. Emerlee Jones, 29' 2, 7. Teagan Hanten, 27' 0.25.



SOUTH DAKOTA SEARCHLIGHT

<https://southdakotasearchlight.com>

Water advocates ask state Supreme Court to block city of Custer discharges into French Creek

Voters passed ordinance banning city's action; county says state permit overrides it

BY: JOHN HULT - APRIL 25, 2024 4:58 PM

Water quality advocates in Custer County want the state Supreme Court to make the county enforce a voter-backed ordinance barring the discharge of treated wastewater into a creek by the city of Custer.

The city studied four options for discharge and chose French Creek. Since 1972, the city had discharged treated wastewater into Flynn Creek. But rebuilding its discharge pipe for Flynn Creek would be too expensive, the city and its contractor determined in 2020, and there were environmental concerns with the other options.

In 2021, the state issued the city a permit to discharge into French Creek upon completion of the upgrades to its wastewater treatment facility. The upgrades are not finished yet.

That happened before some county voters knew that the city had chosen French Creek as its discharge point.

When a group of concerned Custer County residents learned of the plan to switch, they worked to put an ordinance on the county ballot declaring that any discharge into French Creek would count as a public nuisance.

Last June, the ordinance passed with a final tally of 809 for, 609 against.

French Creek advocates: City chose without consultation

The county hasn't enforced the ordinance. A citizen group called Preserve French Creek filed a "writ of mandamus" after the vote in 2023, a legal maneuver meant to force government officials – in this case the county's state's attorney – to fulfill legal obligations.

A local judge agreed with the county in the ensuing legal dispute. State law preempts local law, the judge ruled, so the city's choice of French Creek was unimpeachable by virtue of its listing on the state permit.

Preserve French Creek appealed to the state Supreme Court. Its position is that a permit from the state does not carry the same legal weight as a state statute in the wastewater situation.

The city had four options and picked one without warning citizens and giving them a chance to comment, according to Preserve French Creek's attorney, Steven Beardsley. That ought to give the county enough regulatory wiggle room, he said, to protect one of those options from becoming the designated drop zone for treated wastewater by a city within its border.

State law may trump local law, but Beardsley told the high court on Thursday that state law didn't tell the city which creek to pick before asking for the permit.

"The location is not part of the statute," he said. "They're the ones that chose French Creek, not this agency."

Even if the law gives the secretary of the Department of Agriculture and Natural Resources (DANR) the authority to issue permits after a comment period, Beardsley said, the city should've given residents proper notice.

The notice about the discharge permit came from DANR, and Beardsley said that it wasn't good enough to double as a warning that the city had chosen French Creek specifically. The state's administrative pro-

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, April 26, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 305 ~ 15 of 89

cedures require "actual notice of the action in question to the persons potentially affected by it," he said, a step beyond publishing a notice in a legal newspaper.

"They published it in the Custer Chronicle, and that goes out to about 12 people," Beardsley said. "Now, that's a slight exaggeration. It's more than that, but it's not actual notice."

The Custer County Chronicle's actual circulation is around 1,600.

Chief Justice Steven Jensen asked Beardsley how the notice issue implicates the city, however.

"Aren't you really just saying, 'Well, that order wasn't properly entered by the DANR, and you should set that aside?' Don't you have to go back to the DANR to do that?"

Beardsley said no, citing a South Dakota case wherein the high court ruled that "actual notice" means taking "reasonable precautions" to make sure citizens have an opportunity to object to the location of a potential nuisance.

"State law says you can have wastewater permits or wastewater plants, there's no objection to that," Beardsley said. "The objection is they didn't take reasonable precautions before they chose French Creek."

City: Take it up with lawmakers

Jacob Stewart, representing the city of Custer, argued that notice was properly given in 2020. No one commented on the permit to the DANR, he said.

When asked about "actual notice" by Jensen, Stewart said that issue wasn't addressed in the local courtroom. As such, he told Jensen, it ought not be considered in the Supreme Court appeal.

"There was never any discussion or argument at the lower court level as to the express actual notice," he said.

That issue prompted a question from Justice Janine Kern. What legal remedy might be available to Custer County voters who object so strenuously to French Creek discharge that they were willing to pass an ordinance barring it?

"Your only remedy is to wait and see if something goes wrong or happens outside the scope of the permit?" Kern asked. "There's no way to step back or seek any form of relief?"

"I believe that is the case, your honor," Stewart said.

The permit would come up for renewal in five years, he said. If there are questions about what sort of notice ought to be given in situations where a permit might create a nuisance, he said, it isn't one for the justices.

Lawmakers should decide the bounds of such notices, he said.

"At the end of the day, all of this needs to be recourced in front of the Legislature, not this court," Stewart said.

Justices: How can a county overrule the state?

In his rebuttal, Beardsley argued otherwise. "Actual notice" was necessary.

Justice Patricia DeVaney wondered aloud what it might mean, though, if the high court accepted his arguments and ordered the county to enforce the nuisance ordinance.

If the ordinance conflicts with a legally authorized state permit, she asked, "would not the city then be able to come and make a claim that that's an improper enforcement of an ordinance?"

Beardsley said he believes the county has the authority to enforce, as the discharge permit impacts a larger swath of land than the city has to rule over.

"It'd be one thing if we're putting it in a pond just in the city," he said. "They're putting it in French Creek that goes right on through the entire county. So if the county says, 'you can't do that, because we have an ordinance that you can't do that,' then the city had better think twice," he said.

As far as leaving questions on location to the Legislature, Beardsley repeated his argument that lawmakers had endorsed "actual notice" though its passage of laws codifying administrative procedures.

"There is no possible way that the Legislature is going to say 'we're now going to make it part of the statute, the location of where wastewater should go,' he said. "What the Legislature did, though, was

they said, 'You got to give actual notice.'"

The justices will issue a ruling in the case at a later date.

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

More public colleges admit high schoolers even before they've applied

South Dakota pilot project is part of trend

BY: ELAINE S. POVICH - APRIL 25, 2024 6:00 AM

For some ninth graders near Fresno, California, the invitation — years before they'll don a cap and gown — comes out of the blue: You've been accepted to Fresno State, the letter says.

Public universities across the country increasingly are sending such acceptance letters even before students apply to college. In more than a third of states, at least one public university now uses "direct admission" programs that automatically admit high school students if they meet certain academic criteria.

The programs seek to help fill college and university rosters in a time of declining high school populations. They entice high school students by allowing them to avoid the stressful college application process for a guaranteed spot. And they are likely to grow in the wake of a U.S. Supreme Court decision outlawing race-based admissions, as a new way for schools to increase diversity in their applicant pools.

Some states, such as California and Texas, have long used guaranteed admission programs, under which high school students who graduate in a top percentage of their class are automatically admitted to certain public universities. Direct admissions programs, though, typically go a step further, proactively reaching out to students and providing information on options, requirements and application steps.

"For us to be able to say to our ninth graders, you can go to college, and you are conditionally accepted into Fresno State, I cannot tell you the way the kids light up," said Misty Her, deputy superintendent of the Fresno Unified School District. She said 95% of the students in her district qualify for free and reduced-price meals.

Under Fresno State's "Bulldog Bound" program, ninth graders from partnering school districts in four counties who meet minimum California State University requirements are automatically accepted, as long as they maintain their grades and fulfill high school graduation requirements. Gone are the complicated applications and fees, standardized tests, and the pressure to stack up extracurricular activities, Fresno State officials said. And the college will make early financial aid estimates.

In the meantime, the students get Fresno State IDs, a college email address and access to campus libraries.

"I believe in my heart that this is the gold standard on how to recruit, how to retain and how to graduate students," said Fresno State President Saúl Jiménez-Sandoval, in announcing the program.

"I'm excited that states and institutions are thinking about ways to streamline the pipeline into college," said Taylor Odle, assistant professor of educational policy studies at the University of Wisconsin-Madison, who has studied college admission policy extensively.

With direct admissions, "the dinner table conversation can be: 'Do I go or not go?' Not 'Did you fill out that form, did you write that essay?'" Odle said.

For high school students whose families may not have attended college, being able to skip the lengthy admissions process is a "real game changer," said Mary Churchill, director of the higher education administration program at Boston University, and an expert in college admissions.

"If you're offering direct admission to ninth graders, you actually know them and can prepare for them," she said. She said that when colleges know incoming students, the schools can better prepare to serve them and make a seamless educational journey from kindergarten to college's senior year.

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, April 26, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 305 ~ 17 of 89

However, the programs can have some drawbacks. They can be limiting for students who already plan to go to college but might stop striving for a more selective university once they have received a direct admission offer. That's called "undermatching," Churchill said.

Other potential drawbacks include students overlooking the importance of evaluating whether the school would be a good fit, experts said.

State programs

In South Dakota, where fewer students are graduating high school and fewer of them are enrolling in higher education, a pilot project will begin this fall to inform some high school juniors in Aberdeen, Sioux Falls and Spearfish that they have been proactively admitted to one or more of the state's universities. They include Black Hills State, Northern State, South Dakota State and the University of South Dakota, according to the South Dakota Searchlight.

In Georgia, a program called Georgia Match, championed last year by Republican Gov. Brian Kemp, sent letters to 120,000 high school seniors, saying they are eligible to enroll in one of up to 23 public universities or 22 technical schools without an application fee. The marquee state schools — University of Georgia, Georgia Tech and Georgia College & State University — are not participating.

In a dozen states, at least one public university uses the Common App direct admissions program: Illinois, Massachusetts, Maryland, Michigan, Missouri, New Jersey, Nevada, New York, Oregon, Pennsylvania, Tennessee and Virginia.

The Common App allows students to apply to multiple colleges using one online application, and is widely used among high school seniors.

Idaho was the first state to have a statewide direct admissions program, which started in 2015. It offers admission to all Idaho high school graduates. A study published in January 2022, by Odle, found the Idaho program increased in-state undergraduate enrollments by between 8% and 15%, depending on the campus. But the gains were concentrated on two-year campuses, the study said.

Connecticut, Hawaii and Minnesota also have begun some state-run direct admission programs.

"It's more than admissions — it's a commitment to supporting dreams and building futures," said Phong Yang, associate vice president for strategic enrollment management at Fresno State.

Pros and cons

The college application process can be a barrier, said Odle, who found in a 2023 working paper studying 1.2 million high schoolers that a quarter of students who start a Common App application to college never finish it.

The biggest indicator of whether a student ultimately submitted a college application was whether they completed the essay on their Common App, the paper found. It showed that 94% of students who provided a valid essay response submitted an application, compared with only 43% of non-submitters.

The number of completed applications varied widely by student ethnicity and career aspirations, parents' educational attainment, school type, and community educational attainment and household income, the paper said.

David Hawkins, chief education and policy officer at the National Association for College Admission Counseling, said direct admissions programs can be beneficial both to students and colleges, especially in firing up students to seek the college experience.

But he cautioned that students should be careful in evaluating the direct admission offers to see if the college is the right fit. Students with disabilities, for example, need to look into the campus's accommodations, he said. And any student needs to be comfortable with the university.

"Not all students are going to be the best fit for every school," Hawkins said. "A large state university may not be right for a student who doesn't love large crowds." Those students should check out other schools, he said. Counselors could say to them: "Have you considered XYZ college? Look elsewhere."

Joan Koven, an educational consultant in the Philadelphia area who guides students through college

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, April 26, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 305 ~ 18 of 89

applications and essays, said direct admission programs also help colleges attract a diverse student body. "Everybody is looking for ways, after the SCOTUS decision [ending race-based admissions], to help round out the student body," she said in a phone interview.

She said the only downside she sees in direct admission is if students get to college "and it's not what you expect, or you can't do the work and you drop out."

"You want to find the right blend of getting people eager for a college education and [knowing] what that might look like," she said.

Elaine S. Povich covers education and consumer affairs for Stateline. Povich has reported for Newsday, the Chicago Tribune and United Press International. Stateline is part of States Newsroom, the nation's largest state-focused nonprofit news organization.

U.S. House GOP bars earmarks for certain non-profits, after controversy over LGBTQ projects

BY: JENNIFER SHUTT - APRIL 25, 2024 4:31 PM

WASHINGTON — U.S. House lawmakers will no longer be able to request earmarked funding for some nonprofits under a change in eligibility made by the Republican chairman of the Appropriations Committee on Thursday.

The alteration is related to an uproar during last year's annual government funding process, when House Republicans, who are in the majority, included three LGBTQ projects in one of their spending bills and then stripped that funding during a tense public markup.

The change to eligibility in the House affects nonprofits that fall under the Economic Development Initiative account within the Transportation-HUD spending bill, one of the dozen funding bills that are written by congressional appropriators.

The new guidance laid out by Chairman Tom Cole doesn't apply to House lawmakers seeking funding for nonprofits in the other accounts eligible for earmark requests.

It also doesn't affect how the earmark process will work on the Senate side. That means there is another avenue for lawmakers to secure funding for LGBTQ projects if they decide to make those requests and the Senate spending panel chooses to include it in its version of the bill.

"Similar to previous reforms made in this Congress, this change aims to ensure projects are consistent with the community development goals of the federal program," Cole wrote in a "Dear Colleague" letter.

Cole, an Oklahoma Republican, became chairman of the powerful spending panel earlier this month after the former chairwoman, Kay Granger of Texas, decided to leave that leadership post early.

Connecticut Democratic Rep. Rosa DeLauro, ranking member on the committee, released a written statement, saying the change "is a seismic shift, as nearly half of all the 2024 House-funded EDI projects were directed to non-profit recipients."

"In order to accommodate the extreme Republican wing, Republicans are trying to root out any help for the LGBTQ+ community," DeLauro wrote. "They are willing to hurt their own religious organizations, seniors, and veterans."

The eligibility change, she wrote, would exclude House lawmakers from requesting funding for "YMCA's, Boys & Girls Clubs, and other groups vital to our communities."

Three LGBTQ projects

House Republicans originally included \$1.8 million in funding for the William Way LGBT Center in Philadelphia, \$970,000 for the LGBT Center of Greater Reading's Transitional Housing Program in Pennsylvania and \$850,000 for affordable senior housing at LGBTQ Senior Housing, Inc. in Massachusetts in their Transportation-HUD spending bill released last summer.

All three projects were requested by House lawmakers, the first step in the earmark process.

The projects were funded under the Economic Development Initiatives account that at the time was eligible for earmarks in the Housing and Urban Development section of the Transportation-HUD spending bill. Cole, then-chairman of that subcommittee, removed the three projects through a so-called manager's amendment that made numerous changes to the bill during committee debate.

While manager's amendments are standard and typically bipartisan, the removal infuriated Democrats on the committee, who urged their GOP colleagues to reconsider during a heated debate last July.

Wisconsin Democratic Rep. Mark Pocan said at the time removing the funding was an insult to LGBTQ Americans as well as their families and allies.

"The fact that you would take away members' earmarks simply because they refer to the LGBTQI+ community is insane, is bigoted," Pocan said in July.

The final batch of spending bills Congress approved in March, following House-Senate negotiations, was slated to include \$1 million for the William Way LGBT Center in Philadelphia, since the Pennsylvania senators also requested funding. But that was removed from the bill after it had been released, setting off a confusing blame game among lawmakers.

The final Labor-HHS-Education spending bill approved in March included \$850,000 for LGBTQ Senior Housing, Inc., MA, for services for older adults within the Administration for Community Living account within the HHS section of the bill.

That funding in Massachusetts had been stripped from the House's Transportation-HUD bill by GOP lawmakers, but was also requested by the state's two senators and included in the Labor-HHS-Education spending bill within that chamber.

That final spending bill also included \$400,000 for the Garden State Equality Education Fund, Inc., for trauma-informed strategies to support LGBTQ+ youth in New Jersey, within the Innovation and Improvement account for the Department of Education.

That funding was never requested by House lawmakers, but was asked for by the state's two senators.

Jennifer covers the nation's capital as a senior reporter for States Newsroom. Her coverage areas include congressional policy, politics and legal challenges with a focus on health care, unemployment, housing and aid to families.

U.S. Supreme Court floats return to trial court for Trump in presidential immunity case

BY: JACOB FISCHLER AND ASHLEY MURRAY - APRIL 25, 2024 3:29 PM

WASHINGTON — The U.S. Supreme Court appeared skeptical Thursday of former President Donald Trump's argument he is immune from criminal charges that he tried to overturn his loss in the 2020 election.

But conservatives who dominate the court appeared open to returning key questions to a trial court, possibly delaying Trump's prosecution beyond the November election — and essentially assisting the former president as he fights legal challenges on multiple fronts.

Trump, the presumptive Republican nominee for president, has argued in a federal trial court and in the U.S. Court of Appeals for the District of Columbia that his actions following the 2020 election and leading up to the violent Jan. 6, 2021 attack on the U.S. Capitol, were "official acts" conducted while still in office and therefore are not subject to criminal prosecution.

While court precedent establishes that U.S. presidents are immune to civil damages for their official acts, and to criminal prosecution while in office, the justices now must decide the unanswered question of whether former presidents are absolutely immune from criminal law.

At oral arguments Thursday in Trump v. United States, much of the discussion centered on what should be considered an official presidential act.

Several conservative justices suggested that lower courts work to determine what aspects of the charges against Trump arose solely from his private conduct.

Such a detour could eat up additional weeks or months as the trial calendar converges with Election Day.

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, April 26, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 305 ~ 20 of 89

A decision from the court may not arrive until late June or early July. If a ruling calls for additional fact-finding at the trial court level, Trump's election interference trial likely would not happen prior to the November election.

Trump's lawyer, D. John Sauer, of St. Louis, argued that nearly everything a president does in office — including hypotheticals about ordering a military coup or assassinating a political rival — could be considered official acts.

While much of the court appeared skeptical of that broad view of official acts, several justices on the conservative wing asked about having the trial court determine what acts should be considered official. They also suggested prosecutors could drop sections of the four-count indictment against Trump that dealt with official acts.

The court's three liberal justices voiced serious concerns about Trump's immunity argument, with Justice Ketanji Brown Jackson wondering aloud if the court accepting a broad view of criminal immunity for the president would make the Oval Office "the seat of criminal activity."

The case is one of four in state and federal courts in which criminal charges have been made against Trump. On Thursday, he was in a New York state courtroom where he faces charges in an ongoing hush-money trial; the judge there did not allow him to attend the Supreme Court arguments.

Trial court determination

Conservative justices asked if they could avoid the constitutional question by having the trial court, presided over by U.S. District Judge Tanya Chutkan, determine which parts of the allegations could be considered official or unofficial acts.

Special counsel Jack Smith and his team of prosecutors have indicated that prosecuting only Trump's private conduct would be sufficient, Justice Amy Coney Barrett said.

"The normal process, what Mr. Sauer asked, would be for us to remand if we decided that there were some official acts immunity, and to let that be sorted out below," Barrett said, referring to a process in which a case is sent back to a lower court. "It is another option for the special counsel to just proceed based on the private conduct and drop the official conduct."

'Absolute immunity'

Sauer argued, as he has for months, for "absolute immunity" from criminal prosecution for presidents acting in their official capacity.

No president who has not been impeached and removed from office can be prosecuted for official actions, Sauer said, broadly interpreting the meaning of official acts.

Liberal justices questioned Sauer about how far his definition of official acts would stretch. Trump's attorney was reluctant to list any exceptions.

Justice Sonia Sotomayor asked a hypothetical that arose in a lower court: Would it be an official act for the president to order the assassination of a political rival?

"That could well be an official act," Sauer answered.

He also answered Justice Elena Kagan that it could be an official act for a president to order a military coup, though Sauer said "it would depend on the circumstances."

Michael R. Dreeben, representing the U.S. Department of Justice, argued that Trump's broad view of presidential immunity would break a fundamental element of U.S. democracy, that no one is above the law.

"His novel theory would immunize former presidents for criminal liability for bribery, treason, sedition, murder, and here, conspiring to use fraud to overturn the results of an election and perpetuate himself in power," Dreeben said.

Jackson, questioning Sauer, appeared to agree with that argument.

She said Sauer appeared worried that the president would be "chilled" by potential criminal prosecution, but she said there would be "a really significant opposite problem if the president wasn't chilled."

"Once we say, 'No criminal liability, Mr. President, you can do whatever you want,' I'm worried that we

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, April 26, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 305 ~ 21 of 89

would have a worse problem than the problem of the president feeling constrained to follow the law while he's in office," Jackson said.

'A special, peculiarly precarious position'

But other members of the court appeared more amenable to Sauer's argument that subjecting presidents to criminal prosecution would constrain them.

Justice Samuel Alito, one of the court's conservatives, asked Dreeben about Trump's argument that a president's duties require a broad view of immunity.

The president has to make difficult decisions, sometimes in areas of law that are unsettled, Alito said. "I understand you to say, 'If he makes a mistake, he makes a mistake, he's subject to the criminal laws just like anybody else,'" Alito said. "You don't think he's in a special, peculiarly precarious position?"

Dreeben answered that the president has access to highly qualified legal advice and that making a mistake is not what generally leads to criminal prosecution.

He also noted that the allegations against Trump involve him going beyond his powers as president to interfere with the certification of an election, which is not a presidential power in the Constitution.

Incumbents leaving office

Alito, who seemed to be the justice most sympathetic to Trump's argument that allowing a president to be prosecuted would undermine the powers of the office, also raised the prospect that incumbents who lose elections may seek to illegally stay in power precisely because prosecution would await after they leave office.

"A stable democratic society requires that a candidate who loses an election, even a close one, even a hotly contested one, leave office peacefully," he said.

"If an incumbent who loses a very close, hotly contested election, knows that a real possibility after leaving office is ... the president may be criminally prosecuted by a bitter political opponent, will that not lead us into a cycle that destabilizes the functioning of our country as a democracy?"

Dreeben answered that "it's exactly the opposite," because there are well-established lawful options, including court challenges, available to challenge election results.

Trump posted several times Thursday morning on his social media platform Truth Social that the president would "have no power at all" without absolute immunity.

"That would be the end of the Presidency, and our Country, as we know it, and is just one of the many Traps there would be for a President without Presidential Immunity. Obama, Bush, and soon, Crooked Joe Biden, would all be in BIG TROUBLE," he wrote.

'Writing a rule for the ages'

Some justices indicated they will be thinking beyond the question as it relates to Trump's election interference charges, possibly hinting at a drawn-out process in issuing an opinion.

Criminally prosecuting a former president could open the door to prosecution based on motives, including the motive to get reelected or for other personal gain, conservative Justice Neil Gorsuch suggested.

"I'm not concerned about this case, but I am concerned about future uses of the criminal law to target political opponents based on accusations about their motives," Gorsuch said in a lengthy back-and-forth with Dreeben.

"I'm going to say something that I don't normally say, which is: That's really not involved in this case," Dreeben said, eliciting a laugh from Gorsuch.

"I understand that. I appreciate that. But you also appreciate that we're writing a rule for the ages," Gorsuch responded.

At another point, Dreeben tried to redirect the justices to specific details of the Trump case, including his point that the judicial system has safeguards against purely politically motivated and retaliatory legal action.

Dreeben attempted to detail for Alito that the Justice Department functioned "in the way that it is sup-

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, April 26, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 305 ~ 22 of 89

posed to" when Trump's alleged plan to ask officials to send fraudulent letters to states regarding election results failed.

Alito pushed back, saying he wanted to discuss the case "in the abstract."

"I understand that Mr. Dreeben. But as I said, this case will have effects that go far beyond this particular prosecution," Alito said.

Alan Morrison, a law professor at George Washington University who has argued 20 cases before the Supreme Court, said in a phone interview after oral arguments that the court will not reach "a fast decision" as the justices wrestle with the extent of what is considered a president's official acts.

"Neither side is going to get everything they want," Morrison said. "And the hardest questions to answer are going to be what are official and what are not official acts."

'Reacting against a monarch'

Sticking to the specifics of the indictment against Trump, Kagan ran through a list of the allegations and asked Sauer to discern what constituted an official act.

"The defendant asked the Arizona House Speaker to call the legislature into session to hold a hearing based on their claims of election fraud," Kagan said, citing the indictment.

"Absolutely an official act for the president to communicate with state officials on a matter of enormous federal interest and concern," Sauer answered, "attempting to defend the integrity of a federal election to communicate with state officials and urge them to view what he views as their job under state law and federal law."

Kagan moved to hypotheticals and asked if a president who ordered a military coup, but was never impeached and convicted by Congress, could not be held to U.S. criminal law.

"He was the president. He is the commander in chief. He talks to his generals all the time, and he told the generals, 'I don't feel like leaving office. I want to stage a coup.' Is that immune?"

"If it's an official act, there needs to be impeachment and conviction beforehand," Sauer said, citing the defense's reliance on the Constitution's Impeachment Clause argument.

"That is the wisdom of the (Constitution's) framers," he added.

"The framers did not put an immunity clause into the Constitution," she quickly responded. "... They didn't provide immunity to the president, and you know, not so surprising. They were reacting against a monarch who claimed to be above the law."

"Wasn't the whole point that the president was not a monarch and the president was not supposed to be above the law?" she said.

Federal election interference charges

A federal grand jury charged Trump with four felony counts in August 2023 for working with several co-conspirators to overturn election results in seven states.

The indictment charged the former president with conspiracy to defraud the United States and obstruction of an official proceeding, among other charges.

Trump allegedly worked with several others to replace legitimate electors with fraudulent ones in Arizona, Georgia, Michigan, Nevada, New Mexico, Pennsylvania and Wisconsin, according to the indictment.

The prosecution also alleges that he tried to leverage the Justice Department to pressure the states to replace their slates of electors, and pressure Vice President Mike Pence into altering results during Congress's joint session to certify the results on Jan. 6, 2021.

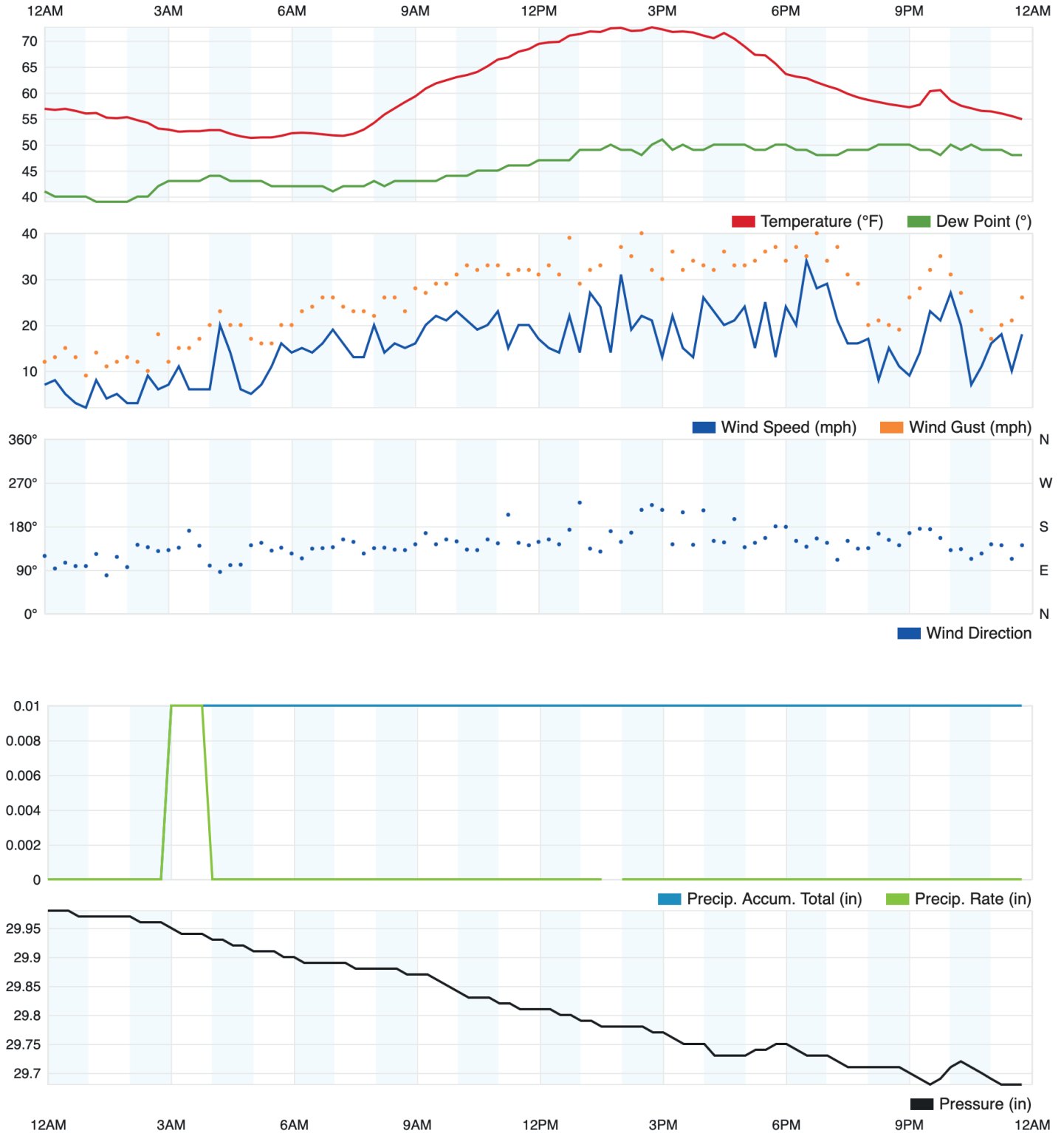
Jacob covers federal policy as a senior reporter for States Newsroom. Based in Oregon, he focuses on Western issues. His coverage areas include climate, energy development, public lands and infrastructure.

Ashley Murray covers the nation's capital as a senior reporter for States Newsroom. Her coverage areas include domestic policy and appropriations.

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, April 26, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 305 ~ 23 of 89

Yesterday's Groton Weather Graphs



Groton Daily Independent

Friday, April 26, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 305 ~ 24 of 89

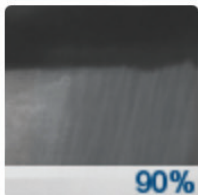
Friday



Showers

High: 57 °F

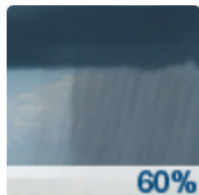
Friday
Night



Showers and
Breezy

Low: 45 °F

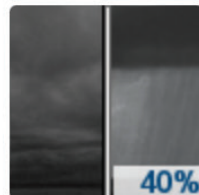
Saturday



Showers
Likely and
Breezy

High: 54 °F

Saturday
Night



Cloudy then
Chance
Showers and
Breezy

Low: 40 °F

Sunday



Showers and
Breezy

High: 47 °F

Unsettled Next Several Days

Today



Highs:
56 to 60°

E-NE
20-30mph

Saturday



Highs:
56 to 51°

N
25-35mph

Sunday



Highs:
44 to 49°

NE
20-35mph

Monday



Highs:
55 to 64°

WNW
20-25mph

Tuesday



Highs:
62 to 68°

SW-W
30-40mph

National Weather Service
Aberdeen, SD

Unsettled for the next several days as a series of systems crosses the region. Mainly rain showers, with a low chance for thunder which is mostly limited to today. Winds will not really let up much either.

Broton Daily Independent

Friday, April 26, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 305 ~ 25 of 89

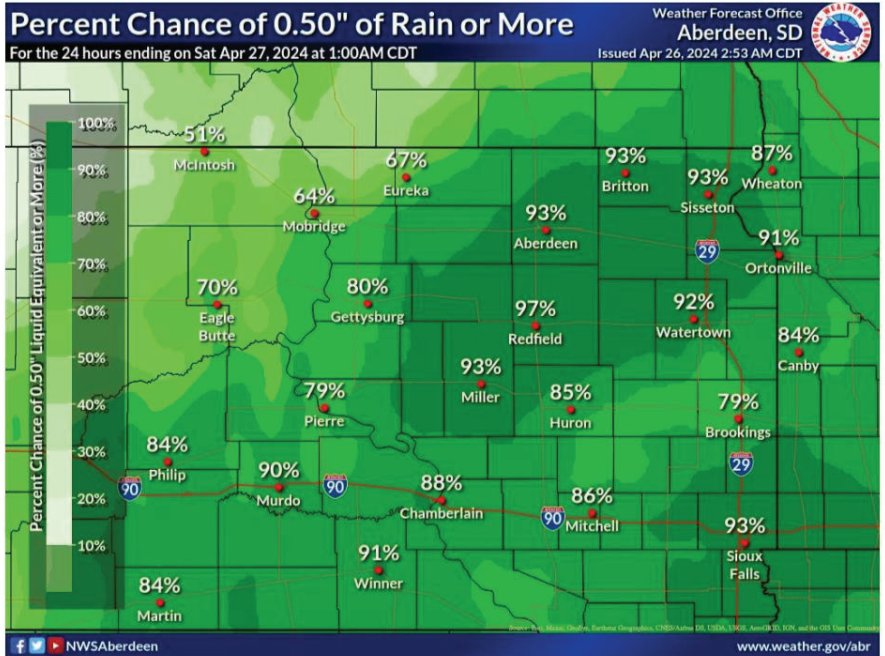


Moisture Through Early Saturday

April 26, 2024
3:17 AM

Round #1

- Probability of seeing ½” or more this morning through 1am Saturday
- Potential for exceeding 1” is around 75% centered across the James valley with lower potential east and west
- Much higher variability expected with the presence of non-severe thunderstorms

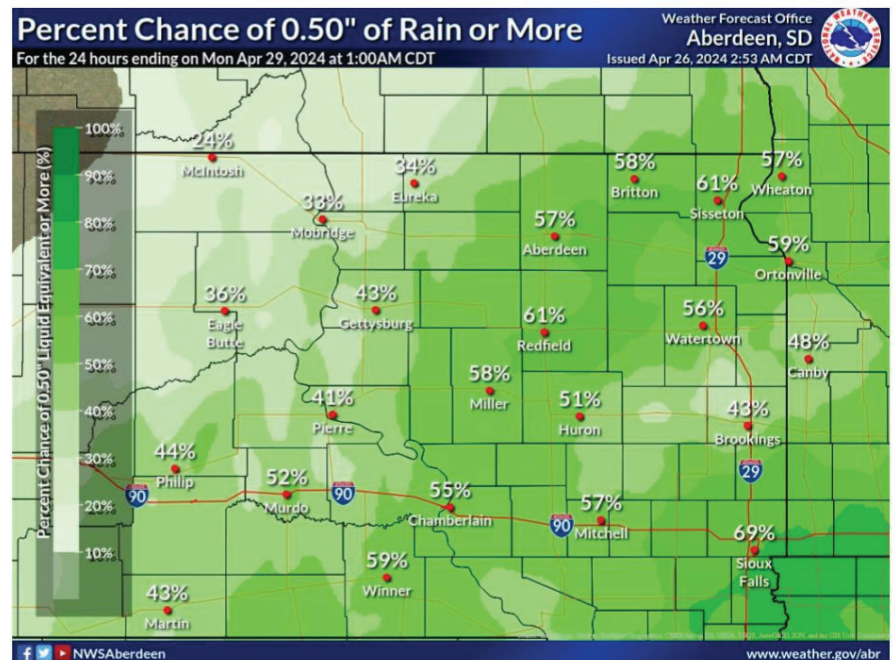


Moisture Sunday Through Early Monday

April 26, 2024
3:20 AM

Round #2

- Probability of seeing ½” or more 1 am Sunday through 1am Monday
- Probability of seeing in excess of 1” is only around 25%
- Little if any potential for non-severe thunderstorms (mostly just rain/rain showers)



Groton Daily Independent

Friday, April 26, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 305 ~ 26 of 89

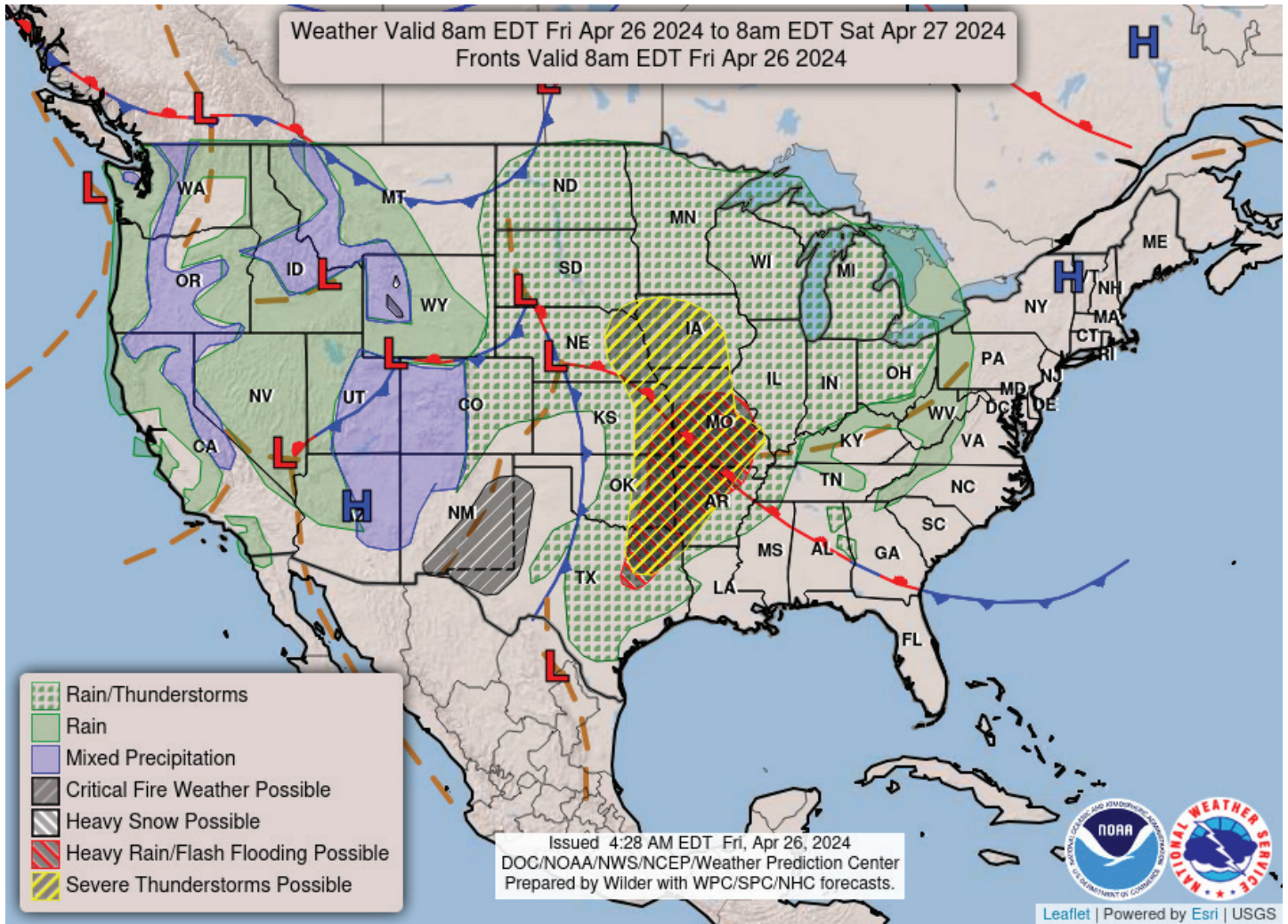
Yesterday's Groton Weather

High Temp: 73 °F at 1:49 PM
Low Temp: 51 °F at 5:04 AM
Wind: 40 mph at 2:28 PM
Precip: : 0.01

Day length: 14 hours, 06 minutes

Today's Info

Record High: 86 in 1952
Record Low: 20 in 1931
Average High: 63
Average Low: 35
Average Precip in April.: 1.54
Precip to date in April: 2.35
Average Precip to date: 3.60
Precip Year to Date: 3.30
Sunset Tonight: 8:33:30 pm
Sunrise Tomorrow: 6:25:21 am



Groton Daily Independent

Friday, April 26, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 305 ~ 27 of 89

Today in Weather History

April 26, 1986: Intense thunderstorms swept across southeast South Dakota, southwest Minnesota, and northwest Iowa. Baseball size hail fell in a 15-mile wide swath from near Pickstown to Scotland, South Dakota. The large hail caused extensive damage to windows, roofs, siding, and vehicles in the path of the storm. Wind gusts of 70 to 80 mph and rain amounts of 2 or more inches in a short period (including 5 inches at Centerville) were reported in southeast South Dakota. Several tornadoes moved across northwest Iowa including one that ran across part of Lyon County destroying several farmsteads. Another tornado moved through Lyon County, Iowa into Nobles County, Minnesota damaging, at least, 16 separate farms. Another tornado touched down briefly on the south side of Okebena in Jackson County destroying or damaging several houses.

April 26, 1991: During a severe thunderstorm event, large hail fell over parts of Brown, Spink, Hand, and Buffalo Counties. Both Brown and Hand Counties received hail up to 1.75 inches in diameter.

April 26, 2008: An area of low-pressure brought widespread heavy snow of 6 to 20 inches to most of northeast South Dakota for much of the 25th and into the early morning hours of the 26th. The precipitation began as light freezing rain in the early morning across parts of the area before changing to all snow by mid-morning. As the low-pressure area intensified, snowfall rates and the north winds also increased. The heavy snow combined with the high winds created widespread visibility problems along with large snowdrifts. Snowfall amounts included, 6 inches at Andover, Britton, Gann Valley, and 15 miles south of Miller, 8 inches at Roy Lake, 9 inches at Clark, Big Stone City, Hillside Colony, and Sisseton, 10 inches 7 miles south of Bristol, and 11 inches at Hayti. Locations with a foot or more of snowfall included 12 inches at Wilmot, Webster, and Waubay, 13 inches at Milbank, 15 inches at Castlewood, 16 inches near Victor, and near Summit, 17 inches at Clear Lake, 19 inches at Watertown, and 20 inches at Bryant.

Some automobiles went into the ditch along with many other vehicles damaged in accidents. Many stranded motorists had to abandon their cars in the hardest hit areas. Travel was not advised across the entire region. A school bus slid into a ditch east of Castlewood with no injuries occurring. Interstate-29 was closed from 3 pm the 25th until 3 pm on the 26th from Brookings north to the North Dakota border. Also, South Dakota State Highway 12 was closed from Webster to the Minnesota line from the afternoon of the 25th until the late morning of the 26th. Most counties affected by the storm opened emergency shelters when Interstate 29 was closed to house stranded motorists. Also, many schools were closed across the area.

The very heavy snow set several records across the area. The 19 inches at Watertown broke its all-time 24-hour snowfall record of 16 inches. Both Victor and Clear Lake had their second-highest snowfall ever recorded in a 24 hour period. Watertown, along with several other locations in northeast South Dakota, received near-record or record snowfall for April. In fact, Watertown's 29.5 inches of snow for April was almost their average seasonal snowfall.

1884: Tornadoes were hard to capture on old cameras with their hard to use glass plate negatives. The first recorded photograph of a tornado was taken on this date by A.A. Adams near Garnett, Kansas.

1978: An unusually strong occluded front swept out of the Gulf of Alaska and produced the first April thunderstorm of record at Fairbanks. Pea-size hail fell northeast of Fairbanks from thunderstorms whose tops were less than 8000 feet.

1986: The Chernobyl nuclear power station in Kiev Ukraine suffered a massive explosion. The radioactive cloud of particles and gas carried westward and northwestward, contaminating large areas of Europe in the following week.

Daily Devotionals

Seeds of Hope

THE PROMISE OF PATIENCE

When I was a child, I was fascinated by my father's garden. Each spring we would plant little seeds that would grow into large plants that produced all types of vegetables. One day I decided to plant my own garden.

Carefully I "turned" the soil and placed the same seeds that my father planted in straight rows separated with room enough for them to grow. Then I went into our house and watched my garden through the window of my bedroom. Every morning and evening I would visit the garden to look for some sign that would assure me that my garden was growing.

Finally, in desperation for some sign that my garden was "working" just like my dad's, I dug up the seeds to see what was going on. To my surprise I discovered that they were still seeds. I had faith and hope, but no patience.

Sometimes during the difficult periods of life, we sow seeds in the garden of prayer and water them with times of meditation, faith and hope. But we lose patience with God and do not give Him enough time to do His work. His Word reminds us, "When the way is rough, your patience has a chance to grow."

Prayer: Help us, Lord, to wait on You for lessons in patience that we all need to learn. Only then will we be strong enough to face the challenges of life. In Jesus' Name, Amen.

Scripture For Today: For when the way is rough, your patience has a chance to grow. So let it grow, and don't try to squirm out of your problems. For when your patience is finally in full bloom, then you will be ready for anything, strong in character, full and complete. 1 John 1:3-5



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

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, April 26, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 305 ~ 29 of 89

The Groton Independent Printed & Mailed Weekly Edition

Subscription Form

All prices listed include 6.5% Sales Tax

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

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

Name: _____

Mailing Address: _____

City _____

State, Zip Code _____

E-mail _____

Phone Number _____

Mail Completed Form to:

Groton Independent

P.O. Box 34

Groton, SD 57445-0034

or scan and email to paperpaul@grotonsd.net

Groton Daily Independent

www.397news.com

Subscription Form

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

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

Name: _____

Mailing Address: _____

City _____

State, Zip Code _____

Phone Number _____

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

E-mail _____

Password _____

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

paypal.me/paperpaul



Groton Daily Independent

Friday, April 26, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 305 ~ 30 of 89



WINNING NUMBERS

MEGA MILLIONS

WINNING NUMBERS:
04.23.24

11 17 33 39 43 14

MegaPlier: 4x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:
\$228,000,000

NEXT DRAW: 17 Hrs 37 Mins 48 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

LOTTO AMERICA

WINNING NUMBERS:
04.24.24

7 12 17 22 52 3

All Star Bonus: 2x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:
\$2,000,000

NEXT DRAW: 1 Days 16 Hrs 52 Mins 48 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

LUCKY FOR LIFE

WINNING NUMBERS:
04.25.24

3 9 21 31 41 8

TOP PRIZE:
\$7,000/week

NEXT DRAW: 17 Hrs 7 Mins 49 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

DAKOTA CASH

WINNING NUMBERS:
04.24.24

5 13 26 32 33

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:
\$70,000

NEXT DRAW: 1 Days 17 Hrs 7 Mins 49 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

POWERBALL

DOUBLE PLAY

WINNING NUMBERS:
04.24.24

23 25 45 46 62 25

TOP PRIZE:
\$10,000,000

NEXT DRAW: 1 Days 17 Hrs 36 Mins 48 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

POWERBALL

WINNING NUMBERS:
04.24.24

2 20 22 26 47 21

Power Play: 4x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:
\$149,000,000

NEXT DRAW: 1 Days 17 Hrs 36 Mins 48 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

News from the Associated Press

Recreational marijuana backers can gather signatures for North Dakota ballot initiative

By JACK DURA Associated Press

BISMARCK, N.D. (AP) — A North Dakota ballot initiative group can gather signatures to put a proposal legalizing recreational marijuana to a statewide vote in the fall, the state's top election official said Thursday, in the latest legalization effort in the conservative state.

The New Economic Frontier needs to submit 15,582 valid signatures to Secretary of State Michael Howe by July 8 to make the November general election ballot. Otherwise, the group has one year to gather enough signatures to make the next statewide election.

The 20-page statutory measure would legalize recreational marijuana for people 21 and older to use at their homes and, if permitted, on others' private property. The measure also outlines numerous production and processing regulations, prohibited uses — such as in public or in vehicles — and home cultivation of plants.

Leading the initiative is Steve Bakken, a Burleigh County commissioner and former Bismarck mayor who said he has never smoked marijuana and never will. He said law enforcement resources "should be directed someplace a little more effectual," such as combating fentanyl and other illicit drugs. He said the group also wants to head off the potential of a poorly crafted initiative.

"If we don't do something now, we're going to wind up getting something that is untenable to work with," Bakken said, adding that he expects the group can gather enough signatures by the July deadline.

Criminal defense attorney Mark Friese, a former Bismarck police officer, also is among the measure's backers. He said North Dakota is poised to become an island as neighboring states and Canada have legalized marijuana or have similar efforts. Law enforcement resources also are "a big part," Friese said.

"We spend too many resources, we spend too much money, we criminalize behavior that's more benign than alcohol consumption, and we have a mental health and true drug crisis going on in our communities, and we're diverting law enforcement resources away from methamphetamine and fentanyl to make marijuana arrests," Friese said. "It's just illogical."

The measure would set maximum purchase and possession amounts of 1 ounce of dried leaves or flowers, 4 grams of a cannabinoid concentrate, 1,500 mg of total THC in the form of a cannabis product and 300 mg of an edible product. The measure would allow cannabis solutions, capsules, transdermal patches, concentrates, topical and edible products.

Marijuana use by people under 21 is a low-level misdemeanor in the state. Recreational use by anyone older is not a crime. Possession penalties vary from an infraction to differing misdemeanors depending on the amount of marijuana. Delivery of any amount of marijuana is a felony, which can be elevated depending on certain factors, such as if the offense was within 300 feet (91 meters) of a school.

In 2023, 4,451 people statewide were charged with ingestion or possession of marijuana, according to North Dakota Courts data requested by The Associated Press.

North Dakota voters rejected previous legalization measures in 2018 and 2022. In 2021, the Republican-led state House of Representatives passed bills to legalize and tax recreational marijuana, which the GOP-majority Senate defeated.

Republican Sen. Janne Myrdal said she is "firmly against" legalizing recreational marijuana, saying, "I just don't believe in illicit drugs being legalized."

"It's kind of like, what else are we going to start legalizing?" Myrdal said. "Other nations have gone and legalized all kinds of wrongdoings and things that are negative for young people, negative for the human body at large, and I just think we're going in the wrong direction of saying, 'Oh, well, people are going to do it anyway, so let's just legalize it.' That's a faulty argument to me."

North Dakota voters approved of medical marijuana in 2016. The state-administered program has nearly

10,000 active patient cards.

In 2019, the state's Pardon Advisory Board approved a new process to ease pardons for low-level marijuana offenses, through which Republican Gov. Doug Burgum has granted 100 pardons, according to his office.

Twenty-four states have legalized marijuana for adults, most recently in Ohio by initiative in November, according to the National Organization for the Reform of Marijuana Laws.

Other legalization efforts are underway in other states. Florida voters will decide a ballot initiative in November. Signature-gathering efforts for similar measures are active in states such as Arkansas, Nebraska and South Dakota, according to NORML.

Antony Blinken meets with China's President Xi as US, China spar over bilateral and global issues

By MATTHEW LEE AP Diplomatic Writer

BEIJING (AP) — U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken met Friday with Chinese President Xi Jinping and senior Chinese officials, warning of the dangers of misunderstandings and miscalculations as the United States and China butted heads over a number of contentious bilateral, regional and global issues.

Blinken met with Xi in Beijing after holding talks with Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi and Public Security Minister Wang Xiaohong.

Talks between the two sides have increased in recent months, even as differences have grown.

"We are committed to maintaining and strengthening lines of communication between us," so that the two sides can prevent any "any miscommunications, any misperceptions and any miscalculations," Blinken said.

Earlier, Blinken and Wang also underscored the importance of keeping lines of communication open as they lamented persistent and deepening divisions that threaten global security. Those divisions were highlighted earlier this week when U.S. President Joe Biden signed a massive foreign aid bill that contains several elements that the Chinese see as problematic.

Their comments hinted at a long list of differences to be discussed, including Taiwan and the South China Sea, and trade and human rights, China's support for Russia and the production and export of synthetic opioid precursors.

"Overall, the China-U.S. relationship is beginning to stabilize," Wang told Blinken at the start of about 5 1/2 hours of talks. "But at the same time, the negative factors in the relationship are still increasing and building and the relationship is facing all kinds of disruptions."

"Should China and the United States keep to the right direction of moving forward with stability or return to a downward spiral?" he asked. "This is a major question before our two countries and tests our sincerity and ability."

Wang also outlined, without being specific, well-known Chinese complaints about U.S. policies and positions on the South China Sea, Taiwan, human rights and China's right to conduct relations with countries it deems fit.

"China's legitimate development rights have been unreasonably suppressed and our core interests are facing challenges," he said. "China's concerns are consistent. We have always called for respect of each other's core interests and urge the United States not to interfere in China's internal affairs, not to hold China's development back, and not to step on China's red lines on China's sovereignty, security, and development interests."

Blinken responded by saying that the Biden administration places a premium on U.S.-China dialogue even on issues of dispute. He noted there had been some progress in the past year but suggested that talks would continue to be difficult.

"I look forward to these discussions being very clear, very direct about the areas where we have differences and where the United States stands, and I have no doubt you will do the same on behalf of China," Blinken told Wang.

"There is no substitute in our judgement for face-to-face diplomacy in order to try to move forward, but also to make sure we're as clear as possible about the areas where we have differences at the very least

to avoid misunderstandings, to avoid miscalculations," he said.

The State Department said later that Blinken and Wang had "in-depth, substantive, and constructive discussions about areas of difference as well as areas of cooperation" and made clear that Blinken had stood his ground on U.S. concerns.

Blinken "emphasized that the U.S. will continue to stand up for our interests and values and those of our allies and partners, including on human rights and economic issues," State Department spokesperson Matthew Miller said in a statement.

Blinken arrived in China on Wednesday, visiting Shanghai shortly before Biden signed the \$95 billion foreign aid package that has several elements likely to anger Beijing, including \$8 billion to counter China's growing aggressiveness toward Taiwan and in the South China Sea. It also seeks to force TikTok's China-based parent company to sell the social media platform.

China and the United States are the major players in the Indo-Pacific. Washington has become increasingly alarmed by Beijing's growing aggressiveness in recent years toward Taiwan and its smaller Southeast Asian neighbors with which it has significant territorial and maritime disputes in the South China Sea.

China has railed against U.S. assistance to Taiwan and immediately condemned the aid as a dangerous provocation. It also strongly opposes efforts to force TikTok's sale.

The bill also allots \$61 billion for Ukraine to defend itself from Russia's invasion. The Biden administration has complained loudly that Chinese support for Russia's military-industrial sector has allowed Moscow to subvert western sanctions and ramp up attacks on Ukraine.

U.S. officials have said China's ties with Russia would be a primary topic of conversation during Blinken's visit, and just before Friday's meetings began, Russian President Vladimir Putin announced he would visit China in May.

Premature baby girl rescued from her dead mother's womb dies in Gaza after 5 days in an incubator

By MOHAMMAD JAHJOUH and BASSEM MROUE Associated Press

RAFAH, Gaza Strip (AP) — A premature Palestinian infant, rescued from her mother's womb shortly after the woman was killed in an Israeli airstrike, has died, her uncle said Friday.

Sabreen Jouda died in a Gaza hospital on Thursday after her health deteriorated and medical teams were unable to save her, said her uncle, Rami al-Sheikh.

Sabreen's home in the southern Gaza city of Rafah was hit by an Israeli airstrike shortly before midnight Saturday. Her parents and 4-year-old sister were killed.

First responders took the bodies to a nearby hospital, where medical workers performed an emergency cesarean section on her mother, Sabreen al-Sakani, who was 30 weeks' pregnant. The infant was kept in an incubator in a neonatal intensive care unit at another hospital until she died five days later.

Al-Sheikh told The Associated Press that Sabreen was buried next to her father on Thursday.

More than 34,000 Palestinians have been killed during the Israel-Hamas war, according to local health officials, who say about two-thirds of the dead are women and children. The health officials don't differentiate among combatants and civilians in their count.

Israel declared war on Hamas and unleashed a pulverizing air and ground offensive in Gaza in response to the militants' Oct. 7 attack on southern Israel. The militants killed about 1,200 people in Israel and took another 250 hostage.

More than half of Gaza's 2.3 million people have sought refuge in Rafah, where Israel has conducted near-daily raids as it prepares for a possible offensive in the city.

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, April 26, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 305 ~ 34 of 89

The Latest | Officials say Egypt sending cease-fire delegation to Israel

By The Associated Press undefined

Egypt is sending a high-level delegation to Israel in the hope of reaching a cease-fire agreement with Hamas in Gaza, while warning a possible new Israeli offensive focused on the southern city of Rafah on the border with Egypt could have catastrophic consequences for regional stability, two officials said Friday.

While in Israel, Kamel plans to make clear that Egypt "will not tolerate" Israel's deployments of troops along Gaza's borders with Egypt, an Egyptian official said, speaking on condition of anonymity to freely discuss the mission.

Earlier Friday, Lebanon's militant Hezbollah group fired anti-tank missiles and artillery shells at an Israeli military convoy in a disputed area along the border, killing an Israeli civilian, the group and Israel's military.

Hezbollah said that its fighters ambushed the convoy shortly before midnight Thursday, destroying two vehicles. The Israeli military said the ambush wounded an Israeli civilian doing infrastructure work, and that he later died of his wounds.

Low-intensity fighting along the Israel-Lebanon border has repeatedly threatened to boil over as Israel has targeted senior Hezbollah militants in recent months.

Tens of thousands of people have been displaced on both sides of the border. On the Israeli side, the cross-border fighting has killed 10 civilians and 12 soldiers, while in Lebanon, more than 350 people have been killed, including 50 civilians and 271 Hezbollah members.

On Thursday, Palestinian hospital officials said Israeli airstrikes on the southern city of Rafah in the Gaza Strip killed at least five people.

More than half of the territory's population of 2.3 million have sought refuge in Rafah, where Israel has conducted near-daily raids as it prepares for an offensive in the city. The Israeli military has massed dozens of tanks and armored vehicles in the area in what appears to be preparations for an invasion of Rafah.

In central Gaza, four people were killed in Israeli tank shelling.

A ship traveling in the Gulf of Aden came under attack Thursday, officials said, the latest assault likely carried out by Yemen's Houthi rebels over the Israel-Hamas war.

Meanwhile, a top Hamas political official told The Associated Press that the Islamic militant group is willing to agree to a truce of five years or more with Israel.

The Israel-Hamas war was sparked by the unprecedented Oct. 7 raid into southern Israel in which militants killed around 1,200 people, mostly civilians, and abducted around 250 hostages. Israel says the militants are still holding around 100 hostages and the remains of more than 30 others.

The war has killed more than 34,000 Palestinians, according to local health officials, around two-thirds of them children and women.

Currently:

- Ship comes under attack off coast of Yemen as Houthi rebel campaign appears to gain new speed
- Satellite photos show new port construction in Gaza Strip for U.S.-led aid operation
- USC cancels graduation ceremony and dozens are arrested on other campuses as anti-war protests grow

— Chef José Andrés says aid workers killed by Israeli airstrikes represented the 'best of humanity'

— U.N. report says 282 million people faced acute hunger in 2023, with the worst famine in Gaza

— EU military officer says a frigate has destroyed a drone launched from Yemen's Houthi-held areas

Here is the latest:

EGYPT SENDS CEASE-FIRE DELEGATION TO ISRAEL

CAIRO — Egypt is sending a high-level delegation to Israel in the hope of reaching a cease-fire agreement with Hamas in Gaza, while warning a possible new Israeli offensive focused on the southern city of Rafah on the border with Egypt could have catastrophic consequences for regional stability, two officials said Friday.

Egypt's top intelligence official, Abbas Kamel, is leading the delegation and plans to discuss a "new vision" on establishing a prolonged cease-fire in Gaza with Israeli officials, an Egyptian official said, speaking on

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, April 26, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 305 ~ 35 of 89

condition of anonymity to freely discuss the mission.

Kamel, who heads Egypt's General Intelligence Service, and the rest of the delegation is expected to arrive in Israel on Friday morning.

Talks will focus at first on a limited exchange of hostages held by Hamas for Palestinian prisoners, along the return of a significant number of displaced Palestinians to their homes in northern Gaza "with minimum restrictions," the official said.

The hope is that negotiations will then continue, with the goal of a larger deal to end the war, he said.

Hamas has said it will not back down from its demands for a permanent cease-fire and full withdrawal of Israeli troops, both of which Israel has refused. Israel says it will continue military operations until Hamas is definitively defeated and will retain a security presence in Gaza afterwards.

Israel has also been conducting near-daily raids on Rafah, a city in which more than half of Gaza's population of 2.3 million have sought refuge. The Israeli military has massed dozens of tanks and armored vehicles in the area in what appears to be preparations for an invasion of the city, which lies on the Egyptian border.

While in Israel, Kamel plans to make clear that Egypt "will not tolerate" Israel's deployments of troops along Gaza's borders with Egypt, the Egyptian official said.

A Western diplomat in Cairo also said that Egypt has intensified its efforts in recent days to reach a compromise and establish a short cease-fire in Gaza that will help negotiate a longer truce and avert the Rafah offensive.

The diplomat spoke on condition of anonymity to freely discuss the developments.

— Samy Magdy in Cairo contributed.

HEZBOLLAH AMBUSHES ISRAELI CONVOY, KILLING CIVILIAN

BEIRUT — Lebanon's militant Hezbollah group fired anti-tank missiles and artillery shells at an Israeli military convoy in a disputed area along the border, killing an Israeli civilian, the group and Israel's military said Friday.

Hezbollah said that its fighters ambushed the convoy shortly before midnight Thursday, destroying two vehicles.

The Israeli military said the ambush wounded an Israeli civilian doing infrastructure work, and that he later died of his wounds.

The incident took place in a disputed area known in Lebanon as the Kfar Chouba hills and in Israel as Har Dov. The area was captured by Israel from Syria during the 1967 Mideast war and is part of Syria's Golan Heights that Israel annexed in 1981. The Lebanese government says the area belongs to Lebanon.

Hezbollah and Israel have traded fire on a near-daily basis along the border since the start of the war in Gaza nearly seven months ago. Hezbollah says it is acting in solidarity with the Hamas, a Palestinian militant group, which triggered the war with its deadly Oct. 7 attack into southern Israel.

The low-intensity fighting has repeatedly threatened to boil over as Israel has targeted senior Hezbollah militants in recent months.

Tens of thousands of people have been displaced on both sides of the border.

On the Israeli side, the cross-border fighting has killed 10 civilians and 12 soldiers. In Lebanon, more than 350 people have been killed, including 50 civilians and 271 Hezbollah members.

India begins second phase of national elections with Modi's BJP as front-runner

By ASHOK SHARMA Associated Press

NEW DELHI (AP) — Millions of Indians began voting Friday in the second round of multi-phase national elections as Prime Minister Narendra Modi sought to galvanize voters with his assertive brand of Hindu nationalist politics.

People lined up outside polling stations as voting opened at 7 a.m. Turnout was expected to pick up as the day progresses.

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, April 26, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 305 ~ 36 of 89

The outcome of Friday's voting will be crucial for Modi's Hindu nationalist Bharatiya Janata Party, as the 88 constituencies up for grabs across 13 states include some of its strongholds in states like Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh and Maharashtra.

Most polls predict a win for Modi and the BJP, which is up against a broad opposition alliance led by the Indian National Congress and powerful regional parties.

Congress party leader Rahul Gandhi is running in Wayanad constituency in southern Kerala state for a second time, after he was defeated in 2019 elections by Smriti Irani, a BJP leader, in the northern Indian city of Amethi — a traditional stronghold for the Nehru-Gandhi family.

Other prominent candidates in the second phase of voting include Shashi Tharoor of the Congress party, popular BJP Bollywood star Hema Malini and actor Arun Govil, who played the role of Hinduism's revered Lord Ram in a 1987 television adaptation of the ancient epic Ramayana.

Prime Minister Modi urged people to vote in record numbers to strengthen democracy.

"I especially urge our young voters and women voters to turn out in great numbers. Your vote is your voice!" Modi said in a message on the social media platform X.

The BJP has already won one parliamentary seat from Surat in Gujarat state, where the Congress party candidate was disqualified Monday. Election officials said they found discrepancies in the signatures on the nomination and other candidates pulled out of the contest, leaving BJP nominee Mukesh Dalal as the winner by default.

Nearly 970 million voters — more than 10% of the world's population — will elect 543 members to the lower house of Parliament for five years during the staggered election, which runs until June 1. The votes will be counted on June 4. There are a total of 28 states in India.

The turnout of the first phase of polling on April 19 was estimated around 62% of 166.3 million eligible voters. About 160 million are eligible to vote in the second phase.

By comparison, India's 2019 national election registered the highest-ever voter turnout — 67.11% — in the history of Indian parliamentary elections. The turnout is expected to increase for five more rounds of voting.

Voters' relative apathy has surprised some political analysts, but they say that the BJP remains a front-runner.

"You could argue that the listlessness is a consequence of a foregone conclusion," said Pratap Bhanu Mehta, an Indian political scientist.

"But for Modi's party which is expecting to win 400 of the 543 seats the joyous surge is missing," he said in an article in the Indian Express daily.

Critics of the prime minister, an avowed Hindu nationalist, say India's tradition of diversity and secularism has come under attack since the BJP won power a decade ago. They accuse the party of fostering religious intolerance and sometimes even violence. The party denies the accusation and says its policies benefit all Indians.

Modi stirred a huge controversy over the weekend when he said that the Congress party, if voted to power, would distribute the country's wealth among "infiltrators" and "those who have more children," in an apparent reference to the Muslim community.

Hindus make up 80% of India's 1.4 billion people, while Muslims account for 14% and Christians and Sikhs 2% each.

The Congress party leaders met with election officials and urged them to investigate whether Modi's comments violated the body's code of conduct that bars politicians from appealing to voters based on caste and religious feelings.

The BJP also filed a complaint against Congress's Gandhi, accusing the opposition leader of falsely asserting that poverty was increasing and driving a wedge between the North and South of India based on language and region in order to disrupt the electoral environment.

The election authority recognized the complaints on Thursday and asked the presidents of the two parties to file their responses by Monday. The authority is expected to give its ruling next week.

South Africa will mark 30 years of freedom amid inequality, poverty and a tense election ahead

By MOGOMOTSI MAGOME Associated Press

JOHANNESBURG (AP) — As 72-year-old Nonki Kunene walks through the corridors of Thabisang Primary School in Soweto, South Africa, she recalls the joy she and many others felt 30 years ago when they voted for the first time.

It was at this school on April 27, 1994, that Kunene joined millions of South Africans to brave long queues and take part in the country's first democratic elections after decades of white minority rule which denied Black people the right to vote.

The country is gearing up for celebrations Saturday to mark 30 years of freedom and democracy. But much of the enthusiasm and optimism of that period has subsided as Africa's most developed economy faces a myriad of challenges.

Like many things in South Africa, the school that Kunene remembers has changed, and what used to be a school hall has now been turned into several classrooms.

"I somehow wish we could go back to that day, because of how excited I was and the things that happened thereafter," said Kunene, referring to Nelson Mandela becoming the country's first Black president and the introduction of a new constitution that afforded all South Africans equal rights, abolishing the racially discriminative system of apartheid.

For many who experienced apartheid, those years remain etched in their collective memory.

"I cannot forget how we suffered at the hands of whites. In the city at night, there were white bikers with hair like this (describing a mohawk-like hairstyle) who would brutally assault a Black person if they saw them walking on a pavement. Those white boys were cruel," said 87-year-old Lily Makhanya, whose late husband died while working in the anti-apartheid movement's underground structures.

"If they saw you walking on the pavement, you would be assaulted so badly and left for dead."

For Makhanya and many others who stood in those queues to vote in 1994, it represented a turning point from a brutal past to the promise of a prosperous future.

But 30 years later, much of that optimism has evaporated amid the country's pressing challenges. They include widening inequality as the country's Black majority continues to live in poverty with an unemployment rate of more than 32%, the highest in the world.

According to official statistics, more than 16 million South Africans rely on monthly welfare grants for survival.

Public demonstrations have become common as communities protest against the ruling African National Congress' failure to deliver job opportunities and basic services like water and electricity.

An electricity crisis that has resulted in power blackouts that are devastating the country's economy added to the party's woes as businesses and homes are sometimes forced to go without electricity for up to 12 hours a day.

Areas like the affluent Johannesburg suburb of Sandton, which hosts beautiful skyscrapers and luxurious homes, are an example of the economic success enjoyed by a minority of the country's 60 million people.

But the township of Alexandra, which lies a few kilometers (miles) from Sandton, is a stark reflection of the living conditions of the country's poor Black majority, where sewage from burst pipes flows on the streets and uncollected rubbish piles up on pavements.

Such contradictions are common across the major cities, including the capital Pretoria and the city of Cape Town, and they remain at the center of what is expected to be one of the country's most fiercely contested elections in May.

For the first time since the ANC came to power in 1994, polls are indicating that the party might receive less than 50% of the national vote, which would see it lose power unless it manages to form a coalition with some smaller parties.

For some younger voters like 24-year-old Donald Mkhwanazi, the nostalgia does not resonate.

Mkhwanazi will be voting for the first time in the May 29 election and is now actively involved in cam-

paing for a new political party, Rise Mzansi, which will be contesting a national election for the first time. "I had an opportunity to vote in 2019, and in local elections in 2021, but I did not because I was not persuaded enough by any of these old parties about why I should vote," he said.

"I didn't see the need to vote because of what has been happening over the past 30 years. We talk about freedom, but are we free from crime, are we free from poverty? What freedom is this that we are talking about?"

Political analyst Pearl Mncube said South Africans are justified in feeling failed by their leaders.

"More and more South Africans have grown skeptical of pronouncements from government due to its history of continuously announcing grand plans without prioritizing the swift execution of said plans," Mncube said.

She said while Freedom Day is meant to signify the country's transition from an oppressive past, it was important to highlight current problems and plans to overcome them.

"We cannot use the past, and any nostalgia attached to it, to avoid accounting for the present," she said.

As some universities negotiate with pro-Palestinian protesters, others quickly call the police

By STEVE LeBLANC and NICK PERRY Associated Press

The students at an encampment at Columbia University who inspired a wave of pro-Palestinian demonstrations across the country dug in for their 10th day Friday, as administrators and police at college campuses from California to Connecticut wrestle with how to address protests that have seen scuffles with police and hundreds of arrests.

Officials at Columbia and some other schools have been negotiating with student protesters who have rebuffed police and doubled down. Other schools have quickly turned to law enforcement to douse demonstrations before they can take hold.

After a tent encampment popped up Thursday at Indiana University Bloomington, police with shields and batons shoved into protesters and arrested 33. Hours later at the University of Connecticut, police tore down tents and arrested one person. And at Ohio State University, police clashed with protesters just hours after they gathered Thursday evening. Those who refused to leave after warnings were arrested and charged with criminal trespass, said university spokesperson Benjamin Johnson, citing rules barring overnight events.

The clock is ticking as May commencement ceremonies near, putting added pressure on schools to clear demonstrations. At Columbia, protesters defiantly erected a tent encampment where many are set to graduate in front of families in just a few weeks.

Columbia officials said that negotiations were showing progress as they neared the school's deadline of early Friday to reach an agreement on dismantling the encampment. Nevertheless, two police buses were parked nearby and there was a noticeable presence of private security and police at entrances to the campus.

"We have our demands; they have theirs," said Ben Chang, a spokesperson for Columbia University, adding that if the talks fail the university will have to consider other options.

Just past midnight, a group of some three dozen pro-Palestinian protesters handed out signs and started chanting outside of the locked Columbia University gates. They then marched away as at least 40 police officers assembled nearby.

California State Polytechnic University, Humboldt, has been negotiating with students who have been barricaded inside a campus building since Monday, rebuffing an attempt by the police to clear them out. Faculty members met with protesters Thursday to try to negotiate a solution as the campus remains shut down at least through the weekend.

The protesters setting up encampments at universities across the country are demanding schools cut financial ties to Israel and divest from companies they say are enabling the conflict. Some Jewish students say the protests have veered into antisemitism and made them afraid to set foot on campus, which has

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, April 26, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 305 ~ 39 of 89

partly prompted the calls for police intervention.

A dean at Cal Poly Humboldt, Jeff Crane, suggested during the meeting with protesters that the university form a committee that would include students to do a deep dive into the school's investments. Crane also suggested faculty and students continue meeting every 24 hours to keep an open line of communication. The sides have yet to announce an agreement.

The school's senate of faculty and staff demanded the university's president resign in a vote of no confidence Thursday, citing the decision to call police in to remove the barricaded students Monday.

On the other end of the state, the University of Southern California announced the cancellation of the school's May 10 graduation ceremony. The announcement was made a day after more than 90 protesters were arrested on campus. The university said it will still host dozens of commencement events, including all the traditional individual school commencement ceremonies.

Tensions were already high after USC canceled a planned commencement speech by the school's pro-Palestinian valedictorian, citing safety concerns.

At the City College of New York on Thursday, hundreds of students who were gathered on the lawn beneath the Harlem campus' famed gothic buildings erupted in cheers after a small contingent of police officers retreated from the scene. In one corner of the quad, a "security training" was held among students.

The Los Angeles Police Department said 93 people were arrested Wednesday night during a campus protest for allegedly trespassing. One person was arrested on allegations of assault with a deadly weapon.

At Emerson College in Boston, 108 people were arrested at an alleyway encampment by early Thursday. Video shows police first warning students in an alleyway to leave. Students link arms to resist officers, who move forcefully through the crowd and throw some protesters to the ground.

"As the night progressed, it got tenser and tenser. There were just more cops on all sides. It felt like we were being slowly pushed in and crushed," said Ocean Muir, a sophomore.

Muir said police lifted her by her arms and legs and carried her away. Along with other students, Muir was charged Thursday with trespassing and disorderly conduct.

Emerson College leaders had warned students that the alley was a public right-of-way and city authorities had threatened to take action if the protesters didn't leave. Emerson canceled classes Thursday, and Boston police said four officers suffered injuries that were not life-threatening during the confrontation.

The University of Texas at Austin campus was much calmer Thursday after 57 people were jailed and charged with criminal trespass a day earlier. University officials pulled back barricades and allowed demonstrators onto the main square beneath the school's iconic clock tower.

Thursday's gathering of students and some faculty protested both the war and Wednesday's arrests, when state troopers in riot gear and on horseback bulldozed into protesters, forcing hundreds of students off the school's main lawn.

At Emory University in Atlanta, local and state police swept in to dismantle a camp. Some officers carried semiautomatic weapons, and video shows officers using a stun gun on one protester they had pinned to the ground. The university said late Thursday in a statement that objects were thrown at officers and they deployed "chemical irritants" as a crowd control measure.

Jail records showed 22 people arrested by Emory police were charged with disorderly conduct. Emory said it had been notified that 28 people were arrested, including 20 members of the university community, and some had been released as of nighttime.

Since the Israel-Hamas war began, the U.S. Education Department has launched civil rights investigations into dozens of universities and schools in response to complaints of antisemitism or Islamophobia. Among those under investigation are many colleges facing protests, including Harvard and Columbia.

Paramedic sentencing in Elijah McClain's death caps trials that led to 3 convictions

By COLLEEN SLEVIN and MATTHEW BROWN Associated Press

DENVER (AP) — Almost five years after Elijah McClain died following a police stop in which he was put in a neck hold and injected with the powerful sedative ketamine, three of the five Denver-area responders prosecuted in the Black man's death have been convicted.

Experts say the convictions would have been unheard of before 2020, when George Floyd's murder sparked a nationwide reckoning over racist policing and deaths in police custody.

But McClain's mother, Sheneen McClain, said justice has not yet been served. Previously, she has said the two acquitted Aurora police officers, as well as other firefighters and police on the scene, were complicit in her 23-year-old son's murder and that they escaped justice.

"I'm waiting on heaven to hand down everybody's judgment. Because I know heaven ain't gonna miss the mark," she told The Associated Press.

She plans to speak on Friday at a sentencing hearing in a Denver suburb, at which Jeremy Cooper, a former Aurora Fire Rescue paramedic, faces up to three years in prison. He was convicted of criminally negligent homicide in December.

Cooper's sentencing hearing caps a series of trials that stretched over seven months and resulted in the convictions of a police officer and two paramedics. The paramedics' conviction sent shock waves through the ranks of EMTs across the nation because of the rarity of criminal charges brought against medical professionals in their role, according to experts.

McClain's name became a rallying cry in protests over racial injustice in policing that swept the U.S. in 2020.

"Without the reckoning over criminal justice and how people of color suffer at much higher rates from police use of force and violence, it's very unlikely that anything would have come of this, that there would have been any charges, let alone convictions," said David Harris, a University of Pittsburgh law professor and expert on racial profiling.

Harris added that the acquittals of the two officers following weeklong trials were unsurprising, since juries are often reluctant to second guess the actions of police and other first responders.

"It's still very hard to convict," he said.

The same judge who will preside over the hearing Friday sentenced ex-paramedic Peter Cichuniec in March to five years in prison for criminally negligent homicide and second-degree assault, the most serious of the charges faced by any of the responders. It was the shortest sentence allowed under the law.

Previously, Judge Mark Warner sentenced officer Randy Roedema to 14 months in jail for criminally negligent homicide and misdemeanor assault.

Prosecutors initially declined to pursue charges related to McClain's death when an autopsy did not determine how he died. But Democratic Gov. Jared Polis ordered the investigation reopened following the 2020 protests against police brutality.

The second autopsy said McClain died because he was injected with ketamine after being forcibly restrained.

To Sheneen McClain, it doesn't make sense that officer Nathan Woodyard, who stopped her son and put him in a neck hold, was acquitted, while officer Roedema received a lighter sentence than the paramedic Cichuniec. She thinks the paramedics' role was to cover up what the police had done to her son.

She plans to address the court at Friday's sentencing hearing.

"I raised him by myself and I will continue to stand there for my son, regardless of whether anybody listens to me or not," she said.

Since the killings of Floyd, McClain and others put a spotlight on police custody deaths, many departments, paramedic units and those that train them have reexamined how they treat suspects. It could take years though to collect enough evidence to show if those efforts are working, said Candace McCoy, a professor at John Jay College of Criminal Justice in New York.

Cooper injected McClain with ketamine after police stopped him as he was walking home. Officers later referenced a suspicious person report. McClain was not armed, nor accused of breaking any laws.

Medical experts said by the time he received the sedative, McClain already was in a weakened state from forcible restraint that rendered him temporarily unconscious.

He went into cardiac arrest on the way to the hospital and died three days later.

Cooper's attorneys did not immediately respond to telephone messages and emails seeking comment on the sentencing.

Since McClain's death, the Colorado health department has told paramedics not to give ketamine to people suspected of having excited delirium, which had been described in a since-withdrawn emergency physicians' report as manifesting symptoms including increased strength. A doctors group has called it an unscientific definition rooted in racism.

The protests over McClain and Floyd also ushered in a wave of state legislation to curb the use of neck holds known as carotid restraints, which cut off circulation, and chokeholds, which cut off breathing. At least 27 states including Colorado have passed some limit on the practices. Only two had bans in place before Floyd was killed.

To MiDian Holmes, a racial justice advocate who attended the trials against the first responders, change isn't coming fast enough.

"It's the message that the life of Elijah mattered but it didn't matter enough," Holmes said.

A look at past and future cases Harvey Weinstein has faced as his New York conviction is thrown out

By ANDREW DALTON AP Entertainment Writer

LOS ANGELES (AP) — Harvey Weinstein's landmark New York sexual assault conviction was thrown out by an appeals court Thursday, and most of the dozens of civil cases filed against him since he became a central target in the #MeToo movement in 2017 have either been settled or dismissed.

That doesn't mean the 72-year-old disgraced movie mogul and his lawyers don't have plenty of court time ahead. Prosecutors in Manhattan say they plan to retry him, and several other cases remain unresolved.

Here's a look at those, and at some that have come and gone:

THE LONE LOS ANGELES CONVICTION

Weinstein was found guilty in 2022 in Los Angeles of the rape and sexual assault of Italian actor and model Evgeniya Chernyshova, and his 16-year sentence in that case will keep him in prison despite the reversal of the New York verdict.

Of the four women he was charged with assaulting in California, this was the only case that led to a conviction. Weinstein insisted at his sentencing that he never met her.

An appeal looms there too, and Weinstein's attorneys will make the same arguments as in the New York case about witnesses testifying to assaults he was not charged with.

Los Angeles prosecutors said Thursday that the judge at their trial acted well within state law in the testimony she allowed. Weinstein's lawyers must make their case in a filing by May 20.

Weinstein could be brought to California to serve the sentence in that case, or he could remain behind bars in New York while awaiting retrial.

WOMAN AT THE CENTER OF CALIFORNIA CONVICTION SUES

Chernyshova also is the plaintiff in one of the last remaining civil lawsuits against Weinstein. Just weeks after the guilty verdict, she sued over emotional distress from her 2013 rape at a Beverly Hills hotel.

Weinstein's attorneys argued at his sentencing in the criminal case that the lawsuit constituted proof that she lied on the stand when she said she sought no financial gain from coming forward with her allegations.

The civil case remains in its early stages. At a hearing Thursday, just a few hours after the New York decision was revealed, a judge tentatively granted Chernyshova's request that it be put on hold while the California criminal appeal plays out.

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, April 26, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 305 ~ 42 of 89

JULIA ORMOND BRINGS A BELATED LAWSUIT

Like other actors including Ashley Judd and Mira Sorvino, Julia Ormond, briefly a major star in the 1990s, has alleged in a lawsuit that Weinstein railroaded her career.

Ormond, who appeared opposite Brad Pitt in "Legends of the Fall" and Harrison Ford in "Sabrina," filed her suit in New York last October. In it she accused Weinstein of committing sexual battery against her in 1995 and then working to tarnish her reputation in Hollywood.

The newest of the known lawsuits against Weinstein, it came years after most of the others. Ormond took advantage of New York's Adult Survivors Act, which allowed a temporary window for people who allege sexual assault to file past the state's normal deadlines.

Weinstein's lawyers denied her allegations.

JUDD'S SUIT LIES DORMANT

Judd, who became a hugely important figure in the takedown of Weinstein and larger #MeToo movement when she went on the record in the original New York Times story about his sexual misconduct, sued him in 2018. Like Ormond she alleged Weinstein did major damage to her career by smearing her to other filmmakers in retaliation for rejecting his sexual advances.

Her lawsuit, which came after director Peter Jackson said Weinstein told him 20 years earlier that Judd was a "nightmare" to work with when Jackson was considering her for a major role in the "Lord of the Rings" trilogy, accused Weinstein of defamation, sexual harassment and violating California's unfair competition labor law.

A federal judge in 2019 threw out the sexual harassment claim, saying Weinstein and Judd, as a producer and actor discussing prospective projects, didn't have the kind of employment relationship that the law covers. California lawmakers later expanded the statute to explicitly cover producers and directors.

Judd's lawsuit is now on long-term hold. A judge administratively closed it last year, but it can be reopened at any time if her legal team makes a motion.

MCGOWAN'S SUIT IS AMONG THE DISMISSED

Some suits were thrown out, including one from actor Rose McGowan, one of Weinstein's earliest and most prominent accusers. She alleged he engaged in racketeering when he worked to silence her and harm her career before she publicly accused him of rape, which he has denied.

McGowan served as her own attorney in the case after firing her lawyers. In 2021, a federal judge dismissed the suit with prejudice, meaning it cannot be refiled.

THE BIG SETTLEMENT

The vast majority of lawsuits against Weinstein, by women from office assistants to successful actors, were brought to a close through a settlement in 2021 as part of the bankruptcy of his former film company, The Weinstein Co.

The agreement included a victims' fund of about \$17 million for some 40 women who sued him. The amount was approved by a majority, but lawyers for some of them, including actor Dominique Huett, objected to it, calling the individual shares "pathetically meager" for the damage Weinstein did.

Also part of the settlement was former actor and screenwriter Louissette Geiss, the lead plaintiff in a Manhattan class action suit. She sued Weinstein in 2017, accusing him of attempting to force her to watch him masturbate in a hotel bathroom in 2008.

"In the end, you see that the judicial system is still not in the right place to take him down. It's really society that takes him down," she told The Associated Press the year after the settlement.

The AP does not typically name people who say they have been sexually abused unless they come forward publicly, as all of the women named here have done.

'The movement will persist': Advocates stress Weinstein reversal doesn't derail #MeToo reckoning

By JOCELYN NOVECK AP National Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — #MeToo founder Tarana Burke has heard it before. Every time there's a legal setback, the movement is declared dead in the water. A legal success, and presto, it's alive again.

So Burke, who nearly two decades ago coined the phrase "Me too" from her work with sexual assault survivors, found herself again declaring after New York's highest court on Thursday overturned Harvey Weinstein's 2020 rape conviction: The #MeToo reckoning is greater than any court case. It's still there, and it's working.

The most obvious proof, Burke said: "Ten years ago we could not get a man like Harvey Weinstein into the courtroom."

The movement, she said, was responsible for that huge cultural shift — regardless of the Hollywood mogul's ultimate legal fate.

Also seeking to take the long view, following a legal setback that stunned many survivors and advocates, was Anita Hill. She testified against Clarence Thomas during his 1991 Supreme Court confirmation hearing, becoming the face of the fight against sexual harassment more than a quarter-century before the Weinstein revelations launched the #MeToo movement.

Alongside her academic career, Hill now heads the Hollywood Commission, which seeks to fight harassment in the entertainment industry. She sought on Thursday to reassure survivors that progress is real.

"I want those who are saddened by the New York Court of Appeal's decision to know that no single legal ruling can ever match the tremendous progress we have made together in the movement against sexual violence," Hill told The Associated Press in an email.

"The movement will persist," she added, "driven by the truth of our testimonies. And changes to our systems and culture will follow."

It was, of course, a rough morning for sexual assault survivors across the country, as Burke acknowledged at a hastily arranged Manhattan news conference following the court ruling with activists including Ashley Judd, one of the earliest Weinstein accusers.

In what Judd called "an act of institutional betrayal," New York's highest court, in a 4-3 decision, ordered a new trial, saying the first one had prejudiced Weinstein, 72, with improper rulings, including letting some accusers testify about allegations that weren't part of the case. Weinstein will remain in prison, however, because he was convicted in Los Angeles in 2022 of another rape.

Among those who testified in New York was Dawn Dunning, a supporting witness, who told the court how during a business meeting Weinstein slid his hand up under her skirt and fondled her genitals.

Dunning told the AP through her attorney, prominent #MeToo lawyer Debra Katz, that she was "shocked" by Thursday's ruling and dealing with a range of emotions, including asking herself, "Was it all for naught?"

"It took two years of my life," Dunning said. "I had to live through it every day. I had to live through the terror of confronting Weinstein. But would I do it again? Yes."

She said that in confronting the producer, she had faced her worst fear and realized he had no power over her. And she was proud that her testimony helped other women earn some justice.

Katz said she had spoken to Dunning and other accusers — women who felt "gutted" — reminding them of the important role they'd played in the broader reckoning against sexual abuse and violence.

"They testified at great personal cost. ... It was life-altering for them," Katz said. "And to feel like this was maybe all for naught is a very, very, bad feeling."

Still, Katz felt certain Weinstein would be convicted in a new trial.

"Their testimony was invalidated by the court today due to legal technicalities," Katz said. But "no one doubted the truth of what they testified to, or the courage of their testimony. And so while this is a setback in this case, I do believe that their testimony changed the world."

The testimony fundamentally altered how people view and react to issues of sexual assault in the workplace, she said.

"And their courage has grown beyond this case — people continue to come forward, people continue to support other victims who've reported sexual assault and violence, and I truly believe there's no going back from that," Katz said.

Many advocates saw the moment, however dispiriting, as an opportunity to call for a renewal of efforts to push the #MeToo message forward.

"Today's decision does not erase the truth of what happened," said Fatima Goss Graves, head of the Time's Up Legal Defense Fund. It's important to remember, she said, "that one well known case does not define this movement. We are a force."

Graves noted the fund has provided support for some 9,000 people with sexual harassment complaints since 2018, and has funded 300 lawsuits. The fund is run by the National Women's Law Center in Washington; the broader Hollywood-based group, launched in 2017, shifted all its resources to the fund in January 2023.

Burke stressed in an interview that while legal advances are necessary for progress, "the judicial system has never been a friend of survivors. And so it's the reason why we need movements, because movements have historically been what has pushed the legal system to do the right thing."

Burke said she spent the morning speaking to accusers, including actor Annabella Sciorra, who testified at the 2020 trial that Weinstein raped her.

"I can understand how devastating and disgusted and angry, just the range of emotions that so many of them must feel," Burke said. "And I hope they understand for those of us survivors who will likely never see a day in court, that they are still heroes to us."

Burke, who has spoken out about her own past as a survivor of abuse, added she could never imagine facing her own perpetrator in court.

"So just the fact that they got to do that, to bring a person, a man like Harvey Weinstein to account for his crimes, is incredible," she said.

Ukraine pulls US-provided Abrams tanks from the front lines over Russian drone threats

By TARA COPP Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Ukraine has sidelined U.S.-provided Abrams M1A1 battle tanks for now in its fight against Russia, in part because Russian drone warfare has made it too difficult for them to operate without detection or coming under attack, two U.S. military officials told The Associated Press.

The U.S. agreed to send 31 Abrams to Ukraine in January 2023 after an aggressive monthslong campaign by Kyiv arguing that the tanks, which cost about \$10 million apiece, were vital to its ability to breach Russian lines.

But the battlefield has changed substantially since then, notably by the ubiquitous use of Russian surveillance drones and hunter-killer drones. Those weapons have made it more difficult for Ukraine to protect the tanks when they are quickly detected and hunted by Russian drones or rounds.

Five of the 31 tanks have already been lost to Russian attacks.

The proliferation of drones on the Ukrainian battlefield means "there isn't open ground that you can just drive across without fear of detection," a senior defense official told reporters Thursday.

The official spoke on the condition of anonymity to provide an update on U.S. weapons support for Ukraine before Friday's Ukraine Defense Contact Group meeting.

For now, the tanks have been moved from the front lines, and the U.S. will work with the Ukrainians to reset tactics, said Joint Chiefs of Staff Vice Chairman Adm. Christopher Grady and a third defense official who confirmed the move on the condition of anonymity.

"When you think about the way the fight has evolved, massed armor in an environment where unmanned aerial systems are ubiquitous can be at risk," Grady told the AP in an interview this week, adding that tanks are still important.

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, April 26, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 305 ~ 45 of 89

"Now, there is a way to do it," he said. "We'll work with our Ukrainian partners, and other partners on the ground, to help them think through how they might use that, in that kind of changed environment now, where everything is seen immediately."

News of the sidelined tanks comes as the U.S. marks the two-year anniversary of the Ukraine Defense Contact Group, a coalition of about 50 countries that meets monthly to assess Ukraine's battlefield needs and identify where to find needed ammunition, weapons or maintenance to keep Ukraine's troops equipped.

Recent aid packages, including the \$1 billion military assistance package signed by President Joe Biden on Wednesday, also reflect a wider reset for Ukrainian forces in the evolving fight.

The U.S. is expected to announce Friday that it also will provide about \$6 billion in long-term military aid to Ukraine, U.S. officials said, adding that it will include much sought after munitions for Patriot air defense systems. The officials spoke on condition of anonymity to discuss details not yet made public.

The \$1 billion package emphasized counter-drone capabilities, including .50-caliber rounds specifically modified to counter drone systems; additional air defenses and ammunition; and a host of alternative, and cheaper, vehicles, including Humvees, Bradley Infantry Fighting Vehicles and Mine Resistant Ambush Protected Vehicles.

The U.S. also confirmed for the first time that it is providing long-range ballistic missiles known as ATACMs, which allow Ukraine to strike deep into Russian-occupied areas without having to advance and be further exposed to either drone detection or fortified Russian defenses.

While drones are a significant threat, the Ukrainians also have not adopted tactics that could have made the tanks more effective, one of the U.S. defense officials said.

After announcing it would provide Ukraine the Abrams tanks in January 2023, the U.S. began training Ukrainians at Grafenwoehr Army base in Germany that spring on how to maintain and operate them. They also taught the Ukrainians how to use them in combined arms warfare — where the tanks operate as part of a system of advancing armored forces, coordinating movements with overhead offensive fires, infantry troops and air assets.

As the spring progressed and Ukraine's highly anticipated counteroffensive stalled, shifting from tank training in Germany to getting Abrams on the battlefield was seen as an imperative to breach fortified Russian lines. Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy announced on his Telegram channel in September that the Abrams had arrived in Ukraine.

Since then, however, Ukraine has only employed them in a limited fashion and has not made combined arms warfare part of its operations, the defense official said.

During its recent withdrawal from Avdiivka, a city in eastern Ukraine that was the focus of intense fighting for months, several tanks were lost to Russian attacks, the official said.

A long delay by Congress in passing new funding for Ukraine meant its forces had to ration ammunition, and in some cases they were only able to shoot back once for every five or more times they were targeted by Russian forces.

In Avdiivka, Ukrainian forces were badly outgunned and fighting back against Russian glide bombs and hunter-killer drones with whatever ammunition they had left.

US expected to provide \$6 billion to fund long-term weapons contracts for Ukraine, officials say

By LOLITA C. BALDOR Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — The U.S. is expected to announce Friday that it will provide about \$6 billion in long-term military aid to Ukraine, U.S. officials said, adding that it will include much sought after munitions for Patriot air defense systems.

The officials said the aid package will be funded through the Ukraine Security Assistance Initiative, which pays for longer-term contracts with the defense industry and means that it could take many months or years for the weapons to arrive. The officials spoke on condition of anonymity to discuss details not yet made public.

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, April 26, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 305 ~ 46 of 89

The new funding — the largest tranche of USAI aid sent to date - will include a wide array of munitions for air defense, such as the National Advanced Surface to Air Missile System (NASAM) and the High Mobility Artillery Rocket System (HIMARS), as well as the Patriot munitions, Switchblade and Puma drones, counter drone systems and artillery.

The announcement is expected to come as Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin convenes a virtual meeting on Friday of defense officials from Europe and around the world to discuss international aid for Ukraine. The gathering — created by Austin and known as the Ukraine Defense Contact Group — has been meeting about monthly for the past two years, and is the primary forum for weapons contributions to Kyiv for the war.

It follows the White House decision earlier this week to approve the delivery of \$1 billion in weapons and equipment to Ukraine. Those weapons include a variety of ammunition, including air defense munitions and large amounts of artillery rounds that are much in demand by Ukrainian forces, as well as armored vehicles and other weapons.

That aid, however, will get to Ukraine quickly because it is being pulled off Pentagon shelves, including in warehouses in Europe.

The large back-to-back packages are the result of the new infusion of about \$61 billion in funding for Ukraine that was passed by Congress and signed into law by President Joe Biden on Wednesday. And they provide weapons Kyiv desperately needs to stall gains being made by Russian forces in the war.

Bitterly divided members of Congress deadlocked over the funding for months, forcing House Speaker Mike Johnson to cobble together a bipartisan coalition to pass the bill. The \$95 billion foreign aid package, which also included billions for Israel and Taiwan, passed the House on Saturday, and the Senate approved it Tuesday.

Senior U.S. officials have described dire battlefield conditions in Ukraine, as troops run low on munitions and Russian forces make gains.

Since Russia's February 2022 invasion, the U.S. has sent more than \$44 billion worth of weapons, maintenance, training and spare parts to Ukraine.

Among the weapons provided to Ukraine were Abrams M1A1 battle tanks. But Ukraine has now sidelined them in part because Russian drone warfare has made it too difficult for them to operate without detection or coming under attack, two U.S. military officials told The Associated Press.

Quarterbacks Williams, Daniels, Maye, Penix, McCarthy and Nix selected in top 12 of NFL draft

By ROB MAADDI AP Pro Football Writer

DETROIT (AP) — Caleb Williams swiftly walked on stage, looked out and screamed "Woوو! Yeah!"

Long-suffering Bears fans felt his joy.

Williams is heading to the Windy City, aiming to become the franchise quarterback Chicago has sought for decades.

"My goal is to get into as far as February as I can," Williams said, referring to playing in a Super Bowl for a team that hasn't hoisted the Lombardi Trophy in nearly 40 years.

The 2022 Heisman Trophy winner kicked off an historic NFL draft Thursday night that had five other teams selecting quarterbacks among the top 12 picks, setting a record with five in the top 10 and tying a record for the most in the first round.

Nearly the entire first half of the draft was offensive players.

A defensive player wasn't selected until UCLA edge rusher Laiatu Latu went at No. 15 to Indianapolis. That's the latest a first defensive player has ever gone.

The Bears opened with the easy choice, taking Williams at No. 1 after deciding weeks ago to bank on the 2022 Heisman Trophy winner from USC.

"Care, love and support and want to win," Williams said about what he's bringing to Chicago.

The Washington Commanders followed up by taking 2023 Heisman Trophy winner Jayden Daniels from

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, April 26, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 305 ~ 47 of 89

LSU and the New England Patriots took North Carolina's Drake Maye at No. 3, making it the fourth draft with quarterbacks going with the first three picks.

At No. 8, the Atlanta Falcons made a stunning decision to choose Washington QB Michael Penix Jr. despite signing Kirk Cousins to a massive contract in free agency. The Minnesota Vikings traded up one spot and took J.J. McCarthy, who led Michigan to a national championship, to make it five QBs in the top 10 for the first time.

The Denver Broncos chose Oregon's Bo Nix with the 12th pick, tying the 1983 draft with six QBs in the first round. Three of those became Hall of Famers — John Elway, Dan Marino and Jim Kelly.

The Arizona Cardinals snapped the early QB trend, choosing Ohio State wide receiver Marvin Harrison Jr. with the fourth pick. The Los Angeles Chargers opened the Jim Harbaugh era by taking Notre Dame offensive tackle Joe Alt instead of giving Justin Herbert a No. 1 wide receiver to replace Keenan Allen and Mike Williams.

The New York Giants then snatched up LSU receiver Malik Nabers at No. 6. The Tennessee Titans took Alabama offensive tackle J.C. Latham with the seventh pick and the Bears selected Washington wideout Rome Odunze at No. 9.

The New York Jets, who dropped to No. 11, chose offensive tackle Olu Fashanu, giving Aaron Rodgers more protection. The Las Vegas Raiders got Georgia tight end Brock Bowers at No. 13. The New Orleans Saints took Oregon State offensive tackle Taliese Fuaga with the 14th pick before the Colts grabbed Latu.

Previously, the latest a first defensive player was selected was No. 8. The Seattle Seahawks took Texas defensive tackle Byron Murphy next and the Vikings made another trade to move up and take Alabama edge Dallas Turner at No. 17.

The Cincinnati Bengals chose Georgia offensive tackle Amarius Mims and the Los Angeles Rams got Florida State edge Jared Verse at No. 19, the team's first selection in the first round since taking Jared Goff at No. 1 in 2016.

Wearing a navy suit with silver accents and flashing a big smile, Williams gave Roger Goodell a bear hug, careful not to squeeze too hard because the NFL commissioner had back surgery three weeks ago.

Rap icon Eminem walked on stage in a Lions sweatshirt and cap shortly after Goodell to start the festivities. The Motor City native riled up the fans before turning it over to Lions stars Goff, Aidan Hutchinson, Amon-Ra St. Brown and Hall of Famers Barry Sanders and Calvin Johnson.

St. Brown led them in chanting "Jar-ed Goff!" and Johnson kept it short: "Whaddup doe?"

An estimated crowd of 275,000, many wearing their Honolulu blue Lions jerseys, filled the streets surrounding the draft theater and turned the NFL's biggest offseason event into a giant party.

They roared when the Lions moved up five spots in a trade with Dallas and took Alabama cornerback Terrion Arnold with the 24th pick.

The 22-year-old Williams is the third quarterback Chicago has selected in the first round in the past eight years, joining Mitch Trubisky and Justin Fields. They passed up on Bryce Young and C.J. Stroud last year and traded the No. 1 pick to Carolina in a blockbuster deal only to get the top choice this year after the Panthers went 2-15.

Williams shouted "Da Bears!" to finish his first news conference as a pro.

A dual-threat player with a strong arm and ability to improvise, Williams threw 93 touchdown passes and ran for 27 scores in three seasons at Oklahoma and USC.

The 23-year-old Daniels, who played three seasons at Arizona State and two at LSU, led the nation in total offense last season with 4,946 yards.

"I don't let football define me, who I am as a human being," Daniels said. "This is something I do and I'm passionate about it."

Maye is the second QB the Patriots have selected in the first round since Tom Brady left. Mac Jones didn't work out and now it's Maye's turn to be the man in a new era that starts without longtime coach Bill Belichick.

The Pittsburgh Steelers selected versatile Washington offensive lineman Troy Fautanu at No. 20. Penn

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, April 26, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 305 ~ 48 of 89

State edge Chop Robinson went next to the Miami Dolphins and the Philadelphia Eagles went with Toledo cornerback Quinyon Mitchell.

Wide receiver Brian Thomas Jr. was chosen by the Jacksonville Jaguars at No. 23. After the Lions took Arnold, the Green Bay Packers selected Arizona offensive tackle Jordan Morgan and the Tampa Bay Buccaneers drafted Duke offensive lineman Graham Barton.

Missouri edge Darius Robinson went to Arizona. The two-time defending Super Bowl champion Kansas City Chiefs made a deal with AFC rival Buffalo to move up and take Texas wideout Xavier Worthy at No. 28.

The Cowboys chose Oklahoma offensive tackle Tyler Guyton and the Baltimore Ravens got Clemson defensive back Nate Wiggins.

The defending NFC champion San Francisco 49ers added another playmaker, taking Florida wideout Ricky Pearsall and the Carolina Panthers made a trade to get South Carolina wideout Xavier Legette with the last pick of the first round at No. 32.

Rooting for Trump to fail has made his stock shorters millions

By BERNARD CONDON Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — Rooting for Donald Trump to fail has rarely been this profitable.

Just ask a hardy band of mostly amateur Wall Street investors who have collectively made tens of millions of dollars over the past month by betting that the stock price of his social media business — Truth Social — will keep dropping despite massive buying by Trump loyalists and wild swings that often mirror the candidate's latest polls, court trials and outbursts on Trump Social itself.

Several of these investors interviewed by The Associated Press say their bearish gambles using "put" options and other trading tools are driven less by their personal feelings about the former president (most don't like him) than their faith in the woeful underlying financials of a company that made less money last year than the average Wendy's hamburger franchise.

"This company makes no money. ... It makes no sense," said Boise, Idaho, ad executive Elle Stange, who estimates she's made \$1,300 betting against Trump Media & Technology stock. "He's not as great a businessman as he thinks. A lot of his businesses go belly up, quickly."

Says Seattle IT security specialist Jeff Cheung, "This is guaranteed to go to zero."

As of Friday morning, a month since Trump Media's initial public offering sent its stock to \$66.22, it has plunged to \$38.49. An AP analysis of data from research firms FactSet and S3 Partners shows that investors using puts and "short selling" have paper profits so far of at least \$200 million, not including the costs of puts, which vary from trade to trade.

Still, amateur traders, mostly risking no more than a few thousand dollars each, say the stock is too volatile to declare victory yet. So they are cashing in a bit now, letting other bets ride and stealing a glance at the latest stock movements in the office cubicle, at the kitchen table or even on the toilet.

There have been plenty of scary moments, including last week when DJT, the ex-president's initials and stock ticker, jumped nearly 40% in two days.

"I don't know which direction the stock is going," says Schenectady, N.Y., day trader Richard Persaud while checking his iPhone amid the surge. "It's so unbelievably overvalued."

Many who spoke to the AP say knowing their bets have helped slash the value of Trump's 65% stake in half is an added political benefit. If some of their predictions are right, they may be able to someday push it to zero, making it impossible for him to tap it to pay his hefty legal bills or finance his GOP presidential campaign.

They have a long way to go. Trump's stake is still worth \$4 billion.

Normally, investors betting a stock will fall, especially a gutsy breed of hedge fund traders called "short sellers," will do plenty of homework. They'll pore over financial statements, develop expertise in an industry, talk to competitors, and even turn to "forensic accountants" to find hidden weaknesses in the books.

No need in Trump Media's case. It's all there in the Sarasota, Florida-based company's 100-page financial report: A firehose of losses, \$58 million last year, on minuscule revenue of \$4 million from advertising and other sources.

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, April 26, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 305 ~ 49 of 89

The losses are so big, as Trump Media's auditor wrote in the report, they "raise substantial doubt about its ability to continue as a going concern."

A short seller's dream? Or is it a nightmare?

Amateur trader Manny Marotta has two computer screens at home, one for work, the other showing DJT stock's movements where he can gauge how much he's up or down.

It wasn't looking so good earlier this week.

The legal writer from suburban Cleveland had been up about \$4,000 on "put" options purchased over the past few weeks. But the screen that morning was showing investors, presumably rich ones, buying large volumes of DJT shares, pushing up the stock once again.

"My options are worth less with every passing minute," says Marotta, adding about DJT: "It's being manipulated. It's insane."

Waiting for the stock to drop is especially painful to "short sellers," who pay a fee to borrow shares owned by others. The idea is to quickly sell them on a hunch then they will be able to buy the same number of them later for much cheaper before having to return them to the lender. That allows short sellers to pocket the difference, minus the fee, which is usually nominal.

In DJT's case, the fee is anything but nominal.

It was costing 565% a year at one point earlier this month, meaning short sellers had only two months before any possible profits would be eaten up in fees, even if the stock went to zero. It's a rate so off the charts, that only three other stocks in recent memory have exceeded it, according to data from Boston University's Karl Diether and Wharton's Itamar Drechsler, who have studied short selling back two decades.

Add in massive buying by Trump supporters who see it as a way to support their candidate, and losses could multiply fast.

"It's scary," says Drechsler, who likens buyers of Trump's stock to unwavering sports fans. "It is everything that you hope that the stock market is not."

Trump Media spokeswoman Shannon Devine said the company is in a "strong financial position" with \$200 million in cash and no debt, and said the AP was "selecting admitted Trump antagonists."

Another danger to the stock is a "short squeeze." If the price rises sharply, it could set off a rush by short sellers who fear they've bet wrongly to return their borrowed shares right away and limit their losses. And so they start buying shares to replace the ones they borrowed and sold, and that very buying tends to work against them, sending the price higher, which in turn scares other short sellers, who then also buy, setting off a vicious cycle of price hikes.

"If DJT starts rallying, you're going to see the mother of all squeezes," says S3 Partners short-selling expert Ihor Dusaniwsky, who spent three decades at Morgan Stanley helping investors borrow shares. "This is not for the faint of heart."

And if that wasn't enough, there is a final oddball feature of DJT stock that could trigger an explosion in prices, up or down.

"Lock up" agreements prohibit Trump and other DJT executives from selling their shares until September. That leaves the float, or the number of shares that can be traded each day by others, at a dangerously tiny 29% of total shares that will someday flood the market. That means a big purchase or sale on any day that would barely move a typical stock can send DJT flying or crashing.

The float is smaller than that of most other notoriously volatile stocks. At their smallest levels, AMC, GameStock and Shake Shack each had more than double the float.

Seattle trader Cheung sees DJT's freak characteristics as a reason to bet against the stock, not shy away. When the lock-up period ends, he predicts, the ex-president will indeed sell his shares, spooking the market and sending the price down sharply. And even if he doesn't, other insiders whose lock-ups expire will fear he will do so and will move fast to get a good price before it falls.

"The first one to sell out is going to make the most," Cheung says. "Everyone is going to sell."

Still, he doesn't want to lose money in the interim, so Cheung is offsetting some of his "put" bets with the purchase of "calls." The latter are also derivatives, but they do the opposite, paying off when the stock rises. Cheung hopes that whichever makes money, the puts or the calls, he will make enough with one to

more than make up for the loss of the other.

If all of this seems too complicated, there is a far simpler way to make money betting against Trump. Offshore, casino-style betting sites are taking wagers on the 2024 election, and some have even made President Joe Biden the favorite.

Trading Trump: Truth Social's first month of trading has sent investors on a ride

By MARTHA MENDOZA Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — There have been lawsuits, short-selling and rampant speculation. Now, as Trump Media & Technology Group approaches its first month as a publicly traded company, it's clear that — like the man it's named after — there's nothing typical about the stock.

"If I woke up tomorrow and shares were zero dollars, or \$100, I would not be surprised," said Matthew Tuttle, a professional investor who bought \$800 in Trump Media stock last week when it was at an all-time low. A day later, it had spiked in value.

"This is not going to move on fundamentals, earnings, or anything I was taught in business school about how a stock is supposed to move," he said.

With Trump facing dozens of federal felony charges and hundreds of millions in legal expenses, Trump Media went public on March 26 on the Nasdaq exchange. Unlike many other stocks, it has been hard for traditional analysts and investors to figure out where it's heading.

Here are some key takeaways from experts and regulator filings that help explain why Trump Media's stock — ticker symbol DJT — has gone up and down, and why its performance continues to confound Wall Street expectations:

TRUMP MEDIA IS TRUMP

The stock's volatility, experts say, is tied to Trump Media's prime asset: Trump himself. Trump Media runs the social media platform Truth Social, which Trump created after he was banned from Twitter and Facebook following the Jan. 6, 2021, Capitol riot. The former Republican president, who is his party's presumptive nominee for the White House this year, is a prolific poster to Truth Social and has a legion of diehard supporters.

"I LOVE TRUTH SOCIAL, I LOVE THE TRUTH!" Trump posted the day his company went public.

Most large investors have balked at buying the company's stock. Based in Sarasota, Florida, Trump Media has been losing loads of money and struggling to raise revenue, according to regulatory filings. That doesn't appear to have dissuaded Trump's supporters from embracing a chance to invest in a piece of him.

"It's everything out of the ordinary," said Julian Klymochko, CEO of Calgary-based Accelerate Financial Technologies Inc.

"I call it the mother of all meme stocks," he said, using a phrase oft-repeated about Trump Media. It's the nickname given to stocks that get caught up in buzz online and shoot way beyond what traditional analysis says they're worth.

RETAIL INVESTORS LEAD THE WAY

Day 1 looked like a windfall for Trump, who controls about 65% of the stock, and other early investors: Shares surged 59% to \$79.38. Trump's wealth immediately grew to \$8 billion on paper. But he couldn't cash out because of a "lock-up" provision that generally prevents company insiders from selling newly issued shares for six months.

The stock started to trend down, but not without near-daily rises and falls on heavy trading volume. The trading has largely been driven by individual investors whom Trump Media's CEO Devin Nunes described as believing "in our mission to create a free-speech beachhead against Big Tech."

Such retail investors are typically less sophisticated day traders. Some banded together to become a powerful force during COVID-19 lockdowns when they mobilized online to pour money into stocks of struggling companies such as video game retailer GameStop and movie theater operator AMC Entertainment.

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, April 26, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 305 ~ 51 of 89

Those investors drove the companies' stock to new heights while big investors ate large losses because they had been betting against the stocks.

Recent postings in a Truth Social group dedicated to chatting about the stock have often referred to buying it as not just an investment but a movement of "MAGA patriots putting our money where our mouth is," referring to Trump's "Make America Great Again" movement.

PROSPECTS ARE UNCLEAR

Truth Social launched in 2022, and the former president uses the platform like he often used Twitter, now known as X: to spread misinformation, praise supporters and attack his political rivals.

Trump was reinstated in November 2022 to X, though he has only posted to that site once since then. He has otherwise stuck to Truth Social, which had 18 million visits in the first three months of 2024, compared with 18 billion on X, according to research firm Similarweb.

Trump Media's prospects are unclear, despite optimistic statements from Trump and its executives. Nunes said last week that the company's "financial position is very strong, particularly for a start-up tech firm at this initial stage of growth."

The company, however, lost nearly \$58.2 million last year while generating only \$4.1 million in revenue, according to Securities and Exchange Commission filings. The company has \$200 million in the bank and no debt.

Trump's retail investors appear to be ignoring the company's fundamentals and placing a bet that the former president will ensure it succeeds, according to analysts and other experts.

They "are thinking he'll figure something out, he's always done that," said John Rekenhaller, vice president of research for Morningstar Research Services. "And it's true, he always lands on his feet. But the people who invest with him, they don't always land on their feet."

Financial advisers and experts are less sanguine about its prospects. They noted that Trump Media's financial filings have provided no indication it has the kind of strategy that will lead to profits. They also pointed out that the company's leadership has little experience running a social media outfit.

The company's executives and board members include Nunes, a former congressman and Trump ally, and one of the former president's sons, Donald Trump Jr. Among the others are Kash Patel, who was a top national security adviser and official in the Trump administration, and Robert Lighthizer, the U.S. trade representative under Trump.

It is a recipe for a corporate crash, experts said.

"Sooner or later it's going to get messy," said University of Michigan law professor Albert Choi. He said it is most likely that Trump Media will run out of cash and be forced to liquidate or file for bankruptcy.

OTHER RISKS

The company has a unique risk, experts said: Trump is not known for being disciplined, especially on social media. Because he is a controlling shareholder, he could be fined or penalized for making false statements about the company. This happened to Elon Musk, who was charged with securities fraud in 2018 after he hinted he would be taking Twitter private. Musk settled with the SEC for a \$40 million fine and was forced to step down as Tesla's chairman.

SEC filings also warn that Trump is facing legal trouble that could jeopardize the company's stability. A New York judge issued a \$454 million civil fraud judgment against Trump after concluding that he and others had deceived banks and insurers by exaggerating their wealth on financial statements.

Trump has appealed the fine and posted a \$175 million bond while the case is considered.

Trump, meanwhile, is on trial in New York on charges of falsifying business records as part of a scheme to squelch negative stories about him during his 2016 presidential campaign. He has been indicted twice in federal court — once on charges of trying to overturn the results of the 2020 election and the other on accusations he kept classified documents after leaving the White House. He has also been indicted in Georgia on charges of racketeering and conspiracy with the aim of potential 2020 election interference.

Trump Media has also been targeted in lawsuits. In February, Trump Media co-founders Andy Litinsky and Wes Moss, who met Trump when they were on his reality show "The Apprentice," sued the company

to prevent Trump from diluting their 8.6% stake by increasing authorized shares from 120 million to 1 billion. Trump sued right back, arguing that they should forfeit their stock in the company because they set it up improperly.

This is not the first time Trump has led a publicly traded company. In 1995, Trump Hotels and Casino Resorts went public on the New York Stock Exchange under the same ticker symbol of DJT. The company lost money for the next nine years and declared bankruptcy.

Charges against Trump's 2020 'fake electors' are expected to deter a repeat this year

By NICHOLAS RICCARDI Associated Press

An Arizona grand jury's indictment of 18 people who either posed as or helped organize a slate of electors falsely claiming that former President Donald Trump won the state in 2020 could help shape the landscape of challenges to the 2024 election.

The indictment issued Wednesday is part of a campaign to deter a repeat of 2020, when Trump and his allies falsely claimed he won swing states, filed dozens of lawsuits unsuccessfully challenging Biden's victory and tried to get Congress to let Trump stay in power. That campaign culminated with the Jan. 6, 2021, attack on the U.S. Capitol.

The penalties piling up for that push include lawyers who helped Trump being disbarred, censured and sanctioned. Added to that are multimillion-dollar libel penalties and now criminal charges in four states for spreading lies about the 2020 election. That effort included submitting so-called fake electors contending that Trump had actually won the states and that Congress should recognize them rather than the electors won by President Joe Biden.

"People are going to have to think twice about doing things to undermine the election," said David Becker, founder of the Center for Election Innovation & Research and coauthor of "The Big Truth," about the danger of 2020 election deniers. "The deterrent effect is real."

Trump himself faces federal charges for his effort to overturn the election as well as a separate indictment out of Fulton County, Georgia. On Thursday, the Supreme Court heard arguments over Trump's contention that he should be immune from prosecution for his acts while serving as president. Though justices seemed poised to reject that contention, several signaled reservations over the federal charges that could delay the case until after the November election.

Justin Levitt, a former Department of Justice official who also worked in the Biden White House, noted the differing pace of consequences for Trump and for those whom he called the former president's "lieutenants" in the challenges to the 2020 election results.

"One of the things that fosters deterrence most is swiftness and severity," Levitt said. "Though the wheels of justice are turning slow, they are turning, and we are seeing consequences for the lieutenants in this conspiracy."

Some of the broadest consequences may have come in the indictments of so-called fake electors in Arizona, Michigan and Nevada, all states with Democratic attorneys general. Several people targeted in the wide-ranging Georgia indictment also were charged relating to a fake elector scheme.

The 18 people indicted in Arizona include Trump's former chief of staff, Mark Meadows, former New York Mayor Rudolph Giuliani and Christina Bobb, a lawyer who was recently appointed the Republican National Committee's head of "Election Integrity." Trump was listed as an unindicted co-conspirator.

"This is not some kind of a game. This is not some sort of fantasy football league," Adrian Fontes, Arizona's Democratic Secretary of State, said in an interview Thursday. "This is real life, and bad acts have real potential bad consequences."

The breadth of the Arizona indictment, announced by state Attorney General Kris Mayes, led to sharp criticism from some out-of-state defendants.

"The phenomenon of partisan 'lawfare' grows more troubling by the day," said Charles Burnham, an attorney for attorney John Eastman, who advised Trump on his 2020 legal fight and faces possible disbar-

ment in California and more criminal charges in Georgia.

It comes after indictments of the 16 alleged Trump electors who claimed their candidate won Michigan, the six in Nevada and three in the Fulton County case in Georgia.

In a speech in Georgia earlier this year, Eastman noted how the phony Trump electors in Wisconsin had to agree that Biden won the state and promise not to serve as electors in 2024 as a condition of settling a civil lawsuit brought by two Democrats. He portrayed it as part of a sweeping effort to squelch dissent over the 2020 election — even though reviews, recounts and audits in all the swing states where Trump disputed his loss all affirmed Biden's win.

"The government has spoken, so if you don't bend the knee we're going to destroy you," Eastman said. Prosecutors have a different take on their cases.

"As we prepare for the 2024 presidential election, today's charges are the first in an ongoing effort to not just seek justice for the wrongs of the past, but to ensure they do not happen again," Michigan Attorney General Dana Nessel said in a statement last year when her office filed its charges.

Beyond the indictments, Congress took a significant step in cutting off further avenues for electoral mischief. A bipartisan bill signed by Biden in 2022 makes it harder to submit rival slates of electors, requiring that only ones certified by a state's governor go to Congress for certification.

"The possibility of alternate electors has narrowed incredibly," said Edward B. Foley, a law professor at The Ohio State University.

The 65 Project is an organization formed to pursue legal discipline against lawyers involved in filing the dozens of unsuccessful lawsuits challenging Trump's 2020 loss. Michael Teter, the group's managing director, said the threat already has had an impact by lessening enthusiasm among election deniers for litigation challenging their many losses at the polls in 2022.

"I don't think we'll see the same sort of effort to use the legal system in 2024," Teter said, adding that he expects Trump to challenge the results should he lose at the polls. "But I don't think they'll use the court system in the same way and I don't think they'll use a scheme like the false elector one.

"I don't think a lot of people will want to sign up for that again."

Trump's lawyers will grill ex-tabloid publisher as 1st week of hush money trial testimony wraps

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

NEW YORK (AP) — After prosecutors' lead witness painted a tawdry portrait of "catch and kill" tabloid schemes, defense lawyers in Donald Trump's hush money trial are poised Friday to dig into an account of the former publisher of the National Enquirer and his efforts to protect Trump from negative stories during the 2016 election.

David Pecker will return to the witness stand for the fourth day as defense attorneys try to poke holes in the testimony of the former National Enquirer publisher, who has described helping bury embarrassing stories Trump feared could hurt his campaign.

It will cap a consequential week in the criminal cases the former president is facing as he vies to reclaim the White House in November.

At the same time jurors listened to testimony in Manhattan, the Supreme Court on Thursday signaled it was likely to reject Trump's sweeping claims that he is immune from prosecution in his 2020 election interference case in Washington. But the conservative-majority high court seemed inclined to limit when former presidents could be prosecuted — a ruling that could benefit Trump by delaying that trial, potentially until after the November election.

In New York — the first of Trump's four criminal cases to go to trial — the presumptive Republican presidential nominee faces 34 felony counts of falsifying business records in connection with hush money payments meant to stifle negative stories from surfacing in the final days of the 2016 campaign.

Prosecutors allege that Trump sought to illegally influence the 2016 race through a practice known in

the tabloid industry as “catch-and-kill” — catching a potentially damaging story by buying the rights to it and then killing it through agreements that prevent the paid person from telling the story to anyone else.

Over several days on the witness stand, Pecker has described how he and the tabloid parlayed rumor-mongering into splashy stories that smeared Trump’s opponents and, just as crucially, leveraged his connections to suppress seamy stories about Trump.

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 encounter ever happened.

During the cross-examination that began Thursday, defense attorney Emil Bove grilled Pecker on his recollection of specific dates and meanings. He appeared to be laying further groundwork for the defense’s argument that any dealings Trump had Pecker were intended to protect himself, his reputation and his family — not his campaign.

Pecker recalled how an editor told him that Daniels’ representative was trying to sell her story and that the tabloid could acquire it for \$120,000. Pecker said he put his foot down, noting that the tabloid was already \$180,000 in the hole for Trump-related catch-and-kill transactions. But, Pecker said, he told Cohen to buy the story himself to prevent Daniels from going public with her claim.

“I said to Michael, ‘My suggestion to you is that you should buy the story, and you should take it off the market because if you don’t and it gets out, I believe the boss will be very angry with you.’”

NFL Draft Latest: Caleb Williams to Bears, record six QBs taken in first 12 picks

DETROIT (AP) — The Latest on the first round of the NFL draft (all times local):

No. 29 pick: Tyler Guyton to the Cowboys

Dallas took the Oklahoma offensive tackle at No. 29 overall after trading down with Detroit to improve their positioning later in the draft.

No. 28 pick (trade): Xavier Worthy to the Chiefs

Kansas City made a deal with AFC rival Buffalo to move up four spots to select the Texas receiver, who set an NFL combine record with a 4.21 40-yard dash.

Kansas City gave up the No. 32 pick along with third- and seventh-round picks to acquire the Bills’ first-round pick along with fourth- and seventh-round selections.

A record 19 offensive players have gone in the first round

There’s been a record-tying haul of offensive players taken in the first round of the draft.

Tampa Bay took Duke offensive lineman Graham Barton 26th overall as the 19th offensive player drafted. That ties the mark in the common draft era previously reached in 2009, 2004 and 1968.

The first 14 players taken were on offense as teams focused heavily on quarterbacks, pass catchers and blockers. There have been a record-tying six QBs taken, eight offensive linemen, four receivers and one tight end.

No. 27 pick: Darius Robinson to the Cardinals

Arizona ended a long wait for the last player waiting in the green room to hear his name called, drafting the Missouri edge rusher and Motor City native with the No. 27 pick overall.

No. 26 pick: Graham Barton to the Buccaneers

Tampa Bay bolstered the middle of its offensive line by selecting the Duke center.

No. 25 pick: Jordan Morgan to the Packers

Green Bay, host of next year’s draft, took the Arizona offensive tackle at No. 25 overall.

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, April 26, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 305 ~ 55 of 89

No. 24 pick (trade): Terrion Arnold to the Lions

Detroit made a deal with Dallas, trading up five spots to take the Alabama cornerback to fire up a sea of fans decked out in Honolulu blue and silver watching the draft.

The Cowboys acquired the No. 29 pick and a third-round selection, No. 73 overall, and gave up a seventh-round selection in the trade.

No. 23 pick: Brian Thomas to the Jaguars

Jacksonville selected the LSU wide receiver after trading down from pick No. 17 in a deal with Minnesota.

No. 22 pick: Quinyon Mitchell to the Eagles

Philadelphia bolstered its secondary selecting the speedy Toledo cornerback.

No. 21 pick: Chop Robinson to the Dolphins

The Miami Dolphins, with a first-round pick for the first time in three years, selected the Penn State edge rusher.

No. 20 pick: Troy Fautanu to the Steelers

Pittsburgh took the Washington offensive tackle to help keep quarterbacks Russell Wilson and Justin Fields upright.

No. 19 pick: Jared Verse to the Rams

The Los Angeles Rams, drafting in the opening round for the first time since taking Jared Goff No. 1 overall in 2016, selected the Florida State edge rusher. ____

No. 18 pick: Amarius Mims to the Bengals

Cincinnati was looking for an offensive lineman to help protect quarterback Joe Burrow and landed the Georgia offensive tackle.

Vikings trade up to No. 17

Minnesota moved up with their second trade of the night to select Alabama edge rusher Dallas Turner.

No. 16 pick: Byron Murphy to the Seahawks

Seattle extended the short run of defensive players going off the board, drafting the Texas defensive tackle with the No. 16 pick.

Defensive players were taken with consecutive picks, following 14 straight from the offensive side of the ball.

That's offensive: First defensive player isn't picked until Latu at No. 15

UCLA edge rusher Laiatu Latu was the first defensive player selected in the NFL draft, going No. 15 overall to Indianapolis to snap a record streak of 14 straight offensive players taken.

The previous latest a defensive player was drafted came in 2021, when the Carolina Panthers took cornerback Jaycee Horn eighth overall.

It was the first time 14 straight offensive players were taken at any point in the draft.

No. 15 pick: Laiatu Latu to the Colts

Finally, a team took a defensive player in a city known as The D.

Indianapolis selected the UCLA edge rusher with the No. 15 pick overall, ending the longest drought before a defensive player was drafted since 1967.

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, April 26, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 305 ~ 56 of 89

No. 14 pick: OT Fuaga to the Saints

New Orleans selected Oregon State's Taliese Fuaga, a second-team All-America offensive tackle.

Raiders select Brock Bowers at No. 13

Las Vegas kept the run on offensive players going, taking the Georgia tight end with the No. 13 pick — leaving another team to take the first defensive player off the board.

Pick-6: Six QBs go in first 12 picks for first time

Denver took Bo Nix with the 12th pick overall, completing a stunning run of a half-dozen QBs going off the board with the first 12 picks.

This draft ties the record from the famed 1983 draft when a record six quarterbacks were taken in the first round, including Hall of Famers John Elway, Jim Kelly and Dan Marino. But it took until pick No. 27 for Marino to go off the board that year.

It went much faster this time around with Nix following Caleb Williams, Jayden Daniels, Drake Maye, Michael Penix Jr. and J.J. McCarthy.

Bo Nix goes No. 12 to Denver

The Broncos took the Oregon standout to mark the first time six quarterbacks were selected among the first 12 picks in an NFL draft.

OT Fashanu goes No. 11 to the Jets

New York drafted Olu Fashanu with the No. 11 overall pick, banking on the Penn State offensive tackle to help keep quarterback Aaron Rodgers healthy.

The Jets traded down one slot with the Minnesota Vikings.

Vikings trade up to pick QB J.J. McCarthy at No. 10

The Minnesota Vikings moved up one spot to make sure they could take J.J. McCarthy with the No. 10 pick overall.

Minnesota sent a fourth- and fifth-round pick to the New York Jets to prevent another team from taking the Michigan quarterback and the Vikings also acquired a sixth-round selection in the first trade of the night.

McCarthy is the record fifth quarterback in the first 10 picks tonight.

Bears select WR Rome Odunze at No. 9

Chicago chose to give Caleb Williams a young, go-to receiver by drafting Washington speedster Rome Odunze with the No. 9 pick overall.

Falcons shock by picking QB Michael Penix Jr. at No. 8

The Atlanta Falcons made the first stunning pick of the NFL draft by taking quarterback Michael Penix Jr. with the No. 8 pick overall, a month after giving quarterback Kirk Cousins a four-year, \$180 million deal with \$100 million in guarantees.

Offensive tackle JC Latham selected by Titans at No. 7

The Tennessee Titans, under first-year coach Brian Callahan, selected Alabama offensive tackle JC Latham with the No. 7 pick.

Giants take WR Malik Nabers at No. 6

The New York Giants took the second receiver off the board, selecting LSU's Malik Nabers with the No. 6 pick overall.

Chargers select offensive tackle Joe Alt at No. 5

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, April 26, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 305 ~ 57 of 89

The Jim Harbaugh-led Los Angeles Chargers drafted Joe Alt, hoping the 6-foot-8, 321 offensive tackle from Notre Dame can help protect quarterback Justin Herbert.

Harrison father-son duo in rare company
Like father, like son.

Marvin Harrison Jr. followed his father into the NFL as the rare son of a Hall of Famer to be picked in the first round when he went fourth to Arizona. The older Harrison had 1,102 catches for 14,580 yards in a 13-year career for Indianapolis.

Harrison followed in the footsteps of Jake Matthews, the son of Bruce; Kyle and Chris Long, the sons of Howie; and Kellen Winslow Jr.

Marvin Harrison Jr. goes No. 4 to Arizona

The Arizona Cardinals, the first team not looking for a quarterback, drafted Ohio State wide receiver Marvin Harrison Jr. with the No. 4 overall pick.

Quarterbacks Caleb Williams, Jayden Daniels and Drake Maye went 1-2-3 to the Bears, Commanders and Patriots.

Jayden Daniels won over Magic Johnson

Magic Johnson has high expectations for Jayden Daniels.

Johnson, a part-owner of the Commanders, said on social media that Daniels would energize the players and fan base after the LSU quarterback was taken with the No. 2 pick by Washington.

It was 45 years ago that Johnson himself was the No. 1 pick in the NBA draft by the Los Angeles Lakers.

"I'm so thrilled and excited to welcome Jayden Daniels to the Commanders family! I'm looking forward to all the wins we will celebrate this season and years to come with you as our leader," Johnson posted.

Patriots pick Drake Maye at No. 3

With the first pick since parting ways with Bill Belichick, the Patriots picked quarterback Drake Maye at No. 3 overall.

The former North Carolina star has the size, arm strength and athleticism teams in the league are looking for. Scouts rave about his ability make a variety of throws with accuracy.

Commanders select Jayden Daniels with second pick

The Washington Commanders selected Jayden Daniels with the No. 2 pick overall.

The 2023 Heisman Trophy made the most of his fifth season of college football, becoming a breakout star at LSU.

Daniels excels at throwing deep and making play with his feet and will get plenty of opportunities to do both in Washington.

Bears take Caleb Williams with No. 1 pick

The NFL draft kicked off with Caleb Williams picked No. 1 overall by the Chicago Bears, as expected.

Williams, a star at USC, was cool and calm in the days leading up to the draft, perhaps because he was one of the only prospects who knew where he would be playing later this year.

The 2022 Heisman Trophy winner is the first of many quarterbacks who will be selected.

Jayden Daniels, Drake Maye and J.J. McCarthy may make this the first draft to have four signal callers chosen among the top five.

Michael Penix Jr. and Bo Nix could make it six QBs taken in the first round to tie a record.

How to watch the 2024 NFL Draft

The Chicago Bears go on the clock with the NFL draft's first pick shortly after 7 p.m. Thursday, to be

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, April 26, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 305 ~ 58 of 89

followed by the rest of the first round. Rounds 2 and 3 will air Friday night, and Rounds 4-7 take place Saturday.

Television: ABC, ESPN, ESPN Deportes, NFL Network

Streaming: ESPN+, NFL+, YouTube TV, Hulu+ Live TV, Fubo TV and Sling TV

First round NFL draft order

1. Chicago Bears (from Carolina)
2. Washington Commanders
3. New England Patriots
4. Arizona Cardinals
5. Los Angeles Chargers
6. New York Giants
7. Tennessee Titans
8. Atlanta Falcons
9. Chicago Bears
10. New York Jets
11. Minnesota Vikings
12. Denver Broncos
13. Las Vegas Raiders
14. New Orleans Saints
15. Indianapolis Colts
16. Seattle Seahawks
17. Jacksonville Jaguars
18. Cincinnati Bengals
19. Los Angeles Rams
20. Pittsburgh Steelers
21. Miami Dolphins
22. Philadelphia Eagles
23. Minnesota Vikings (from Cleveland through Houston)
24. Dallas Cowboys
25. Green Bay Packers
26. Tampa Bay Buccaneers
27. Arizona Cardinals (from Houston)
28. Buffalo Bills
29. Detroit Lions
30. Baltimore Ravens
31. San Francisco 49ers
32. Kansas City Chiefs

AP mock NFL draft: Williams and Daniels go 1-2, then things get wild

It's no secret the Chicago Bears are taking Caleb Williams with the No. 1 overall pick. The 2022 Heisman Trophy winner at USC has been ticketed for the top selection for months.

The Washington Commanders are expected to choose between LSU's Jayden Daniels, the 2023 Heisman winner, and North Carolina's Drake Maye at No. 2.

Then, the New England Patriots are expected to take the remaining quarterback. Or, will they?

A historic QB class?

Caleb Williams says this quarterback draft class could be "historic." Williams, Jayden Daniels, Drake Maye and J.J. McCarthy could make this the first NFL draft to have four QBs selected in the top five.

Michael Penix Jr. and Bo Nix could join Williams, Daniels, Maye and McCarthy to make it six QBs in the

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, April 26, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 305 ~ 59 of 89

first round, which would tie a record.

The 1983 draft had three Hall of Fame quarterbacks — John Elway, Dan Marino and Jim Kelly — selected in the first round along with Todd Blackledge, Tony Eason and Ken O'Brien.

Detroit shines in draft spotlight

Motown is getting its groove back.

"The city, it's got an energy to it," Dan Gilbert told The Associated Press after his real-estate company, Bedrock, worked with public and private entities to land one of the league's signature events.

Detroit is hosting the NFL draft one month after NCAA Tournament Sweet 16 games and a regional final were played at Little Caesars Arena — and three years before the Final Four returns to Ford Field.

The big-time sports events end a drought that followed quite a run.

From 2004 to 2009, the Motor City had a Super Bowl, Final Four, Major League Baseball All-Star Game, Ryder Cup and the PGA Championship.

Offense expected to dominate first round

The first round will have a strong offensive flavor with QBs, receivers and linemen expected to dominate the selections.

The odds favor a record-setting night on offense with teams expected to take more than 20 players from that side of the ball in the first round. The current high is 19 last reached in 2009.

There's a chance that the records for those three key positions could fall. The record for first-round QBs is six in 1983, for receivers is seven in 2004 and for linemen it's 10 in 1968.

This also could threaten the latest for the first defensive player to go. The 2021 draft set that record when Jaycee Horn was the first defensive player taken at No. 8.

USC cancels graduation ceremony and dozens are arrested on other campuses as anti-war protests grow

By STEVE LeBLANC and NICK PERRY Associated Press

The University of Southern California canceled its main graduation ceremony and dozens more college students were arrested at other campuses nationwide Thursday as protests against the Israel-Hamas war continued to spread.

College officials across the U.S. are worried the ongoing protests could disrupt plans for commencement ceremonies next month. Some universities have called in police to break up the demonstrations, resulting in ugly scuffles and hundreds of arrests, while others appeared content to wait out student protests as the final days of the semester ticked down.

Schools such as Columbia University in New York continued to negotiate with protesters who first set up an encampment last week. At California State Polytechnic University, Humboldt, faculty members met with students who have barricaded themselves inside a campus building since Monday, trying to negotiate a solution. The campus was shut down earlier this week with classes moved online.

Other universities are rewriting their rules to ban encampments and moving final exams to new locations.

But encampments and protests continued to spring up Thursday. At Indiana University Bloomington, a tent encampment popped up before police with shields and batons shoved into a line of protesters, arresting 33 people.

At the City College of New York, hundreds of students who were gathered on the lawn beneath the Harlem campus' famed gothic buildings erupted in cheers after a small contingent of police officers retreated from the scene. In one corner of the quad, a "security training" was held among students.

Police arrested one protester and tore down tents at the University of Connecticut Thursday, while demonstrators at Stanford University rallied on a day when newly admitted students visited the campus.

Students protesting the war are demanding schools cut financial ties to Israel and divest from companies enabling the conflict. Some Jewish students say the protests have veered into antisemitism and made

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, April 26, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 305 ~ 60 of 89

them afraid to set foot on campus.

USC announced the cancellation of the May 10 graduation ceremony a day after more than 90 protesters were arrested on campus. The university said it will still host dozens of commencement events, including all the traditional individual school commencement ceremonies.

Tensions were already high after USC canceled a planned commencement speech by the school's pro-Palestinian valedictorian, citing safety concerns.

"We understand that this is disappointing; however, we are adding many new activities and celebrations to make this commencement academically meaningful, memorable, and uniquely USC," the university said in a statement Thursday.

The Los Angeles Police Department said 93 people were arrested Wednesday night during a campus protest for allegedly trespassing. One person was arrested on allegations of assault with a deadly weapon.

At Emerson College in Boston, 108 people were arrested overnight at an alleyway encampment. Video shows police first warning students in the alleyway to leave. Students linked arms to resist officers, who moved forcefully through the crowd and threw some protesters to the ground.

"As the night progressed, it got tenser and tenser. There were just more cops on all sides. It felt like we were being slowly pushed in and crushed," said Ocean Muir, a sophomore.

Muir said police lifted her by her arms and legs and carried her away. Along with other students, Muir was charged Thursday with trespassing and disorderly conduct.

Emerson College leaders had warned students that the alley was a public right-of-way and city authorities had threatened to take action if the protesters didn't leave. Emerson canceled classes Thursday, and Boston police said four officers suffered injuries that were not life-threatening during the confrontation.

The University of Texas at Austin campus was much calmer Thursday after 55 people were arrested a day earlier — 26 of whom had no affiliation with the university, according to a statement to the campus by university president Jay Hartzell. University officials pulled back barricades and allowed demonstrators onto the main square beneath the school's iconic clock tower.

Thursday's gathering of students and some faculty protested both the war and Wednesday's arrests, when state troopers in riot gear and on horseback bulldozed into protesters, forcing hundreds of students off the school's main lawn.

At Emory University in Atlanta, local and state police swept in to dismantle a camp. Some officers carried semiautomatic weapons, and video shows officers using a stun gun on one protester whom they had pinned to the ground. The university said late Thursday in a statement that objects were thrown at officers and they deployed "chemical irritants" as a crowd control measure.

Jail records showed 22 people arrested by Emory police were charged with disorderly conduct. Emory said it had been notified that 28 people were arrested, including 20 members of the university community, and some had been released as of nighttime.

Protesters at Emory chanted slogans supporting Palestinians and opposing a public safety training center being built in Atlanta. The two movements are closely entwined in Atlanta, where there have been years of "Stop Cop City" activism against the center.

Many colleges, including Harvard University, were choosing not to take immediate action against protesters who had set up tents, even though they were openly defying campus rules. And some colleges were making new rules, like Northwestern University, which hastily changed its student code of conduct Thursday morning to bar tents on its suburban Chicago campus.

George Washington University said it would move its law school finals from a building next to the protest encampment to a new location because of the noise.

The current wave of protests was inspired by events at Columbia University, where police cleared an encampment and arrested more than 100 people last week, only for students to defiantly put up tents again, in an area where many are set to graduate in front of families in a few weeks.

U.S. Secretary of Education Miguel Cardona said the ability to embrace student voices and different perspectives was a hallmark of the nation's growth but warned authorities wouldn't tolerate hate, discrimination or threats of violence.

Since the Israel-Hamas war began, the U.S. Education Department has launched civil rights investigations into dozens of universities and schools in response to complaints of antisemitism or Islamophobia. Among those under investigation are many colleges facing protests, including Harvard and Columbia.

Guatemalan prosecutors raid offices of Save the Children charity

Associated Press undefined

GUATEMALA CITY (AP) — Guatemalan prosecutors raided the offices of the charity Save the Children on Thursday, citing a complaint alleging the violation of migrant children's rights.

Prosecutor Rafael Curruchiche said in a video to media that the complaint filed by an unidentified foreigner had raised serious concerns because it involved allegations of abuse of children.

The raid came a week after the secretary general of Guatemala's Public Ministry, Ángel Pineda, wrote a letter to Texas Attorney General Ken Paxton asking for support in addressing allegations that Save the Children and other aid groups "could be participating in child trafficking operations."

Curruchiche said the raid was intended to search for any documents that might support the accusations. The prosecutor's office did not say whether Paxton responded to the request.

Curruchiche and Pineda have been accused of trying to undermine the country's democracy by participating in a failed effort to prevent anti-corruption President Bernardo Arévalo from taking power as well as hindering the anti-corruption fight in the Central American nation. Those efforts have led to more than 40 countries sanctioning them, including the United States and the European Union.

The raid comes amid historic levels of migration to the United States, in which Guatemala has been both a country that people migrate from and a transit route that they use on their way north.

Save the Children, which is dedicated to caring for children in crisis zones, has been working in Guatemala since 1976. It did not comment on Thursday's raid, but it issued a statement last week indicating it was aware of the allegations saying it has no evidence the allegations are true.

"We take the allegations of children's safety and misconduct very seriously and have independent investigative mechanisms in place to investigate thoroughly," the charity's statement said. "We have no evidence to validate such allegations and we continue to work hard to provide humanitarian assistance to migrant children and their families under strict safety and protection standards."

Tennessee lawmakers OK bill penalizing adults who help minors receive gender-affirming care

By KIMBERLEE KRUESI Associated Press

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (AP) — Tennessee's GOP-controlled Statehouse on Thursday gave their final approval to legislation penalizing adults who help minors receive gender-affirming care without parental consent, clearing the way for the first-in-the-nation proposal to be sent to Gov. Bill Lee's desk for his signature.

The bill mirrors almost the same language from a so-called anti-abortion trafficking proposal Tennessee Republican lawmakers approved just a day prior. In that version, supporters are hoping to stop adults from helping young people obtain abortions without permission from their parents or guardians.

Lee, a Republican, hasn't publicly commented on either bill, but supporters are confident he will sign them into law. Lee eagerly approved a sweeping abortion ban and a ban on gender-affirming care for children. He has also never issued a veto during his time as governor.

While the Republican supermajority touted the proposed statutes as necessary to protect parental rights, critics warned about the possible broad application. Violations could range from talking to an adolescent about a website on where to find care to helping that young person travel to another state with looser restrictions on gender-affirming care services.

The original bill included criminal penalties, but supporters agreed to civil penalties for violators.

"This is a parent's rights bill, nothing more, nothing less," Republican Rep. Bryan Richey, the bill's sponsor, said during House debate earlier this week. "At the end of the day, parents should have final say what

medical procedures their children are receiving, and nobody else.”

The Human Rights Campaign says Tennessee has enacted more anti-LGBTQ+ laws more than any other state since 2015, identifying more than 20 bills that advanced out of the Legislature over the past few months.

That included sending Gov. Lee a bill banning the spending of state money on hormone therapy or sex reassignment procedures for prisoners — though it would not apply to state inmates currently receiving hormone therapy — and requiring public school employees to out transgender students to their parents.

Republicans in the state also passed a measure that would let LGBTQ+ foster children be placed with families that hold anti-LGBTQ+ beliefs. Lee signed it into law this month.

“Tennessee lawmakers are on the verge of enacting more than twice as many anti-LGBTQ+ laws as any other state, a staggering assault on their own constituents,” Cathryn Oakley, senior director of legal policy at the Human Rights Campaign, said in a statement.

To date, no state has placed restrictions on helping young people receive gender-affirming care, despite the recent push among more than 20 Republican-led states — including Tennessee — to ban such care for most minors.

Instead some Democratic-led states have been pushing to shield health care providers if they provide services that are banned in a patient’s home state. Most recently Maine’s Democratic governor signed a bill Wednesday protecting providers of abortion and gender-affirming care from legal action brought by other states.

The proposal has created a disagreement between Maine Attorney General Aaron Frey and attorneys general in several other states, including Tennessee. The other states have warned of legal action over the law; Frey dismissed such threats as “meritless.”

Key moments from landmark Supreme Court arguments on Trump’s immunity claims

By ERIC TUCKER and ALANNA DURKIN RICHER Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — There was talk of drone strikes and presidential bribes, of a potential ruling “for the ages” and of the Founding Fathers, too. The presidential race went unmentioned but was not far from mind.

The Supreme Court heard more than 2 1/2 hours worth of arguments on the landmark question of whether former President Donald Trump is immune from prosecution in a case charging him with plotting to overturn the 2020 presidential election.

Though the justices appeared likely to reject Trump’s absolute immunity claim, it seemed possible he could still benefit from a lengthy trial delay, possibly beyond November’s election.

A look at some of the many notable moments:

‘A RULE FOR THE AGES’

Justice Neil Gorsuch conveyed concern that prosecutors, or political opponents, could have bad motives in pursuing political rivals. Michael Dreeben, a lawyer for special counsel Jack Smith’s team, responded that this fear was inapplicable in this case.

“I appreciate that,” Gorsuch said. “But you also appreciate that we’re writing a rule for the ages.”

Other justices were no less lofty in describing the historic stakes of the case and the potential for precedent that will stand the test of time far beyond Trump. For conservative justices, that approach seemed a way to set aside the facts of the Trump indictment and the brazen abuse of power it alleges and focus instead on the implication of a court ruling on cases that have yet to be charged — but theoretically could be.

“This case has huge implications for the presidency, for the future of the presidency, for the future of the country, in my view,” said Justice Brett Kavanaugh, a Trump appointee who served in the George W. Bush White House and is generally seen as a staunch protector of presidential power.

All in all, the court seemed more interested in the future than the present as it contemplated the ruling

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, April 26, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 305 ~ 63 of 89

ahead. There were plenty of historic callbacks, too, with frequent invocations of the nation's Founding Fathers.

WORDS NOT SPOKEN

There was no reference in the arguments to "November." Nor to "2024." Even Trump's name was barely uttered, and mostly in the context of the formal title of court cases.

Yet there's no question that the 2024 election was the proverbial elephant in the room, and in that sense, the words not spoken were almost as loud as those that were.

Hovering in the background of Thursday's session was the tacit acknowledgment that the court is helping decide not only whether Trump is immune from prosecution but also whether he can stand trial before the vote.

The uncomfortable reality for an institution loath to be thought of as a political actor is that a decision that takes until late June or early July to write, or that directs a lower court to do additional analysis about which acts Trump could conceivably be entitled to immunity for, could delay the trial until after the election.

Dreeben took care not to note the consequences of the court's ruling on the election or to urge a speedy ruling for political purposes.

The closest, albeit still oblique, reference to the election came from Justice Amy Coney Barrett, who at one point said to Dreeben: "The special counsel has expressed some concern for speed and wanting to move forward."

MORE WORK AHEAD?

While the court seemed highly skeptical of Trump's bid to dismiss the case, several justices suggested it may have to be sent back for more legal wrangling before the case could go to trial.

Such a ruling would almost certainly delay the trial until after the election. That would be a victory for Trump because, if he defeats President Joe Biden in November, he could presumably order his new attorney general to dismiss the case, or issue a pardon for himself.

Barrett and others repeatedly tried to pin down Trump's lawyer and Smith's team on whether the acts alleged in the indictment were official acts — and, therefore, potentially shielded from prosecution — versus private acts.

And even as Chief Justice John Roberts made clear his resistance to Trump's sweeping absolute immunity claims, he also said he had "concerns" about an earlier appeals court ruling that rejected Trump's immunity arguments but that did not provide a detailed analysis of whether the acts in the indictment were official or private ones.

The lower court, Roberts said, appears to be saying simply that "a former president can be prosecuted because he's being prosecuted."

"Why shouldn't we either send it back to the Court of Appeals or issue an opinion making clear that that's not the law?" Roberts asked Dreeben.

Smith's team has told the court that even if it finds that some level of immunity exists for official acts, there are enough private actions alleged in the indictment — like scheming to submit slates of fake electors — for the case to proceed to trial immediately.

"The president has no functions with respect to the certification of the winner of the presidential election," Dreeben said. "So it's difficult for me to understand how there could be a serious constitutional question about saying 'you can't use fraud to defeat that function, you can't obstruct it through deception, you can't deprive millions of voters of their right to have their vote counted for the candidate who they chose.'"

THE JUSTICES TO WATCH

The liberal justices appeared likely to side with Smith's team in ruling that the trial should move forward, suggesting that Trump's argument turned the Constitution on its head.

"The Framers did not put an immunity clause into the Constitution. They knew how to," Justice Elena Kagan said. "And, you know, not so surprising, they were reacting against a monarch who claimed to be above the law. Wasn't the whole point that the president was not a monarch and the president was not supposed to be above the law?"

Meanwhile, Kavanaugh and fellow conservative Samuel Alito seemed more receptive to Trump's claims, particularly the suggestion that not granting immunity could open the door to former presidents being prosecuted for political reasons.

But ultimately, the matter may come down to Roberts, who at one point questioned whether the case would be able to move forward if official acts were removed from the indictment, saying that doing so could create a "one-legged stool."

Barrett's nuanced questioning suggested that she's another one to watch.

Barrett, who was appointed by Trump, got Trump's attorney, D. John Sauer, to concede that former presidents could be prosecuted for private actions. And Sauer acknowledged that some of Trump's alleged conduct surrounding the 2020 election was not the official act of a president.

Trump "turned to a private attorney, he was willing to spread knowingly false claims of election fraud to spearhead his challenges to the election results. Private?" Barrett asked Sauer.

"That sounds private to me," he replied.

HYPOTHETICALS GALORE

Sure, the justices pressed the lawyers about the actual acts in the indictment, wanting to know which of the steps Trump took in his failed but frantic bid to remain in power might deserve legal protection.

But there were plenty of hypothetical scenarios, too, which is hardly surprising given how the justices and courts in general enjoy testing the outer boundaries of lawyers' arguments as they determine where to draw a line.

Sauer opened the door by saying that, without immunity, President George W. Bush could have been prosecuted for "allegedly lying to Congress to induce war in Iraq" and Biden for "unlawfully inducing immigrants to enter the country illegally for his border policies."

Roberts picked it up from there, asking whether a president who accepted a bribe for an ambassador appointment could be prosecuted.

And so it went. What about selling nuclear secrets to a foreign adversary? Kagan wanted to know. A drone strike on a U.S. citizen abroad authorized by then-President Barack Obama? asked Kavanaugh.

One particularly notable hypothetical came from Alito, who raised the prospect that an outgoing president who loses a closely contested race but fears indictment upon leaving office might try to remain in power, creating "a cycle that destabilizes the functioning of our country as a democracy."

17 states challenge federal rules entitling workers to accommodations for abortion

By ANDREW DeMILLO Associated Press

LITTLE ROCK, Ark. (AP) — Republican attorneys general from 17 states filed a lawsuit Thursday challenging new federal rules entitling workers to time off and other accommodations for abortions, calling the rules an illegal interpretation of a 2022 federal law.

The lawsuit led by Tennessee and Arkansas comes since finalized federal regulations were published April 15 to provide guidance for employers and workers on how to implement the Pregnant Workers Fairness Act. The language means workers can ask for time off to obtain an abortion and recover from the procedure.

The rules, which the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission adopted on a 3-2 vote along party lines, will go into effect June 18. The lawsuit filed in federal court in Arkansas argues the regulations go beyond the scope of the 2022 law that passed with bipartisan support.

"This is yet another attempt by the Biden administration to force through administrative fiat what it cannot get passed through Congress," Arkansas Attorney General Tim Griffin said in a statement. "Under this radical interpretation of the PWFA, business owners will face federal lawsuits if they don't accommodate employees' abortions, even if those abortions are illegal under state law."

An EEOC spokesperson referred questions to the Justice Department, which did not immediately respond to a request for comment.

A Better Balance, one of the most vocal advocates for the Pregnant Workers Fairness Act, called the

lawsuit a baseless attack on the law's protections.

"This lawsuit represents a bad faith effort to politicize what is a vital protection for the health and economic security of millions of families, and a continuation of the alarming attacks on women's health and reproductive choice," Dina Bakst, the group's co-president, said in a statement. "We are committed to fighting to defend workers' rights under the Pregnant Workers Fairness Act."

The EEOC has said the new law does not obligate employers or employer-sponsored health plans to cover abortion-related costs, and that the type of accommodation that most likely will be sought under the Pregnant Workers Fairness Act regarding an abortion is time off to attend a medical appointment or for recovery, which does not have to be paid.

The other states joining the lawsuit are Alabama, Florida, Georgia, Idaho, Indiana, Iowa, Kansas, Missouri, Nebraska, North Dakota, Oklahoma, South Carolina, South Dakota, Utah and West Virginia.

USC's move to cancel commencement amid protests draws criticism from students, alumni

By STEFANIE DAZIO Associated Press

LOS ANGELES (AP) — The University of Southern California's decision Thursday to cancel its main graduation ceremony, a move that came 10 days after administrators said the student valedictorian who had expressed support for Palestinians would not be allowed to speak, left students and alumni stunned as protests over the Israel-Hamas war continue to spread on campuses nationwide.

"It seems like USC isn't really listening to their student body," said Olivia Lee, a 2023 business administration graduate who said she is rethinking whether to recommend the private university to potential students.

Videos of police officers in riot gear facing off, and ultimately arresting, dozens of protesters on campus left her worried about suggesting her alma mater to teenagers who may join similar demonstrations.

"Could that happen to them?" she said.

The protests over the Israel-Hamas conflict pose a tough test for colleges across the country as administrators seek to balance free speech and open debate against pressures over campus safety.

The USC controversy ignited April 15 when officials said the 2024 valedictorian, who has publicly supported Palestinians, could not make a commencement speech, citing nonspecific security concerns for their rare decision. Days later, USC scrapped the keynote speech by filmmaker Jon M. Chu — a 2003 graduate of the university — and said it would not confer honorary degrees.

By this week, the student protests ignited at Columbia University inspired similar on the Los Angeles campus, with students calling on the university to divest from companies that do business with Israel or support its ongoing military action in Gaza. Ninety demonstrators were arrested Wednesday night. Less than a day later, the university announced it would cancel the May 10 main graduation event -- a ceremony that typically draws 65,000 people to the Los Angeles campus — would not happen this year.

University officials said in a statement they would not be able to process tens of thousands of guests "with the new safety measures in place this year."

"We understand that this is disappointing; however, we are adding many new activities and celebrations to make this commencement academically meaningful, memorable, and uniquely USC," the statement said.

Taylor Contarino, a senior who will graduate with a journalism undergraduate degree next month, said there was "disheartening energy" on campus Thursday morning even before the university made its announcement. The school limited campus access to people with USC identification in the wake of Wednesday's protests.

"I couldn't help but feel like there was an elephant in the room," she said. "We're all walking past each other, showing our IDs to security guards."

Contarino has wanted to attend USC since she was 13 or 14 years old, and she had planned to attend the main graduation event. But she said her work to cover the protests for Annenberg Media, a student-led news outlet, has reminded her of the importance of her major to witness and record history. She plans to

return to USC in the fall for her master's degree in journalism.

Lee, the 2023 graduate, said she initially didn't want to wake up early for the main commencement event last year, but her friends convinced her to go. While students walk across the stage for their diplomas at the smaller school ceremonies — which are still scheduled to occur — she said the big ceremony was worth attending.

"It just made the day of graduation that much more special," she said. "If I was to graduate college again, I would go."

Lee agrees with the protesters' call for USC to stop investing money in businesses that support Israel. "We pay so much to be there," she said. "I think that students have a right to know where their tuition money goes and is invested in."

Joshua Adams planned to return to USC's campus next year with his family to celebrate the 10-year anniversary of receiving his master's degree in journalism. He called the university's recent decisions to limit free speech "upsetting" and said he hoped alumni voices would help sway administrators.

Colleges and universities nationwide, including USC, tout themselves as champions of free speech, he said, but at the same time often shy away from defending pro-Palestinian views.

"We're at an inflection point where students won't accept that," Adams said.

Harvey Weinstein's rape conviction is overturned by New York's top court

By MICHAEL R. SISAK and DAVE COLLINS Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — New York's highest court on Thursday threw out Harvey Weinstein's 2020 rape conviction with a ruling that shocked and disappointed women who celebrated historic gains during the #MeToo era and left those who testified in the case bracing for a retrial against the ex-movie mogul.

The court found the trial judge unfairly allowed testimony against Weinstein based on allegations that weren't part of the case.

Weinstein, 72, will remain in prison because he was convicted in Los Angeles in 2022 of another rape. But the New York ruling reopens a painful chapter in America's reckoning with sexual misconduct by powerful figures — an era that began in 2017 with a flood of allegations against Weinstein.

#MeToo advocates noted that Thursday's ruling was based on legal technicalities and not an exoneration of Weinstein's behavior, saying the original trial irrevocably moved the cultural needle on attitudes about sexual assault.

The Manhattan district attorney's office said it intends to retry Weinstein, and at least one of his accusers said through her lawyer that she would testify again.

The state Court of Appeals overturned Weinstein's 23-year sentence in a 4-3 decision, saying "the trial court erroneously admitted testimony of uncharged, alleged prior sexual acts" and permitted questions about Weinstein's "bad behavior" if he had testified. It called this "highly prejudicial" and "an abuse of judicial discretion."

In a stinging dissent, Judge Madeline Singas wrote that the Court of Appeals was continuing a "disturbing trend of overturning juries' guilty verdicts in cases involving sexual violence." She said the ruling came at "the expense and safety of women."

In another dissent, Judge Anthony Cannataro wrote that the decision was "endangering decades of progress in this incredibly complex and nuanced area of law" regarding sex crimes after centuries of "deeply patriarchal and misogynistic legal tradition."

The reversal of Weinstein's conviction is the second major #MeToo setback in the last two years. The U.S. Supreme Court refused to hear an appeal of a Pennsylvania court decision to throw out Bill Cosby's sexual assault conviction.

Weinstein has been in a New York prison since his conviction for forcibly performing oral sex on a TV and film production assistant in 2006, and rape in the third degree for an attack on an aspiring actor in 2013. He was acquitted on the most serious charges — two counts of predatory sexual assault and first-

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, April 26, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 305 ~ 67 of 89

degree rape.

He was sentenced to 16 years in prison in the Los Angeles case.

Weinstein's lawyers expect Thursday's ruling to have a major impact on the appeal of his Los Angeles rape conviction. Their arguments are due May 20.

Jennifer Bonjean, a Weinstein attorney, said the California prosecution also relied on evidence of uncharged conduct alleged against him.

"A jury was told in California that he was convicted in another state for rape," Bonjean said. "Turns out he shouldn't have been convicted and it wasn't a fair conviction. ... It interfered with his presumption of innocence in a significant way in California."

Weinstein lawyer Arthur Aidala called the Court of Appeals ruling "a tremendous victory for every criminal defendant in the state of New York."

Attorney Douglas H. Wigdor, who has represented eight Harvey Weinstein accusers including two witnesses at the New York criminal trial, called it "a major step back" and contrary to routine rulings by judges allowing evidence of uncharged acts to help jurors understand the intent or patterns of a defendant's criminal behavior.

Debra Katz, a prominent civil rights and #MeToo attorney who represented several Weinstein accusers, said her clients are "feeling gutted" by the ruling, but she believes — and is telling them — that their testimony had changed the world.

"People continue to come forward, people continue to support other victims who've reported sexual assault and violence, and I truly believe there's no going back from that," Katz said. She predicted Weinstein will be convicted at a retrial and said accusers like her client Dawn Dunning feel great comfort knowing he will remain behind bars.

Dunning, a former actor who was a supporting witness at the New York trial, said in remarks to The Associated Press conveyed through Katz that she was "shocked" by the ruling and dealing with a range of emotions, including asking herself, "Was it all for naught?"

"It took two years of my life," Dunning said. "I had to live through it every day. But would I do it again? Yes."

She said that in confronting Weinstein, she faced her worst fear and realized he had no power over her.

Weinstein's conviction in 2020 was heralded by activists and advocates as a milestone achievement, but dissected just as quickly by his lawyers and, later, the Court of Appeals when it heard arguments on the matter in February.

Allegations against Weinstein, the once powerful and feared studio boss behind such Oscar winners as "Pulp Fiction" and "Shakespeare in Love," ushered in the #MeToo movement.

Dozens of women came forward to accuse Weinstein, including stars such as Ashley Judd and Uma Thurman. His New York trial drew intense publicity, with protesters chanting "rapist" outside the courthouse.

"This is what it's like to be a woman in America, living with male entitlement to our bodies," Judd said Thursday.

Weinstein, incarcerated at the Mohawk Correctional Facility, about 100 miles (160 kilometers) northwest of Albany, maintains his innocence. He contends any sexual activity was consensual.

His lawyers argued on appeal that the trial overseen by Judge James Burke was unfair because testimony was allowed from three women whose claims of unwanted sexual encounters with Weinstein were not part of the charges. Burke's term expired at the end of 2022, and he is no longer a judge.

They also appealed the judge's ruling that prosecutors could confront Weinstein over his long history of brutish behavior, including allegations of punching his movie producer brother at a business meeting, snapping at waiters, hiding a woman's clothes and threatening to cut off a colleague's genitals with gardening shears.

As a result, Weinstein, who wanted to testify, did not take the stand, Aidala said.

The appeals court labeled the allegations "appalling, shameful, repulsive conduct" but warned that "destroying a defendant's character under the guise of prosecutorial need" did not justify some trial evidence and testimony.

In a majority opinion written by Judge Jenny Rivera, the Court of Appeals said defendants have a right to be held accountable “only for the crime charged and, thus, allegations of prior bad acts may not be admitted against them for the sole purpose of establishing their propensity for criminality.”

The Court of Appeals agreed last year to take Weinstein’s case after an intermediate appeals court upheld his conviction. Prior to their ruling, judges on the lower appellate court at oral arguments had raised doubts about Burke’s conduct. One observed that Burke let prosecutors pile on with “incredibly prejudicial testimony” from additional witnesses.

At a news conference, Aidala predicted that the lasting effect of the reversal would be that more defendants will testify at their trials, including Weinstein, who “will be able to tell his side of the story.”

He said that when he spoke to Weinstein on Thursday, his client told him: “I’ve been here for years in prison for something I didn’t do. You got to fix this.”

A US-led effort to bring aid to Gaza by sea is moving forward. But big concerns remain

By LOLITA C. BALDOR, JULIA FRANKEL and JON GAMBRELL Associated Press

JERUSALEM (AP) — The construction of a new port in Gaza and an accompanying U.S. military-built pier offshore are underway, but the complex plan to bring more desperately needed food to Palestinian civilians is still mired in fears over security and how the humanitarian aid will be delivered.

The Israeli-developed port, for example, has already been attacked by mortar fire, sending high-ranking U.N. officials scrambling for shelter this week, and there is still no solid decision on when the aid deliveries will actually begin.

While satellite photos show major port construction along the shore near Gaza City, aid groups are making it clear that they have broad concerns about their safety and reservations about how Israeli forces will handle security.

Sonali Korde, an official with the U.S. Agency for International Development, said key agreements for security and handling the aid deliveries are still being negotiated. Those include how Israeli forces will operate in Gaza to ensure that aid workers are not harmed.

“We need to see steps implemented. And the humanitarian community and IDF (Israeli Defense Forces) continue to talk and engage and iterate and improve the system so that everyone feels safe and secure in this very difficult operating environment,” Korde said.

A senior U.S. military official said Thursday the U.S. is on track to begin delivering aid using the new port and pier by early May. The official, who spoke to reporters on condition of anonymity to discuss details not yet made public, said deliveries through the sea route initially will total about 90 trucks a day and could quickly increase to about 150 trucks daily.

The senior official acknowledged, however, that the final installation of the U.S.-built causeway onto the beach at the port will be governed by the security situation, which is assessed daily. The Israeli Defense Force has a brigade — thousands of soldiers — as well as ships and aircraft dedicated to protecting the deliveries, the official said.

Asked about the recent mortar attack, the military official said the U.S. assesses that it had nothing to do with the humanitarian mission, adding that security around the port will be “far more robust” when the deliveries start.

In addition, the U.S. has rehearsed offensive and defensive measures to ensure U.S. troops working at the pier and those on the floating platform several miles off shore are all protected.

Aid groups have been shaken by the deaths of seven World Central Kitchen aid workers in an Israeli airstrike on April 1 as they traveled in clearly marked vehicles on a delivery mission authorized by Israel. The killings have hardened sentiment among some aid groups that the international community should focus instead on pushing Israel to ease obstacles to the delivery of aid on land routes by truck.

The World Central Kitchen staff, who were honored at a memorial service Thursday in Washington, are among more than 200 humanitarian workers killed in Gaza, a toll the U.N. says is three times higher than

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, April 26, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 305 ~ 69 of 89

any previous number for aid workers in a single year of any war.

Development of the port and pier comes as Israel faces widespread international criticism over the slow trickle of aid into the Palestinian territory, where the United Nations says at least a quarter of the population sits on the brink of starvation.

This is how the sea route will work:

— Pallets of aid will be inspected and loaded onto mainly commercial ships in Cyprus, which then will sail about 200 miles to the large floating platform being built by the U.S. military.

— The pallets will be transferred onto trucks, driven onto smaller Army vessels and then taken several miles to the causeway, which will be roughly 1,800 feet, or 550 meters, long and anchored to the shoreline by the Israeli military.

— The trucks will then go down the causeway to a secure drop-off area, where pallets will be distributed to aid agencies. That mission could last several months, the U.S. military official said.

A U.N. official said the port will likely have three zones — one controlled by the Israelis where aid from the pier is dropped off, another where the aid will be transferred, and a third where Palestinian drivers contracted by the U.N. will wait to pick up the aid before bringing it to distribution points.

The construction of the new port in the Gaza Strip appears to have been moving quickly over the last two weeks, according to satellite images analyzed Thursday by The Associated Press. Offshore, U.S. Navy and Army vessels have started the construction of the large pier, or floating platform.

The port sits just southwest of Gaza City, a bit north of a road bisecting Gaza that the Israeli military built during the fighting. The area once was the territory's most-populous region, before the Israeli ground offensive rolled through, pushing over 1 million people south toward the town of Rafah on the Egyptian border.

No militant group immediately claimed responsibility for Wednesday's mortar attack at the port site, and no one was hurt or killed. But it reflected ongoing threats from Hamas, which has said it would reject the presence of any non-Palestinians in Gaza.

High-ranking Hamas political official Khalil al-Hayya told the AP that the group would consider Israeli forces — or forces from any other country — stationed by the pier to guard it as "an occupying force and aggression," and that they would resist it.

The U.N.'s World Food Program has agreed to lead the aid delivery effort. Carl Skau, WFP's deputy executive director, speaking Thursday at the U.N., said it's "necessary for us to be able to operate, reach communities, have access to needs, and to do so in a safe and secure way." He also said the port mission must be just one part of a broader Israeli effort to improve sustainable, land-based deliveries of aid to avert a famine.

The U.N. official, speaking on condition of anonymity to discuss behind-the-scenes deliberations, said several sticking points remain around how the Israelis would handle the port's security. The military is reportedly seeking to install remote-controlled gun positions, which the U.N. opposes, said the official, although it was not clear what weapons were being described.

In a statement Thursday, the IDF said it "will act to provide security and logistical support for the initiative," including the construction of the dock and the transfer of aid from the sea to the Gaza Strip.

The port will provide critical extra aid as getting more supplies into Gaza through land crossings has proven challenging, with long backups of trucks awaiting Israeli inspections. Past efforts to get land in by sea faltered after the World Central Kitchen attack.

Countries have even tried airdropping aid from the sky — a tactic that aid groups say is a last-ditch resort because it can't deliver aid in large quantities and also has led to deaths.

"The more time we spend talking about JLOTS," said Bob Kitchen, vice president for emergencies with the International Rescue Committee, using the U.S. military acronym for the U.S.-built pier, "the more we talk about air drops — all of this is massively expensive, comparatively low-scale and is a side-show. It's a distraction."

With fear and hope, Haiti warily welcomes new governing council as gang-ravaged country seeks peace

By DÁNICA COTO Associated Press

PORT-AU-PRINCE, Haiti (AP) — Haiti opened a new political chapter Thursday with the installation of a transitional council tasked to pick a new prime minister and prepare for eventual presidential elections, in hopes of quelling spiraling gang violence that has killed thousands in the Caribbean country.

Ariel Henry, the prime minister who had been locked out of the country for the past couple of months due to the violence, cleared the way for the transition by presenting his resignation in a letter signed in Los Angeles.

The document was released Thursday in Haiti on the same day as the new transitional council was sworn in to choose a new prime minister and Cabinet. Henry's outgoing Cabinet chose Economy and Finance Minister Michel Patrick Boisvert as interim prime minister in the meantime. It was not immediately clear when the transitional council would name its own choice for interim prime minister.

The council was officially sworn in at the National Palace in downtown Port-au-Prince early Thursday as the pop of sporadic gunfire erupted nearby, prompting some officials to look around the room. The council had been urged to seek a safer venue because gangs have launched daily attacks in the area.

Addressing a crowded and sweaty room in the prime minister's office hours later in Pétiön-Ville, Boisvert said that Haiti's crisis had gone on too long and that the country now found itself at a crossroads. The members of the transitional council stood behind him, and before him, the country's top police and military officials as well as ambassadors and well-known politicians.

"After long months of debate ... a solution has been found," Boisvert said. "Today is an important day in the life of our dear republic."

He called the transitional council a "Haitian solution" and directing his remarks toward them, Boisvert wished them success, adding, "You are to lead the country to peace, to economic and social recovery, to sacred union, to participation."

After the speeches, the soft clink of glasses echoed in the room as attendees served champagne flutes toasted with a somber "To Haiti."

The council was installed earlier Thursday, more than a month after Caribbean leaders announced its creation following an emergency meeting to tackle Haiti's spiraling crisis. Gunfire heard as the council was sworn in at the National Palace prompted worried looks.

The nine-member council, of which seven have voting powers, is also expected to help set the agenda of a new Cabinet. It will also appoint a provisional electoral commission, a requirement before elections can take place, and establish a national security council.

The council's non-renewable mandate expires Feb. 7, 2026, at which date a new president is scheduled to be sworn in.

The council members are Emmanuel Vertilaire for Petit Desalin, a party led by former senator and presidential candidate Jean-Charles Moïse; Smith Augustin for EDE/RED, a party led by former Prime Minister Claude Joseph; Fritz Alphonse Jean for the Montana Accord, a group of civil society leaders, political parties and others; Leslie Voltaire for Fanmi Lavalas, the party of former President Jean-Bertrand Aristide; Louis Gérald Gilles for the Dec. 21 coalition that backs former Prime Minister Ariel Henry; Edgard Leblanc Fils for the Jan. 30 Collective, which represents parties including that of former President Michel Martelly; and Laurent Saint-Cyr for the private sector.

The two non-voting seats were awarded to Frinel Joseph, a pastor, and Régine Abraham, a former World Bank and Haitian government official.

Augustin, one of the council's voting members, said that it was unclear if the council would decide to keep Boisvert on as interim prime minister or choose another. He said it would be discussed in the coming days. "The crisis is unsustainable," he said.

Abraham, a nonvoting member, recalled the July 2021 assassination of President Jovenel Moïse, explaining that "that violence had a devastating impact."

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, April 26, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 305 ~ 71 of 89

Abraham said that gangs now controlled most of Port-au-Prince, tens of thousands of the capital's residents have been displaced by violence and more than 900 schools in the capital have been forced to close. "The population of Port-au-Prince has literally been taken hostage," she said.

Gangs launched coordinated attacks that began on Feb. 29 in the capital, Port-au-Prince, and surrounding areas. They burned police stations and hospitals, opened fire on the main international airport that has remained closed since early March and stormed Haiti's two biggest prisons, releasing more than 4,000 inmates. Gangs also have severed access to Haiti's biggest port.

The onslaught began while Prime Minister Henry was on an official visit to Kenya to push for a U.N.-backed deployment of a police force from the East African country.

In his resignation letter, Henry said Haiti would be reborn. "We served the nation in difficult times," he wrote. "I sympathize with the losses and suffering endured by our compatriots during this period."

He remains locked out of Haiti.

"Port-au-Prince is now almost completely sealed off because of air, sea and land blockades," Catherine Russell, UNICEF's director, said earlier this week.

The international community has urged the council to prioritize Haiti's widespread insecurity. Even before the attacks began, gangs already controlled 80% of Port-au-Prince. More than 2,500 people were killed or injured from January to March, up by more than 50% compared with the same period last year, according to a recent U.N. report.

"It is impossible to overstate the increase in gang activity across Port-au-Prince and beyond, the deterioration of the human rights situation and the deepening of the humanitarian crisis," María Isabel Salvador, the U.N. special envoy for Haiti, said at a U.N. Security Council meeting on Monday.

On Thursday, some Haitians said they didn't know that the country had a new prime minister and a transitional council in place. Others warily celebrated the new leadership.

"We don't ask for much. We just want to move about freely," said Guismet Obabourg, owner of a dusty convenience store who lamented that his merchandise has been stuck at the port for two months.

As for Boisvert: "I don't know him personally, but as long as he does what he's supposed to do, provide security to the country, that's all that matters."

In attendance at Boisvert's swearing in Thursday was Dennis Hankins, the newly installed U.S. ambassador. He said Thursday's events were an important step for Haiti.

"In crisis, the Haitians are able to do tremendous things, so we're here to help them," Hankins said. "We won't be the solution, but hopefully we will be part of helping those finding the solution."

As part of that, he said the U.S. government was working to enforce export controls on weapons, many of which have found their way to Haiti, fueling the violence.

"The fact that many of the arms that come here are from the United States is indisputable and that has a direct impact," Hankins said. "It is something we recognize is a contributing factor to instability."

Nearly 100,000 people have fled the capital in search of safer cities and towns since the attacks began. Tens of thousands of others left homeless after gangs torched their homes are now living in crowded, makeshift shelters across Port-au-Prince that only have one or two toilets for hundreds of residents.

At the United Nations Thursday, World Food Program Deputy Executive Director Carl Skau said Haiti is suffering from a security, political and humanitarian crisis that is causing acute food insecurity for some 5 million people, or about half the population. The U.N. defines that as "when a person's inability to consume adequate food puts their lives or livelihoods in immediate danger."

"The situation is dramatic," Skau told reporters. "Devastating crisis, a massive humanitarian impact, the worst humanitarian situation in Haiti since the 2010 earthquake."

Rachel Pierre, a 39-year-old mother of four children, living in one of the capital's makeshift shelters, said, "Although I'm physically here, it feels like I'm dead."

"There is no food or water. Sometimes I have nothing to give the kids," she said as her 14-month-old suckled on her deflated breast.

Many Haitians are angry and exhausted at what their lives have become and blame gangs for their situation.

"They're the ones who sent us here," said Chesnel Joseph, a 46-year-old math teacher whose school closed because of the violence and who has become the shelter's informal director. "They mistreat us. They kill us. They burn our homes."

These people were charged with interfering in the 2020 election. Some are still in politics today

By KATE BRUMBACK Associated Press

ATLANTA (AP) — As Donald Trump seeks a return to the White House, criminal charges are piling up for the people who tried to help him stay there in 2020 by promoting false theories of voter fraud.

At least five states won in 2020 by President Joe Biden have investigated efforts to install slates of electors who would cast Electoral College votes for Trump despite his loss. Those slates were to be used by Trump allies in the House and Senate to justify delaying or blocking the certification of the election during the joint session of Congress on Jan. 6, 2021, which was disrupted by pro-Trump rioters storming the Capitol.

Several of those charged or accused of involvement in election interference across the states are still involved in Republican politics today — including the lawyer overseeing "election integrity" for the Republican National Committee. And Trump, who faces federal charges in Washington and state charges in Georgia for his efforts to overturn Biden's win, frequently still claims the 2020 election was stolen, a falsehood echoed by many of his supporters.

Here's a look at the sprawling web of allegations, criminal charges and references to people in Trump's orbit as unindicted co-conspirators.

DONALD TRUMP

The former president faces state charges in Georgia and federal charges in Washington over efforts to overturn his 2020 election loss and has been identified as an unindicted co-conspirator by investigators in Arizona and Michigan.

The Georgia charges came in a sprawling racketeering indictment in Fulton County in August that accused Trump and 18 others of participating in a wide-ranging scheme — that included the Republican elector effort — to illegally try to overturn his narrow loss in the state.

Trump is the only one charged in the federal indictment in Washington, but several close associates are recognizable as unindicted co-conspirators.

Trump has denied wrongdoing and the U.S. Supreme Court is weighing his arguments that he should be immune from prosecution. He has clinched his third straight Republican nomination for president.

RUDY GIULIANI

Racketeering and conspiracy are among the charges the former New York mayor and Trump-aligned attorney faces in Georgia. In Arizona, the charges against him have not yet been made public.

In Michigan, a state investigator has testified that Giuliani is among several high-profile unindicted co-conspirators in a case against Republicans who signed elector certificates falsely saying Trump had won the state.

He's also an unindicted co-conspirator in the federal indictment in Washington, which cites comments he made at the "Stop the Steal" rally prior to the Capitol riot.

His spokesman, Ted Goodman, said in a statement Thursday that the "continued weaponization of our justice system should concern every American as it does permanent, irrevocable harm to the country."

CHRISTINA BOBB

Bobb is a lawyer and conservative media personality charged in Arizona. She worked closely with Giuliani as he tried to persuade Arizona lawmakers to block the certification of the election results. She later raised money for a discredited audit of the election results in Maricopa County and covered the spectacle for One America News Network.

As lawyer for Trump, Bobb signed a letter stating that a "diligent search" for classified records had been conducted and that all such documents had been given back to the government before an FBI search revealed dozens of protected documents at his Mar-a-Lago residence.

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, April 26, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 305 ~ 73 of 89

She was recently tapped to oversee "election integrity" efforts at the Republican National Committee. Asked about Bobb's role with the RNC, Trump campaign spokesman Steven Cheung accused Democrats of "weaponization of the legal system."

BORIS EPSHTEYN

A longtime Trump aide, Epshteyn was charged in Arizona, where a grand jury accused him of assisting with the fake electors plan.

He's a lawyer who has been by Trump's side for some of the former president's own court appearances, including Thursday in New York.

Epshteyn was a principal surrogate in the 2016 presidential campaign, making frequent television appearances. He briefly served as a senior White House adviser before becoming an analyst for Sinclair Broadcast Group.

MARK MEADOWS

Trump's White House chief is charged in the sweeping Georgia racketeering indictment, but not in connection with the Republican elector meeting. Among other things, he participated in a January 2021 phone call between Trump and Georgia Secretary of State Brad Raffensperger during which the then-president urged the elections official to help "find" the votes needed to overturn his narrow loss in the state.

Meadows' charges in Arizona are not publicly known. He was also identified by the Michigan state investigator as an unindicted co-conspirator.

His attorney, George Terwilliger, referred to Wednesday's indictment in Arizona as a "blatantly political and politicized accusation and will be contested and defeated."

Meadows now works for the Conservative Policy Institute, a Washington think tank that describes his role as leading "strategic initiatives on Capitol Hill, with other partner organizations, and with grassroots activists across the country."

JOHN EASTMAN

A former dean of Chapman University's law school in Southern California, Eastman wrote a memo arguing that Trump could remain in power if then-Vice President Mike Pence overturned the results of the electoral certification during a joint session of Congress using the slates of Republican electors from the battleground states.

The charges against him in Georgia include racketeering and conspiracy, while the Arizona charges have not been made public. He's also named as an unindicted co-conspirator in the federal indictment, which quotes his remarks at the Jan. 6, 2021, "Stop the Steal" rally in Washington.

He has pleaded not guilty to the charges in Georgia and his lawyer Charles Burnham said he's innocent of the charges in Arizona.

JENNA ELLIS

Ellis was charged in the Georgia indictment after she appeared with Giuliani at a December 2020 hearing hosted by state Republican lawmakers at the Georgia Capitol during which false allegations of election fraud were made. She pleaded guilty in October to one felony count of aiding and abetting false statements and writings after reaching a deal with prosecutors. She wasn't charged in connection with the Republican electors efforts in Georgia.

It wasn't immediately clear whether she had a lawyer in Arizona who could comment on charges she faces there, which have not yet been made public.

MICHAEL ROMAN

A Trump campaign staffer and onetime White House aide, Roman was charged with several conspiracy counts related to the Republican elector meeting and the filing of the elector certificate in Georgia. He was also charged in Arizona.

Roman has pleaded not guilty to the charges in Georgia. It wasn't immediately clear whether he had a lawyer in Arizona yet.

KENNETH CHESEBRO

Chesebrow, a lawyer, worked with Republicans in multiple swing states to coordinate and execute the Trump elector plan. He was charged with racketeering and several conspiracy counts in relation to that

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, April 26, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 305 ~ 74 of 89

work in Georgia and in October reached a deal with prosecutors to plead guilty to one felony charge of conspiracy to commit filing false documents.

Chesebro is an unindicted co-conspirator in Trump's federal election indictment, which says he "assisted in devising and attempting to implement a plan to submit fraudulent slates of presidential electors to obstruct the certification proceeding."

He was also named in the Wisconsin civil lawsuit, and when he turned over documents to settle that suit he didn't admit liability but promised never to participate in similar efforts.

SIDNEY POWELL

A lawyer and unflinching Trump ally, Powell was charged with racketeering and conspiracy charges in Georgia but was not implicated in the elector scheme. The Fulton County indictment accused her of participating in an unauthorized breach of elections equipment in a rural Georgia county elections office. She pleaded guilty in October to six misdemeanors accusing her of conspiring to intentionally interfere with the performance of election duties after reaching a deal with prosecutors.

She's an unindicted co-conspirator in the federal election interference case, where prosecutors say she filed a lawsuit in Georgia that amplified false or unsupported claims of election fraud.

JEFFREY CLARK

Clark was a U.S. Justice Department official who championed Trump's false claims of election fraud. He was charged in Georgia with racketeering and criminal attempt to commit false statements and writings after he presented colleagues with a draft letter pushing Georgia officials to convene a special legislative session on the election results.

He has pleaded not guilty to the charges in Georgia.

He was also one of the unindicted co-conspirators in the federal election indictment against Trump.

REPUBLICAN TRUMP ELECTORS

In addition to Arizona, criminal charges have been filed against Republicans who presented themselves as electors in Michigan, Georgia and Nevada. Wisconsin Republicans who signed elector certificates reached a settlement in a civil lawsuit, admitting their actions were part of an effort to overturn Biden's victory. No charges have been filed in Pennsylvania or New Mexico, with the attorney general in the latter saying there's no avenue for prosecution under state law.

Hamas again raises the possibility of a 2-state compromise. Israel and its allies aren't convinced

By The Associated Press undefined

The Palestinian militant group Hamas has said for more than 15 years that it could accept a two-state compromise with Israel — at least, a temporary one. But Hamas has also refused to say that it would recognize Israel or renounce its armed fight against it.

For Israel and many others, especially in the wake of Hamas' Oct. 7 attack that spurred the latest war in Gaza, that's proof that Hamas is still irrevocably bent on destroying Israel. The United States and European countries have joined Israel in shunning the militant group they have labeled a terrorist organization.

For some observers, Hamas has signaled a potential pragmatism that could open a path to a solution. But the group's vagueness as it tries to square the circle of its own positions has fueled suspicion.

Hamas offers long-term "truces" instead of outright peace. It has dropped open pledges to destroy Israel but endorses "armed resistance" — and says it will fight for liberation of all "the land of Palestine."

In the latest iteration of its stance, senior Hamas official Khalil al-Hayya told The Associated Press in an interview on Wednesday the group would lay down its weapons and convert into a political party if an independent Palestinian state is established in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip along the pre-1967-borders.

Though he again spoke of a truce, it was also a rare suggestion that Hamas could dissolve its armed wing.

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has vowed to destroy Hamas after the militants' Oct. 7 attack on southern Israel. Netanyahu has repeatedly rejected the creation of a Palestinian state and, critics say, worked to severely undermine the West Bank-based Palestinian Authority that has recognized Israel.

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, April 26, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 305 ~ 75 of 89

Here's a look at some of the nuances in Hamas' positions, in the past and now:

UNITY TALKS

In 2006, after Hamas won Palestinian legislative elections, it entered talks with Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas over a unity government. Amid the negotiations, Ismail Haniyeh — who today is Hamas' top political leader — said the group supported a Palestinian state along the 1967 lines "at this stage, but in return for a cease-fire, not recognition."

The two sides eventually reached a deal under which the unity government, including Hamas, would "respect" the Palestinian Authority's peace agreements with Israel. It was a formula that allowed Hamas to avoid accepting the accords and recognizing Israel.

Israel and the U.S. refused to recognize the unity government and imposed economic sanctions. The government quickly collapsed amid fighting between Hamas and Abbas' Fatah faction — ending with Hamas' 2007 takeover of Gaza.

In 2008, then-political head of Hamas Khaled Mashaal said it would accept a state in the West Bank and Gaza along with a 10-year truce with Israel. He rejected ever recognizing Israel, but he suggested Hamas would accede to a permanent peace accord with Israel if Palestinians accepted one in a referendum.

Hamas and Abbas' PA have had multiple rounds of unity talks ever since, often emerging with variations in phrasing on Hamas' stance. Every time, unity efforts have been wrecked by the factions' own bitter rivalry over power and the West's refusal to accept any government that includes Hamas unless it expressly recognizes Israel.

THE NEW 2017 'CHARTER'

After years of internal discussions, Hamas came out with a new political platform in 2017 that presented a dramatic change in tone from its original charter, issued in 1988.

The 1988 charter presented the Israeli-Palestinian conflict in stark religious terms. It spoke of "our struggle against the Jews," insisted the land belonged to Muslims and declared that jihad, or holy war, was the only way to solve the Palestinian question.

The 2017 document dropped much of that religious and antisemitic rhetoric and instead presented its cause in terms of human rights, including the right of refugees to return and the right to resist occupation. It said its fight wasn't against Jews but against Zionism, which it called a "colonial" project that had taken Palestinians' land and repressed their freedoms.

The document enshrined Hamas's quasi-acceptance of a state in the West Bank and Gaza Strip. It said such a state, with Jerusalem as its capital and the return of Palestinian refugees, was a "national consensus."

Still, it said it rejects "any alternative to the full and complete liberation of Palestine, from the river to the sea." That area includes what is now Israel, and in the context of Hamas' agenda, such language is seen by Israel as a call for its destruction.

Strict new EPA rules would force coal-fired power plants to capture emissions or shut down

By MATTHEW DALY Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Coal-fired power plants would be forced to capture smokestack emissions or shut down under a rule issued Thursday by the Environmental Protection Agency.

New limits on greenhouse gas emissions from fossil fuel-fired electric plants are the Biden administration's most ambitious effort yet to roll back planet-warming pollution from the power sector, the nation's second-largest contributor to climate change. The rules are a key part of President Joe Biden's pledge to eliminate carbon pollution from the electricity sector by 2035 and economy-wide by 2050.

The rule was among four measures targeting coal and natural gas plants that the EPA said would provide "regulatory certainty" to the power industry and encourage them to make investments to transition "to a clean energy economy." The measures include requirements to reduce toxic wastewater pollutants from coal-fired plants and to safely manage coal ash in unlined storage ponds.

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, April 26, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 305 ~ 76 of 89

EPA Administrator Michael Regan said the rules will reduce pollution and improve public health while supporting the reliable, long-term supply of electricity that America needs.

"One of the biggest environmental challenges facing our nation is man-made pollution that damages our air, our water and our land," Regan said in a speech at Howard University. "Not only is this pollution a major threat to public health — it's pushing our planet to the brink."

Regan called the power plant rules "a defining moment" for his agency as it works to "build a cleaner and healthier future for all of us."

The plan is likely to be challenged by industry groups and Republican-leaning states. They have repeatedly accused the Democratic administration of overreach on environmental regulations and have warned of a looming reliability crisis for the electric grid. The rules issued Thursday are among at least a half-dozen EPA rules limiting power plant emissions and wastewater pollution.

Environmental groups hailed the EPA's latest action as urgently needed to protect against the devastating harms of climate change.

The power plant rule marks the first time the federal government has restricted carbon dioxide emissions from existing coal-fired power plants. The rule also would force future electric plants fueled by coal or gas to control up to 90% of their carbon pollution. The new standards will avoid 1.38 billion metric tons of carbon pollution through 2047, equivalent to the annual emissions of 328 million gas cars, the EPA said, and will provide hundreds of billions of dollars in climate and health benefits, measured in fewer premature deaths, asthma cases and lost work or school days.

Coal plants that plan to stay open beyond 2039 would have to cut or capture 90% of their carbon dioxide emissions by 2032, the EPA said. Plants that expect to retire by 2039 would face a less stringent standard but still would have to capture some emissions. Coal plants that are set to retire by 2032 would not be subject to the new rules.

Rich Nolan, president and CEO of the National Mining Association, said that through the latest rules, "the EPA is systematically dismantling the reliability of the U.S. electric grid."

He accused Biden, Regan and other officials of "ignoring our energy reality and forcing the closure of well-operating coal plants that repeatedly come to the rescue during times of peak demand. The repercussions of this reckless plan will be felt across the country by all Americans."

Regan denied that the rules were aimed at shutting down the coal sector, but he acknowledged in proposing the power plant rule last year that, "We will see some coal retirements."

The proposal relies on technologies to limit carbon pollution that the industry itself has said are viable and available, Regan said. "Multiple power companies have indicated that (carbon capture and storage) is a viable technology for the power sector today, and they are currently pursuing those CCS projects," he told reporters Wednesday.

Coal provided about 16% of U.S. electricity last year, down from about 45% in 2010. Natural gas provides about 43% of U.S. electricity, with the remainder from nuclear energy and renewables such as wind, solar and hydropower.

Dan Brouillette, president and CEO of the Edison Electric Institute, which represents U.S. investor-owned electric companies, said he was "disappointed" that the EPA "did not address the concerns we raised about carbon capture and storage." While promising, the technology "is not yet ready for full-scale, economy-wide deployment," said Brouillette, who served as energy secretary in President Donald Trump's administration.

The rules initially included steps to curb emissions from existing natural gas plants, but Regan delayed that aspect of the rules until at least next year after some moderate Democrats and the gas industry warned that the plan could affect grid reliability. Regan also said he wanted to address complaints from environmental justice groups that the earlier plan allowed too much toxic air pollution from gas-fired plants near low-income and minority neighborhoods.

Even so, the rules issued Thursday complete "a historic grand slam" of major actions by the Biden administration to reduce carbon pollution, said David Doniger, a climate and clean energy expert at the Natural

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, April 26, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 305 ~ 77 of 89

Resources Defense Council. The first and most important action was passage of the 2022 climate law, officially known as the Inflation Reduction Act, he said, followed by separate EPA rules targeting tailpipe emissions from cars and trucks and methane emissions from oil and gas drilling.

Together, the climate law and the suite of EPA rules "are the biggest reductions in carbon pollution we've ever made and will put the country on the pathway to zero out carbon emissions," Doniger said.

The nation still faces challenges in eliminating carbon from transportation, heavy industry and more, said Abigail Dillen, president of the environmental group Earthjustice, "but we can't make progress on any of it without cleaning up the power plants."

Jim Matheson, CEO of the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association, called the EPA rule "unlawful, unrealistic and unachievable," adding that it faced a certain court challenge. The rule disregards the Supreme Court's 2022 decision that limited the agency's ability to regulate carbon pollution under the Clean Air Act, Matheson said.

"This barrage of new EPA rules ignores our nation's ongoing electric reliability challenges and is the wrong approach at a critical time for our nation's energy future," said Matheson, whose association represents 900 local electric cooperatives across the country.

The EPA rules would not mandate use of equipment to capture and store carbon emissions — a technology that is expensive and still being developed. Instead, the agency would set caps on carbon dioxide pollution that plant operators would have to meet. Some natural gas plants could start blending gas with other fuel sources that do not emit carbon, although specific actions would be left to the industry.

Still, the regulation is expected to lead to greater use of carbon capture equipment. Only a handful of projects are operating in the country despite years of research.

The EPA also tightened rules aimed at reducing wastewater pollution from coal-fired power plants and preventing harm from toxic pits of coal ash, a waste byproduct of burning coal.

Coal ash contains cancer-causing substances like arsenic and mercury that can leach into the ground, drinking water and nearby rivers and streams, harming people and killing fish. The waste is commonly stored in ponds near power plants. The EPA issued rules in 2015 to regulate active and new ponds at operating facilities, seven years after a disaster in Kingston, Tennessee, that flooded two rivers with toxic waste and destroyed property.

Environmental groups challenged that rule, arguing it left a large amount of coal ash waste unregulated by the federal government. The rule issued Thursday forces owners to safely close inactive coal ash ponds and clean up contamination.

A separate rule will reduce toxic wastewater pollution by 660 million pounds annually, according to federal officials. It's a reversal of the Republican Trump administration's push to loosen coal plant wastewater standards.

The Biden rule comes nearly a decade after former President Barack Obama first tried to set limits on carbon pollution from U.S. power plants. His 2015 Clean Power Plan was blocked by the Supreme Court and later rolled back by Trump. Trump's plan was also blocked by a federal court.

Reggie Bush plans to continue his fight against the NCAA after the return of his Heisman Trophy

By GREG BEACHAM AP Sports Writer

LOS ANGELES (AP) — Reggie Bush is overjoyed to have his Heisman Trophy once again.

Now he wants his reputation back as well.

The former Southern California tailback says the return of his Heisman is the biggest step yet in what he sees as his fight against the NCAA to restore his good name and his records from his incredible college football career. Bush pointedly said he "never cheated" during his three seasons at USC.

"There was never a doubt in my mind that it would come," Bush said. "Because I know the truth is on my side."

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, April 26, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 305 ~ 78 of 89

Bush and his family celebrated the restoration of his Heisman honors Thursday during a news conference atop the venerable Coliseum, where Bush played for the Trojans before his 11-year NFL career. Bush and his three children held up the trophy together while his wife, mother and many supporters cheered.

Bush praised the Heisman Trust for his reinstatement, but the former tailback and his attorneys made it clear their fight against the NCAA has not ended. Bush indicated he doesn't plan to drop his defamation lawsuit filed last year against the NCAA over the governing body's 2021 characterization of the circumstances that led to Bush's troubles.

"It was more of being labelled a cheater," Bush said. "The trophy ... being taken away from me (was painful), but being labelled a cheater was far worse, because I've never cheated, and there's no proof of that, that I've cheated."

Bush won the Heisman in 2005, but forfeited it in 2010 after USC was hit with massive sanctions partly related to Bush's dealings with two aspiring sports marketers. The Heisman Trust restored the honor and returned the trophy to Bush in Jacksonville, Florida, on Wednesday, citing fundamental changes in the structure of college athletics over the past 14 years.

The NCAA also vacated 14 wins by the Trojans and wiped many of Bush's achievements from the record books in its sanctions. That decision still infuriates Bush, who clearly hopes his lawsuit and public pressure can force the governing body to change its stance.

"This is a clarion call to the NCAA to do the right thing, to get on the right side of history," attorney Ben Crump said.

Bush, whose NCAA-mandated disassociation from USC ended in 2020, hopes to see his retired No. 5 on the Coliseum peristyle this fall. He also hopes to lead coach Lincoln Riley's team out of the Coliseum tunnel, accepting the honor given to top former Trojans.

But Bush says he won't be satisfied until his name is cleared as well.

"You can't get to this, or a national championship, by cheating," Bush said. "I promise you that."

Venice tests a 5-euro entry fee for day-trippers as the Italian city grapples with overtourism

By COLLEEN BARRY Associated Press

VENICE, Italy (AP) — Under the gaze of the world's media, the fragile lagoon city of Venice launched a pilot program Thursday to charge day-trippers a 5-euro (\$5.35) entry fee that authorities hope will discourage visitors from arriving on peak days and make the city more livable for its dwindling residents.

Visitors arriving at Venice's main train station were greeted with large signs listing the 29 dates through July of the plan's test phase that also designated separate entrances for tourists, and residents, students and workers.

"We need to find a new balance between the tourists and residents," said Simone Venturini, the city's top tourism official. "We need to safeguard the spaces of the residents, of course, and we need to discourage the arrival of day-trippers on some particular days."

Not all residents, however, are persuaded of the efficacy of the new system in dissuading mass tourism, insisting that only a resurgence in the population will restore balance to a city where narrow alleyways and water buses are often clogged with tourists.

Hundreds of Venetians protested against the program, marching festively though the city's main bus terminal behind banners reading "No to Tickets, Yes to Services and Housing." Protesters scuffled briefly with police with riot gear who blocked them from entering the city, before changing course and entering over another bridge escorted by plainclothes police officers. The demonstration wrapped up peacefully in a piazza.

Tourists arriving at the main station encountered almost as many journalists as stewards on hand to politely guide anyone unaware of the new requirements through the process of downloading the QR code to pay the fee.

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, April 26, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 305 ~ 79 of 89

Arianna Cecilia, a tourist from Rome visiting Venice for the first time, said she thought it was "strange" to have to pay to enter a city in her native country, and be funneled through separate entrance ways for tourists. She and her boyfriend were staying in nearby Treviso, and so downloaded the QR code as required. But she was still caught off-guard while soaking in her first view ever of Venice's canals by the sight of the entrance signs and her boyfriend telling her to get out the ticket.

On the other side of the entrance ways, workers in yellow vests carried out random checks at the train station. Transgressors face fines of 50 to 300 euros (\$53 to \$320), but officials said "common sense" was being applied for the launch.

The requirement applies only for people arriving between 8:30 a.m. and 4 p.m. Outside of those hours, access is free and unchecked.

Venice has long suffered under the pressure of overtourism, and officials hope that the pilot project can help provide more exact figures to better manage the phenomenon.

The city can track the number of hotel visitors, which last year numbered 4.6 million and is down 16% from pre-pandemic highs. But the number of day visitors, which make up the majority of the crowds in Venice, could only be estimated until recently.

A Smart Control Room set up during the pandemic has been tracking arrivals from cellphone data, roughly confirming pre-pandemic estimates of 25 million to 30 million arrivals a year, said Michele Zuin, the city's top economic official. That includes both day-trippers and overnight guests.

But Zuin said the data is incomplete.

"It's clear we will get more reliable data from the contribution" being paid by day-trippers, he said.

Venturini said the city is strained when the number of day-trippers reaches 30,000 to 40,000. On peak days, local police set up one-way traffic for pedestrians to keep the crowds moving.

Residents opposing the day-tripper tax insist that the solution to Venice's woes are to boost the resident population and the services they need, limiting short-term rentals to make available more housing and attract families back from the mainland.

Last year, Venice passed a telling milestone when the number of tourist beds exceeded for the first time the number of official residents, which is now below 50,000 in the historic center with its picturesque canals.

"Putting a ticket to enter a city will not decrease not even by one single unit the number of visitors that are coming," said Tommaso Cacciari, an activist who organized a protest Thursday against the measure.

"You pay a ticket to take the metro, to go to a museum, an amusement park. You don't pay a ticket to enter a city. This is the last symbolic step of a project of an idea of this municipal administration to kick residents out of Venice," he said.

Venice Mayor Luigi Brugnaro declared the launch day, coinciding with an Italian holiday, a success, registering 15,700 paying visitors, 50% more than anticipated.

More than 97,000 others had downloaded a QR code denoting an exemption, including to work in Venice or as a resident of the Veneto region. Hotels in Venice, including in mainland districts like Marghera or Mestre, provided a QR code for visitors to attest to their stay, which includes a hotel tax — accounting for 40,000 of those.

Venturini, the tourist official, said that interest in Venice's pilot program has been keen from other places suffering from mass tourism, including other Italian art cities, and municipalities abroad such as Barcelona, Spain, and Amsterdam.

But Marina Rodino, who has lived in Venice for 30 years, doesn't see the fee as the cure-all. Neighboring apartments in her residential building near the famed Rialto Bridge once inhabited by families are now short-term apartment rentals.

The corner butcher shop closed. Yet she noted that the new entrance fee requirement will still allow young people to flood the city in the evening for the traditional aperitivo, which can grow rowdy.

She was passing out mock European Union passports for "Venice, Open City," underlining the irony of the new system, and challenging its legal standing with citations from the Italian Constitution guaranteeing its citizens the right to "move or reside freely in any part of the national territory."

"This is not a natural oasis. This is not a museum. It is not Pompeii. It is a city, where we need to fight so the houses are inhabited by families, and stores reopen. That is what would counter this wild tourism," Rodino said.

Chef José Andrés says aid workers killed by Israeli airstrikes represented the 'best of humanity'

By ELLEN KNICKMEYER and REBECCA SANTANA Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — The seven World Central Kitchen aid workers killed by Israeli airstrikes represented the "best of humanity" and risked everything "to feed people they did not know and will never meet," José Andrés, the celebrity chef who founded the organization, told mourners who gathered Thursday to honor the dead.

Speaking at Washington National Cathedral, Andrés said there was no excuse for the killings and he called for an investigation into the deaths. He appeared to struggle at times to maintain his composure, his words focused on the lives and contributions of the aid workers as he pleaded for greater compassion.

"The seven souls we mourn today were there so that hungry people could eat," said Andrés, reading aloud their names. "Their examples should inspire us to do better, to be better."

The workers were killed April 1 when munitions fired from Israeli armed drones ripped through vehicles in their convoy as they left one of World Central Kitchen's warehouses: Palestinian Saifeddin Issam Ayad Abutaha; Britons John Chapman, James Kirby and James Henderson; dual U.S.-Canadian citizen Jacob Flickinger; Australian Lalzawmi Frankcom; and Polish citizen Damiam Sobol.

Hanging on the altar behind Andrés were flags of the slain humanitarian workers' home countries, alongside the red, green, black and white Palestinian flag. More than 500 mourners sat in pews below the cathedral's soaring stained glass windows.

Andrés spoke in depth about each one and their contributions to the work of feeding people suffering through disaster and deprivation — human-made and natural — around the world.

He said Chapman was "brave, selfless and strong" and had the ability to make people around him feel "loved and protected."

Andrés said Flickinger was a problem-solver, "exactly what you need" in the chaos of a disaster zone and Frankcom gave "joy to others even more than she gave food."

He talked of how Henderson had taught first aid in Ukraine and was an avid rugby player. He said Kirby, known to friends as "Kirbs," was driven to help people in need. And he said a town in Turkey had named a street after Sobol, in honor of his work there after an earthquake.

Andrés noted that Abutaha's family was unable to attend the memorial, and he read from a message sent by the 25-year-old's brother that called the aid workers "heroes" and urged World Central Kitchen to continue its work in Gaza and across the globe, "carrying on the spirit of the fallen, and the resilience of the Palestinian people."

At times, Andrés spoke emotionally about the organization's mission and why aid workers do what they do.

"We stand next to communities as they feed themselves, nourish themselves, heal themselves. People don't want our pity. They want our respect. Our only way to show respect is facing the mayhem alongside them," he said. "We remind them by showing up that they are not alone in the darkness."

After an unusually swift Israeli investigation, Israel said the military officials involved in the attack had violated policy by acting based on a single grainy photo that one officer had contended — incorrectly — showed one of the seven workers was armed. The Israeli military dismissed two officers and reprimanded three others.

"I know we all have many unanswered questions about what happened and why. There is no excuse for these killings," Andrés told mourners, demanding an investigation. "The official explanation is not good enough."

The aid workers, whose trip had been coordinated with Israeli officials, are among more than 220 hu-

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, April 26, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 305 ~ 81 of 89

humanitarian workers killed in the Israel-Hamas war that began Oct. 7, according to the United Nations. That includes at least 30 killed in the line of duty.

The international prominence and popularity of Andrés and his nonprofit work galvanized widespread outrage over the killings of the group's workers. The deaths intensified demands from the administration and others that Israel's military change how it operates in Hamas-controlled Gaza to spare aid workers and Palestinian civilians in the territory who are facing a humanitarian crisis and desperately need aid from relief organizations as the U.N. warns of looming famine.

World Central Kitchen, along with several other humanitarian aid agencies, temporarily suspended work in the territory after the attack. "We haven't given up," World Central Kitchen spokesperson Linda Roth said last week. "We are in funeral mode right now."

Douglas Emhoff, husband of Vice President Kamala Harris, and Kurt Campbell, the deputy secretary of state, were among those at the event, joined by diplomats from more than 30 countries, along with representatives from the State Department and the U.S. Agency for International Development.

Democratic Sen. Chris Van Hollen of Maryland, one of the most active lawmakers pushing President Joe Biden to condition military aid on improved Israeli treatment of aid workers and Palestinian civilians, joined the mourners as a lone bagpiper played.

Biden sent a letter that was read privately to the families before the service, the White House said.

The National Enquirer was the go-to American tabloid for many years. Donald Trump helped change that

By DAVID BAUDER AP Media Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — Catch and kill. Checkbook journalism. Secret deals. Friends helping friends.

Even by National Enquirer standards, testimony by its former publisher David Pecker at Donald Trump's hush money trial this week has revealed an astonishing level of corruption at America's best-known tabloid and may one day be seen as the moment it effectively died.

"It just has zero credibility," said Lachlan Cartwright, executive editor of the Enquirer from 2014 to 2017. "Whatever sort of credibility it had was totally damaged by what happened in court this week."

On Thursday, Pecker was back on the witness stand to tell more about the arrangement he made to boost Trump's presidential candidacy in 2016, tear down his rivals and silence any revelations that may have damaged him.

THE ENQUIRER HELPED FUEL THE RISE OF TABLOID CULTURE

However its stories danced on the edge of credulity, the Enquirer was a cultural fixture, in large part because of genius marketing. As many Americans moved to the suburbs in the 1960s, the tabloid staked its place on racks at supermarket checkout lines, where people could see headlines about UFO abductions or medical miracles while waiting for their milk and bread to be bagged.

Celebrity news was a staple, and the Enquirer paid sources around Hollywood to learn what the stars' publicists wouldn't say. It may have been true. It may have had just a whiff of truth. It was rarely boring.

When the tabloid paid a mourner to secretly snap a picture of Elvis Presley in his coffin for its front cover, that week's issue sold 6.9 million copies, according to the 2020 documentary, "Scandalous: The Untold Story of the National Enquirer."

For all the ridicule the tabloid received from "serious" journalists, Enquirer reporters hustled and broke some genuine news. A memorable picture of the married Sen. Gary Hart enjoying a tropical holiday alongside a woman he was involved with destroyed a presidential candidacy and brought politicians into the Enquirer's celebrity world. The tab was considered for a Pulitzer Prize after revealing a sex scandal involving U.S. Sen. John Edwards in the early 2000s.

During his celebrity days in the 1990s, Trump was a fixture in its pages, and often a source for news. When Pecker bought the Enquirer in 1999, one of his first calls was from Trump, who said, "Congratulations — you bought a great magazine," the former executive testified this week.

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, April 26, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 305 ~ 82 of 89

As the "Scandalous" documentary illustrates, some of Pecker's unsavory practices predated his deal with Trump. The Enquirer paid for the story of Gigi Goyette, an actress who claimed she had an affair with Arnold Schwarzenegger, dangling the prospect of a potential book and movie. Then it kept silent as Schwarzenegger, who denied the affair, ran for California governor. The arrangement became known as "catch and kill."

Pecker said that in a summer 2015 meeting with Trump and lawyer Michael Cohen, he outlined how he would help the presidential candidate, a deal that included the alleged "catch and kill" arrangements with Karen McDougal and Stormy Daniels.

"They weren't put into writing," Pecker testified about his promises to Trump. "It was just an agreement among friends."

Throughout the campaign, National Enquirer headlines made no secret who the tabloid was backing: "Donald Trump: The Man Behind the Legend," read one. "Donald Trump: Healthiest Individual Ever Elected," was another.

The Trump-boosting covers baffled Steve Coz, a former top Enquirer editor, when he saw them at his neighborhood supermarket in Florida. "That is so foreign to anybody who worked at the National Enquirer," Coz said in the documentary.

NOT THE TYPICAL JOURNALISTIC PRACTICES

Cartwright, lured to a job at the Enquirer by his friend, Dylan Howard, with a promise to break stories like the Edwards scandal, instead found that material about one of the most colorful, compromised politicians in recent history was off limits. Meanwhile, Bill and Hillary Clinton were frequent targets of unflattering stories; Pecker called that a double win, since it helped Trump and anti-Clinton stories were popular with Enquirer readers.

Even Cartwright said he was surprised to learn in Pecker's testimony about the role Cohen played in helping to manufacture outlandishly false stories about Trump's Republican primary rivals. Ben Carson was described as a "bungling surgeon and "brain butcher." Marco Rubio headlines referenced a "love child" and "cocaine connection." Ted Cruz supposedly was having five secret affairs and his father was alleged to have a connection with JFK assassin Lee Harvey Oswald.

Cartwright remembers wondering with friends at the time about what was going on, only to be told that "you're sounding like a conspiracy theorist."

The stories were wild, nothing truthful about them. But thousands of voters saw them, and when the rumors hit the mainstream media, the opponents — particularly an angry Cruz — were forced to address them.

"This is the ground zero of fake news," said Cartwright, now a correspondent for The Hollywood Reporter.

It has been years since an Enquirer story made an impact. In 2019, the tabloid published texts alleging an extramarital affair by Amazon founder Jeff Bezos — also owner of The Washington Post, a thorn in then-President Trump's side. But it backfired when Bezos publicly revealed that the Enquirer had threatened to publish damning photos if the Post didn't halt an investigation into Pecker's American Media Inc. Pecker lost his job as head of the Enquirer's parent company in 2020, and it was eventually sold.

Celebrity news is widespread in the media today. TMZ has largely assumed the Enquirer's mantle with aggressive celebrity coverage and a willingness to pay for it, with more journalistic rigor. Political talk is also easy to find on the web, and so is disinformation.

The Enquirer averaged 238,000 newsstand sales each week during the last six months of election year 2016, according to the Alliance for Audited Media. During the last six months of 2023, its sales averaged just under 56,500. It limps along: The lead story on its website Thursday was "The Untold Story: Marko Stout's Journey From Obscurity to Art World Phenom."

"It's really a shadow of its former self," Cartwright said. "David Pecker's legacy will be that he totally destroyed that tabloid."

The Latest: Supreme Court arguments conclude in Trump immunity case

WASHINGTON (AP) — The U.S. Supreme Court on Thursday took up Donald Trump's bid to avoid prosecution over his efforts to overturn his 2020 election loss to Democrat Joe Biden.

Trump's lawyers argue that former presidents are entitled to absolute immunity for their official acts. Otherwise, they say, politically motivated prosecutions of former occupants of the Oval Office would become routine and presidents couldn't function as the commander in chief if they had to worry about criminal charges.

Lower courts have rejected those arguments, including a unanimous three-judge panel on an appeals court in Washington. And even if the high court resoundingly follows suit, the timing of its decision may be as important as the outcome.

That's because Trump, the presumptive 2024 Republican presidential nominee, has been pushing to delay the trial until after the November election, and the later the justices issue their decision, the more likely he is to succeed.

The court typically issues its last opinions by the end of June, which is roughly four months before the election.

Currently:

- What to listen for during Supreme Court arguments on Donald Trump and presidential immunity
- The Supreme Court will decide whether Trump is immune from federal prosecution. Here's what's next
- What to know in the Supreme Court case about immunity for former President Trump
- Trump is in New York for the hush money trial while the Supreme Court hears his immunity case in DC
- Follow the AP's coverage of the U.S. Supreme Court at <https://apnews.com/hub/us-supreme-court>

Here's the latest:

ARGUMENTS CONCLUDE

Arguments before the U.S. Supreme Court have ended after more than 2 1/2 hours in Donald Trump's bid to avoid prosecution over his efforts to overturn his 2020 election loss to Joe Biden.

The arguments had been scheduled to last for an hour but ran more than double the allotted time.

The case delved deep into the nuances of immunity, and key questions of when the high court might rule remain unclear.

The court usually releases its opinions by the end of June, and the timing of the ruling could be as important as the outcome.

At least five justices appeared likely to reject the claim of absolute immunity, but some also suggested that former presidents might have some immunity.

If their ruling reflects that and requires lower courts to then sort out whether immunity applies to Trump, it could push the trial past the November election.

'A RULE FOR THE AGES'

The Supreme Court justices are keenly aware their decision on whether former commanders in chief have immunity will have huge implications not just for this case, but also far beyond this prosecution.

During arguments Thursday in Donald Trump's bid to avoid prosecution over his efforts to overturn his 2020 election loss, Justice Neil Gorsuch told special counsel team lawyer Michael Dreeben they are "writing a rule for the ages."

Justice Brett Kavanaugh concurred, adding: "This case has huge implications for the presidency, for the future of the presidency, for the future of the country."

Dreeben is working hard throughout the arguments to make clear that a prosecution in this case would not open the floodgates to other criminal charges against future ex-presidents.

In response to a question about drone strikes authorized by former President Barack Obama, Dreeben said the U.S. government already analyzed that fact pattern and concluded that there was "no risk of prosecution for that course of activity."

THE HEART (AND THE TIMING) OF THE CASE

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, April 26, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 305 ~ 84 of 89

As Supreme Court arguments over immunity for Donald Trump stretched near the two-hour mark Thursday, special counsel team attorney Michael Dreeben got to the heart of the government's case.

He ticked through the acts Trump is charged with, including a slate to elevate fake electors in battleground states, that he said were undertaken in Trump's status as a presidential candidate and not a president.

Dreeben did, however, note that Trump's interactions with Justice Department officials in his administration were perhaps protected acts.

The justices appeared highly skeptical of Trump's claims of absolute immunity, but with arguments still underway, the essential question of when they might decide the case remains unclear.

The timing of their ruling could be as important as the outcome. At least five justices appeared likely to reject the claim of absolute immunity, but some also suggested that former presidents might have some immunity.

If their ruling reflects that and requires lower courts to then sort out whether immunity applies to Trump, it could push the trial past the November election. The court usually releases opinions by the end of June.

ONE-LEGGED STOOLS, HAM SANDWICHES AND AN ECLIPSE

In oral arguments that have involved a lot of elevated legal jargon, the Supreme Court justices also sneaked in a few fun metaphors Thursday during Donald Trump's bid to avoid prosecution over his efforts to overturn his 2020 election loss to Joe Biden.

Striking a skeptical note while questioning Trump lawyer D. John Sauer, Chief Justice John Roberts argued that expunging from the indictment acts that are official rather than personal would hobble the case, making it a "one-legged stool."

Later, in conversation with special counsel team lawyer Michael Dreeben, Justice Samuel Alito brought up "the old saw about indicting a ham sandwich." He was referring to the belief that indictments are easy to secure, and that they don't necessarily indicate any likelihood of guilt.

Alito asked Dreeben whether he had come across a lot of cases in which a federal prosecutor wanted to indict a case and the grand jury refused. Dreeben said there are such cases, before Alito cut him off.

"Every once in a while there's an eclipse, too," Alito said, drawing some laughs in the courtroom.

SPECIAL COUNSEL'S TEAM IS UP BEFORE THE COURT

The team under Special Counsel Jack Smith, which wrote that a lack of previous criminal charges "underscores the unprecedented nature" of what Donald Trump is accused of, is up before the Supreme Court in Trump's bid to avoid prosecution over his efforts to overturn his 2020 election loss to Democrat Joe Biden.

Michael Dreeben, a lawyer for the Smith team, said the court has never before recognized absolute immunity for a former president. "Such presidential immunity," he said, "has no foundation in the Constitution."

Justice Clarence Thomas asked Dreeben whether he was saying that there was no immunity even for official acts.

Dreeben said yes and also that impeachment and conviction before the Senate is not a prerequisite for a courtroom prosecution. Dreeben said there are plenty of checks to prevent politically motivated prosecutions.

Thomas said that other presidential acts in the past would have seemed ripe for prosecution and yet none occurred. Dreeben responded that the core distinction is that those other acts were not crimes.

Dreeben said the Smith team was not endorsing a system in which presidents would be exposed to prosecution for mistakes or bad judgments.

GORSUCH POSES FRIENDLY QUESTIONS

Justice Neil Gorsuch posed a line of questions Thursday that appeared friendly to arguments by Trump's lawyers in his bid to avoid prosecution over his efforts to overturn his 2020 election loss to Democrat Joe Biden.

Gorsuch suggested that if presidents fear they could be prosecuted after they leave office, they could begin preemptively pardoning themselves.

"We've never answered whether a president can do that. And happily, it's never been presented to us," he said.

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, April 26, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 305 ~ 85 of 89

But Justice Amy Coney Barrett took issue with a key argument of the Trump team — that under the Constitution, former presidents must be impeached and convicted before the Senate before they can be prosecuted in court.

Barrett said no one has ever suggested the justices would need to be impeached and convicted before they could be prosecuted. Trump lawyer D. John Sauer responded that under the Constitution, the sequence is only mandatory as it relates to former presidents.

JUSTICES POSE SCENARIOS AND EXPRESS SKEPTICISM

Some Supreme Court justices posed scenarios or expressed skepticism Thursday as arguments started in Donald Trump's bid to avoid prosecution over his efforts to overturn his 2020 election loss to Democrat Joe Biden.

Conservative Justice Samuel Alito said he considered it "implausible" that a president could legally order Navy SEALs to order the assassination of a political rival. That skepticism matters because the hypothetical is something the Trump team, which includes attorney D. John Sauer, has suggested could theoretically be protected from prosecution.

Conservative Justice Amy Coney Barrett asked Sauer a question that cut to the heart of the case, reading aloud allegations from the indictment and asking him to respond whether Trump's actions in each instance were private or official.

Trump's attorneys concede that immunity does not extend to personal actions but instead protects official acts. Sauer said he believed most of the acts are unquestionably official.

Chief Justice John Roberts, who could be a key swing vote, struck a skeptical note about the idea of expunging from the indictment acts that are official rather than personal, saying such a move would render the case a "one-legged stool."

Liberal Justice Ketanji Brown Jackson said Sauer was asking for a change in the immunity law. She raised Richard Nixon's pardon, asking, "I think that if everybody thought that presidents couldn't be prosecuted, then what was that about?"

Liberal Justice Elena Kagan noted the Founding Fathers did not insert an immunity clause for presidents into the Constitution — but, she said, "they knew how to."

THOMAS GETS FIRST QUESTION; SOTOMAYOR SKEPTICAL

Supreme Court Justice Clarence Thomas pressed Donald Trump's lawyer D. John Sauer at the outset of arguments Thursday, asking where the principle of absolute immunity comes from.

The question was the first during arguments at the Supreme Court in Trump's bid to avoid prosecution over his efforts to overturn his 2020 election loss to Democrat Joe Biden.

Sauer fell back quickly on a Supreme Court case that's core to the defense — a 1982 decision that held that former presidents are immune from civil lawsuits.

A skeptical Justice Sonia Sotomayor pointedly noted to Sauer that the indictment alleges that Trump acted for personal gain.

She said the Founding Fathers had contemplated the idea of immunity for presidents but had explicitly decided against it.

She made clear her opposition to the Trump legal team's position, saying she was having a hard time envisioning immunity for a president who creates and submits false documents, orders the assassination of a political rival, and any number of other criminal acts.

SUPREME COURT ARGUMENTS ARE UNDERWAY

First up on Thursday was D. John Sauer, making Donald Trump's argument that he's immune from criminal prosecution. A former Missouri solicitor general and onetime Supreme Court clerk, Sauer also represented Trump at the appeals court level.

Trump went to those arguments even though he wasn't required to be there, but he won't be in the audience at the Supreme Court today. He's required to be in New York for his hush money trial.

About 30 demonstrators gathered outside the Supreme Court before arguments, some wearing judicial robes with kangaroo masks and others holding signs like "Justice Delayed Is Justice Denied." That's an ap-

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, April 26, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 305 ~ 86 of 89

parent reference to the the timing of the high court's ultimate decision in the case, which could determine whether a trial can be held before the election in November.

TRUMP TAKES TO SOCIAL MEDIA BEFORE ARGUMENTS

Shortly before arguments were slated to begin, Trump fired off a few posts Thursday on his social media network.

In one, he declared in all caps, "WITHOUT PRESIDENTIAL IMMUNITY, IT WOULD BE IMPOSSIBLE FOR A PRESIDENT TO PROPERLY FUNCTION, PUTTING THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA IN GREAT AND EVERLASTING DANGER!"

Trump also said that without immunity, a president would just be "ceremonial" and the opposing political party "can extort and blackmail the President by saying that, 'if you don't give us everything we want, we will Indict you for things you did while in Office,' even if everything done was totally Legal and Appropriate."

EXPECT A FULL BENCH ON THE COURT

Of the nine justices hearing the case, three were nominated by Trump — Amy Coney Barrett, Neil Gorsuch and Brett Kavanaugh. But it's the presence of a justice confirmed decades before Trump's presidency, Justice Clarence Thomas, that's generated the most controversy.

Thomas's wife, Ginni Thomas, urged the reversal of the 2020 election results and then attended the rally that preceded the Capitol riot. That has prompted calls for the justice to step aside from several court cases involving Trump and Jan. 6.

But Thomas has ignored the calls, taking part in the unanimous court decision that found states cannot kick Trump off the ballot as well as last week's arguments over whether prosecutors can use a particular obstruction charge against Capitol riot defendants.

COURT HAS MULTIPLE PATHS TO DECIDE THE CASE

The justices will probably meet in private a short time after arguments to take a preliminary vote on the outcome. Chief Justice John Roberts would be a prime candidate to take on the opinion for the court, assuming he is in the majority.

They could simply reject Trump's immunity claim outright, permitting the prosecution to move forward and returning the case to U.S. District Judge Tanya Chutkan to set a trial date.

They could also reverse the lower courts by declaring for the first time that former presidents may not be prosecuted for conduct related to official acts during their time in office. Such a decision would stop the prosecution in its tracks.

There are other options, too, including ruling that former presidents do retain some immunity for their official actions but that, wherever that line is drawn, Trump's actions fall way beyond it.

Yet another possibility is that the court sends the case back to Chutkan with an assignment to decide whether the actions Trump is alleged to have taken to stay in power constitute official acts.

Hamas official says group would lay down its arms if an independent Palestinian state is established

By ABBY SEWELL Associated Press

ISTANBUL (AP) — A top Hamas political official told The Associated Press the Islamic militant group is willing to agree to a truce of five years or more with Israel and that it would lay down its weapons and convert into a political party if an independent Palestinian state is established along pre-1967 borders.

The comments by Khalil al-Hayya in an interview Wednesday came amid a stalemate in months of talks for a cease-fire in Gaza. The suggestion that Hamas would disarm appeared to be a significant concession by the militant group officially committed to Israel's destruction.

But it's unlikely Israel would consider such a scenario. It has vowed to crush Hamas following the deadly Oct. 7 attacks that triggered the war, and its current leadership is adamantly opposed to the creation of a Palestinian state on lands Israel captured in the 1967 Mideast war.

Al-Hayya, a high-ranking Hamas official who has represented the Palestinian militants in negotiations for

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, April 26, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 305 ~ 87 of 89

a cease-fire and hostage exchange, struck a sometimes defiant and other times conciliatory tone.

Speaking to the AP in Istanbul, Al-Hayya said Hamas wants to join the Palestine Liberation Organization, headed by the rival Fatah faction, to form a unified government for Gaza and the West Bank. He said Hamas would accept "a fully sovereign Palestinian state in the West Bank and Gaza Strip and the return of Palestinian refugees in accordance with the international resolutions," along Israel's pre-1967 borders.

If that happens, he said, the group's military wing would dissolve.

"All the experiences of people who fought against occupiers, when they became independent and obtained their rights and their state, what have these forces done? They have turned into political parties and their defending fighting forces have turned into the national army," he said.

Over the years, Hamas has sometimes moderated its public position with respect to the possibility of a Palestinian state alongside Israel. But its political program still officially "rejects any alternative to the full liberation of Palestine, from the river to the sea" — referring to the area reaching from the Jordan River to the Mediterranean Sea, which includes lands that now make up Israel.

Al-Hayya did not say whether his apparent embrace of a two-state solution would amount to an end to the Palestinian conflict with Israel or an interim step toward the group's stated goal of destroying Israel.

Ophir Falk, a foreign policy adviser to Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, declined to comment on Al-Hayya's comments, dismissing him as a "high-ranking terrorist." But he said Hamas had broken a previous truce with its Oct. 7 attack on southern Israel in which militants killed about 1,200 people, mostly civilians. Militants dragged some 250 hostages into the enclave.

Israel's ensuing bombardment and ground offensive have killed more than 34,000 Palestinians, most of them women and children, according to local health authorities, and displaced some 80% of Gaza's population of 2.3 million.

"Prime Minister Netanyahu's government set a mission to destroy Hamas' military and governing capabilities in Gaza, free the hostages and ensure that Gaza does not pose a threat to Israel and the rest of the civilized world in the future," he said. "Those goals will be achieved."

There was no immediate reaction from the PLO or the Fatah-led Palestinian Authority, the internationally recognized self-ruled government that Hamas drove out when it seized Gaza in 2007, a year after winning Palestinian parliamentary elections. After the Hamas takeover of Gaza, the Palestinian Authority was left with administering semi-autonomous pockets of the Israeli-occupied West Bank.

The Palestinian Authority hopes to establish an independent state in the West Bank, east Jerusalem and Gaza — areas captured by Israel in the 1967 Mideast war. While the international community overwhelmingly supports such a two-state solution, Netanyahu's hard-line government rejects it.

Nearly seven months into the war in Gaza, cease-fire negotiations have stalled. Israel is now preparing for an offensive in the southern city of Rafah, where more than 1 million Palestinians have fled to.

Israel says it has dismantled most of the initial two dozen Hamas battalions since the start of the war, but that the four remaining ones are holed up in Rafah. Israel argues that a Rafah offensive is necessary to achieve victory over Hamas.

Al-Hayya said such an offensive would not succeed in destroying Hamas. He said contacts between the political leadership outside and military leadership inside Gaza are "uninterrupted" by the war and "contacts, decisions and directions are made in consultation" between the two groups.

Israeli forces "have not destroyed more than 20% of (Hamas') capabilities, neither human nor in the field," he asserted. "If they can't finish (Hamas) off, what is the solution? The solution is to go to consensus."

In November, a weeklong cease-fire saw the release of more than 100 hostages in exchange for 240 Palestinian prisoners held in Israel. But talks for a longer-term truce and release of the remaining hostages are now frozen, with each side accusing the other of intransigence. Key interlocutor Qatar has said in recent days that it is undertaking a "reassessment" of its role as mediator.

Most of Hamas' top political officials, previously based in Qatar, have left the Gulf country in the past week and traveled to Turkey, where Hamas political leader Ismail Haniyeh met with Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan on Saturday. Al-Hayya denied a permanent move of the group's main political office is in

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, April 26, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 305 ~ 88 of 89

the works and said Hamas wants to see Qatar continue in its capacity as mediator in the talks.

Israeli and U.S. officials have accused Hamas of not being serious about a deal.

Al-Hayya denied this, saying Hamas has made concessions regarding the number of Palestinian prisoners it wants released in exchange for the remaining Israeli hostages. He said the group does not know exactly how many hostages remain in Gaza and are still alive.

But he said Hamas will not back down from its demands for a permanent cease-fire and full withdrawal of Israeli troops, both of which Israel has balked at. Israel says it will continue military operations until Hamas is definitively defeated and will retain a security presence in Gaza afterwards.

"If we are not assured the war will end, why would I hand over the prisoners?" the Hamas leader said of the remaining hostages.

Al-Hayya also implicitly threatened that Hamas would attack Israeli or other forces who might be stationed around a floating pier the U.S. is scrambling to build along Gaza's coastline to deliver aid by sea.

"We categorically reject any non-Palestinian presence in Gaza, whether at sea or on land, and we will deal with any military force present in these places, Israeli or otherwise ... as an occupying power," he said.

Al-Hayya said Hamas does not regret the Oct. 7 attacks, despite the destruction it has brought down on Gaza and its people. He denied that Hamas militants had targeted civilians during the attacks — despite overwhelming evidence to the contrary — and said the operation succeeded in its goal of bringing the Palestinian issue back to the world's attention.

And, he said, Israeli attempts to eradicate Hamas would ultimately fail to prevent future Palestinian armed uprisings.

"Let's say that they have destroyed Hamas. Are the Palestinian people gone?" he asked.

Today in History: April 26, Chernobyl nuclear plant disaster

By The Associated Press undefined

Today in History

Today is Friday, April 26, the 117th day of 2024. There are 249 days left in the year.

Today's Highlight in History:

On April 26, 1986, an explosion and fire at the Chernobyl nuclear power plant in Ukraine caused radioactive fallout to begin spewing into the atmosphere. (Dozens of people were killed in the immediate aftermath of the disaster while the long-term death toll from radiation poisoning is believed to number in the thousands.)

On this date:

In 1607, English colonists went ashore at present-day Cape Henry, Virginia, on an expedition to establish the first permanent English settlement in the Western Hemisphere.

In 1865, John Wilkes Booth, the assassin of President Abraham Lincoln, was surrounded by federal troops near Port Royal, Virginia, and killed.

In 1913, Mary Phagan, a 13-year-old worker at a Georgia pencil factory, was strangled; Leo Frank, the factory superintendent, was convicted of her murder and sentenced to death. (Frank's death sentence was commuted, but he was lynched by an anti-Semitic mob in 1915.)

In 1933, Nazi Germany's infamous secret police, the Gestapo, was created.

In 1964, the African nations of Tanganyika and Zanzibar merged to form Tanzania.

In 1968, the United States exploded beneath the Nevada desert a 1.3 megaton nuclear device called "Boxcar."

In 1977, the legendary nightclub Studio 54 had its opening night in New York.

In 1984, bandleader Count Basie, 79, died in Hollywood, Florida.

In 1994, voting began in South Africa's first all-race elections, resulting in victory for the African National Congress and the inauguration of Nelson Mandela as president.

In 2000, Vermont Gov. Howard Dean signed the nation's first bill allowing same-sex couples to form civil unions.

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, April 26, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 305 ~ 89 of 89

In 2009, the United States declared a public health emergency as more possible cases of swine flu surfaced from Canada to New Zealand; officials in Mexico City closed everything from concerts to sports matches to churches in an effort to stem the spread of the virus.

In 2012, former Liberian President Charles Taylor became the first head of state since World War II to be convicted by an international war crimes court as he was found guilty of arming Sierra Leone rebels in exchange for "blood diamonds" mined by slave laborers and smuggled across the border. (Taylor was sentenced to 50 years in prison.)

In 2013, singer George Jones, believed by many to be the greatest country crooner of all time, died in Nashville at age 81.

In 2018, comedian Bill Cosby was convicted of drugging and molesting Temple University employee Andrea Constand at his suburban Philadelphia mansion in 2004. (Cosby was later sentenced to three to 10 years in prison, but Pennsylvania's highest court threw out the conviction and released him from prison in June 2021, ruling that the prosecutor in the case was bound by his predecessor's agreement not to charge Cosby.)

In 2022, Russia pounded eastern and southern Ukraine as the U.S. promised to "keep moving heaven and earth" to get Kyiv the weapons it needed to repel the new offensive, despite Moscow's warnings that such support could trigger a wider war.

Today's Birthdays: Actor-comedian Carol Burnett is 91. R&B singer Maurice Williams is 86. Songwriter-musician Duane Eddy is 86. Actor Nancy Lenahan is 71. Actor Giancarlo Esposito is 66. Rock musician Roger Taylor (Duran Duran) is 64. Actor Joan Chen is 63. Rock musician Chris Mars (The Replacements) is 63. Actor-singer Michael Damian is 62. Actor Jet Li (lee) is 61. Actor-comedian Kevin James is 59. Author and former U.S. Poet Laureate Natasha Trethewey is 58. Actor Marianne Jean-Baptiste is 57. Rapper T-Boz (TLC) is 54. Former first lady Melania Trump is 54. Actor Shondrella Avery is 53. Actor Simbi Kali is 53. Country musician Jay DeMarcus (Rascal Flatts) is 53. Rock musician Jose Pasillas (Incubus) is 48. Actor Jason Earles is 47. Actor Leonard Earl Howze is 47. Actor Amin Joseph is 47. Actor Tom Welling is 47. Actor Pablo Schreiber is 46. Actor Nyambi Nyambi is 45. Actor Jordana Brewster is 44. Actor Stana Katic is 44. Actor Marnette Patterson is 44. Actor Channing Tatum is 44. Americana/roots singer-songwriter Lilly Hiatt is 40. Actor Emily Wickersham is 40. Actor Aaron Meeks is 38. New York Yankees outfielder Aaron Judge is 32.