

Groton Daily Independent

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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.
Catholic: SEAS Confession, 7:45-8:15 a.m., SEAS

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



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.

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1440

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Gaza Pier Construction

US Army engineers have started building (w/visuals) a floating pier for the passage of humanitarian aid off the coast of Gaza. The pier is expected to be completed by early May and is estimated to help unload as many as 2 million meals per day from the Mediterranean island of Cyprus.

More than 1,000 US troops are estimated to be involved in building the pier; however, the troops won't be setting foot onto the Gaza Strip as part of an order from President Joe Biden. A temporary causeway connecting the pier to the shore is being assembled at sea. At least 150 trucks would receive the aid using the causeway and distribute the meals to the enclave's roughly 2.3 million people. Large swaths of the population face starvation, according to international groups.

Separately, an Egyptian delegation arrived in Israel Friday to restart talks over hostage-release negotiations with Hamas. Roughly 100 hostages abducted from Israel during Hamas' Oct. 7 raid remain captive.

Federal Student Aid head to step down in June amid FAFSA fallout.

Richard Cordray will leave the Education Department office that oversees the Free Application for Federal Student Aid program, the largest provider of student financial aid in the US. The announcement comes amid delays—partly due to glitches and errors—in the rollout of a revamped FAFSA process.

US regulators launch new probe of Tesla after 2 million cars recalled.

The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration is reviewing a December recall on Tesla's autopilot feature, focusing on whether the electric vehicle company adequately remedied the issue. The probe comes after at least 20 crashes have occurred involving cars that received Tesla's autopilot software update.

King Charles to resume public duties next week after cancer diagnosis.

The 75-year-old king was diagnosed with an unspecified form of cancer in February (see previous write-up) and has made limited appearances since then. Buckingham Palace said Friday King Charles' medical team was pleased with his progress so far under current treatments.

White House Correspondents' Association Dinner to be held tonight.

The dinner is one of Washington, DC's biggest events, with White House officials, lawmakers, celebrities, and journalists in attendance. SNL's Colin Hanks is set to host. The 41-year-old joined "Saturday Night Live" as a writer in 2005 and has cohosted the late-night show's "Weekend Update" segment since 2014.

Key US inflation measure rises in March.

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

Humankind(ness)

Today, we're sharing a story from reader Jeanine M. from Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania.

"I was parallel parking into a tight spot and the man in the truck in front of me had just gotten out of his vehicle. When he saw me parking, he jumped back in and pulled forward a little bit. Then he got out and watched until I was able to get into the spot; then he gave me a thumbs-up once he knew I made it. How kind!"

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Chamber welcomes Tiger Tots Childcare

The Groton Chamber welcomed Tiger Tots Childcare to the Groton community recently! Tiger Tots is owned by Jamie Krueger and is located at 8 E 4th Ave. Call/text Jamie at 605-216-3870 for weekly rates (full time, part time, or drop ins). Pictured are Topper Tastad, Ashley Bentz, Jamie Krueger, Douglas Heinrich and April Abeln. (Courtesy photo)

**GROTON
HISTORIC JAIL
RESTORATION
BENEFIT
BRUNCH**



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

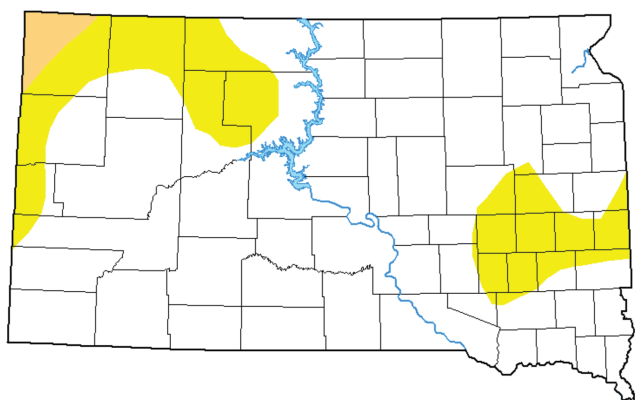
Drought Classification

None
D0 (Abnormally Dry)
D1 (Moderate Drought)

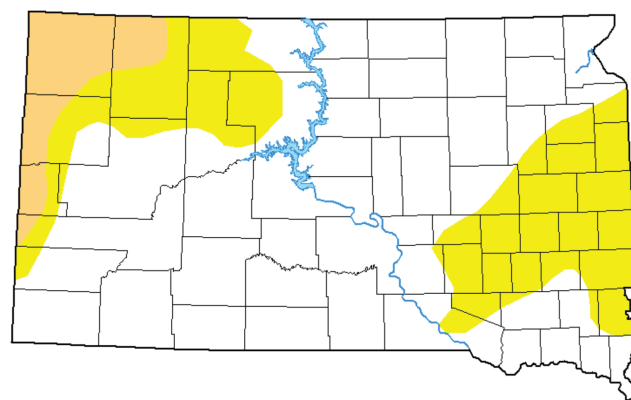
D2 (Severe Drought)
D3 (Extreme Drought)

D4 (Exceptional Drought)
No Data

Drought Monitor



April 23



April 16

Widespread rain and snow (1 to 2 inches of precipitation, liquid equivalent) on April 7 led to a 1-category improvement across parts of northeastern Wyoming and western South Dakota. Despite the recent heavy precipitation, 6-month SPI along with 28-day average streamflow support a continuation of moderate drought (D1) across the High Plains. Following another week of precipitation along with considerations of soil moisture and SPI values of neutral to positive, abnormal dryness (D0) coverage was reduced throughout the Dakotas. A strengthening low pressure system on April 6 and 7 brought high winds to the Great Plains which dried out topsoil especially across Kansas and southeastern Colorado. A reassessment of SPIs at various time scales and given snow water equivalent is slightly above average, D1 coverage was reduced for southern Colorado.

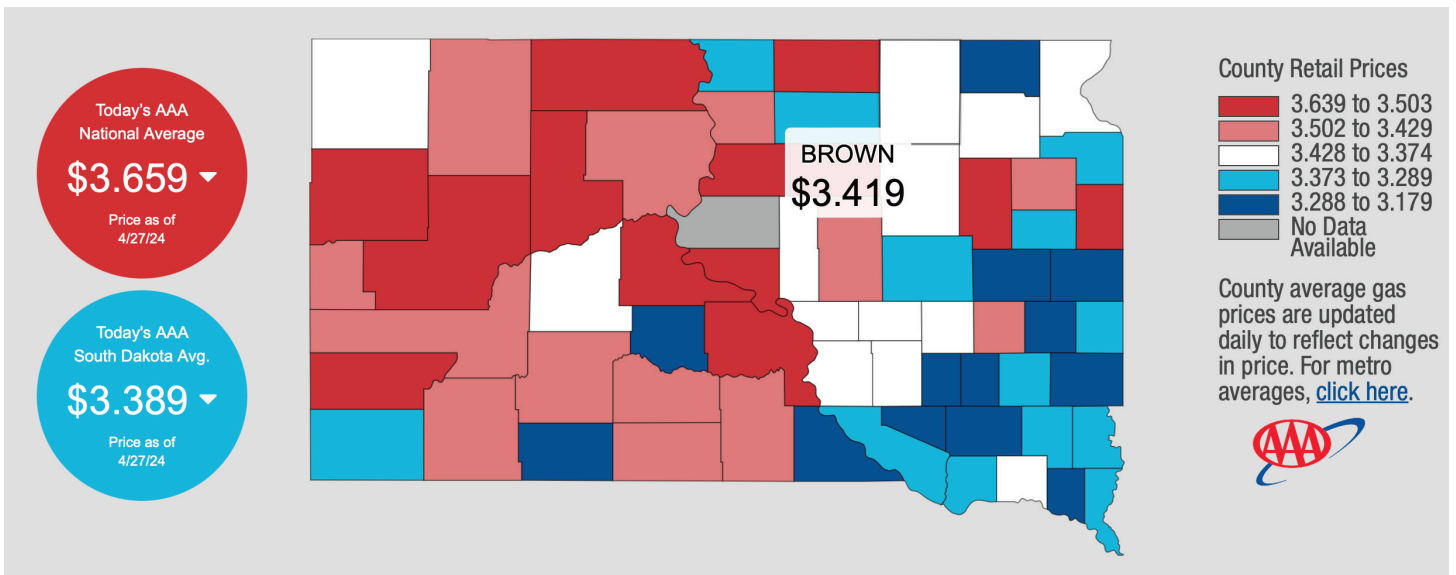
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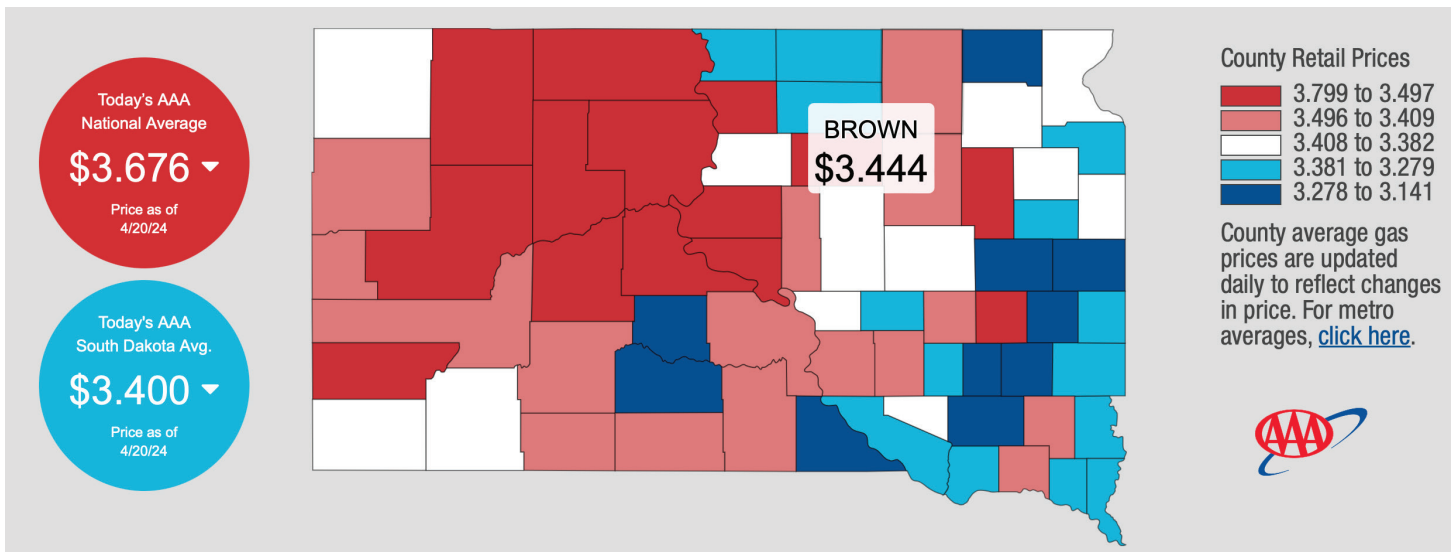
South Dakota Average Gas Prices

	Regular	Mid-Grade	Premium	Diesel
Current Avg.	\$3.389	\$3.531	\$3.968	\$3.679
Yesterday Avg.	\$3.400	\$3.542	\$3.973	\$3.689
Week Ago Avg.	\$3.400	\$3.551	\$3.971	\$3.708
Month Ago Avg.	\$3.310	\$3.467	\$3.898	\$3.731
Year Ago Avg.	\$3.554	\$3.686	\$4.128	\$3.970

This Week



Last Week



Northern State University Spring Commencement Ceremony Set for May 4

ABERDEEN, S.D. —Northern State University is proud to announce that on Saturday, May 4, 257 students will embark on a new chapter of their lives as they graduate during the university's spring commencement ceremony.

The commencement ceremony is scheduled begin at 10 a.m. and will be held at the Barnett Center. For the convenience of family, friends, and well-wishers unable to attend in person, the event will be streamed live on multiple platforms. Audiences can join the celebration via the Northern State University's Facebook page, the NSU Graduation and Commencement page, as well as on Midco channel 288, and NVC and locally through cable channel 12.

Live captioning will be accessible via screens during the ceremony, as well as on Facebook and the graduation webpage.

During the ceremony, there will be recognition of five distinguished individuals who will be awarded honorary doctorates for their outstanding contributions to their respective fields. The recipients of these prestigious accolades are Harvey Jewett, Michael Evans, Tim Kessler (posthumously), Eldon Swingler, Jack Thompson.

Locals graduating are:

Samantha Ferguson, Bath (B.S.Ed Elementary Education)***

Joy Voss, Bristol (A.A. General Studies)

Kayla Jensen, Claremont (B.S.Ed in Honoribus Special Education)**

Caitlin Podoll, Columbia (M.S.Ed Teaching and Learning)

Lauren Geranen, Frederick (B.S.Ed Elementary Education)***

Alyson Anderson, Groton (M.S.Ed Special Education)

Carrie Cole, Groton (B.S.Ed Elementary Education)

Darius Swanson, Langford (B.A. in Honoribus Government)*

*** Candidate for Summa Cum Laude

** Candidate for Magna Cum Laude

* Candidate for Cum Laude

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Redfield Golf Meet

The Groton Area girls golf team took part in the Redfield Invitational held Thursday.

Carlee Johnson placed sixth with a 106, Carly Guthmiller placed eighth with a 107, Carly Gilbert was 10th with a 108, Claire Schuelke was 15th with a 115, Halee Harder was 18th with a 124 and Mia Crank was 23rd with a 129.

Aberdeen Roncalli won the team title with 407 points followed by Groton Area with 436 and Milbank with 459.

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BROWN COUNTY
BROWN COUNTY COMMISSION AGENDA
REGULAR MEETING TUESDAY

April 30, 2024 8:45 A.M.

COMMISSIONER'S CHAMBERS, COURTHOUSE ANNEX - 25 MARKET STREET, ABERDEEN SD

1. Call To Order - Pledge of Allegiance
2. Approval of Agenda
3. Opportunity for Public Comment
4. Second Reading & Possible Adoption – Ord. #267 - Rezone
5. Kyle Sultz – Discuss Pipeline branch from Groton
6. Approve & Authorize Chairman to sign JDC Agreement with Aberdeen School District
7. Approve & Authorize Chairman to sign Towing Services Agreement
8. Consent Calendar
 - a. Approval of Minutes of April 23, 2024
 - i. General Meeting
 - ii. Consolidated Equalization Meeting
 - b. Claims
 - c. HR Report
 - d. Malt Beverage & SD Farm Wine License Renewals
 - e. Claim Assignment
 - f. Lease Agreements
 - g. Travel Requests
 - h. Set Hearing Date & Authorize Advertising for Temporary Special Event Malt Beverage & Wine License – Aberdeen Area Chamber of Commerce
 - i. Township Bonds
9. Other Business
10. Executive Session (if requested per SDCL 1-25-2)
11. Adjourn

Brown County Commission Meeting

Please join my meeting from your computer, tablet, or smartphone.

<https://meet.goto.com/BrCoCommission>

You can also dial in using your phone. United States: [+1 \(872\) 240-3311](tel:+18722403311)

Access Code: 601-168-909 #

Get the app now and be ready when your first meeting starts: <https://meet.goto.com/install>

Public comment provides an opportunity for the public to address the county commission but may not exceed 3 minutes.

Public comment will be limited to 10 minutes (or at the discretion of the board).

Public comment will be accepted virtually when the virtual attendance option is available.

Official Recordings of Commission Meetings along with the Minutes can be found at <https://www.brown.sd.us/node/454>

Lyman County Fatal Crash

What: Two vehicle fatal crash
Where: SD Highway 248 and 305th Avenue, Presho, SD
When: 2:55 p.m., Thursday, April 25, 2024

Driver 1: Male, 31 years old, no injuries
Vehicle 1: Case IH Patriot

Driver 2: Male, 33 years old, fatal injuries
Vehicle 2: 2021 Ford Ranger
Seat Belt Use: Yes

Lyman County, S.D.- A 33-year-old man died from injuries in a two-vehicle crash Thursday afternoon in Presho, SD.

Preliminary crash information indicates the driver of a Case IH Patriot agricultural sprayer was traveling northbound on 305th Avenue. At the same time, the driver of a 2021 Ford Ranger was headed westbound on SD Highway 248. The Case IH failed to stop at the intersection where it collided with the pick-up truck. The driver of the truck died at the scene. No injuries were sustained by the other driver.

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.

Names Released in Lawrence County Double Fatality Crash

What: Two vehicle double fatality crash
Where: SD 34, mile marker 24, two miles west of Whitewood, SD
When: 1:55 p.m., Saturday, April 13, 2024

Driver 1: Joel James Walker, 24-year-old male from Sturgis, SD, fatal injuries
Vehicle 1: 2012 Dodge Avenger
Seat Belt Use: Under investigation

Driver 2: Paul Kevin Alexander, 55-year-old male from Miles City, MT, Serious non-life-threatening injuries
Vehicle 2: 2013 Chevrolet Silverado
Seat Belt Use: Yes
Passenger 1: Janice Lenora Alexander, 87-year-old female from Miles City, MT, fatal injuries
Seatbelt Use: Yes

Lawrence County, S.D.- Two people died Saturday afternoon, April 13, in a two-vehicle crash near Whitewood, SD.

Preliminary crash information indicates Joel J. Walker, the driver of a 2012 Dodge Avenger was traveling eastbound on SD Highway 34 and crossed the centerline into the path of a westbound 2013 Chevrolet Silverado. The vehicles collided in the westbound lane near mile marker 24. Walker was ejected as the vehicle came to rest in the eastbound lane and was pronounced deceased at the scene. The Chevrolet continued into the ditch. Janice L. Alexander, a passenger in the truck was also pronounced deceased at the scene. The driver of the Chevrolet, Paul K. Alexander, suffered serious, non-life-threatening injuries.

Name Released in Meade County Fatal Crash

What: Single vehicle fatal crash
Where: 8986 Erickson Ranch Road, Blackhawk, SD
When: 9:48 p.m., Friday, April 12, 2024

Driver 1: Nathan Tyrel Wheeler, 42-year-old male from Piedmont, SD, fatal injuries
Vehicle 1: 2004 GMC Envoy
Seat Belt Use: No

Meade County, S.D.- A 42-year-old man died Friday, April 12, in a single-vehicle crash in Black Hawk, SD.

Preliminary crash information indicates Nathan T. Wheeler was northbound on Erickson Ranch Road when the vehicle left the roadway to the right entering the ditch. The vehicle rolled, ejecting Wheeler, who was not wearing a seatbelt. He suffered fatal injuries and was pronounced deceased at the scene.

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.

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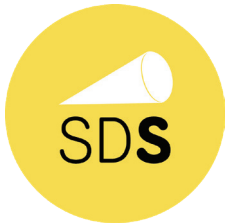
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—Weber—
Landscaping
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Groton
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Sat 10-4 ~ Sun 12-4



SOUTH DAKOTA SEARCHLIGHT

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Boot camps, business accelerators: Rapid City, Sioux Falls get creative with child care grants

BY: MAKENZIE HUBER - APRIL 27, 2024 6:00 AM

South Dakota's two largest cities are creatively spending child care grants awarded by the state, with uses including boot camps for providers and the hiring of a child care entrepreneur-in-residence.

Both communities face a shortage of available child care slots and struggle with affordable child care options for families, which can cost economic productivity and force family members out of the workforce.

Rapid City and Sioux Falls are two of 13 communities awarded a child care grant from the Governor's Office of Economic Development last month. In total, the grants, using federal funds, are infusing over \$3.7 million into helping communities find collaborative, innovative solutions to address child care needs across South Dakota.

The initiatives range from improving the child care workforce to creating after-school programs and supporting existing providers with continued education.

"We want to see a better quality of life for everyone in our community," said Brienne Maner, executive director with Start Up Sioux Falls. "This crisis is affecting everyone directly and indirectly. I want to see better support for our kids. I want to see our parents, especially our mothers, be able to confidently go back into the workforce knowing they're making a difference and getting ahead financially — and that putting their child in day care won't break them."

Startup Sioux Falls is partnering with the Sioux Falls Development Foundation, Helpline Center and Lutheran Social Services to launch a small business accelerator program tailored for child care providers and to fund a child care entrepreneur-in-residence to help support providers in the metro area, Maner said. Lutheran Social Services will start its own child care development program for underserved communities in Sioux Falls — such as Spanish-speaking, multilingual, refugee or immigrant families.

The state awarded the Sioux Falls collaboration just under \$285,000, Maner said.

"Child care workers don't always identify as a small business owner, therefore they're not necessarily seeking the same resources other small businesses and entrepreneurs are," Maner said. "We're looking at this as a more economic approach. We're providing tools for success and creating a community of individuals who can help support each other as they move forward."

Elevate Rapid City will host a series of child care provider boot camps throughout the Black Hills area this year with most of its \$255,000 grant, said Laura Jones, the nonprofit's housing and community development manager.

The boot camps will cover basics such as branding and marketing, accounting best practices, and requirements and benefits in becoming a licensed provider with the state, Jones said. Another piece of the grant will be used for subgrants to help existing providers expand their facilities to become licensed with the state.

"Our secondary goal of our overall grant is to get more in-home providers to register with the state," Jones said. "We have no idea how many unlicensed providers are out there, and there's no way to know how many spots are being covered by unregistered providers."

Both Jones and Maner said providers in their communities are interested in long-term policy solutions in addition to the one-time pot of cash from the state.

"This problem isn't going to be fixed at the local level, but we're doing what we can and deploying the

resources we have to help our community from within," Maner said, adding that providers would benefit from financial support at a national level. "It's in our economy's best interest to take a hard look at how we're prioritizing child care when it comes to workforce and public health and all these sorts of things. I hope our state leadership is listening and will be a good advocate for us in Washington, D.C."

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

Action needed to protect kids' mental health from social media, bipartisan panelists say

Daschle-connected group hosts public dialogue in Sioux Falls

BY: JOSHUA HAIAR - APRIL 26, 2024 5:09 PM

SIOUX FALLS — The kids are not all right, and replacing socializing with social media contributes to it. That consensus emerged during a public dialogue Friday on the mental health challenges faced by America's youth, hosted by the Bipartisan Policy Center at the Avera Behavioral Health Hospital in collaboration with the Helmsley Charitable Trust.

The Bipartisan Policy Center is a Washington, D.C.-based think tank established by former U.S. Sen. Tom Daschle, D-South Dakota, and others. A video message from Daschle was played at the start of the dialogue.

One of the dialogue participants, Sioux Falls Mayor Paul TenHaken, a Republican, highlighted the impact of social media and the weakening of community bonds as contributors to youth mental health problems. He said those problems were exacerbated when people stayed home during the COVID-19 pandemic.

"When you isolate people – I don't care if you're a kid, an adult, a senior in a senior living facility – isolation is not good for your mental health," he said. "We are designed to be in community with one another."

More than 40% of U.S. teenagers say they struggle with persistent feelings of sadness or hopelessness. Youth suicide attempts and drug overdoses are increasing.

State survey data shows the number of South Dakota high schoolers suffering a serious injury from an attempted suicide grew by 100% between 2009 and 2019. The state had the second-highest suicide rate in the U.S. for teens ages 15 to 19 from 2018 to 2020. In 2019, 23% of South Dakota high schoolers seriously considered suicide, 19% planned an attempt, and 12% made an attempt. Among Native American students, 31% reported attempting suicide.

The center created a Youth Mental Health and Substance Use Task Force in January. The dialogue was part of the center's tour across rural America to learn more. It brought together policymakers and health experts to discuss treatment needs, dissect the complex causes and discuss policy solutions.

TenHaken said mentorship programs can make a difference.

"As cliché and kind of corny and simple as that sounds, there's a lot of youth living in very dark, lonely places," he said, which "forces them to live life on screens."

Co-chair of the youth mental health task force and Democratic former U.S. representative from Florida, Val Demings, said she does not blame policymakers who encouraged kids to stay home for public health during the pandemic.

"We lost a million people in this country," Demings said.

However, she added that policymakers moving forward have to acknowledge the long-term mental health side effects of removing children from their friends and mentors.

"Now, we know better," she said.

Demings told South Dakota Searchlight that implementing a policy limiting youth social media use or banning it for children under a certain age is necessary but difficult to implement in Congress.

"Some members come from certain districts where the headquarters of a social media platform is located," Demings said.

She's optimistic lawmakers are warming up to greater regulations – pointing to the recent bipartisan push to force China-based ByteDance to sell TikTok or face a national ban.

Demings said the task force is looking at advocating for a federal office responsible for regulating social media.

On treatment – which health care officials on a separate panel said needs more funding and staffing – Demings told South Dakota Searchlight that fiscally conservative policymakers should see investments in youth mental health as ensuring a productive and healthy future labor force.

South Dakota Department of Social Services Secretary Matt Althoff offered a different take. He said “faithlessness” may be a primary contributor to the U.S. mental health crisis.

“This is a critical thing that isn't getting enough attention — the evil that is afoot, the secularistic sort of influences that are pulling people away from what has historically been a turning to God,” Althoff said.

Althoff told South Dakota Searchlight he was not referring to any one religion in particular, but rather what believing in a higher power can do for an individual and society.

If you or someone you know is having suicidal thoughts, help is available anytime by dialing 988. The service is free and confidential.

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

Cities and schools see new opportunities to partner on child care with state grants

BY: MAKENZIE HUBER - APRIL 26, 2024 2:23 PM

Jody Hernandez has a pitch for Brookings businesses to support a child care initiative in the city.

“We can go to employers and say, if you want to retain employees, then we have a system that their potential employees' children from ages 0 to 5 can be kept safe with a great education from 6 a.m. to 6 p.m.,” said Hernandez, who serves as CEO of the Boys and Girls Club of the Northern Plains.

She was referring to a new collaboration between the Boys and Girls Club and the Brookings School District. The nonprofit will create three club sites at elementary schools in Brookings to offer preschool and child care for the entire workday.

The club will use school facilities and a shared curriculum to help prepare 4- and 5-year-olds for kindergarten in a structured environment similar to what they'll experience in school.

The collaboration provides continuous care for preschoolers, rather than a half-day model, and it isn't tied to public education. Instead, it's starting out as a fee-based model where the school district provides the facilities and the Boys and Girls Club covers the rest of the children's needs.

The move will open up the Boys and Girls Club's current facility to double the number of 3-year-olds the club can provide preschool and continuous care for. The nonprofit also plans to remodel the facility and partner with another child care provider to serve children up to 2 years old. Hernandez said the nonprofit is partnering with the Children's Museum and South Dakota State University to create a “fun, interactive design” for the space.

Hernandez hopes the collaboration will open 100 new 0-2 child care spots in the Brookings area by 2025 and serve up to 240 children at the school district club sites. While Brookings has four child care centers, two are associated with an employer and primarily serve employees' children, which limits community options for child care, she said.

Brookings is one of 13 communities awarded a child care grant from the Governor's Office of Economic Development last month. In total, the grants, using federal funds, are infusing over \$3.7 million into helping communities find collaborative, innovative solutions to address child care needs across South Dakota.

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The initiatives range from improving the child care workforce, to creating after-school programs, to supporting existing providers with continued education. The Brookings partnership was awarded \$400,000 for its program.

"It just made sense that we'd work hand in hand with the school district on this program," Hernandez said, saying the partnership will help children transition to school more easily, especially with a focus on early literacy. "In 18 years we'll see the success we've got from this program. When they graduate from school, hopefully they'll have handled school better, performed better and will become adults that'll give back to their community."

Brookings isn't the only community that sees a partnership between child care providers and the local school district as a potential solution to addressing child care shortages:

Burke will launch its first after-school program in collaboration with the school district with its \$211,000 grant.

Mobridge will hold privately funded preschool classes and child care inside its school buildings with its \$500,000 grant.

Vermillion's school district gifted an empty elementary school to child care providers to use.

Mobridge preschool model

Michele Harrison, executive director for the Mobridge Chamber of Commerce in north-central South Dakota, said the town's lone licensed child care facility has a waitlist of over 35 children. Many of the child care spots are filled by 3- and 4-year-olds rather than younger children.

"I have employers on my board who've been screaming at me for a long time to do something about day care, because they can't have employees without it," Harrison said.

Similar to Brookings, the local child care center, after-school program and school district are partnering to provide fee-based preschool and child care for 3- and 4-year-olds across the street from the school. The school's tech class will build two classrooms on the currently vacant lot, Harrison said.

Additionally, the future child care program, called Lake Oahe Learning Academy, will work as an umbrella organization to help in-home child care providers become licensed, answer their questions and provide support.

Harrison said Mobridge will gain 18 infant and toddler slots as well as 34 preschool-age slots by the start of the school year in the fall. She plans to have 16 more infant and toddler slots available by fall 2025.

Creating after-school programs in rural areas

Gregory County, in south-central South Dakota, doesn't have any licensed after-school or summer care programs, said Kelsea Sutton, president of the Burke Business Promotion Council. Those students, similar to Mobridge, end up filling needed child care slots for younger children and infants. It can also impact productivity in the county.

"I don't think families here understand how much they've rearranged their lives to accommodate the lack of after-school care," Sutton said. "Whether that's a grandparent reducing their work hours to take care of their grandkids after school, a parent doing that, or even a family making not the best or safest decision so they can have a full work day."

The plan is to run an after-school care program through the three licensed child care facilities in the county – in Burke, Gregory and Bonesteel – since the requirements for licensing a child care center are similar to after-school care. But the programs themselves will be hosted on school campuses.

The program will be fee-based, but Sutton is encouraging eligible families to enroll their children using the state's child care assistance program because it "helps providers be sustainable." The after-school program can serve up to 90 children.

Platte, using its nearly \$300,000 grant, is planning to create an after-school program at an existing child care center in the town. The town, across the Missouri River from Gregory County, doesn't have an after-school program.

The community's original plan was to create a school-adjacent after-school program by relocating an-

other child care provider to a former nursing home, said Colette Mesman, executive director for the Platte Development Corporation, but that plan fell through.

The money will now be used to expand capacity at the child care facility to accommodate over 20 more children and to help the provider recruit and retain more employees for the expanded program. Mesman said the grant will be used to offer sign-on and retention bonuses.

"It's still great," Mesman said. "It's a smaller impact than what we planned, but we're still utilizing the money to impact child care in Platte."

Vermillion School District donates building, uses grant to expand access and workforce

In Vermillion, the city is looking to increase child care slots by 46 by using an old elementary school building for a child care center, and by using grant money to renovate the school building and a couple of other child care centers.

The school district donated the building to the Vermillion Boys and Girls Club, but the center will be run by another child care provider.

The city also plans to build a preschool science, technology, engineering, arts and mathematics (STEAM) lab for preschoolers, establish a voucher system for businesses to buy slots in child care throughout Vermillion, and help improve the child care workforce by paying for certification for child care workers, said President and CEO of the Vermillion Area Chamber and Development Company Jim Peterson.

Peterson hopes the initiatives will set an example for other South Dakota communities. He added that the University of South Dakota will work with child care providers to research and assess the impact of the proposed STEAM lab, which will be available for providers across the state to access.

"We really tried to look at the model overall and make it sustainable over the long term," Peterson said. "Based on the study and need and looking at the workforce demands in Vermillion, our group felt this was the best utilization of the grant and gives the best return on the feedback we got from parents and businesses. It hits on accessibility, affordability, quality and getting more teachers into the workforce."

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

'We can't exist without child care': Rural towns use state funding to open local centers

BY: MAKENZIE HUBER - APRIL 26, 2024 5:00 AM

It's been over six months since two in-home child care providers closed in Highmore. The town of over 600 in central South Dakota has a few other in-home providers, but all are full and have waitlists months out.

If a family wanted to move to the town — about an hour's drive east of Pierre — there wouldn't be any child care for them, said Beth Simonson, a board member of Hyde County Child Development.

Parents are driving their children up to 50 miles away to towns including Miller, Onida or Pierre to find child care, Simonson said. Some families have to split their children between child care in Highmore and another town.

Hyde County, where Highmore is located, has the fastest declining population in the state, according to census data.

"Why would young people want to move here if there isn't quality child care?" Simonson said. "It's one of the key elements of keeping people and growing our community, which we've been struggling with thriving. We need to attract those young families. We can't exist without child care."

The city of Highmore is one of 13 communities awarded a child care grant from the Governor's Office of Economic Development last month. In total, the grants, using federal funds, are infusing over \$3.7 million into helping communities find collaborative, innovative solutions to address child care needs across

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South Dakota.

The initiatives range from improving the child care workforce, to creating after school programs, to supporting existing providers with continued education. In Highmore, the community plans to use the \$300,000 awarded by the state to create a community child care center.

"I don't know what other solution there was," Simonson said. "It's been six months and nobody has really stepped up otherwise."

The Hyde County Child Development board's plan is to lease and renovate a vacant building — most recently a flower shop — as a child care center to serve up to 39 infants and toddlers. Highmore plans to eventually build a new child care center on vacant land owned by Venture Communications. That piece of land will house the center's playground until then.

The state's focus for the grants was fostering community collaboration between local governments, child care providers, businesses and schools, according to the Governor's Office of Economic Development. Simonson expected a handful of people to help in the planning and implementation of the grant, but nearly 50 people came out to support the effort.

Based on a survey of over 100 Highmore residents, nearly 30% expect they'll need child care in the next three years. Another 45% currently need child care during the summer months when school is out, since there isn't an afterschool program for school-aged children in Highmore.

"They want this for their families and for Highmore's future," Simonson said. "That's what this is really about. We need this for the future of our community."

In Redfield, the economic development group Grow Spink (a reference to Spink County) plans a similar community child care center using the \$245,000 it was awarded from the state. It will be open to the entire county, and will serve as an "umbrella organization" for other child care providers in the county. There are 12 in-home providers in Spink County and one community child care center in Doland — all are full with waitlists.

Having a central child care agency or office will help the county organize, award smaller grants for other child care providers to make renovations and improvements, and set up a substitute teacher system. In applying for the state grants, the economic development group realized one of the major challenges for providers is staffing.

"My own kids go to a provider in Redfield that has a waitlist out to 2026," said Grow Spink Executive Director Gianna Schieffer. "I know of three or four providers who want to retire but don't have the heart to close because their families have nowhere to go. They're hoping there'll be a solution sooner rather than later."

Schieffer added she's starting to see families move out of Redfield or pass up "good paying jobs" because of a lack of child care options. With 30% of the county population nearing or within child bearing age, it's important for the growth of the county, she added.

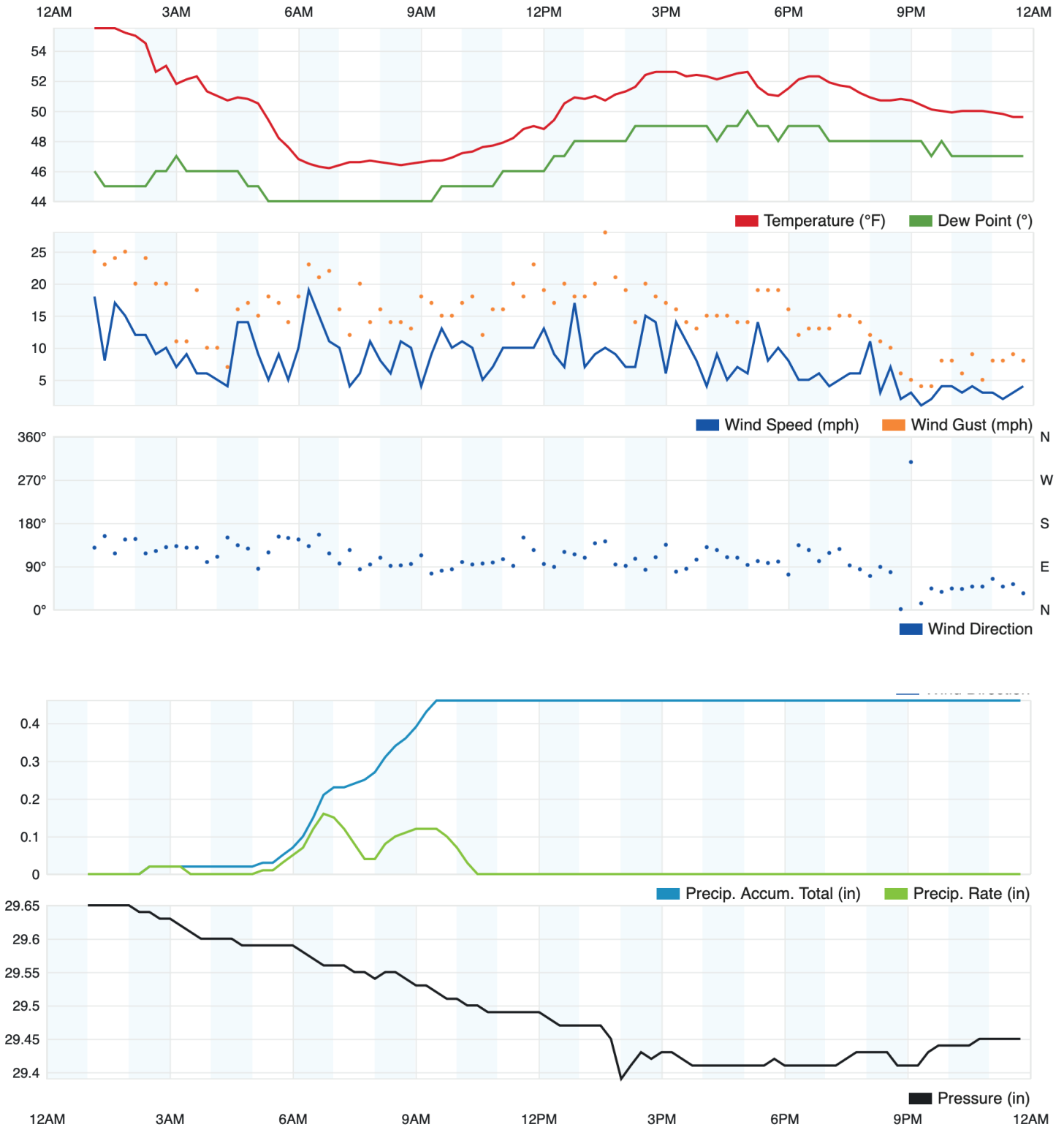
Both Redfield and Highmore plan to fundraise more to reach their goals beyond the awarded grants.

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

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Yesterday's Groton Weather Graphs



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Today

Tonight

Sunday

Sunday
Night

Monday



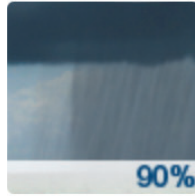
Showers
Likely and
Patchy Fog
then Slight
Chance
Showers

High: 52 °F



Mostly Cloudy

Low: 40 °F



Showers and
Breezy

High: 46 °F



Showers

Low: 35 °F



Chance
Showers then
Partly Sunny

High: 57 °F

Clouds Persist

**Rain
Returns
Sunday**

Today

*Highs: 50° - 55°
Winds: N 20 - 35mph*

Tonight

*Lows: 38° - 43°
Winds: NE 20 - 25mph*

Sunday

*Highs: 43° - 47°
Winds: NE 20 - 35mph*



April 27, 2024 3:54 AM

The unsettled weather pattern continues through the weekend. Clouds, with sprinkles and drizzle will persist today and then we have the next system moving in tonight/early Sunday with more moisture potential.

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Rain Timing & Amounts

April 27, 2024
3:24 AM

Probability of Precipitation Forecast (%)

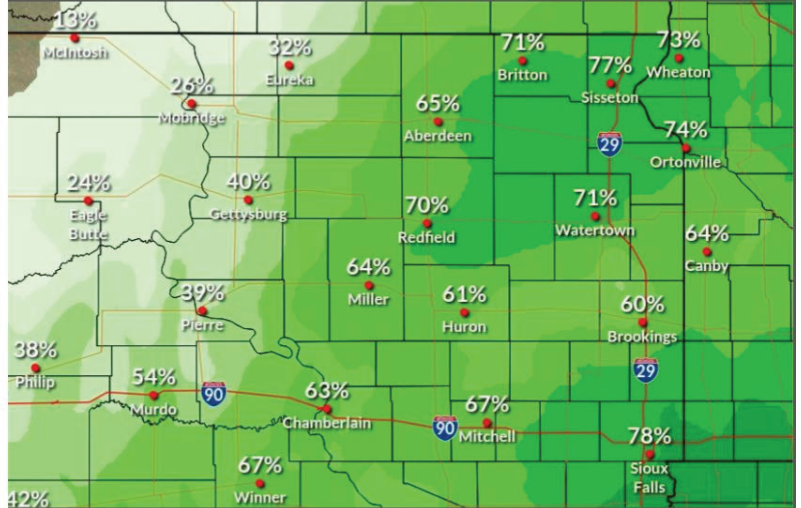
	4/27 Sat				4/28 Sun				4/29 Mon							
	12pm	3pm	6pm	9pm	12am	3am	6am	9am	12pm	3pm	6pm	9pm	12am	3am	6am	9am
Aberdeen	20	15	10	5	5	5	70	90	90	90	90	65	65	40	40	10
Britton	20	15	15	10	5	10	60	80	80	95	95	80	80	60	60	20
Brookings	10	5	5	10	15	35	75	90	100	95	85	75	75	45	45	10
Chamberlain	10	10	10	10	20	50	90	100	95	85	75	35	35	10	10	0
Clark	20	15	5	5	5	15	75	95	95	95	95	75	75	40	40	10
Eagle Butte	15	10	5	5	10	20	60	70	70	60	60	25	25	15	15	0
Ellendale	20	10	10	5	5	10	60	75	75	90	90	75	75	55	55	15
Eureka	20	10	5	5	5	10	60	75	75	85	85	60	60	40	40	10
Gettysburg	20	15	15	10	10	15	70	90	90	75	75	40	40	20	20	5
Huron	10	10	10	10	10	30	80	90	100	90	75	65	65	30	30	5
Kennebec	20	20	10	10	25	40	80	90	90	60	60	25	25	10	10	0
McIntosh	10	0	0	0	5	5	45	60	60	70	70	30	30	15	15	5
Milbank	20	10	5	5	5	10	75	95	95	95	95	85	85	55	55	10
Miller	20	15	10	5	10	25	80	100	100	90	90	50	50	25	25	5
Mobridge	20	10	0	5	5	10	60	75	75	80	80	45	45	20	20	5
Murdo	20	20	15	15	25	40	80	90	90	60	60	20	20	5	5	0
Pierre	20	20	10	5	15	25	70	85	85	55	55	30	30	10	10	0
Redfield	20	15	10	5	5	15	75	95	95	95	95	60	60	30	30	5
Sisseton	20	15	10	10	10	5	65	85	85	95	95	90	90	60	60	20
Watertown	20	10	5	5	5	15	75	95	95	95	95	80	80	45	45	10
Webster	20	15	10	5	10	10	70	90	90	95	95	85	85	50	50	15
Wheaton	20	5	5	10	10	5	60	75	75	95	95	90	90	60	60	25

Percent Chance of 0.50" of Rain or More

For the 24 hours ending on Mon Apr 29, 2024 at 1:00AM CDT

Weather Forecast Office
Aberdeen, SD

Issued Apr 27, 2024 2:53 AM CDT



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Yesterday's Groton Weather

High Temp: 56 °F at 12:45 AM

Low Temp: 46 °F at 6:42 AM

Wind: 30 mph at 12:36 AM

Precip: : 0.46

Day length: 14 hours, 12 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

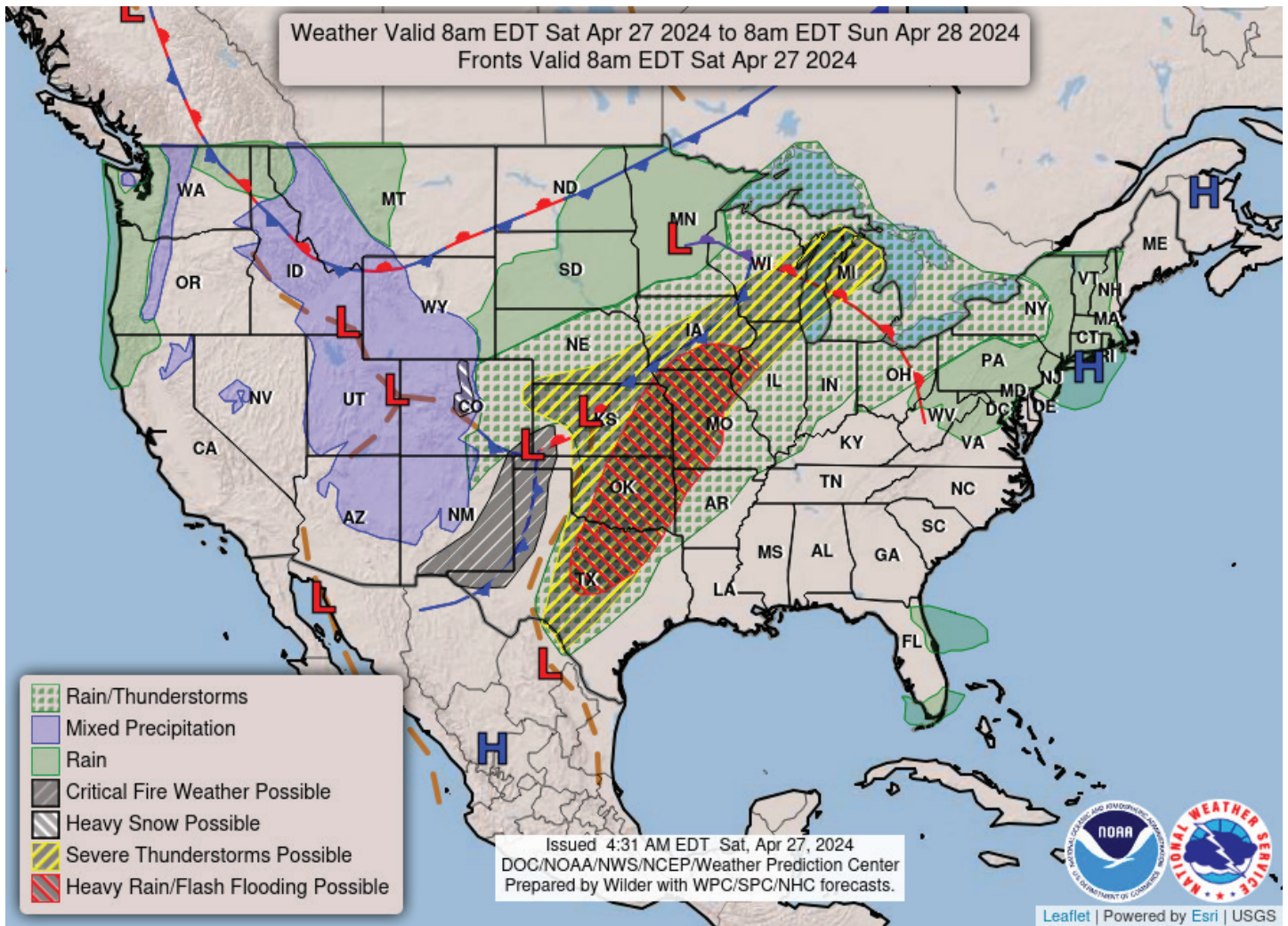
Precip to date in April: 2.81

Average Precip to date: 3.60

Precip Year to Date: 3.76

Sunset Tonight: 8:36:04 pm

Sunrise Tomorrow: 6:22:12 am



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Today in Weather History

April 27, 1968: A significant snowstorm raged over the northern Black Hills blocking many highways near Gillette and Moorcroft with an estimated three to four feet of snow. Winds in the Sturgis area were nearly 90 mph.

1898: The first Weather Bureau kite was launched in Topeka, Kansas to report daily, early morning, atmospheric observations. By year's end, 16 additional launch sites would be in operation. Click [HERE](#) for more information from the Weather Doctor.

1899 - A tornado struck Kirksville, MO, killing 34 persons and destroying 300 buildings. (David Ludlum)

1912: The April 27-28, 1912 outbreak was the climax of a wild, week-long period of severe weather that occurred in Oklahoma. Strong to violent tornadoes struck portions of central and north-central Oklahoma on April 20, 1912. Also, a violent tornado hit Ponca City, OK on April 25, 1912. From the 27 through the 28th, 16 tornadoes rated F2 or greater touched down in the state with 6 of them rated F4. About 40 people were killed, and the storms injured 120 people. Click [HERE](#) for more information from the NWS Office in Norman, Oklahoma.

1931: The temperature at Pahala, located on the main island of Hawaii, soared to 100 degrees to establish a state record.

1942 - A destructive tornado swept across Rogers County and Mayes County in Oklahoma. The tornado struck the town of Pryor killing 52 persons and causing two million dollars damage. (David Ludlum)

1987 - Forty-two cities in the western and south central U.S. reported record high temperatures for the date. The afternoon high of 87 degrees at Olympia WA was an April record, and highs of 92 degrees at Boise ID, 95 degrees at Monroe LA, and 96 degrees at Sacramento CA tied April records. (The National Weather Summary) More than 300 daily temperature records fell by the wayside during a two week long heat wave across thirty-four states in the southern and western U.S. Thirteen cities established records for the month of April. (Sandra and TI Richard Sanders - 1987)

1988 - Mount Washington NH reported seven feet of snow in ten days, pushing their snowfall total for the month past the previous record of 89.3 inches set in 1975. (The National Weather Summary)

1989 - Thunderstorms produced severe weather from the Lower and Middle Mississippi Valley to Virginia and the Carolinas. Hail up to four and a half inches in diameter caused five million dollars damage around Omaha NE. Thunderstorms spawned eleven tornadoes, and there were 160 other reports of large hail and damaging winds. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1990 - Thunderstorms produced severe weather in eastern Texas and the Lower Mississippi Valley. Severe thunderstorms spawned thirteen tornadoes in Texas and twelve in Louisiana. A tornado southwest of Coolidge TX injured eight persons and caused more than five million dollars damage. There were also eighty-five reports of large hail and damaging winds, with baseball size hail reported at Mexia TX and Shreveport LA. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data) Forty-three cities in the eastern U.S. reported record high temperatures for the date. Records highs included 94 degrees at Charleston WV, 95 degrees at Baltimore MD and 96 degrees at Richmond VA. (The National Weather Summary)

2003: For only the 11th time since records began in 1871, hail was observed in Key West Florida. A severe thunderstorm produced hail to 1.75 inches in diameter which easily broke the previous record of a half an inch in diameter which was set on May 10, 1961.

2011: April 27 was the single deadliest day for tornadoes since records began in 1950. The death toll from Wednesday's 199 tornadoes surpassed 300. The worst day in recorded history for storm fatalities is March 18, 1925, with 747 deaths. Of the 316 deaths reported, 313 were associated with the afternoon/evening tornadoes. In all, 31 of these tornadoes were rated as EF3 or stronger. Eleven tornadoes were rated EF4, and four were rated EF5. The average EF4 and EF5 tornado path length were 66 miles.

Daily Devotionals

Seeds of Hope

WHAT'S AVERAGE GOT TO DO WITH IT?

Someone said that the average man has sixty-nine pounds of muscle, forty-one pounds of bones but only three pounds of brain. (Now that may explain many things!)

Henry Spangler was not average. He was alert.

He worked as a janitor but had problems with dust. Whenever he swept the floor, the dust would rise, causing him to sneeze and cough. His eyes would run, and it even caused him to have serious headaches. But he did not quit. He began to think about the dust – not himself. He began to search for ways to suck up dust rather than scattering it through the air. If only, he thought, there would be a way to capture the dust in a container. He asked God to help to solve his problem.

His search finally led him to the idea of a vacuum cleaner. After much thought, he shared his idea with an old friend and asked him to finance the idea and work with him. It resulted in the Hoover Vacuum Cleaner and his old friend was H. W. Hoover.

James wrote, "If you want to know what God wants you to do, ask...He'll tell you." God can solve any problem we have if we look to Him for His solution.

It's never the size of our problem but our faith.

Prayer: Lord, help us to look beyond ourselves when we have a problem and know that You already have the solution if we simply ask for Your help. In Jesus' Name, Amen.

Scripture For Today: If you need wisdom, ask our generous God, and he will give it to you. He will not rebuke you for asking. But when you ask him, be sure that your faith is in God alone. James 1:5-8



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

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WINNING NUMBERS

MEGA MILLIONS

WINNING NUMBERS:
04.26.24

15 23 53 57 61 9

MegaPlier: 3x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:
\$257,000,000

NEXT DRAW:

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: 14 Hrs 5 Mins 15 Secs

PREVIOUS RESULTS

LUCKY FOR LIFE

WINNING NUMBERS:
04.26.24

11 15 27 28 46 7

TOP PRIZE:

\$7,000/week

NEXT DRAW: 14 Hrs 20 Mins 15 Secs

PREVIOUS RESULTS

DAKOTA CASH

WINNING NUMBERS:
04.24.24

5 13 26 32 33

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:
\$70,000

NEXT DRAW: 14 Hrs 20 Mins 15 Secs

PREVIOUS RESULTS

POWERBALL

DOUBLE PLAY

WINNING NUMBERS:
04.24.24

23 25 45 46 62 25

TOP PRIZE:
\$10,000,000

NEXT DRAW: 14 Hrs 49 Mins 15 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: 14 Hrs 49 Mins 15 Secs

PREVIOUS RESULTS

News from the Associated Press

South Dakota governor, a potential Trump running mate, writes in new book about killing her dog

By The Associated Press undefined

South Dakota Gov. Kristi Noem — a potential running mate for presumptive Republican presidential candidate Donald Trump — is getting attention again. This time, it's for a new book where she writes about killing an unruly dog, and a smelly goat, too.

The Guardian obtained a copy of Noem's soon-to-be released book, "No Going Back: The Truth on What's Wrong with Politics and How We Move America Forward." In it, she tells the story of the ill-fated Cricket, a 14-month-old wirehaired pointer she was training for pheasant hunting.

She writes, according to the Guardian, that the tale was included to show her willingness to do anything "difficult, messy and ugly" if it has to be done. But backlash was swift against the Republican governor, who just a month ago drew attention and criticism for posting an infomercial-like video about cosmetic dental surgery she received out-of-state.

In her book, Noem writes that she took Cricket on a hunting trip with older dogs in hopes of calming down the wild puppy. Instead, Cricket chased the pheasants while "having the time of her life."

On the way home from the hunting trip, Noem writes that she stopped to talk to a family. Cricket got out of Noem's truck and attacked and killed some of the family's chickens, then bit the governor.

Noem apologized profusely, wrote the distraught family a check for the deceased chickens, and helped them dispose of the carcasses, she writes. Cricket "was the picture of joy" as all that unfolded.

"I hated that dog," Noem writes, deeming her "untrainable."

"At that moment," Noem writes, "I realized I had to put her down." She led Cricket to a gravel pit and killed her.

That wasn't all. Noem writes that her family also owned a "nasty and mean" male goat that smelled bad and liked to chase her kids. She decided to go ahead and kill the goat, too. She writes that the goat survived the first shot, so she went back to the truck, got another shell, then shot him again, killing him.

Soon thereafter, a school bus dropped off Noem's children. Her daughter asked, "Hey, where's Cricket?" Noem writes.

The excerpts drew immediate criticism on social media platforms, where many posted photos of their own pets. President Joe Biden's reelection campaign surfaced the story on social media alongside a photo of Noem with Trump.

The Lincoln Project, a conservative group that opposes Trump, posted a video that it called a "public service announcement," showing badly behaved dogs and explaining that "shooting your dog in the face is not an option."

"You down old dogs, hurt dogs, and sick dogs humanely, not by shooting them and tossing them in a gravel pit," Rick Wilson of the Lincoln Project wrote on X. "Unsporting and deliberately cruel ... but she wrote this to prove the cruelty is the point."

Noem took to social media to defend herself.

"We love animals, but tough decisions like this happen all the time on a farm," she said on X. "Sadly, we just had to put down 3 horses a few weeks ago that had been in our family for 25 years."

She urged readers to preorder her book if they want "more real, honest, and politically INCORRECT stories that'll have the media gasping."

Republican strategist Alice Stewart said that while some Republican voters might appreciate the story "as a testament to her grit," it ultimately creates a distraction for Noem.

"It's never a good look when people think you're mistreating animals," Stewart said. "I have a dog I love like a child and I can't imagine thinking about doing that, I can't imagine doing that, and I can't imagine writing about it in a book and telling all the world."

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It's not the first time Noem has grabbed national attention.

In 2019, she stood behind the state's anti-meth campaign even as it became the subject of some mockery for the tagline "Meth. We're on it." Noem said the campaign got people talking about the methamphetamine epidemic and helped lead some to treatment.

Last month, Noem posted a nearly five-minute video on X lavishing praise on a team of cosmetic dentists in Texas for giving her a smile she said she can be proud of. "I love my new family at Smile Texas!" she wrote.

South Dakota law bans gifts of over \$100 from lobbyists to public officials and their immediate family. A violation is a misdemeanor punishable up to a year in jail and/or a \$2,000 fine. The state attorney general's office has declined to answer questions about whether the gift ban applies to people who are not registered lobbyists.

Student anti-war protesters dig in as faculty condemn universities' leadership over calling police

By JAMES POLLARD, NOREEN NASIR and NICK PERRY Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — Students protesting the Israel-Hamas war at universities across U.S., some of whom have clashed with police in riot gear, dug in Saturday and vowed to keep their demonstrations going as faculty at several schools condemned university presidents who have called in law enforcement to remove protesters.

As Columbia University continues negotiations with those at a pro-Palestinian student encampment on the New York school's campus, the university's senate passed a resolution Friday that created a task force to examine the administration's leadership, which last week called in police in an attempt to clear the protest, resulting in scuffles and more than 100 arrests.

Though the university has repeatedly set and then pushed back deadlines for the removal of the encampment, the school sent an email to students Friday night saying that bringing back police "at this time" would be counterproductive.

As the death toll mounts in the war in Gaza, protesters nationwide are demanding that 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.

Early Saturday, police in riot gear cleared an encampment on the campus of Northeastern University in Boston. Several dozen students shouted and booed at them from a distance, but the scene was otherwise nonconfrontational.

The school said that the demonstration, which began two days ago, had become "infiltrated by professional organizers" with no affiliation to the school.

Antisemitic slurs, including "Kill the Jews," were used, the school said in a statement.

"We cannot tolerate this kind of hate on our campus," said the statement, which was posted on the social media platform X.

The decisions to call in law enforcement, leading to hundreds of arrests nationwide, have prompted school faculty members at universities in California, Georgia and Texas to initiate or pass votes of no confidence in their leadership. They are largely symbolic rebukes, without the power to remove their presidents.

But the tensions pile pressure on school officials, who are already scrambling to resolve the protests as May graduation ceremonies near.

California State Polytechnic University, Humboldt, gave protestors who have barricaded themselves inside a building since Monday until 5 p.m. Friday to leave and "not be immediately arrested." The deadline came and went. Only some of the protesters left, others doubled down. After protesters rebuffed police earlier in the week, the campus was closed for the rest of the semester.

In Colorado, police swept through an encampment Friday at Denver's Auraria Campus, which hosts three universities and colleges, arresting around 40 protesters on trespassing charges.

Students representing the Columbia encampment, which inspired the wave of protests across the country,

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said Friday that they reached an impasse with administrators and intend to continue their protest.

After meetings Thursday and Friday, student negotiators said the university had not met their primary demand for divestment, although there was progress on a push for more transparent financial disclosures.

"We will not rest until Columbia divests," said Jonathan Ben-Menachem, a fourth-year doctoral student.

In the letter sent to Columbia students Friday night, the university's leadership said "we support the conversations that are ongoing with student leaders of the encampment."

Columbia's president, Minouche Shafik, faced significant criticism from faculty Friday, but retained the support of trustees.

A report by the university senate's executive committee, which represents faculty, found Shafik and her administration took "many actions and decisions that have harmed Columbia University." Those included calling in police and allowing students to be arrested without consulting faculty, misrepresenting and suspending student protest groups and hiring private investigators.

"The faculty have completely lost confidence in President Shafik's ability to lead this organization," said Ege Yumusak, a philosophy lecturer who is part of a faculty team protecting the encampment.

In response, university spokesperson Ben Chang said in the evening that "we are committed to an ongoing dialogue and appreciate the Senate's constructive engagement in finding a pathway forward."

Also Friday, Columbia student protester Khymani James walked back comments made in an online video in January that recently received new attention. James said in the video that "Zionists don't deserve to live" and people should be grateful James wasn't killing them.

"What I said was wrong," James said in a statement. "Every member of our community deserves to feel safe without qualification."

James, who served as a spokesperson for the pro-Palestinian encampment as a member of Columbia University Apartheid Divest, was banned from campus Friday, according to a Columbia spokesperson.

Protest organizers said James' comments didn't reflect their values. They declined to describe James' level of involvement with the demonstration.

In France, students at the Paris Institute of Political Studies, which counts President Emmanuel Macron among its many famous alumni, students blocked access to a campus building and classes went online as the wave of protests reached overseas.

Police clashed with protesters Thursday at Indiana University, Bloomington, where 34 were arrested; Ohio State University, where about 36 were arrested; and at the University of Connecticut, where one person was arrested.

The University of Southern California canceled its May 10 graduation ceremony Thursday, 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 ceremonies.

Universities where faculty members have initiated or passed votes of no confidence in their presidents include Cal Poly Humboldt, University of Texas at Austin and Emory University.

Tornadoes collapse buildings and level homes in Nebraska and Iowa

By JOSH FUNK, MARGERY A. BECK and HEATHER HOLLINGSWORTH Associated Press

OMAHA, Neb. (AP) — Tornadoes wreaked havoc Friday in the Midwest, causing a building to collapse with dozens of people inside and destroying and damaging hundreds of homes, many around Omaha, Nebraska.

As of Friday night, there were several reports of injuries but no immediate deaths reported. Tornado warnings continued to be issued into the night in Iowa.

Three people were hurt in Nebraska's Lancaster County when a tornado hit an industrial building, causing it to collapse with 70 people inside. Several were trapped, but everyone was evacuated and the injuries were not life-threatening, authorities said.

One of the most destructive tornadoes moved for miles Friday through mostly rural farmland before chewing up homes and other structures in the suburbs of Omaha, a city of 485,000 people with a metropolitan area population of about 1 million.

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Photos on social media showed the small town of Minden, Iowa, about 30 miles (48.3 kilometers) north-east of Omaha also sustained heavy damage.

Jeff Theulen, chief deputy of the Pottawattamie County Sheriff's Office, said at a late Friday briefing that 40 to 50 homes had been completely destroyed. Two injuries were reported but none was life-threatening.

School buses have been brought in to give residents a ride out of town if they need one, he said. He asked others to stay away, as it's a very dangerous area with power lines down and piles of debris where homes used to be.

"It's heartbreaking to see these people who have lost houses, cars, essentially their life until they have to rebuild it," he said.

The forecast for Saturday was ominous. The National Weather Service issued tornado watches across parts of Iowa, Kansas, Missouri, Oklahoma and Texas. Forecasters warned that large hail and strong wind gusts were possible.

"It does look like a big outbreak again tomorrow," said Becky Kern, the warning coordination meteorologist in the National Weather Service's Omaha office. "Maybe slightly farther south."

Hundreds of houses sustained damage in Omaha on Friday, mostly in the Elkhorn area in the western part of the city, Omaha police Lt. Neal Bonacci said.

"You definitely see the path of the tornado," Bonacci said, adding that many of the homes were destroyed or severely damaged.

Police and firefighters went door-to-door to help people, going to the "hardest hit area" with a plan to search anywhere someone could be trapped, Omaha Fire Chief Kathy Bossman said.

"We'll be looking throughout properties in debris piles, we'll be looking in basements, trying to find any victims and make sure everybody is rescued who needs assistance," Bossman said.

In one area of Elkhorn, dozens of newly built, large homes were damaged. At least six were wrecked, including one that was leveled, while others had their top halves ripped off. Dozens of emergency vehicles responded to the area.

"We watched it touch down like 200 yards over there and then we took shelter," said Pat Woods, who lives in Elkhorn. "We could hear it coming through. When we came up our fence was gone and we looked to the northwest and the whole neighborhood's gone."

Kim Woods, his wife, added, "The whole neighborhood just to the north of us is pretty flattened."

Three people, including a child, were in the basement of the leveled home when the tornado hit but got out safely, according to Dhaval Naik, who said he works with home's owner.

KETV-TV video showed one woman being removed from a demolished home on a stretcher in Blair, a city just north of Omaha.

Two people were transported for treatment, both with minor injuries, Bonacci said.

Crews were doing a second search of homes. Fire crews would work throughout the night to check all the unsafe structures and make sure no one is inside, Bonacci said.

"People had warnings of this and that saved lives," Omaha Police Chief Todd Schmaderer said of the few serious injuries.

The tornado warning was issued in the Omaha area on Friday afternoon just as children were due to be released from school. Many schools had students shelter in place until the storm passed. Hours later, buses were still transporting children home.

"Was it one long track tornado or was it several tornadoes?" Kern of the National Weather Service said.

The agency planned to send out multiple crews over the next several days to determine the number of tornadoes and their strength, which could take up to two weeks, she said.

"Some appeared to be violent tornadoes," Kern continued. "There were tornadoes in different areas. And so it's like forensic meteorology, we call it, like piecing together, all the damage indicators."

Another tornado hit an area on the eastern edge of Omaha, passing directly through parts of Eppley Airfield, the city's airport. Officials halted aircraft operations to access damage but then reopened the facility, Omaha Airport Authority Chief Strategy Officer Steve McCoy said.

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The passenger terminal wasn't hit by the tornado but people rushed to storm shelters until the twister passed, McCoy said.

After passing through the airport, the tornado crossed the Missouri River and into Iowa, north of Council Bluffs.

Nebraska Emergency Management Agency spokesperson Katrina Spert said Friday afternoon that damage reports were just starting to come in. Taylor Wilson, a spokesperson for the University of Nebraska Medical Center, said they hadn't seen any injuries yet.

In Lancaster County, where three people were injured when an industrial building collapsed, sheriff's officials also said they had reports of a tipped-over train near Waverly, Nebraska.

Two people who were injured in the county were being treated at the trauma center at Bryan Medical Center West Campus in Lincoln, the facility said in a news release. The hospital said the patients were in triage and no details were released on their condition.

The Omaha Public Power District reported nearly 10,000 customers were without power in the Omaha area. The number had dropped to about 7,300 by Friday night.

Nebraska Gov. Jim Pillen posted on the social platform X that he had ordered state resources to be made available to help with the emergency response and to support first responders as they assess the damage.

"Nebraskans are no strangers to severe weather and, as they have countless times before, Nebraskans will help Nebraskans to rebuild," Pillen said.

Daniel Fienhold, manager of the Pink Poodle Steakhouse in Crescent, Iowa, said he was outside watching the weather with his daughter and restaurant employees, recalling "it looked like a pretty big tornado was forming" northeast of town.

"It started raining, and then it started hailing, and then all the clouds started to kind of swirl and come together, and as soon as the wind started to pick up, that's when I headed for the basement, but we never saw it," Fienhold said.

Trump promised big plans to flip Black and Latino voters. Many Republicans are waiting to see them

By MATT BROWN and STEVE PEOPLES Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — Donald Trump says he wants to hold a major campaign event at New York's Madison Square Garden featuring Black hip-hop artists and athletes. His aides speak of making appearances in Chicago, Detroit and Atlanta with leaders of color and realigning American politics by flipping Democratic constituencies.

But five months before the first general election votes are cast, the former president's campaign has little apparent organization to show for its ambitious plans.

The Trump campaign removed its point person for coalitions and hasn't announced a replacement. The Republican Party's minority outreach offices across the country have been shuttered and replaced by businesses that include a check-cashing store, an ice cream shop and a sex-toy store. And campaign officials concede they are weeks away from rolling out any targeted programs.

The presumptive Republican presidential nominee has struggled to navigate a messy transition into the general election plagued by staffing issues, his personal legal troubles and the "Make America Great Again" movement's disdain for so-called "identity politics." There are signs of frustration on the ground, where Republicans believe Trump has a real opportunity to shift the election by cutting into President Joe Biden's advantage with voters of color.

"To be quite honest, the Republican Party does not have a cohesive engagement plan for Black communities," said Darrell Scott, a Black pastor who served as a senior advisor on Trump's 2016 and 2020 campaigns. "What it has are conservatives in communities of color that have taken it upon themselves to head our own initiatives."

In Michigan, a critical battleground that flipped from Trump to Biden four years ago, several party of-

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ficials confirmed that the Republican National Committee, overhauled by Trump allies after he clinched the nomination in March, has yet to set up any community centers for minority outreach. Office spaces to house the centers have been offered up by community members, but staffing has been an issue, said Oakland County GOP Chair Vance Patrick.

"We've got all these carts but we have no horses yet," said Patrick. "So, it's all about making sure we have staffing when we open up these offices."

On-the-ground political organizing has long been a hallmark of successful presidential campaigns, which typically invest tremendous resources into identifying would-be supporters and ensuring they vote. The task may be even more critical this fall given how few voters are excited about the Biden-Trump rematch.

The Trump campaign hired a national coalitions director in October 2023, almost a year after he launched his campaign. But the staffer, Derek Silver, departed in March without explanation, according to two people familiar with the matter who spoke on the condition of anonymity to share internal discussions. Silver did not return multiple requests for comment and no replacement has been announced.

Trump's advisors reject criticism that they're not doing enough organizing or spending to reach minorities. James Blair, the campaign's political director, said the campaign would not "broadcast" its spending or staffing levels, "but I assure you, it's enough to ensure President Trump's historic surge in support amongst Black and Hispanic voters sticks in November and beyond."

Lynne Patton, a senior adviser on the campaign overseeing coalitions work who has worked closely with the Trump family for decades, said that Trump's political team is laying the groundwork for a robust minority outreach program, although largely in private.

"We are speaking with Black leaders, we are speaking with small business owners, we're speaking with famous athletes, hip-hop artists, some of whom I think you'd be surprised if you knew who was talking with us right now," Patton said in an interview. "These are people who are expressing openness to supporting President Trump both publicly and privately."

Polls show that many Black and Hispanic adults are dissatisfied with Biden. According to AP-NORC polls, Biden's approval among Black adults has dropped from 94% when he started his term to just 55% in March. Among Hispanic adults, it dropped from 70% to 32% in the same period.

And an April poll by the Pew Research Center confirms the problem is especially acute among younger adults: Just 43% of Black adults under 50 said they approve of Biden in that poll, compared with 70% of those age 50 and older. Among Hispanics, 29% of younger adults said they approve, slightly less than the 42% who said that among those 50 and older.

Trump's allies argue that increased frustration about crime, inflation and immigration may win over some voters of color who have previously been less receptive to Trump's record and divisive rhetoric.

Biden has been spending millions of dollars on ads targeting Black and Latino voters in presidential battleground states. That's in addition to dozens of new office openings in minority neighborhoods. All the while, Biden's team has frequently dispatched Vice President Kamala Harris, the nation's first Black female vice president, and other prominent leaders of color to key states.

"Donald Trump and MAGA Republicans proudly admitting that they have no real strategy to reach Black voters because they believe all they need is rap concerts and free chicken is only surprising if you haven't paid attention to Trump's fraudulent relationship to Black America for years," said Jasmine Harris, the Biden campaign's Black media director, who described Trump as "a fraud" who "takes every opportunity available to him to demean our community."

Republican strategist Alice Stewart, a veteran of several GOP campaigns, said she's confident that the Trump campaign will ultimately do what's necessary.

"But the key is they can't just talk about minority outreach," she said. "They have to do it."

Hamas is reviewing an Israeli proposal for a cease-fire in Gaza, as possible Rafah offensive looms

By SAMY MAGDY and DAVID RISING Associated Press

CAIRO (AP) — Hamas said Saturday it was reviewing a new Israeli proposal for a cease-fire in Gaza, as Egypt intensified efforts to broker a deal to end the months-long war and stave off a possible Israeli ground offensive into the southern Gaza city of Rafah.

Senior Hamas official Khalil al-Hayya said the Palestinian militant group was evaluating Israel's proposal, and "upon completion of its study, it will submit its response."

He gave no details of Israel's offer but said it was in response to a proposal from Hamas two weeks ago. Negotiations earlier this month centered on a six-week cease-fire proposal and the release of 40 civilian and sick hostages in exchange for freeing hundreds of Palestinian prisoners in Israeli jails.

Hamas' statement came hours after a high-level Egyptian delegation wrapped up a visit to Israel where it discussed a "new vision" for a prolonged cease-fire in Gaza, according to an Egyptian official, who spoke on condition of anonymity to freely discuss the developments.

It was not immediately clear whether Israel's latest response to Hamas on a cease-fire was directly related to Friday's visit to Tel Aviv by Egyptian mediators.

The discussions between Egyptian and Israeli officials focused on the first stage of a multi-phase plan that would include a limited exchange of hostages held by Hamas for Palestinian prisoners, and the return of a significant number of displaced Palestinians to their homes in northern Gaza "with minimum restrictions," the Egyptian official said.

The mediators are working on a compromise that will answer most of both parties' main demands, which could pave the way to continued negotiations with the goal of a larger deal to end the war, the official said.

As the war drags on and casualties mount, there has been growing international pressure for Hamas and Israel to reach an agreement on a cease-fire and avert a possible Israeli attack on Rafah, where more than half of Gaza's 2.3 million people have sought refuge after fleeing fighting elsewhere in the territory.

Israel has been insisting for months it plans a ground offensive into Rafah, on the border with Egypt, where it says many remaining Hamas militants are holed up, despite calls for restraint from the international community including Israel's staunchest ally, the United States.

Egypt has cautioned an offensive into Rafah could have "catastrophic consequences" on the humanitarian situation in Gaza, as well as on regional peace and security.

The Israeli military has massed dozens of tanks and armored vehicles in southern Israel close to Rafah and hit targets in the city in near-daily airstrikes.

Early Saturday, an Israeli airstrike hit a house in Rafah's Tel Sultan neighborhood, killing six people, including four children, according to officials at a local hospital.

The strike killed a man, his wife and their three sons, aged 12, 10 and 8, according to records of the Abu Yousef al-Najjar hospital's morgue. A neighbor's four-month-old girl was also killed, the records showed.

Ahmed Omar rushed with other nearby residents to the house after the 1:30 a.m. strike to look for survivors but said they only found bodies and body parts.

"It's a tragedy," he said.

Five people were also killed in the Nuseirat refugee camp in central Gaza overnight when an Israeli strike hit a house, according to officials at the al-Aqsa Martyrs Hospital.

Elsewhere, Israeli forces shot and killed two Palestinian men in an exchange of fire at a checkpoint in the Israeli-occupied West Bank, the military said.

Violence in the West Bank has flared since the war started. Since then, 491 Palestinians have been killed by Israeli fire in the territory according to the Ramallah-based Health Ministry,

The Israeli army said the two men were killed after they opened fire from a vehicle at Israeli troops stationed at Salem checkpoint near the Palestinian city of Jenin.

The U.S. has been critical of Israeli policies in the West Bank and Secretary of State Antony Blinken, who is expected in Israel on Tuesday, has recently determined an army unit committed human rights abuses

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there before the Gaza war.

But Blinken said in an undated letter to House Speaker Mike Johnson, obtained by The Associated Press on Friday, that he is postponing a decision on blocking aid to the unit to give Israel more time to right the wrongdoing.

Blinken stressed in the letter that overall U.S. military support for Israel's defense against Hamas and other threats would not be affected by the State Department's eventual decision on the one unit.

The U.S. has also been building a pier to deliver aid to Gaza through a new port, which an official said last week was on track to start operating by early May.

The Biden administration has stressed there will be no American boots on the ground for the mission. However, the BBC reported Saturday that the British government was considering deploying troops to drive the trucks to carry the aid to the shore, citing unidentified government sources. British officials declined to comment on the report.

Hamas said Friday it is open to any "ideas or suggestions" that take into consideration the needs of the Palestinian people such as an end to Israel's attacks on Gaza, the return of displaced people to their homes and an Israeli withdrawal.

The Palestinian group 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 rejected.

Israel says it will continue military operations until Hamas is defeated and that it will retain a security presence in Gaza afterward.

Hamas sparked the war with its attack into southern Israel on Oct. 7, in which militants killed around 1,200 people, mostly civilians, and took some 250 people as hostages. Israel says the militants are still holding around 100 hostages and the remains of more than 30 others.

Since then, more than 34,000 Palestinians have been killed in Israel's air and ground offensive, according to the Health Ministry in Hamas-run Gaza, around two-thirds of them children and women. The ministry said Saturday that 32 people killed in Israeli strikes had been brought to local hospitals over the past 24 hours.

Israel has reported at least 260 of its soldiers killed since the start of ground operations in Gaza.

Russia renews attacks on the Ukrainian energy sector as Kyiv launches drones at southern Russia

By ILLIA NOVIKOV Associated Press

KYIV, Ukraine (AP) — Russia launched a barrage of missiles against Ukraine overnight, in attacks that appeared to target the country's energy infrastructure. Meanwhile, Russia said its air defense systems had intercepted more than 60 Ukrainian drones over the southern Krasnodar region.

Ukraine's air force said Saturday that Russia had launched 34 missiles against Ukraine overnight, of which 21 had been shot down by Ukrainian air defenses.

In a post on Telegram, Minister of Energy Herman Halushchenko said energy facilities in Dnipropetrovsk in the south of the country and Ivano-Frankivsk and Lviv in the west had been attacked and that an engineer was injured.

Private energy operator DTEK said four of its thermal power plants were damaged and that there were "casualties," without going into detail.

Earlier this month Russia destroyed one of Ukraine's largest power plants and damaged others in a massive missile and drone attack as it renewed its push to target Ukraine's energy facilities.

Ukraine has appealed to its Western allies for more air defense systems to ward off such attacks. At a meeting of the Ukraine Defense Contact Group on Friday, U.S. Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin announced the U.S. will provide Ukraine with additional munitions and gear for its air defense launchers.

Further east, a psychiatric hospital was damaged and one person was wounded after Russia launched a missile attack overnight on Ukraine's second-largest city, Kharkiv. Photos from the scene showed a huge crater on the grounds of the facility and patients taking shelter in corridors. Regional governor Oleh Synyehubov said a 53-year-old woman was hurt.

Also in the Kharkiv region, a man was killed in an overnight attack on the city of Vovchansk, according to Ukraine's State Service for Emergency Situations.

In Russia, the Defense Ministry said Russian air defense systems had intercepted 66 drones over the country's southern Krasnodar region. Two more drones were shot down over the Moscow-annexed Crimean Peninsula.

The governor of the Krasnodar region, Veniamin Kondratyev, said that Ukrainian forces targeted an oil refinery and infrastructure facilities but that there were no casualties or serious damage. The regional department of the Emergency Situations Ministry reported that a fire broke out at the Slavyansk oil refinery in Slavyansk-on-Kuban during the attack.

Ukrainian officials normally decline to comment on attacks on Russian soil, but the Ukrainian Energy Ministry said Saturday that two oil refineries in the Krasnodar region had been hit by drones.

Five people were wounded in a drone attack in a border village in Russia's Belgorod region, regional Gov. Vyacheslav Gladkov said.

Dozens of deaths reveal risks of injecting sedatives into people restrained by police

By RYAN J. FOLEY, CARLA K. JOHNSON and SHELBY LUM Associated Press

Demetrio Jackson was desperate for medical help when the paramedics arrived.

The 43-year-old was surrounded by police who arrested him after responding to a trespassing call in a Wisconsin parking lot. Officers had shocked him with a Taser and pinned him as he pleaded that he couldn't breathe. Now he sat on the ground with hands cuffed behind his back and took in oxygen through a mask.

Then, officers moved Jackson to his side so a medic could inject him with a potent knockout drug.

"It's just going to calm you down," an officer assured Jackson. Within minutes, Jackson's heart stopped. He never regained consciousness and died two weeks later.

Jackson's 2021 death illustrates an often-hidden way fatal U.S. police encounters end: not with the firing of an officer's gun but with the silent use of a medical syringe.

The practice of giving sedatives to people detained by police has spread quietly across the nation over the last 15 years, built on questionable science and backed by police-aligned experts, an investigation led by The Associated Press has found. Based on thousands of pages of law enforcement and medical records and videos of dozens of incidents, the investigation shows how a strategy intended to reduce violence and save lives has resulted in some avoidable deaths.

At least 94 people died after they were given sedatives and restrained by police from 2012 through 2021, according to findings by the AP in collaboration with FRONTLINE (PBS) and the Howard Centers for Investigative Journalism. That's nearly 10% of the more than 1,000 deaths identified during the investigation of people subdued by police in ways that are not supposed to be fatal. About half of the 94 who died were Black, including Jackson.

Behind the racial disparity is a disputed medical condition called excited delirium, which fueled the rise of sedation outside hospitals. Critics say its purported symptoms, including "superhuman strength" and high pain tolerance, play into racist stereotypes about Black people and lead to biased decisions about who needs sedation.

The use of sedatives in half these incidents has never been reported, as scrutiny typically focuses on the actions of police, not medics. Elijah McClain's 2019 death in Aurora, Colorado, was a rare exception: Two paramedics were convicted of giving McClain an overdose of ketamine, the same drug given to Jackson. One was sentenced last month to five years in prison and the other was sentenced Friday to 14 months in jail and probation.

It was impossible to determine the role sedatives may have played in each of the 94 deaths, which often involved the use of other potentially dangerous force on people who had taken drugs or consumed alcohol. Medical experts told the AP their impact could be negligible in people who were already dying;

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the final straw that triggered heart or breathing failure in the medically distressed; or the main cause of death when given in the wrong circumstances or mishandled.

While sedatives were mentioned as a cause or contributing factor in a dozen official death rulings, authorities often didn't even investigate whether injections were appropriate. Medical officials have traditionally viewed them as mostly benign treatments. Now some say they may be playing a bigger role than previously understood and deserve more scrutiny.

Time and time again, the AP found, agitated people who were held by police facedown, often handcuffed and with officers pushing on their backs, struggled to breathe and tried to get free. Citing combativeness, paramedics administered sedatives, further slowing their breathing. Cardiac and respiratory arrest often occurred within minutes.

Paramedics drugged some people who were not a threat to themselves or others, violating treatment guidelines. Medics often didn't know whether other drugs or alcohol were in people's systems, although some combinations cause serious side effects.

Police officers sometimes improperly encouraged paramedics to give shots to suspects they were detaining.

Responders occasionally joked about the medications' power to knock their subjects out. "Night, night" is heard on videos before deaths in California, Tennessee and Florida.

Emergency medical workers, "if they aren't careful, can simply become an extension of the police's handcuffs, of their weapons, of their nightsticks," said Claire Zagorski, a former paramedic and an addiction researcher at the University of Texas at Austin.

Supporters say sedatives enable rapid treatment for drug-related behavioral emergencies and psychotic episodes, protect front-line responders from violence and are safely administered thousands of times annually to get people with life-threatening conditions to hospitals. Critics say forced sedation should be strictly limited or banned, arguing the medications, given without consent, are too risky to be administered during police encounters.

Ohio State University professor Dr. Mark DeBard was an important early proponent of sedation, believing it could be used in rare cases when officers encountered extremely agitated people who needed rapid medical treatment. Today, he said he's frustrated officers still sometimes use excessive force instead of treating those incidents as medical emergencies. He's also surprised paramedics have given unnecessary injections by overdiagnosing excited delirium.

Others say the premise was flawed, with sedatives and police restraint creating a dangerous mix. The deaths have left a trail of grieving relatives from coast to coast.

"They're running around on the streets administering these heavy-duty medications that could be lethal," said Honey Gutzalenko, a nurse whose husband died after he was injected with midazolam in 2021 while restrained by police near San Francisco. "It's just not right."

'I'M BEGGING YOU TO STOP'

Jackson was standing on a truck outside a radio station on the border of the small Wisconsin cities of Eau Claire and Altoona. An employee called 911 before dawn on Oct. 8, 2021, hoping officers could shoo away a stranger who "doesn't seem to be a threat, but not normal either."

Police video and hundreds of pages of law enforcement and medical records show how the incident escalated.

An Altoona police officer met Jackson in the parking lot. Jackson appeared uneasy and paranoid, looking around and talking softly. He had taken methamphetamine, which a psychiatrist said he used to self-medicate for schizophrenia. He'd been in and out of jail and living on the streets, with frequent visits to the emergency room seeking a place to rest.

The officer, joined by a second Altoona officer and a sheriff's deputy, told him he could leave if he gave his name. Jackson refused.

Police identified him through his tattoos, learning he was on probation for meth possession. They noticed the truck had minor damage and decided to arrest him.

Jackson took off running. The officers chased Jackson, who stopped seconds later and staggered toward

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the first officer. Body-camera video shows she fired her Taser, its darts striking Jackson in the stomach and thigh. He screamed after the electrical shock and collapsed.

When officers couldn't handcuff Jackson, she fired additional darts, striking Jackson in the back as he lay on the ground. Officers from the Eau Claire Police Department forced Jackson onto his stomach to be handcuffed and restrained him in what's known as the prone position.

"I'm begging you to stop," Jackson said. "I can't breathe."

After a couple of minutes, officers moved him to his side and then sat him up, trying to improve his breathing.

An officer wondered aloud whether Jackson had "excited delirium" and asked a colleague if paramedics were "going to stand around and do nothing." He voiced approval when one arrived with ketamine, adding Jackson would not like it "when he gets poked."

The Eau Claire Fire Department's excited delirium protocol advises, "Rapid sedation is the key to de-escalation!!!!" The medic measured 400 milligrams after estimating the 6-foot-tall Jackson weighed 175 pounds, enough to immobilize someone within minutes. He injected the medicine into Jackson's buttocks.

Five medical experts who reviewed the case for AP said Jackson's behavior did not appear to be dangerous enough to justify the intervention.

"I don't believe he was a candidate for ketamine," said Connecticut paramedic Peter Canning, who said he supports sedating truly violent patients because they stop fighting and are sleeping by the time they get to the hospital.

Minutes later, Jackson stopped breathing on the way to Sacred Heart Hospital. He'd suffered cardiac arrest and, after he was resuscitated, had no brain function.

Jackson's mother, Rita Gowens, collapsed while shopping at an Indiana Walmart when she learned her oldest son was hospitalized and not expected to survive.

Gowens rushed to the hospital 500 miles away, where she was told he'd been injected with ketamine. She searched online and was stunned to read it's used to tranquilize horses.

Gowens spoke to Jackson, held his hand and hoped for a miracle. She eventually agreed to remove him from a ventilator after his condition didn't improve, singing into his ear as he took his final breaths: "You've never lost a battle, and I know, I know, you never will."

She still has nightmares about how police and medics treated her son, whom she recalls as a happy boy with chunky cheeks that inspired the nickname "Meatball." There are few days when she doesn't ask, "Why did they give him an animal tranquilizer?"

KETAMINE MOVES TO THE STREETS

The practice of using ketamine to subdue people outside hospitals began in 2004 when a disturbed man scaled a fence, cut himself with a broken bottle and paced along a narrow strip of concrete on a Minneapolis highway bridge.

The man was in danger of falling into traffic below when officers reached through the fence and grabbed him.

Dr. John Hick, who worked with first responders, heard the emergency radio chatter while driving and rushed to the scene with an idea. Hick gave the man two shots of ketamine, started an IV and kept him breathing with an air mask.

The man stopped struggling, and responders lowered him to safety.

Paramedics had occasionally used other sedatives to calm combative people since the 1980s. Hick and his Hennepin County Medical Center colleague Dr. Jeffrey Ho believed ketamine worked faster and had fewer side effects, showing promise to avert fatal police encounters.

Ho was a leading researcher on Taser safety and an expert witness for the company in wrongful death lawsuits. In a 2007 deposition in one such case, he argued for a potentially "life-saving tactic" of having sedative injections quickly follow Taser shocks, saying the combination could shorten struggles that, if prolonged, might end in death.

Some doctors at his public hospital in Minneapolis were using "something called ketamine, which is an

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analog to LSD," he said. "It's sort of an animal tranquilizer."

The drug became more common outside the hospital in 2008 when Hennepin County paramedics were given permission to use it.

An American College of Emergency Physicians panel that included Ho said in 2009 that ketamine had shown "excellent results and safety" while acknowledging no research proved it would save lives.

In time, its use became standard from Las Vegas to Columbus, Ohio, to Palm Beach County, Florida. The earliest death involving ketamine documented in AP's investigation came in 2015, when 34-year-old Juan Carrizales was injected after struggling with police in the Dallas suburb of Garland, Texas.

Shortly after ketamine became authorized for such use in Arizona in 2017, deputies who were restraining David Cutler facedown in handcuffs in the scorching desert asked a paramedic to sedate him.

The medic testified he was surprised when Cutler stopped breathing, although the dose was larger than recommended for someone weighing 132 pounds. He said he had been trained that ketamine didn't impact respiration. Cutler's death was ruled an accident due to heat exposure and LSD — though that was disputed by experts hired by Cutler's family, who said heat stroke along with ketamine caused his death.

In Minneapolis, an oversight agency found the use of ketamine during police calls rose dramatically from 2012 through 2017 and body-camera video showed instances of officers appearing to pressure paramedics to use ketamine and joking about its power. The department told officers they could never "suggest or demand" the use of sedation.

Facing criticism, Hennepin Healthcare halted a study examining the effectiveness of ketamine on agitated patients. The Food and Drug Administration later found the research failed to protect vulnerable, intoxicated people who had not given consent.

By 2021, the American College of Emergency Physicians warned ketamine impacted breathing and the heart more than previously believed.

"Ketamine is not as benign as we might have hoped it to be," a co-author of the new position, Dr. Jeffrey Goodloe, said on the group's podcast in 2022.

He said the practice of giving large doses of ketamine, sometimes too much for smaller patients, had spread nationwide as agencies copied each other's protocols with little independent review.

But the AP's findings show risks of sedation go beyond ketamine, which was used in at least 19 cases.

Roughly half of the 94 deaths documented by the AP came after the use of midazolam, which has long been known to heighten the risk of respiratory depression. Many came during police encounters in California, where ketamine is not widely used. Midazolam, a common pre-surgery drug known by the brand name Versed, is also part of a three-drug cocktail used in some states to execute prisoners.

Other cases involved a range of other drugs, including the antipsychotic medications haloperidol and ziprasidone, which can cause irregular heartbeats.

The need for monitoring side effects is often laid out for paramedics in written guidelines, many of which are based on the disputed belief that excited delirium can cause sudden death.

THE HISTORY OF 'EXCITED DELIRIUM'

The theory of excited delirium was troubling from the start.

In the 1980s, with cocaine use soaring, Dr. Charles Wetli, a Miami forensic pathologist, coined the term to explain a handful of deaths of violent cocaine users, many of whom had been restrained by police. Wetli, who died in 2020, also blamed excited delirium for the mysterious deaths of more than a dozen Black women. He said cocaine and sexual activity triggered the fatal condition.

The women's deaths eventually were attributed to a serial killer. Wetli's theory survived. And over time, symptoms described by Wetli and others — "superhuman strength," animal-like noises and high pain tolerance — became disproportionately assigned to Black people. The terms spread to police and emergency medical services to describe certain agitated people — and explain sudden deaths.

By the mid-2000s, police were encountering more drug users and mentally ill people as stimulant use increased and psychiatric hospitals closed. Departments adopted Tasers as a less-lethal alternative to firearms, but there was a problem — hundreds died after being jolted.

Supporters of Wetli's research, including the medical examiner in Miami-Dade County, ruled again and

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again that excited delirium was the cause of these deaths, not the effects of the weapons and other physical force. Executives at Taser's manufacturer agreed, promoting excited delirium to medical examiners around the country and retaining experts who explained the concept to juries in wrongful death lawsuits.

In 2006, a grand jury that investigated Taser-related deaths in Miami-Dade recommended an untested treatment that it said could save people before they died from excited delirium: squirting midazolam up their noses to cause "almost immediate sedation." Its report acknowledged they "may experience difficulty in breathing." Miami-Dade paramedics adopted this treatment.

But key medical groups didn't recognize excited delirium, and activists were calling for limits on Taser use. What happened next would help promote sedation alongside Tasers as tools to gain control.

In 2008, the biggest names in excited delirium research gathered at a Las Vegas hotel for a three-day meeting organized by a group with ties to Taser's manufacturer.

"A lot of talk took place on chemical sedation because the cops didn't know what to do with these people," recalled John Peters, president of the Institute for the Prevention of In-Custody Deaths, which sponsored the meeting. "Jeff Ho had done some work up in Minnesota. He said, 'Look. I've been using ketamine. It knocks them out quicker.'"

The timing was fortuitous: The American College of Emergency Physicians would soon form a task force to study excited delirium and how police and medics should respond.

The 19-member panel included Ho, who became Taser's medical director under an arrangement in which the company paid part of his hospital salary; Dr. Donald Dawes, a Taser research consultant; and University of Miami researcher Deborah Mash, who testified for Taser about several deaths she blamed on excited delirium. At least two other panelists were routinely retained by officers and their departments as expert witnesses.

The panel's 2009 paper disclosed none of these relationships. It found excited delirium was real, could result in death regardless of whether someone was shocked with a Taser and called for "aggressive chemical sedation" to treat the symptoms.

DeBard, the now-retired Ohio doctor who chaired the panel, told AP he recruited relevant experts to join and that disclosure of conflicts wasn't required by the ER doctors group then. He said Taser didn't influence the outcome, which reflected the panel's consensus. Mash said she had no conflict because Taser didn't fund her research. Dawes declined an interview request. Ho didn't return messages.

Taser rebranded itself in 2017 as Axon. A spokesperson for the company declined interview requests and did not respond to written questions.

Dr. Brooks Walsh, an emergency physician in Connecticut who was not on the panel, said the 2009 paper reinforced racial bias as it formalized "loaded terms" used to describe excited delirium, influencing how the diagnosis would be applied.

Ho and other Taser- and police-aligned experts joined a federally sponsored panel in 2011 that built on the work, recommending four actions on a checklist for officers and paramedics: Identify excited delirium symptoms; control (with a Taser if necessary); sedate; and transport to a hospital.

No test measures for excited delirium, so paramedics faced a judgment call: Which patients were so agitated, strong, impervious to pain and dangerous that they needed to be sedated?

DeBard said the symptoms were based on medical observations, not race. "If you've got somebody that's delirious, irrational, aggressive, hyperactive, running around naked, I mean, it's really pretty easy" to recognize, he said.

Yet, over time, prominent medical groups and some experts pointed to overuse of sedation during police encounters and a disproportionate impact on Black people. Even supporters of the practice have acknowledged that the wrong patients at times have been injected.

The deaths of Black men in police custody, including the 2020 killing of George Floyd, put pressure on the medical community to re-examine excited delirium. The ER doctors group in 2023 withdrew approval of the 2009 paper and said excited delirium shouldn't be used in court testimony. Some doctors called that decision political and note the group still recognizes a similar condition — hyperactive delirium with

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severe agitation — that can be treated with sedation. But today no major medical association legitimizes excited delirium.

'CONVENIENT FOR LAW ENFORCEMENT'

In more than a dozen cases reviewed by AP, police asked for or suggested the use of sedatives, calling into question whether medics were working for law enforcement or in patients' interests. Officers often suggested their detainees had excited delirium.

University of California, Berkeley, law and bioethics professor Osagie Obasogie, who has studied excited delirium and sedation, said officers should be banned from influencing medical care.

"We need to be sure that folks are treated in a way that meets their medical needs and not simply given a chemical restraint because it's convenient for law enforcement," he said.

Officers are told not to dictate medical treatment but "some knuckleheads" have done otherwise, said Peters, whose group hosted the 2008 Las Vegas meeting that focused on excited delirium.

Paramedics say they make medical decisions independently from police, following guidelines that call for sedating people who may be dangerous. But in several cases AP found, people were injected though they had calmed down or even passed out after struggles with police.

Ivan Gutzalenko, a 47-year-old father, was struggling to breathe as two officers restrained him in Richmond, California. Gutzalenko told the officers they were hurting him, and bucked to try to get one off his back.

A paramedic viewed Gutzalenko's action as aggression, and went to his ambulance to get a 5-milligram dose of midazolam. When he returned three minutes later, Gutzalenko lay motionless. "He's faking like he's unconscious," an officer said.

The medic plunged the needle into his bicep. Gutzalenko's heart stopped. He was declared dead at a hospital. A pathologist testified that midazolam was given to "quiet him down" during an episode of excited delirium but did not contribute to the death, which he blamed on prone restraint and meth use.

His wife said Gutzalenko, a former critical care nurse, would never have consented to receive midazolam that day.

"I know from being a registered nurse since 2004, you don't administer a sedative to someone who is clearly already in respiratory distress," she said, adding that his death has been devastating to their two teenage children.

Dr. Gail Van Norman, a University of Washington professor of anesthesiology and pain medicine, said it's dangerous for officers to put pressure on the backs and necks of detainees before and after they're injected with sedatives.

"It's a recipe for disaster, because you may have created a situation in which you are impeding a person's ability to get oxygen," she said.

The AP investigation found half who died following sedation had been shocked with a Taser and the majority had been restrained facedown.

Their blood acid levels may already have been spiking from drugs, adrenaline and pain while oxygen levels may have been plummeting — life-threatening conditions called acidosis and hypoxia.

Sedatives can dull the instinct to compensate by breathing quickly and heavily to blow off carbon dioxide, essential for the heart to beat, said Dr. Christopher Stephens, a UTHealth Houston anesthesiologist and former paramedic.

Under sedation, he said, the body doesn't respond as efficiently to the buildup of carbon dioxide. "Your brain doesn't care as much about it," Stephens said. "And they can go into respiratory and cardiac arrest."

Paramedics usually have no idea whether their patients have alcohol, opioids or other depressants in their bodies that increase sedatives' effects on breathing.

More than a dozen who died had been drinking, including Jerica LaCour, 29, a Colorado Springs, Colorado, mother of five young children.

She was stressed about family finances, husband Anthony LaCour recalled, when deputies found her trespassing at a trucking company.

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"Guess who gets ketamine?" paramedic Jason Poulson of AMR, the nation's largest ambulance company, said as LaCour was restrained on a gurney, according to body-camera footage.

An EMT said in a report that she told Poulson that LaCour had calmed and didn't need ketamine, and later warned that LaCour was no longer breathing. In a disciplinary agreement with state regulators, Poulson admitted he was unsuccessful in protecting LaCour's airway despite multiple attempts, mishandled the syringe and failed to document the ketamine use properly. His state certification was put on probation.

AMR and Poulson denied responsibility for LaCour's death in court filings, arguing LaCour was experiencing excited delirium and ketamine was appropriate. This week they settled a long-pending wrongful death lawsuit, LaCour family attorney Daniel Kay said Friday. He said the settlement amount was confidential and the proceeds would help her children. AMR didn't immediately respond to a request for comment and a man who answered a cellphone number listed for Poulson hung up on a reporter.

AFTER DEATH, SEDATION GOES UNQUESTIONED

When people died, the use of sedation often went unacknowledged publicly and unquestioned by investigators.

After Jackson's death in Wisconsin, police press releases said nothing about ketamine. State police redacted mention of the drug from investigation records and blurred video of the prone restraint and injection, saying his family's privacy outweighed the public interest in disclosure.

The fire department, which declined comment, blacked out the information in its incident report. But when AP uploaded the document, redactions disappeared, revealing Jackson was given 400 milligrams of ketamine.

An autopsy concluded Jackson died from complications caused by meth. The report said Jackson's ketamine dose was 100 milligrams, a quarter of what the fire department report said.

Two longtime forensic pathologists who reviewed the case for AP said meth use wasn't the only factor. Dr. Joye Carter said she believed the police altercation and ketamine caused the death, saying the sedative can cause heart problems when given to a meth user.

Dr. Victor Weedn said the level of meth in Jackson's blood was high but generally not lethal. He said Jackson likely died from high blood acid levels, with police restraint and possibly ketamine contributing.

The autopsy was performed in Ramsey County, Minnesota. A county spokesperson defended the findings from a now-retired medical examiner, saying the discrepancy on the ketamine dose wasn't significant.

Citing the autopsy's finding that meth was the cause, Eau Claire County District Attorney Peter Rindal ruled Jackson's case was not an "officer-involved death" under Wisconsin law and closed the investigation.

In nearly 90% of the deaths examined by AP, coroners and medical examiners did not list sedation as a cause or contributing factor. Some autopsy reports failed to document that the deceased had been sedated.

The most common ruling was an accidental death in which other drugs, often meth or cocaine, were causes or contributing factors. More than a quarter were at least partially attributed to excited delirium.

Medical examiners view sedatives as safe treatments to control patients and wouldn't question their use unless there was a grievous error, said Dr. James Gill, the chief medical examiner of Connecticut and past president of the National Association of Medical Examiners.

"Generally we're going to default then back to what's the underlying disease or injury that started this chain of events," Gill said.

He said sedatives rarely cause deaths by themselves but additional studies could look at whether they play a role in fatal police struggles where many factors are involved.

Even when autopsies implicated sedatives, investigations didn't always follow.

In LaCour's case, the coroner found she died from "respiratory arrest associated with acute alcohol and ketamine intoxication." The district attorney's office said it had no record of reviewing her death.

Nine miles from LaCour's injection, a paramedic injected 26-year-old Hunter Barr with ketamine as officers held him facedown in the dirt outside his Colorado Springs home in September 2020.

Retired postal worker Mark Barr had called 911 for help controlling his son, who he said wasn't violent but was having a bad reaction to LSD. He watched as a medic gave two injections just minutes apart. He said he couldn't figure out why the second injection was necessary, saying his son was subdued. Hunter

Barr became unconscious on the way to a hospital and died within hours.

The coroner ruled Barr died from the effects of ketamine. The Colorado Springs Police Department closed the case as "non-criminal" and the DA's office again had no review.

When deaths were investigated, inquiries usually focused on whether police used excessive force. In audio and video reviewed by AP, investigators seemed uninterested in how sedation may have contributed.

"I'm not trying to get in the weeds with a whole bunch of that," an investigator told a paramedic explaining the ketamine injection he gave 18-year-old Giovanni Berne before Berne's heart stopped in Palm Bay, Florida, in 2016.

Berne's sister, Christina, said the family didn't know he had been given ketamine until contacted by AP years later, but "we knew something bad happened in the ambulance." A medical examiner ruled that Berne died of excited delirium.

The death of McClain, 23, in Colorado is the only one that resulted in charges against paramedics. Prosecutors argued Aurora paramedics Jeremy Cooper and Peter Cichuniec didn't assess McClain, gave him too much ketamine for someone his size and didn't monitor him afterward.

Their convictions shook the EMS field, whose leaders say treatment mistakes shouldn't be criminalized. Defense attorneys argued the paramedics followed their training on excited delirium and ketamine. A judge gave Cichuniec five years in prison while Cooper was sentenced Friday to 14 months in jail and probation.

Civil liability is also rare, in part because deaths have multiple causes and some courts have ruled that unwilling injections aren't excessive force even when they cause harm. That hasn't stopped families from trying: A number of wrongful death lawsuits involving sedation are pending.

Lawmakers in Colorado banned excited delirium as a justification for using ketamine and put other restrictions on the drug, but changes in the law elsewhere have been few.

Paramedic reformers are working to address the failures that increase the risk of sedatives contributing to deaths.

Paramedic Eric Jaeger helped rewrite New Hampshire's protocols and, at a fire station in Hooksett, recently used Jackson's death as a training scenario after evaluating the case for AP. He questioned whether sedation was necessary. He said medics failed to thoroughly evaluate Jackson and should have had monitoring equipment ready before any injection.

He said he had been aware of a handful of deaths but the number found by AP "dramatically increases" the scope.

"If we don't change the training, change the protocols, change the leadership to make the system safer," Jaeger said, "then we all bear responsibility for future deaths."

Pro-Palestinian students have peacefully evacuated prestigious Paris university campus building

PARIS (AP) — Students in Paris inspired by Gaza solidarity encampments at campuses in the United States peacefully evacuated a campus building at a prestigious French university late on Friday after days of tensions.

The head of the Paris Institute of Political Studies, known as Sciences Po, said an agreement was found Friday with students. Sciences Po counts President Emmanuel Macron and Prime Minister Gabriel Attal among its many famous alumni.

Tensions had break out on the campus as pro-Palestinian students sought to occupy an amphitheater earlier this week.

On Friday, pro-Palestinian and pro-Israeli demonstrators faced each other in a tense standoff in the street outside the school. Riot police stepped in to separate the opposing groups.

Students later agreed to leave the site.

Pro-Palestinian protester and Sciences Po student Wajih, who declined to give his last name for fear of disciplinary sanctions by the university, said "the occupation has paused for now. But we'll still support the Palestinian movement at large, we'll support other universities, we'll support all over the globe until

Palestine is free.”

In an email to students, Sciences Po administrator Jean Bassères pledged Friday to hold a townhall meeting in the coming week and to suspend some disciplinary proceedings against students. In return, students “committed to no longer disrupting courses, examinations and all other activities of the institution,” the email said.

The university administration closed all university buildings and moved classes online Friday.

The Gaza war is sharply divisive in France, which has the largest populations of Muslims and Jews in western Europe. France initially sought to ban pro-Palestinian demonstrations after Hamas’ surprise Oct. 7 attack on Israel that sparked the war. Antisemitism has surged.

The US and China talk past each other on most issues, but at least they’re still talking

By MATTHEW LEE AP Diplomatic Writer

BEIJING (AP) — U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken wrapped up his just-concluded latest visit to China with a stop at a Beijing record store where he bought albums by Taylor Swift and Chinese rocker Dou Wei in a symbolic nod to cross-cultural exchanges and understanding he had been promoting for three days.

Music, he said at the Li-Pi shop on his way to the airport late Friday, “is the best connector, regardless of geography.”

Yet Swift’s “Midnights” and Dou Wei’s “Black Dream” could just as easily represent the seemingly intractable divisions in the deeply troubled relationship between the world’s two largest economies that both sides publicly and privately blame on the other.

Blinken and his Chinese interlocutors, including Chinese President Xi Jinping and Foreign Minister Wang Yi, all referred to these rifts even as they extolled the virtues of keeping communication channels open to manage these differences and avoid misunderstandings and miscalculations.

Blinken went out of his way to champion the importance of U.S.-China exchanges at all levels. In Shanghai, he ate at a famous soup dumpling restaurant, attended a Chinese basketball playoff game and visited with American and Chinese students at the New York University branch. In his official meetings with Chinese leaders in Beijing, he spoke repeatedly of improvements in ties over the past year.

But he also stressed that the U.S. has serious and growing concerns with China’s policies and practices on the local, regional and global stages. And, he said, the U.S. would not back down. “America will always defend our core interests and values,” he said.

On several occasions, he slammed Chinese overproduction of electric vehicles that threatened to have detrimental effects on U.S. and European automakers and complained that China was not doing enough to stop the production and export of synthetic opioid precursors.

At one point he warned bluntly that if China does not end support for Russia’s defense industrial sector, something the Biden administration says has allowed Russia to step up its attacks on Ukraine and threaten European security, the U.S. would act to stop it. “I made clear that if China does not address this problem, we will,” Blinken told reporters after meeting with Xi.

Chinese officials were similarly direct, saying that while relations have generally improved since a low point last year over the shutdown of a Chinese surveillance balloon, they remained fraught.

“The two countries should help each other succeed rather than hurt each other, seek common ground and reserve differences rather than engage in vicious competition, and honor words with actions rather than say one thing but do the opposite,” Xi told Blinken in a not-so-veiled accusation of U.S. hypocrisy.

Wang, the foreign minister, said China is fed up with what it considers to be U.S. meddling in human rights, Taiwan and the South China Sea and efforts to restrict its trade and relations with other countries. “Negative factors in the relationship are still increasing and building and the relationship is facing all kinds of disruptions,” he said. He urged the U.S. “not to step on China’s red lines on China’s sovereignty, security, and development interests.”

Or, as Yang Tao, the director general of North American and Oceania affairs at the Foreign Ministry, put

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it, according to the official Xinhua News Agency: "If the United States always regards China as its main rival, China-US relations will continuously face troubles and many problems."

Still, Blinken pressed engagement on all levels. He announced a new agreement to hold talks with China on the threats posed by artificial intelligence but lamented a dearth of American students studying in China – fewer than 900 now, compared to more than 290,000 Chinese in the U.S. He said both sides wanted to increase that number.

"We have an interest in this, because if our future leaders – whether it's in government, whether it's in business, civil society, climate, tech, and other fields – if they're going to be able to collaborate, if they want to be able to solve big problems, if they're going to be able to work through our differences, they'll need to know and understand each other's language, culture, history," he said. But he added a caveat the Chinese were likely to see as a barb.

"What I told my PRC counterparts on this visit is if they want to attract more Americans here to China, particularly students, the best way to do that is to create the conditions that allow learning to flourish anywhere – a free and open discussion of ideas, access to a wide range of information, ease of travel, confidence in the safety, security, and privacy of the participants," Blinken said.

Those are issues that neither Taylor Swift nor Dou Wei can overcome.

South Africa remembers an historic election every April 27. Here's why this year is so poignant

By GERALD IMRAY Associated Press

CAPE TOWN, South Africa (AP) — South Africans celebrate their "Freedom Day" every April 27, when they remember their country's pivotal first democratic election in 1994 that announced the official end of the racial segregation and oppression of apartheid.

Saturday is the 30th anniversary of that momentous vote, when millions of Black South Africans, young and old, decided their own futures for the first time, a fundamental right they had been denied by a white minority government.

The first all-race election saw the previously banned African National Congress party win overwhelmingly and made its leader, Nelson Mandela, the country's first Black president four years after he was released from prison.

Here's what you need to know about that iconic moment and a South Africa that's changing again 30 years on:

A TURNING POINT

The 1994 election was the culmination of a process that began four years earlier when F.W. de Klerk, the last apartheid-era president, shocked the world and his country by announcing that the ANC and other anti-apartheid parties would be unbanned.

Mandela, the face of the anti-apartheid movement, was released from prison nine days later, setting him on the road to becoming South Africa's first Black leader.

South Africa needed years to prepare and was still on a knife-edge in the months and weeks before the election because of ongoing political violence, but the vote — held over four days between April 26 and April 29 to accommodate the large numbers who turned out — went ahead successfully.

A country that had been shunned and sanctioned by the international community for decades because of apartheid emerged as a fully-fledged democracy.

HEROES

Nearly 20 million South Africans of all races voted, compared with just 3 million white people in the last general election under apartheid in 1989.

Associated Press photographer Denis Farrell's iconic aerial photograph of people waiting patiently for hours in long, snaking queues in fields next to a school in the famed Johannesburg township of Soweto captured the determination of millions of Black South Africans to finally be counted. It was nominated for a Pulitzer Prize.

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"South Africa's heroes are legend across the generations," Mandela said as he proclaimed victory. "But it is you, the people, who are our true heroes."

APARTHEID FALLS

The ANC's election victory ensured that apartheid was finally dismantled and a new Constitution was drawn up and became South Africa's highest law, guaranteeing equality for everyone no matter their race, religion or sexuality.

Apartheid, which began in 1948 and lasted for nearly half-a-century, had oppressed Black and other non-white people through a series of race-based laws. Not only did the laws deny them a vote, they controlled where Black people lived, where they were allowed to go on any given day, what jobs they were allowed to hold and who they were allowed to marry.

30 YEARS ON

Current South African President Cyril Ramaphosa — a protege of Mandela — will lead Saturday's 30th anniversary Freedom Day celebrations at the Union Buildings in Pretoria, the seat of government.

The ANC has been in government ever since 1994 and while it is still recognized for its central role in freeing South Africans, it is no longer celebrated in the same way as it was in the hope-filled aftermath of that election.

South Africa in 2024 has deep socio-economic problems, none more jarring than the widespread and severe poverty that still overwhelmingly affects the Black majority. The official unemployment rate is 32%, the highest in the world, while it's more than 60% for young people aged 15-24.

Millions of Black South Africans still live in neglected, impoverished townships and informal settlements on the fringes of cities in what many see as a betrayal of the heroes Mandela referred to. South Africa is still rated as one of the most unequal countries in the world.

The ANC is now largely being blamed for the lack of progress in improving the lives of so many South Africans, even if the damage of decades of apartheid wasn't going to be easy to undo.

ANOTHER PIVOTAL ELECTION?

The 30th anniversary of 1994 falls with another possibly pivotal election as a backdrop. South Africa will hold its seventh national vote since the end of apartheid on May 29, with all the opinion polls and analysts predicting that the ANC will lose its parliamentary majority in a new landmark.

The ANC is still expected to be the largest party and will likely have to enter into complicated coalitions with smaller parties to remain part of the government, but the overriding picture that is expected is that more South Africans will vote for other parties in a national election for the first time in their democracy.

South Africans still cherish the memory of Mandela and the elusive freedom and prosperity he spoke about in 1994. But the majority of them now appear ready to look beyond the ANC to attain it.

Paramedic who injected Elijah McClain with ketamine before his death avoids prison

By COLLEEN SLEVIN and MATTHEW BROWN Associated Press

BRIGHTON, Colo. (AP) — A former paramedic who injected Elijah McClain with a powerful sedative avoided prison Friday and was sentenced to 14 months in jail with work release and probation in the killing of the Black man that helped fuel the 2020 racial injustice protests.

Jeremy Cooper had faced up to three years in prison after being found guilty in a jury trial last year of criminally negligent homicide. He administered a dose of ketamine to McClain, 23, who had been forcibly restrained after police stopped him as the massage therapist was walking home in a Denver suburb in 2019.

The sentencing caps a series of trials that stretched over seven months and resulted in the convictions of a police officer and two paramedics. Criminal charges against paramedics and emergency medical technicians involved in police custody cases are rare.

Cooper, who was fired after his conviction, was sentenced to four years of probation including 14 months in jail under a program that will allow him to leave for work and return to jail at night and on weekends, said Lawrence Pacheco with the Colorado Attorney General's Office.

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The other paramedic involved in McClain's death received a more severe punishment after being convicted on an additional charge of felony assault.

Judge Mark Warner said evidence showed Cooper did not purposely give McClain a ketamine overdose, rejecting claims by prosecutors that the paramedic had acted with indifference.

McClain's mother told the judge prior to Friday's sentencing that she blamed McClain's death on everyone who was present that night, not just those who were convicted.

"Eternal shame on all of you," Sheneen McClain said.

She said Cooper "did nothing" to help her son after he'd been restrained by police — didn't check his pulse, didn't check his breathing and didn't ask him how he was doing — before injecting him with an overdose of ketamine.

Close to tears, McClain ended by raising her right fist in the air and saying loudly, "From my heart to my hands, long live Elijah McClain, always and forever."

She later told reporters that she wasn't expecting much from the trials and wasn't surprised Cooper avoided prison time. "We won, Elijah won," she said.

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.

At least 94 people died after they were given sedatives and restrained by police from 2012 through 2021, according to findings by The Associated Press in collaboration with FRONTLINE (PBS) and the Howard Centers for Investigative Journalism.

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 juries are often reluctant to second guess the actions of police and other first responders.

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

Cooper said during the hearing that he was sorry he couldn't save McClain.

"I want you to know that I would give anything to have a different outcome, Elijah," Cooper said as if he were talking to McClain. "I never, ever meant for anyone to hurt you."

He added that he wished he knew more at the time, implying that he could have used that knowledge to help McClain.

Sheneen McClain walked out of the courtroom as Cooper was speaking but later returned.

Prosecutor Jason Slothouber had asked the judge to incarcerate Cooper and argued that the paramedic was "singularly most responsible" for McClain's death because Cooper gave him a "massive overdose" of ketamine.

Cooper's attorney and wife and fellow firefighters urged the judge to show leniency. They described him saving people from fires, jumping into floodwaters to help an older woman and using CPR to try to save a child who died in a fire.

Cooper was not taken into custody after the hearing. He declined to comment as he walked out of the courthouse with his wife and supporters.

Judge Warner previously sentenced ex-paramedic Peter Cichuniec in March to five years in prison. He faced the most serious of the charges in the case. It was the shortest sentence allowed under the law.

Warner sentenced officer Randy Roedema to 14 months in jail with work release 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. Democratic Gov. Jared Polis ordered the investigation reopened in 2020.

The second autopsy said McClain died because he was injected with ketamine after being forcibly re-

strained.

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.

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.

McClain was not armed, nor accused of breaking any laws. He went into cardiac arrest on the way to the hospital and died three days later.

The Colorado health department has since told paramedics not to give ketamine to people suspected of having excited delirium, 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. At least 27 states including Colorado have passed some limit on the practices. Only two had bans in place before Floyd was killed.

Sheneen McClain said outside the courthouse Friday that the only closure she got was that the trials and sentencings were over.

"It doesn't matter what anybody else does to wipe the blood of my son off their hands," she said. "It's already there."

Ballistic missiles fired by Yemen's Houthi rebels damage Panama-flagged oil tanker in Red Sea

By JON GAMBRELL Associated Press

JERUSALEM (AP) — Ballistic missiles fired by Yemen's Houthi rebels caused "minor damage" to a Panama-flagged oil tanker traveling through the Red Sea on Friday, authorities said.

The attack follows an uptick in assaults launched by the Houthis in recent days after a relative lull in their monthslong campaign over Israel's war on Hamas in the Gaza Strip.

The rebels fired three missiles in the attack, one of which damaged the Panama-flagged, Seychelles-registered Andromeda Star, the U.S. military's Central Command said. The private security firm Ambrey described the tanker as being "engaged in Russia-linked trade." The vessel was traveling from Primorsk, Russia, to Vadinar, India, Ambrey said.

Houthi military spokesman Brig. Gen. Yahya Saree later claimed the attack early Saturday in a prerecorded statement aired by the rebels. He described the tanker as being "directly hit."

Another vessel, the Antiqua-Barbados-flagged, Liberia-operated Maisha, was also nearby at the time of the assault, the U.S. said. The attack occurred off Mocha, Yemen, near the Bab el-Mandeb Strait, which connects the Red Sea to the Gulf of Aden.

The Houthis have launched more than 50 attacks on shipping, seized one vessel and sank another since November, according to the U.S. Maritime Administration.

Houthi attacks have dropped in recent weeks as the rebels have been targeted by a U.S.-led airstrike campaign in Yemen. Shipping through the Red Sea and Gulf of Aden has declined because of the threat. American officials have speculated that the rebels may be running out of weapons as a result of the U.S.-led campaign against them and after firing drones and missiles steadily in the last months.

However, since Wednesday, there have been at least two other attacks claimed by the Houthis. The first targeted the MV Yorktown, a U.S.-flagged, owned and operated vessel with 18 U.S. and four Greek crew members. Another targeted the MSC Darwin.

The Houthis have said they will continue their attacks until Israel ends its war in Gaza, which has killed more than 34,000 Palestinians there. The war began after Hamas-led militants attacked Israel on Oct. 7, killing 1,200 people and taking some 250 others hostage.

Most of the ships targeted by the Houthis have had little or no direct connection to Israel, the U.S. or other nations involved in the war. The rebels have also fired missiles toward Israel, though they have

largely fallen short or been intercepted.

Class of 2024 reflects on college years marked by COVID-19, protests and life's lost milestones

By JULIE WATSON and LESLIE AMBRIZ Associated Press

LOS ANGELES (AP) — On a recent afternoon, Grant Oh zigzagged across the University of Southern California campus as if he was conquering an obstacle course, coming up against police blockade after police blockade on his way to his apartment while officers arrested demonstrators protesting the Israel-Hamas war.

In many ways, the chaotic moment was the culmination of a college life that started amid the coronavirus pandemic and has been marked by continual upheaval in what has become a constant battle for normalcy. Oh already missed his prom and his high school graduation as COVID-19 surged in 2020. He started college with online classes. Now the 20-year-old will add another missed milestone to his life: USC has canceled its main commencement ceremony that was expected to be attended by 65,000 people.

His only graduation ceremony was in middle school and there were no caps and gowns.

"It's crazy because I remember starting freshman year with the start of the Russian invasion of Ukraine, which came after senior year of high school when the Black Lives Matter protests were happening and COVID, and xenophobia," he said "It feels definitely surreal. It still shocks me that we live in a world that is so fired up and so willing to tear itself apart."

Oh, who is getting a degree in health promotion and disease prevention, added that his loss of a memorable moment pales in comparison to what is happening: "At the end of the day, people are dying."

College campuses have always been a hotbed for protests from the civil rights era to the Vietnam war to demonstrations over apartheid in South Africa. But students today also carry additional stresses from having lived through the isolation and fear from the pandemic, and the daily influence of social media that amplifies the world's wrongs like never before, experts say.

It's not just about missed milestones. Study after study shows Generation Z suffers from much higher rates of anxiety and depression than Millennials, said Jean Twenge, a psychologist and professor at San Diego State University, who wrote a book called "Generations." She attributes much of that to the fact that negativity spreads faster and wider on social media than positive posts.

"Gen Z, they tend to be much more pessimistic than Millennials," she said. "The question going forward is do they take this pessimism and turn it into concrete action and change, or do they turn it into annihilation and chaos?"

Protesters have pitched tents on campuses from Harvard and MIT to Stanford and the University of Texas, Austin, raising tensions as many schools prepare for spring commencements. Hundreds of students have been arrested across the country. Inspired by demonstrations at Columbia University, students at more than a dozen U.S. colleges have formed pro-Palestinian encampments and pledged to stay put until their demands are met.

The campus will be closed for the semester at California State Polytechnic University, Humboldt, which 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.

USC announced Thursday that it would be calling off its main graduation ceremony after protests erupted over not only the Israel-Hamas war but the school's decision earlier this month to call off the commencement speech by its valedictorian Asna Tabassum, who expressed support for Palestinians. Officials cited security concerns.

"By trying to silence Asna, it made everything way worse," Oh said, adding that he hopes there will be no violence on graduation day May 10 when smaller ceremonies will be held by different departments.

Maurielle McGarvey graduated from high school in 2019 so was able to have a ceremony but then she took a gap year when many universities held classes only online. McGarvey, who is getting a degree in screenwriting with a minor in gender and social justice studies at USC, called the cancellations "heartbreak-

ing," and said the situation has been grossly mishandled by the university. She said police with batons came at her yelling as she held a banner while she and fellow demonstrators said a Jewish prayer.

"It's definitely been like an overall diminished experience and to take away like the last sort of like typical thing that this class was allowed after having so many weird restrictions, so many customs and traditions changed," she said. "It's such a bummer."

She said the email by the university announcing the cancellation particularly stung with its link to photos of past graduates in gowns tossing up their caps and cheering. "That's just insult to injury," she said.

Students at other universities were equally glum.

"Our grade is cursed," said Abbie Barkan of Atlanta, 21, who is graduating from the University of Texas in two weeks with a journalism degree and who was among a group of Jewish students waving flags and chanting at a counter-protest Thursday near a pro-Palestinian demonstration on campus.

University of Minnesota senior Sarah Dawley, who participated in pro-Palestinian protests, is grateful graduation plans have not changed at her school. But she said the past weeks have left her with a mix of emotions. She's been dismayed to watch colleges call in police.

But she said she also feels hope after having gone through the pandemic and become part of a community that stands up for what they believe in.

"I think a lot of people are going to go on to do cool things because after all this, we care a lot," she said.

Oregon's Sports Bra, a pub for women's sports fans, plans national expansion as interest booms

By CLAIRE RUSH Associated Press

PORTLAND, Ore. (AP) — On a recent weeknight at this bar in northeast Portland, fans downed pints and burgers as college women's lacrosse and beach volleyball matches played on big-screen TVs. Memorabilia autographed by female athletes covered the walls, with a painting of U.S. soccer legend Abby Wambach mounted above the chalkboard beer menu.

The Sports Bra is a pub where women's sports are celebrated — and the only thing on TV.

Packed and buzzing with activity, the bar has successfully tapped into a meteoric rise of interest in women's sports, embodied most recently by the frenzy over University of Iowa basketball phenomenon Caitlin Clark's records-smashing feats.

Just two years after opening, the bar announced plans this week to go nationwide through a franchise model.

"Things have happened at light speed compared to what my forecast was," founder and CEO Jenny Nguyen told The Associated Press. "This tiny spot that I built for my friends and I to watch games and give female athletes their flowers means so much more. And not just to me, but to a lot of people."

Under the plan, bars and entrepreneurs elsewhere will be able to apply to use The Sports Bra brand for their franchises. Nguyen is open to working with people who already have a physical space, as well as those who may only have a business plan. What matters, she said, is that the potential future partners share The Sports Bra's values.

One aspiring partner is Jackie Reau, who hopes to open a franchise in Cincinnati, where she works as the CEO of a media and marketing agency. During an interview at The Sports Bra, where she happily watched her college women's lacrosse team on one of the TV sets, she said such establishments "celebrate women's sports and the champions and the athletes behind the story."

"It's exciting to see it grow and gain such popularity," Reau said of the bar. "It's just such a moment right now for women's sports."

The expansion will be boosted by funding from a foundation created by Reddit co-founder Alexis Ohanian, who is married to tennis legend Serena Williams. Nguyen said she already has received hundreds of inquiries.

Interest in women's sports is at an all-time high, helped by Clark's exploits this year, when she shattered all-time NCAA scoring records for women and men. The championship game between Iowa and

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South Carolina on April 7 drew 18.9 million viewers on average, surpassing the audience for the men's title match for the first time.

A week later a record 2.45 million viewers on average tuned in to the WNBA draft to watch as Clark went to the Indiana Fever as the No. 1 pick. This week it was reported that she was set to sign a \$28 million deal with Nike that would be the richest sponsorship contract for a women's basketball player.

The rise in interest is not just for women's basketball, but other sports as well. The 2023 Women's World Cup reported record attendance with nearly 2 million fans. A University of Nebraska volleyball game played in a football stadium drew more than 92,000 people last August, a world record for largest attendance at a women's sporting event.

"It's sort of in this pinnacle moment where eyeballs are plentiful," said Lauren Anderson, director of the Warsaw Sports Business Center at the University of Oregon. "It's just been an alignment of many things that has created this incredible moment for women's sports that seems to be more than just a flash in the pan."

As the fan base and engagement grow, so too does the appetite for changing a sports bar culture that has traditionally catered to men's athletics. Other establishments like The Sports Bra have recently opened elsewhere: A Bar of Their Own began operating in Minneapolis earlier this year, and Seattle's Rough & Tumble launched in late 2022.

Sports bars have not always been welcome spaces for women, Nguyen said. A fan since childhood, she would gather groups of friends to go because she didn't feel safe going by herself. She recalled encountering macho environments that made her uncomfortable, and bartenders who refused to change the channel to a women's game.

"That was just what we settled with," she said. "When I wanted to push back and kind of flip the status quo, that's when I really started to dig in on how The Sports Bra could matter and change the narrative on sports bars."

One memory in particular stands out for Nguyen from her time as proprietor: Serena Williams' last match, in 2022. A massive crowd showed up to watch, spilling over onto the sidewalk. People outside cupped their eyes with their hands as they peered through the windows to see the screens.

"When Serena would score a point, I swear to God, I thought the glass was going to shatter. My eyeballs were rattling inside my head," Nguyen said. "And then when they were volleying, I feel like you could hear a burger flip in the kitchen."

Toward the end, she felt tears welling up. She passed two tissue boxes around for similarly weepy customers as everyone reveled in Williams' last minutes on the court.

"I remember taking a deep breath and thinking, 'I don't know if there's a single place on the face of the planet that is having this exact moment,'" Nguyen said. "It was amazing."

Fans can still find it challenging to watch women's sports games, because many are not broadcast on TV and require different streaming subscriptions, said Tarlan Chahardovali, an assistant professor in the University of South Carolina's Department of Sport and Entertainment Management.

Women's sports bars can be a reliable go-to for many events by having those subscriptions. But more broadly, Chahardovali said, much work remains to be done to ensure the media market doesn't undervalue women's sports.

"Today's numbers are hard to ignore, and I think it's a very exciting time," she said. "But it's a moment that needs to be maintained and sustained, and it needs continuous investment."

Retrial of Harvey Weinstein unlikely to occur soon, if ever, experts say

By LARRY NEUMEISTER Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — The retrial in New York of Harvey Weinstein — whose moviemaking prowess once wowed Hollywood — won't be coming to a courtroom anytime soon, if ever, legal experts said on a day when one of two women considered crucial to the case said she wasn't sure she would testify again.

A ruling Thursday by the New York Court of Appeals voided the 2020 conviction of the onetime movie

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powerbroker who prosecutors say forced young actors to submit to his prurient desires by dangling his ability to make or break their careers. He remains jailed in New York state after he was also convicted in a similar case in California.

The appeals court in a 4-3 decision vacated a 23-year jail sentence and ordered a retrial of Weinstein, saying the trial judge erred by letting three women testify about allegations that were not part of the charges and by permitting questions about Weinstein's history of "bad behavior" if he testified. He did not. He was convicted of forcibly performing oral sex on a TV and film production assistant and of third-degree rape for an attack on an aspiring actor in 2013.

Several lawyers said in interviews Friday that it would be a long road to reach a new trial for the 72-year-old ailing movie mogul and magnet for the #MeToo movement who remains behind bars, and it was doubtful that one could start before next year, if at all.

"I think there won't be a trial in the end," said Joshua Naftalis, a former Manhattan federal prosecutor now in private practice. "I don't think he wants to go through another trial, and I don't think the state wants to try him again."

Naftalis said both sides may seek a resolution such as a plea that will eliminate the need to put his accusers through the trauma of a second trial.

Deborah Tuerkheimer, a professor at Northwestern University Pritzker School of Law and former assistant district attorney in Manhattan, said whether there is a second trial will "hinge on the preferences of the women who would have to testify again and endure the ordeal of a retrial."

"I think ultimately this will come down to whether they feel it's something they want to do, are able to do," she said.

Jane Manning, director of the nonprofit Women's Equal Justice, which provides advocacy services to sexual assault survivors, agreed "the biggest question is whether the two women are willing to testify again."

If they are, then Manhattan District Attorney Alvin Bragg "will absolutely retry the case," said Manning, who prosecuted sex crimes when she was in the Queens district attorney's office in the late 1990s and early 2000s.

Tama Kudman, a West Palm Beach, Florida, criminal defense lawyer who also practices in New Jersey and New York, said prosecutors will likely soon have conversations with key witnesses for a retrial.

"It's really up to them at the end of the day whether they want to go through that again," Kudman said, noting that prosecutors will have to see if witnesses can withstand a second trial. "Being willing to and wanting to are two different things."

The legal process is already in motion, with Weinstein scheduled to be brought to court in Manhattan on Wednesday, an appearance likely to be used in part to establish where he will be jailed while he awaits a new trial.

Bragg's office put out a statement soon after the appeals ruling was made public Thursday, saying it will "do everything in our power to retry this case."

But lawyers say the road to a trial will include months-long battles between lawyers over what evidence and testimony will be allowed at a retrial.

The daunting path to a new trial was clear Friday when Miriam Haley, one of two women at the heart of the charges against Weinstein, said during an electronic news conference that she "will consider testifying again, should there be another trial," but declined to commit to a new trial when questioned further about it.

Haley, a former "Project Runway" production assistant also known as Mimi Haley, testified at Weinstein's trial that she repeatedly told Weinstein "no" when he attacked her inside his apartment in July 2006, forcibly performing oral sex on her. In a 2020 civil lawsuit, Haley said she was left with horror, humiliation and pain that persists.

During the news conference with her lawyer, Gloria Allred, Haley said the appeals ruling was "a terrible decision that sends an extremely disheartening message to victims of sexual assaults everywhere."

She said testifying was "retraumatizing, exhausting and terrifying" and she could not yet decide if she would testify at a retrial while "we're all in a bit of shock" from the court ruling.

"I wish it would be as easy as 'Sure, I'm going to do it again!'" Haley said.

She said people really don't understand.

"It's like insane. It's grueling. It's hard. You're living in fear for years," Haley said. "Then you're getting harassed. There's so much stuff that people don't see that I had to live with. Yeah, like I have to take a minute to think about it."

Allred told the news conference Friday afternoon that Bragg's office had not yet reached out to Haley about testifying again.

Erika Rosenbaum, a Canadian actor who made her own accusations against Weinstein in 2017, has spent years speaking out against harassment and abuse but has not been called to testify in either Weinstein trial.

She said in an interview Friday that it was harrowing enough to tell her own story of abuse in the media and can only imagine how much more difficult it is to go on the witness stand — let alone twice.

"Every time I speak about it, whether it's to the press or to a group of students or young people, I get physically hot and uncomfortable. My head pounds, I have a physical, visceral reaction. It takes a physical and mental and emotional toll," Rosenbaum said.

She said she imagines it would be terrifying to testify and she wishes she could "take the stand for them or with them."

"But these are some brave ladies, and I have a great deal of respect for them and gratitude," Rosenbaum added.

The Associated Press does not typically identify people who say they have been victims of sexual assault unless they agree to be named as Haley and Rosenbaum have.

As border debate shifts right, Sen. Alex Padilla emerges as persistent counterforce for immigrants

By STEPHEN GROVES Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Joe Biden had a question.

"Is it true?" Biden asked Sen. Alex Padilla, referencing the roughly 25% of U.S. students in kindergarten through high school who are Latino. Padilla said the question came as he was waiting with the president in a back room at a library in Culver City, California, before an event in February.

It was exactly the kind of opening Padilla was hoping to get with the Democratic president. Biden was weighing his reelection campaign, executive actions on immigration and what to do about a southern border that has been marked by historic numbers of illegal crossings during his tenure.

Padilla wanted to make sure Biden also took into account the potential of the country's immigrants. "Mr. President, do you know what I call them, those students?" Padilla recalled saying. "It's the workforce of tomorrow."

It was just one of the many times Padilla, who at 52 years old is now the senior senator of California, has taken the opportunity — from face-to-face moments with the president to regular calls with top White House staff and sometimes outspoken criticism — to put his stamp on the Democratic Party's approach to immigration.

The son of Mexican immigrants and first Latino to represent his state in the Senate, Padilla has emerged as a persistent force at a time when Democrats are increasingly focused on border security and the country's posture toward immigrants is uncertain.

Illegal immigration is seen as a growing political crisis for Democrats after authorities both at the border and in cities nationwide have struggled to handle recent surges. The party may also be losing favor with Hispanic voters amid disenchantment with Biden. But Padilla, in a series of interviews with The Associated Press, expressed a deep reserve of optimism about his party's ability to win support both from and for immigrant communities.

"Don't be afraid, don't be reluctant to talk about immigration. Lean into it," Padilla said. "Because number one, it's the morally right thing to do. Number two, it is key to the strength, the security and the future of our country."

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The senator has tried to anchor his fellow Democrats to that stance even as the politics of immigration grow increasingly toxic. Donald Trump, the presumptive Republican presidential nominee, has said immigrants who enter the U.S. illegally are “poisoning the blood” of the country and accused Biden of allowing a “bloodbath” at the southern border. Biden, meanwhile, has shifted to the right at times in both the policies and language he is willing to use as illegal border crossings become a vulnerability for his reelection bid.

Such was the case when Biden, during his State of the Union address, entered into an unscripted exchange with Rep. Marjorie Taylor Greene, a Republican of Georgia, and referred to a Venezuelan man accused of killing a nursing student in Georgia as an “illegal” — a term anathema to immigration rights advocates.

After the speech, Padilla discussed the moment with Rep. Tony Cárdenas in the apartment they share in Washington. The men, who have known each other since their earliest days in Los Angeles politics, now form a political odd couple while away from their families in California. Padilla towers over many in the Capitol with his height and usually speaks in measured tones, while Cárdenas, shorter in stature, is known to come to tears during debates and worries sometimes his voice carries into the neighboring apartment.

“Usually I’m talking in 20 sentences by the time he’ll get his one or two sentences,” Cárdenas said. “He’ll say what I’m saying pretty much, but much more calmly, much more methodically.”

And that night, Cárdenas said, their conversation turned to how they wanted politicians to avoid labeling migrants as “illegals” because it deprived them of dignity.

Padilla told him he would call the White House.

“He’s is the kind of person who steps in and steps up, and, you know, he’s tactical about it,” Cárdenas said.

It’s a difficult role to play, especially as Democrats try to shore up what’s seen as a weakness on border security in the battleground states that will determine control of the White House and Congress.

Even in California, Republicans have been emboldened on immigration as they try to reassert statewide relevance, said Mark Meuser, a lawyer who lost elections against Padilla for the Senate in 2022 and California Secretary of State in 2018. He argued top California Democrats like Padilla “are driving hard towards the extreme edges of their party.”

Padilla has urged the president and fellow Democrats to hold firm to the position that border enforcement measures be paired with reforms for immigrants who are already in the country. Padilla expressed frustration with how some Democrats, including Biden, did not keep immigration reforms, such as a pathway to citizenship for those who entered the U.S. illegally as children, a top priority during a negotiation earlier this year with Senate Republicans on border security.

During those negotiations, Padilla asserted himself as the leader of congressional opposition from the left: He pulled Biden aside for one-on-one conversations to warn against the changes, spoke forcefully at rallies advocating for immigrant rights and organized a call with top White House aides and the Congressional Hispanic Caucus. Padilla, along with four other Democratic-aligned senators, eventually voted against advancing the package, ensuring its failure as Republicans also rejected it.

“He is a lone voice but it is a courageous voice in the Senate,” said Vanessa Cardenas, who leads the immigration advocacy organization America’s Voice.

It’s been a quick ascent for Padilla, who is just beginning his fourth year in Congress, and comes as little surprise to those who have known him since his days in California politics.

“What he’s always been brilliant at is being able to navigate the space, bring people together, be a constructive player,” said John A. Pérez, who was the California Assembly Speaker while Padilla was in the state Senate. “With Alex you don’t get criticism without an alternative.”

Padilla was also known as a determined and effective negotiator. While he was on the Los Angeles City Council, Padilla negotiated a statewide deal with then-Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger to send more funding to local governments. What was supposed to be a one-day meeting turned into a ten-day, around-the-clock negotiation in Sacramento. Padilla quickly exhausted his wardrobe and resorted to washing his socks in a sink, said Mike Madrid, a Republican strategist who worked with Padilla on the League of Cities. They got the compromises they wanted.

Now that Padilla is involved in the immigration policy debate, Madrid said “the politics have never de-

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manded border security more and immigration reform less.”

But he conceded that he could be proven wrong: “If there is any one person in Washington that could make that deal happen, it would be Alex Padilla.”

And for Padilla, it’s the very reason he entered politics in the first place.

When he graduated in 1994 with an engineering degree from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, it was a dream fulfilled for his parents — his father a short order cook and his mother a house cleaner. But he was soon drawn into politics as the state’s attention turned to Proposition 187, a 1994 ballot measure that was approved to deny education, health care and other non-emergency services to immigrants who entered the country illegally.

It was branded by supporters as the Save Our State Initiative. Padilla still remembers the ads for the campaign.

“Trying to try to blame a downward economy on the hardest working people that I know was offensive and an outrage,” he said.

Now he sees parallels between California in the 1990s, which approved the ballot measure but then had it invalidated in federal court, and the wider country today: changing demographics, economic uncertainty and political opportunists “scapegoating” immigrants.

Yet it also spurred the state’s Latinos to get involved politically. To Padilla, there’s no coincidence that California, the state with the most immigrants, now boasts the nation’s largest economy and is a stronghold for Democrats.

One of Padilla’s first jobs in politics was managing the state assembly campaign for Cárdenas, who is about a decade older than Padilla and grew up a few blocks from him in Pacoima, a neighborhood in the San Fernando Valley.

The campaign started as an unlikely bid for two political neophytes trying to get the area to elect a Latino for the first time. Cárdenas remembered Padilla working so hard on the campaign trail that he fell asleep standing up as they debriefed one night.

“We were literally laughed out of people’s offices at the time,” Padilla said. Still, Cárdenas won.

Padilla went on to work for the late Sen. Dianne Feinstein and manage other local campaigns until he ran for Los Angeles City Council at the age of 26. Padilla rose quickly in the council, becoming its president at the age of 28. And for two days following the Sept. 11, 2001, terrorist attacks, Padilla oversaw the emergency response while then-Mayor James Hahn was stranded across the country in Washington. Padilla gave interviews in both English and Spanish to reassure the city’s population.

But before he was elected to his first office, he faced skepticism about his age. Cárdenas said his bid for the council seat only took off when Padilla closed a debate by invoking a phrase often used in the hardscrabble community of the San Fernando Valley: “No te rajes.” Don’t give up.

Elliss, Jenkins, McCaffrey join Harrison and Alt in following their fathers into the NFL

By ARNIE STAPLETON AP Pro Football Writer

ENGLEWOOD, Colo. (AP) — Marvin Harrison Jr., Joe Alt, Kris Jenkins, Jonah Ellis and Luke McCaffrey have turned the NFL draft into a family affair.

The sons of former pro football stars, they’ve followed their fathers’ formidable footsteps into the league.

Ellis was selected by the Denver Broncos in the third round Friday night. His father, Luther Ellis, was once the NFL’s highest-paid defensive tackle while playing for Detroit for nine seasons. He played one final season with Denver in 2004. In 2015, Luther served as team chaplain for the Broncos in their last Super Bowl season.

“Actually, I don’t remember too many of his highlights, but I do remember when we moved out to Colorado,” Jonah Ellis said. “I spent a year there. It was really awesome just to see my dad start to get back into football, even though he was just the chaplain at the time. So, it was awesome seeing him do that. And I’m really excited to come down there where he was.”

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Elliss also has three brothers in the NFL: Kaden (Falcons), Christian (Patriots) and Noah (Eagles). Kaden played his first four seasons with New Orleans and was also drafted by Sean Payton, who's now the Broncos' coach.

"Kaden told me how much he loved Coach, so I'm just really excited to get out there and work for him because my brother had such good things to say about him," Jonah Elliss said.

Elliss, an edge rusher, wore No. 83 at Utah just like his dad did in the early 1990s.

Jenkins, an All-American and team captain for national champion Michigan as a senior who was selected by the Bengals in the second round on Friday, also has NFL bloodlines.

His father, also named Kris, was a two-time All-Pro defensive tackle during 10 seasons with Carolina and the New York Jets. And his uncle is Super Bowl champion defensive end Cullen Jenkins.

Luke McCaffrey, a wide receiver from Rice, was selected by the Washington Commanders at the end of the third round. The 100th overall selection is the son of former star receiver Ed McCaffrey and the brother of current star running back Christian McCaffrey of the San Francisco 49ers.

On Thursday night, the Harrisons and Alts became the 10th and 11th families since 1967 to have both a father and son selected in the first round of the NFL draft.

Arizona selected Harrison with the fourth overall selection Thursday night. His father, Pro Football Hall of Famer Marvin Harrison Sr., was selected in the first round by the Indianapolis Colts in 1996.

One pick later, the Los Angeles Chargers chose Alt, whose father, John Alt, was a first-round pick by the Kansas City Chiefs in the 1984 NFL draft.

More prospects with pro bloodlines are expected to join them this weekend in Rounds 4-7 as Frank Gore Jr., Brenden Rice (son of Hall of Fame receiver Jerry Rice) and Jeremiah Trotter Jr. are on the board.

Texas wide receiver Jordan Whittington, Missouri offensive lineman Javon Foster, Michigan offensive lineman Drake Nugent and Michigan defensive lineman Jaylen Harrell also are sons of former NFL players.

Columbia protesters say they're at an impasse with administrators and will continue anti-war camp

By JAMES POLLARD, NOREEN NASIR and NICK PERRY Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — Columbia University students who inspired pro-Palestinian demonstrations across the country said Friday that they reached an impasse with administrators and intend to continue their encampment until their demands are met.

The announcement after two days of exhaustive negotiations came as Columbia's president faced harsh criticism from faculty — something that has been seen at several other universities where professors and staff similarly condemned leadership over the use of police against demonstrators, leading to fierce clashes, injuries and hundreds of arrests.

The tensions add pressure on school officials from California to Massachusetts who are scrambling to resolve the protests as May graduation ceremonies near.

As the death toll mounts in the war in Gaza and the humanitarian crisis worsens, protesters at universities all over the U.S. are demanding that 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, and safety concerns have prompted some of the heavier-handed approaches.

In one crackdown, in Denver, police swept through an encampment Friday at the Auraria Campus, which hosts three universities and colleges. Forty protesters who set up there the day before were arrested on what the campus said were trespassing charges for violating a camping ban.

At Columbia, student negotiators representing the encampment said that after meetings Thursday and Friday, the university had not met their primary demand for divestment, although there was progress on a push for more transparent financial disclosures.

"We will not rest until Columbia divests," said Jonathan Ben-Menachem, a fourth-year doctoral student. Columbia officials had said earlier that talks were showing progress.

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

Meanwhile, Columbia's president, Minouche Shafik, faced a significant — but largely symbolic — rebuke from faculty Friday but retained the support of trustees, who have the power to hire or fire the president.

A report by the university senate's executive committee, which represents faculty, found Shafik and her administration took "many actions and decisions that have harmed Columbia University." Those included calling in police and letting students be arrested without consulting faculty, failing to defend the institution in the face of external pressures, misrepresenting and suspending student protest groups and hiring private investigators.

"The faculty have completely lost confidence in President Shafik's ability to lead this organization," said Ege Yumusak, a philosophy lecturer who is part of a faculty team protecting the encampment.

In response, Chang said in the evening that "we are committed to an ongoing dialogue and appreciate the Senate's constructive engagement in finding a pathway forward."

Also Friday, student protester Khymani James walked back comments made in an online video in January that recently received new attention. James said in the video that "Zionists don't deserve to live" and people should be grateful James wasn't killing them.

"What I said was wrong," James said in a statement. "Every member of our community deserves to feel safe without qualification."

James, who served as a spokesperson for the pro-Palestinian encampment as a member of Columbia University Apartheid Divest, was banned from campus Friday, according to a Columbia spokesperson.

Protest organizers said James' comments didn't reflect their values. They declined to describe James' level of involvement with the demonstration.

On the opposite coast, protesters at California State Polytechnic University, Humboldt, barricaded themselves inside a building for the fifth day Friday. The administration gave them until 5 p.m. to leave and "not be immediately arrested," a deadline that came and went.

University officials did not immediately respond to a request for an update or provide information on what they planned to do, and the campus has been closed for the remainder of the semester.

At Arizona State University, protesters pitched tents, including some that police dismantled, and at least one person was handcuffed and taken away Friday.

Police previously clashed with protesters Thursday at Indiana University, Bloomington, where 34 were arrested. There were about 36 arrests at Ohio State, and one at the University of Connecticut.

The president of Portland State University took a different approach Friday, announcing a forum to discuss protesters' concerns and a pause on further gifts and grants from Boeing, after students asked that the school cut ties with the aerospace company.

The University of Southern California canceled its May 10 graduation ceremony Thursday, 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 ceremonies.

Elsewhere in New York, about a dozen protesters spent the night in tents and sleeping bags inside a building at the Fashion Institute of Technology.

Protesters also stayed overnight at the encampment at George Washington University. Officials said in a statement that those who remained were trespassing on private property and disciplinary actions would be pursued against students involved in the unauthorized demonstrations.

At Emory University in Atlanta, video that circulated widely on social media showed two women who identified themselves as professors being detained, with one of them slammed to the ground by an officer as a second one pushed her chest and face onto a concrete sidewalk.

University President Gregory Fenves said via email that some videos of clashes were "shocking" and he was "horrified that members of our community had to experience and witness such interactions."

Fenves blamed the campus unrest on "highly organized, outside protesters" who he said arrived in vans, put up tents and took over the quad. But in an earlier statement, school officials said that 20 of the 28 people arrested were members of the university community.

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.

Midwest tornadoes flatten homes in Nebraska suburbs and leave trails of damage in Iowa

By JOSH FUNK, MARGERY A. BECK and HEATHER HOLLINGSWORTH Associated Press

OMAHA, Neb. (AP) — A tornado plowed through suburban Omaha, Nebraska, on Friday, damaging hundreds of homes and other structures as it tore for miles along farmland and into subdivisions. Some injuries were reported but there were no immediate reports that anyone was killed.

Multiple tornadoes were reported in Nebraska and Iowa on Friday, but the most destructive storm moved from a largely rural area into suburbs northwest of Omaha, a city of 485,000 people. Photos on social media showed the small city of Minden, Iowa, about 30 miles (48.3 kilometers) northeast of Omaha also sustained heavy damage.

Three people were injured in Nebraska's Lancaster County when a tornado hit an industrial building, causing it to collapse with 70 people inside. Several were trapped, but everyone was evacuated and the injuries were not life-threatening, authorities said.

Hundreds of houses sustained damage in Omaha, mostly in the Elkhorn area in the western part of the city, Omaha police Lt. Neal Bonacci said. Police and firefighters moved door-to-door to help people. Crews went to the "hardest hit area" and had a plan to search anywhere someone could be trapped, Omaha Fire Chief Kathy Bossman said.

"They're going to be putting together a strategic plan for a detailed search of the area, starting with the properties with most damage," Bossman said. "We'll be looking throughout properties in debris piles, we'll be looking in basements, trying to find any victims and make sure everybody is rescued who needs assistance."

Bonacci said many homes were destroyed or severely damaged.

"You definitely see the path of the tornado," Bonacci said.

In one area of Elkhorn, dozens of newly built, large homes were damaged. At least six were wrecked, including one that was leveled, while others had the top half ripped off. There were dozens of emergency vehicles in the area.

"We watched it touch down like 200 yards over there and then we took shelter," said Pat Woods, who lives in Elkhorn. "We could hear it coming through. When we came up our fence was gone and we looked to the northwest and the whole neighborhood's gone."

His wife, Kim Woods added, "The whole neighborhood just to the north of us is pretty flattened."

Three people, including a child, were in the basement of the leveled home when the tornado hit but got out safely, according to Dhaval Naik, who said he works with home's owner.

KETV-TV video showed one woman being removed from a wrecked home on a stretcher in Blair, a city just north of Omaha.

Bonacci said only two people have been transported for treatment, both with minor injuries.

He said crews are now doing a second search of homes. He said fire crews would work throughout the night to check all the unsafe structures and make sure no one is inside.

"People had warnings of this and that saved lives," Omaha Police Chief Todd Schmaderer said, of the few serious injuries.

The tornado warning was issued in the Omaha area on Friday afternoon just as children were due to be released from school. Many schools had students shelter in place until the storm passed. Hours later, buses were still transporting students home.

"Was it one long track tornado or was it several tornadoes?" said Becky Kern, the warning coordination meteorologist in the National Weather Service's Omaha office.

She said the agency planned to send out multiple crews over the next several days to determine the

number of tornadoes and their strength, and that it could take up to two weeks to finish the evaluation. "Some appeared to be violent tornadoes," she continued. "There were tornadoes in different areas. And so it's like forensic meteorology, we call it, like piecing together, all the damage indicators."

Another tornado hit an area on the eastern edge of Omaha, passing directly through parts of Eppley Airfield, the city's airport. Officials closed the airport to aircraft operations to access damage but then reopened the facility, Omaha Airport Authority Chief Strategy Officer Steve McCoy said.

The passenger terminal wasn't hit by the tornado but people rushed to storm shelters until the twister passed, McCoy said.

After passing through the airport, the tornado crossed the Missouri River and into Iowa, north of Council Bluffs.

Nebraska Emergency Management Agency spokesperson Katrina Sperl said damage reports were just starting to come in. Taylor Wilson, a spokesperson for the University of Nebraska Medical Center, said they hadn't seen any injuries yet.

In Lancaster County, where three people were injured when an industrial building collapsed, sheriff's officials also said they had reports of a tipped-over train near Waverly.

Two people who were injured in the county were being treated at the trauma center at Bryan Medical Center West Campus in Lincoln, the facility said in a news release. The hospital said the patients were in triage and no details were released on their condition.

The Omaha Public Power District reported that nearly 10,000 customers were without power in the Omaha area.

Daniel Fienhold, manager of the Pink Poodle Steakhouse in Crescent, Iowa, said he was outside watching the weather with his daughter and restaurant employees. He said "it looked like a pretty big tornado was forming" northeast of town.

"It started raining, and then it started hailing, and then all the clouds started to kind of swirl and come together, and as soon as the wind started to pick up, that's when I headed for the basement, but we never saw it," Fienhold said.

The forecast for Saturday was ominous. The Weather Service also issued tornado watches across parts of Iowa, Kansas, Missouri, Oklahoma and Texas. And forecasters warned that large hail and strong wind gusts were possible.

"It does look like a big outbreak again tomorrow," Kern said. "Maybe slightly farther south."

Biden officials indefinitely postpone ban on menthol cigarettes amid election-year pushback

By MATTHEW PERRONE and ZEKE MILLER Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Joe Biden's administration is indefinitely delaying a long-awaited menthol cigarette ban, a decision that infuriated anti-smoking advocates but could avoid a political backlash from Black voters in November.

In a statement Friday, Biden's top health official gave no timeline for issuing the rule, saying only that the administration would take more time to consider feedback, including from civil rights groups.

"It's clear that there are still more conversations to have, and that will take significantly more time," Health and Human Services Secretary Xavier Becerra said in a statement.

The White House has held dozens of meetings in recent months with groups opposing the ban, including civil rights organizers, law enforcement officials and small business owners. Most of groups have financial ties to tobacco companies.

The announcement is another setback for Food and Drug Administration officials, who drafted the ban and predicted it would prevent hundreds of thousands of smoking-related deaths over 40 years. The agency has worked toward banning menthol across multiple administrations without ever finalizing a rule.

"This decision prioritizes politics over lives, especially Black lives," said Yolonda Richardson of the Cam-

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paigned for Tobacco-Free Kids, in an emailed statement. "It is especially disturbing to see the administration parrot the false claims of the tobacco industry about support from the civil rights community."

Richardson noted that the ban is supported by groups including the NAACP and the Congressional Black Caucus.

Previous FDA efforts on menthol have been derailed by tobacco industry pushback or competing political priorities. With both Biden and former President Donald Trump vying for the support of Black voters, the ban's potential impact has been scrutinized by Republicans and Democrats heading into the fall election.

Anti-smoking advocates have been pushing the FDA to eliminate the flavor since the agency gained authority to regulate certain tobacco ingredients in 2009. Menthol is the only cigarette flavor that wasn't banned under that law, a carveout negotiated by industry allies in Congress. But the law instructed the FDA to continue studying the issue.

More than 11% of U.S. adults smoke, with rates roughly even between white and Black people. But about 80% of Black smokers smoke menthol, which the FDA says masks the harshness of smoking, making it easier to start and harder to quit. Also, most teenagers who smoke cigarettes prefer menthols.

For decades, tobacco companies focused menthol advertising and promotions in Black communities, sponsoring music festivals and neighborhood events. Industry documents released via litigation also show companies viewed menthol cigarettes as a good "starter product" because they were more palatable to teens.

The FDA released its draft of the proposed ban in 2022. Officials under Biden initially targeted last August to finalize the rule. Late last year, White House officials said they would take until March to review the measure. When that deadline passed last month, several anti-smoking groups filed a lawsuit to force its release.

"We are disappointed with the action of the Biden administration, which has caved in to the scare tactics of the tobacco industry," said Dr. Mark Mitchell of the National Medical Association, an African American physician group that is suing the administration.

Separately, Rev. Al Sharpton and other civil rights leaders have warned that a menthol ban would create an illegal market for the cigarettes in Black communities and invite more confrontations with police.

The FDA and health advocates have long rejected such concerns, noting FDA's enforcement of the rule would only apply to companies that make or sell cigarettes, not to individuals.

An FDA spokesperson said Friday the agency is still committed to banning menthol cigarettes.

"As we've made clear, these product standards remain at the top of our priorities," Jim McKinney said in a statement.

Smoking can cause cancer, strokes and heart attacks and is blamed for 480,000 deaths each year in the U.S., including 45,000 among Black Americans.

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 Truth 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."

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

As of Friday's close, a month since Trump Media's initial public offering sent its stock to \$66.22, it has dropped to \$41.54. 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.

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 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, GameStop 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.

Trump's lawyers try to discredit testimony of prosecution's first witness in hush money trial

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

NEW YORK (AP) — Donald Trump's defense team attacked the credibility of prosecutors' first witness in his hush money case on Friday, seeking to discredit testimony detailing a scheme to bury negative stories to protect the Republican's 2016 presidential campaign.

On the witness stand for a fourth day, former National Enquirer publisher David Pecker was grilled about his memory and past statements as the defense tried to poke holes in potentially crucial testimony in the first criminal trial of a former American president.

Two other witnesses followed Pecker as prosecutors built the foundation of their case involving a hush money payment to porn actor Stormy Daniels, who claimed she had a sexual encounter with Trump. Trump's longtime executive assistant told jurors she recalled seeing Daniels in a reception area of Trump Tower, though the date of the visit wasn't clear.

Pecker's testimony provided jurors with a stunning inside look at the supermarket tabloid's "catch-and-kill" practice of purchasing the rights to stories so they never see the light of day. He's believed to be a key witness to bolster prosecutors' theory that Trump sought to illegally influence the 2016 race by suppressing negative stories about his personal life.

Trump, who denies any wrongdoing, slammed the prosecution as he left the courthouse Friday after spending most of the week in his role as criminal defendant instead of political candidate. Trump seized

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on President Joe Biden's remarks Friday that he's willing to debate Trump. Trump told reporters he's up for it anytime, anywhere.

Under cross-examination, Trump's lawyers appeared to be laying the groundwork to make the argument that any dealings Trump had with Pecker were intended to protect Trump, his reputation and his family — not his campaign. The defense also sought to show that the National Enquirer was publishing negative stories about Trump's 2016 rival, Hillary Clinton, long before an August 2015 meeting that is central to the case.

During that meeting, Pecker said he told Trump and then-Trump attorney Michael Cohen he would be the "eyes and ears" of the campaign, and would notify Cohen if he heard negative stories about Trump so they could be killed.

Under questioning by Trump lawyer Emil Bove, Pecker acknowledged there was no mention at that meeting of the term "catch-and-kill." Nor was there discussion at the meeting of any "financial dimension," such as the National Enquirer paying people on Trump's behalf for the rights to their stories, Pecker said.

Bove also confronted Pecker with statements he made to federal prosecutors in 2018 that the defense lawyer said were "inconsistent" with the former publisher's testimony.

Pecker told jurors that Trump thanked him during a White House visit in 2017 for his help burying two stories. But according to notes Bove read in court, Pecker told federal authorities that Trump did not express any gratitude to him during the meeting.

"Was that another mistake?" Bove asked Pecker.

Pecker stuck to the account that he gave in court, adding, "I know what the truth is."

Prosecutors challenged the defense's contention that Trump's arrangement with the National Enquirer wasn't unique. Under questioning from a prosecutor, Pecker acknowledged he had not previously sought out stories and worked the company's sources on behalf of a presidential candidate or allowed political fixers close access to internal decision-making.

"It's the only one," Pecker said.

The second witness called to the stand was Rhona Graff, Trump's longtime executive assistant. Graff, who started working for Trump in 1987 and left the Trump Organization in April 2021, has been described as his gatekeeper and right hand.

Graff testified that she believed she was the one who added contact information for Daniels and former Playboy model Karen McDougal to the Trump Organization's computer system. The women's listings were shown in court, with Daniels named in the system simply as "Stormy." Graff later noted that Trump never used computers.

Trump spoke briefly to Graff as she left the witness stand. He appeared to reach out to her with his hand as an officer guided her away from the witness stand past the defense table. Trump's lawyers were at the bench, talking with Judge Juan Merchan, when Trump stood up and engaged with Graff.

The case will resume Tuesday with the third prosecution witness, Gary Farro, a banker. Farro testified Friday about helping Cohen form a bank account for the limited liability company he used to facilitate the Daniels payment. Farro said Cohen led him to believe the firm, Essential Consultants LLC, would be involved in real estate consulting.

Friday's testimony caps a consequential week in the criminal cases the former president faces 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 the hush money payments.

The charges center on \$130,000 that Trump's company paid to Cohen on Trump's behalf to keep Daniels from going public with her claims of a sexual encounter with Trump a decade earlier. Trump has denied

the encounter ever happened.

Over several days on the witness stand, Pecker described how 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.

Trump's attorney zeroed in on a nonprosecution agreement in 2018 between the federal government and American Media Inc., the parent company of the National Enquirer.

The company admitted to engaging in the "catch-and-kill" practice to help Trump's campaign, and prosecutors agreed to not prosecute the company for paying \$150,000 to McDougal for the rights to her story about an alleged affair with Trump. Trump denies the affair.

Trump's attorney repeatedly suggested that Pecker may have felt pressured to accept an agreement in order to finalize a deal to sell his company to the newsstand operator Hudson News Group for a proposed \$100 million.

"To consummate that deal, you knew you had to clear up the investigations," Bove said.

After pausing for several seconds, Pecker replied in the affirmative. But Pecker also said he felt "no pressure" to finalize the nonprosecution agreement to complete the transaction.

In the end, the deal didn't go through.

Harvey Weinstein due back in court, while a key witness weighs whether to testify at a retrial

By PAT EATON-ROBB Associated Press

Harvey Weinstein will appear in a New York City court next week, the first step in potentially retrying the film mogul after his 2020 rape conviction was overturned.

New York's highest court on Thursday threw out Weinstein's 2020 rape conviction, ordering a new trial. The Manhattan district attorney's office has said it intends to pursue a retrial, but gave no indication about the agenda for Wednesday's hearing.

"We will do everything in our power to retry this case, and remain steadfast in our commitment to survivors of sexual assault," the district attorney's office said in a statement Friday.

Meanwhile, a woman Weinstein was sent to prison for sexually assaulting said Friday she is considering whether she would testify at any retrial.

Mimi Haley said she is still processing Thursday's decision by the state Court of Appeals and is considering numerous factors, including the trauma of having to prepare for another trial and again relive what happened to her.

"It was retraumatizing and grueling and exhausting and all the things," she said during a news conference with her attorney, Gloria Allred. "I definitely don't want to actually go through that again. But for the sake of keeping going and doing the right thing and because it is what happened, I would consider it."

Weinstein was convicted in New York in February 2020 of forcing himself on Haley, a TV and film production assistant, in 2006 for oral sex and raping an aspiring actress in 2013.

The Associated Press does not generally identify people alleging sexual assault unless they consent to be named and Haley has agreed to be named.

Weinstein, 72, will remain in prison because he was convicted in Los Angeles in 2022 of another rape. He was sentenced to 16 years in prison in that case.

Thursday's Court of Appeals court ruling in New York essentially resets Weinstein's case, with next week's hearing the first step in the process of potentially retrying him. Prosecutors will work off the same indictment, albeit excluding the charges he was acquitted of four years ago.

Among other things, authorities will need to sort out where Weinstein is incarcerated while he awaits a new trial in New York. He could be sent to the city's notorious Riker's Island jail complex, or to California to begin serving a sentence for his conviction there.

Allred said the New York decision shows how important it was to also bring charges in California, even when critics called that prosecution superfluous.

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Weinstein's attorney, Arthur Aidala, did not immediately respond to an email seeking a response to Haley's comments. But on Thursday he called the state Court of Appeals ruling "a tremendous victory for every criminal defendant in the state of New York."

The court 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."

New York Governor Kathy Hochul said Friday that her office is analyzing the scale of the decision and how the state can make sure that all women feel safe coming forward.

"I don't want this to be a moment of stifling the environment that was created where finally we were calling out people who were abusing women in their presence," Hochul said. "We don't want to have any setbacks where there's this sense that you now have to be silenced, and that's something that we have to protect."

Allred said she welcomed the governor's comments and likely would be suggesting possible legislation. She said she's concerned that the ruling will lead to fewer cases being brought, especially against high-profile defendants.

"Then there will be not only no access to justice for the 'Me too' witnesses, prior bad-act witnesses, but in addition for the actual victim of the crime...where it could have been prosecuted, would have been prosecuted otherwise," she said.

Haley said she has talked to other alleged victims of Weinstein about the ruling, but the subject of testifying again did not come up.

"What would make me want to do it again would just be, like I said in the past, this isn't just about me," she said. "It's a really important case. It's in the public eye. It's really difficult for me personally, but it's important for the collective."

US announces new Patriot missiles for Ukraine as part of new \$6 billion aid package

By LOLITA C. BALDOR and TARA COPP Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — The U.S. will provide Ukraine additional Patriot missiles for its air defense systems as part of a massive \$6 billion additional aid package, Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin announced Friday.

The missiles will be used to replenish previously supplied Patriot systems. The package also includes more munitions for the National Advanced Surface-to-Air Missile Systems, or NASAMS, and additional gear to integrate Western air defense launchers, missiles and radars into Ukraine's existing weaponry, much of which still dates back to the Soviet era.

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy discussed the need for Patriots early Friday with the Ukraine Defense Contact Group, a coalition of about 50 countries gathering virtually in a Pentagon-led meeting. The meeting fell on the second anniversary of the group, which Austin said has "moved heaven and earth" since April 2022 to source millions of rounds of ammunition, rocket systems, armored vehicles and even jets to help Ukraine rebuff Russia's invasion.

Zelenskyy said at least seven Patriot systems are needed to protect Ukrainian cities. "We urgently need Patriot systems and missiles for them," Zelenskyy said. "This is what can and should save lives right now."

At a Pentagon press conference following the meeting, Austin said the U.S. was working with allies to resource additional Patriot systems but did not commit to sending more U.S. versions. He said he has been speaking one-on-one with a number of his European counterparts in recent days to hash out this issue and others.

"It's not just Patriots that they need, they need other types of systems and interceptors as well," Austin said. "I would caution us all in terms of making Patriot the silver bullet."

Austin said he is asking allied nations to "accept a little bit more risk" as they consider what weapons to send to Ukraine. A number of nations have expressed some reluctance to send Patriot air defense systems to Ukraine because most don't have very many and they believe they need them for their own defense.

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U.S. 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 the condition of anonymity to discuss details not yet made public.

The new funding — the largest tranche of USAI aid sent to date — also includes High Mobility Artillery Rocket System, or HIMARS, as well as Switchblade and Puma drones, counter drone systems and artillery.

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.

Friday's meeting 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, such as 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.

Gen. CQ Brown, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, said the \$1 billion weapons package will have a key benefit.

"There's some near-term effects," said Brown, who stood alongside Austin at the Pentagon briefing. "Now the Ukrainians don't necessarily have to ration what they have because they know things are coming out of this package and there will be follow-on packages."

The large back-to-back aid approvals are the result of a 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, a Louisiana Republican, to cobble together a bipartisan coalition to pass the bill. The \$95 billion foreign aid package, which also included billions of dollars 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.

#MeToo advocates vow the reckoning will continue after Weinstein's conviction is overturned

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, who famously 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

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the Weinstein case 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.

Echoing that view was Erika Rosenbaum, a Montreal actor who came forward with her own accusations against Weinstein in 2017, and has spent the years since then speaking to groups, especially young people, about sexual harassment and abuse.

"If anything, I feel like (#MeToo) is a movement that gets stronger all the time," Rosenbaum said in an interview. "It is very much a movement of incremental steps and sharing of stories and holding each other up. And that does not change with a court decision ... Because this is very much a change of culture. There are ups and downs, there are battles. But this is something that will keep going."

Like her, 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 Wash-

ington; 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.

The Latest | Trump speaks with reporters after 4th day of witness testimony in hush money trial ends

NEW YORK (AP) — Defense lawyers in Donald Trump's hush money trial dug Friday into assertions of the former publisher of the National Enquirer and his efforts to protect Trump from negative stories during the 2016 election.

David Pecker returned to the witness stand for the fourth day as defense attorneys tried to poke holes in his testimony, which has described helping bury embarrassing stories Trump feared could hurt his campaign.

Pecker has painted a tawdry portrait of "catch and kill" tabloid schemes — 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.

The prosecution later called to the stand Rhona Graff, Trump's former longtime executive assistant who has been described as his "gatekeeper," and Gary Farro, a private client adviser who previously worked at First Republic, which was used by former Trump attorney and fixer Michael Cohen. Farro will continue his testimony Tuesday when the trial resumes, with Monday being a long-scheduled day off.

Testimony from the prosecution's three witnesses capped a consequential week in the criminal cases the former president is facing as he vies to reclaim the White House in November.

The charges center on \$130,000 in payments that Trump's company made to his then-lawyer, 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.

Prosecutors say Trump obscured the true nature of those payments and falsely recorded them as legal expenses. He has pleaded not guilty to 34 felony counts of falsifying business records.

The case is the first-ever criminal trial of a former U.S. president and the first of four prosecutions of Trump to reach a jury.

Currently:

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- Trading Trump: Truth Social's first month of trading has sent investors on a ride
- These people were charged with interfering in the 2020 election. Some are still in politics today
- Key players: Who's who at Donald Trump's hush money criminal trial
- The hush money case is just one of Trump's legal cases. See the others here

Here's the latest:

TRUMP SPEAKS AFTER COURT ENDS FOR THE DAY

Donald Trump spoke to reporters with more energy than he had in past days after spending the day in the Manhattan courtroom where his hush money trial is being held.

The former president declared that the case was politically motivated and reaffirmed his willingness to

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debate President Joe Biden anytime, anywhere, even Friday night or at the White House.

Trump left for the day after speaking for a few minutes and didn't take any questions from reporters on the way out of court. He's expected to head back to Florida.

4TH DAY OF WITNESS TESTIMONY CONCLUDES

Trump exited the Manhattan courtroom where his hush money trial is being held, exhaling and with a stern expression. It marked the end of the trial's fourth day of witness testimony.

So far, prosecutors have called three witnesses.

Former National Enquirer publisher David Pecker spent about 10 hours on the stand over the course of four days.

Then Trump's longtime executive assistant Rhona Graff answered questions for about 30 minutes.

The current witness, Cohen's former banker Gary Farro, was on the stand for a little under an hour Friday and will return when the trial resumes Tuesday, with Monday being a long-scheduled day off.

BANKER EXPLAINS HOW HE HELPED FORMER TRUMP ATTORNEY CREATE AN LLC

Gary Farro detailed the step-by-step process of helping Donald Trump's former attorney Michael Cohen create an account for his limited liability company while testifying Friday in the Trump's hush money trial in Manhattan.

According to Farro, Cohen said Resolution Consultants, which he opened in September 2016, was related to real estate. In fact, the LLC was formed to facilitate the planned purchase of Karen McDougal's story rights from American Media. That deal never went through.

Prosecutors have shown emails in which Cohen describes the opening of the account as an "important matter."

Farro said that since the account was never funded, it was never technically opened. Instead, Cohen pivoted to starting another account for another LLC — Essential Consultants — which he used to make the \$130,000 payment to Stormy Daniels. Similarly, Farro said Cohen led him to believe that firm would be involved in real estate consulting.

PROSECUTION CALLS BANKER AS ITS 3RD WITNESS

The prosecution on Friday called its third witness in former president Donald Trump's hush money trial to testify.

Gary Farro works at Flagstar Bank as a private client adviser and was previously at First Republic Bank, which was used by former Trump attorney and fixer Michael Cohen.

Farro, testifying pursuant to a subpoena, said Cohen had several personal bank accounts at First Republic when Farro took over the client relationship in 2015.

"I was told that I was selected because of my knowledge and because of my ability to handle individuals that may be a little challenging," Farro said.

"Frankly, I didn't find him that difficult," he added.

FORMER LONGTIME EXECUTIVE ASSISTANT OF TRUMP CONCLUDES HER TESTIMONY

After Rhona Graff concluded her testimony Friday in Donald Trump's hush money trial in Manhattan, Trump spoke briefly to his former executive assistant as she left the stand.

The former president appeared to reach out to her with his hand as an officer guided her away from the witness stand past the defense table.

Trump's lawyers were at the bench, talking with Judge Merchan, when Trump stood up and engaged with Graff.

Soon after, Trump left court for a break. He was carrying the thick stack of papers he brought in with him in the morning. He gave a thumbs up as he left and ignored a shouted question from a reporter about Stormy Daniels. He returned several minutes later.

SECOND WITNESS, DESCRIBED AS TRUMP'S 'GATEKEEPER,' TESTIFIES

Rhona Graff, Donald Trump's longtime executive assistant, was called to the stand Friday in the former president's hush money trial in Manhattan.

Graff started working for Trump in 1987 and left the Trump Organization in April 2021. She has been described as his gatekeeper and right hand. She was among several people involved in keeping his records.

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Former National Enquirer publisher David Pecker, the first prosecution witness called, testified Thursday that Graff was often the conduit for his communications with Trump, routing his calls and summoning him to a Trump Tower meeting on Jan. 6, 2017. At the meeting, the ex-publisher said, he and Trump discussed some of the hush money arrangements at issue in the case.

Graff testified that porn actor Stormy Daniels was once at Trump's offices in Trump Tower.

"I have a vague recollection of seeing her in the reception area" one time, Graff said.

The date of the visit wasn't immediately clear.

Graff said she assumed Daniels was there to discuss potentially being a contestant on one of Trump's "Apprentice"-brand shows.

"You had heard President Trump say that he thought that she would be an interesting addition" to the cast, Trump lawyer Susan Necheles asked.

"It was part of the office chatter," Graff said.

PUBLISHER DAVID PECKER CONCLUDES HIS TESTIMONY

Former National Enquirer publisher David Pecker concluded his testimony Friday afternoon in Donald Trump's hush money trial in Manhattan.

Before he left the witness stand, however, prosecutor Joshua Steinglass elicited testimony pushing back on a defense suggestion that Pecker had changed his story about Trump thanking him at a Jan. 6, 2017 Trump Tower meeting for his help burying negative stories.

During cross-examination, Trump lawyer Emil Bove had shown Pecker notes from the first of two FBI interviews he gave in 2018. According to the notes, Pecker told investigators that Trump hadn't shown gratitude at their meeting.

Pecker maintained that the FBI's notes of the interview may have been wrong. And, as Steinglass noted, he told investigators in an interview a week later that Trump had thanked him "for handling" Karen McDougal's affair claims and a Trump Tower doorman's false rumor about him.

Pecker confirmed he later told a federal grand jury that Trump was "very grateful and these stories could have been very, very damaging."

Asked by Steinglass if he had any confusion over whether that happened, Pecker replied: "No."

TRUMP SAYS HE DOUBTS BIDEN'S WILLINGNESS TO DEBATE

While on a lunch break from his hush money trial in Manhattan, Donald Trump reacted on social media to Biden's comment Friday that he's willing to debate this fall.

Trump said on Truth Social that he thinks Biden "doesn't really mean it." He said if Biden is serious, they should debate next week or even Friday at the Manhattan courthouse on national television, saying "I'll wait around."

Trump on the way into court on Friday complained he was in court instead of in Florida with his wife for her birthday and said he planned to fly to Florida after the trial wrapped for the day.

PROSECUTORS CLAW BACK AT PORTRAIT OF TABLOID DEAL

Before breaking for lunch Friday, prosecutors in Donald Trump's hush money trial in Manhattan clawed back at the defense's contention that an arrangement with the National Enquirer wasn't unique to Trump, eliciting testimony from former publisher David Pecker that underscored the unusual nature of their deal.

"Is it standard operating procedure for AMI to be consulting with a presidential candidate's fixer about amendments to a source agreement?" Steinglass asked, using initials for the tabloid's parent company. "No," Pecker responded.

Several similar questions followed suit, with Pecker acknowledging that he had not previously sought out stories and worked the company's sources on behalf of a presidential candidate, nor allowed political fixers close access to internal decision-making.

"It's the only one," Pecker said.

BEGINNING OF 'REDIRECT' AND THEN LUNCH

As court broke for lunch, Donald Trump stopped to confer with aide Jason Miller just outside the courtroom doors at his hush money trial Friday in Manhattan. He left without making any remarks to reporters waiting nearby.

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Prosecutor Joshua Steinglass had begun conducting what the legal world calls "redirect" examination — a follow-up round of questioning in response to what defense lawyers asked former National Enquirer publisher David Pecker. The defense's cross-examination of that key witness ended earlier Friday.

And the defense can then conduct a "recross." The sides can go back and forth, but they generally can't just re-ask questions or delve into new topics that weren't raised in prior questioning.

CROSS-EXAMINATION OF EX-PUBLISHER PECKER ENDS

The defense's cross-examination of former National Enquirer publisher David Pecker in Donald Trump's hush money trial in New York ended around midday Friday, his fourth day on the witness stand.

As Trump lawyer Emil Bove wrapped up his cross-examination, Pecker said, "I've been truthful, to the best of my recollection."

Bove earlier argued that Pecker's testimony has been inconsistent with statements to federal prosecutors in 2018.

Pecker testified that Trump thanked him for his help handling potential news stories involving former Playboy model Karen McDougal and a Trump Tower doorman, during a White House visit in 2017.

But Bove said Pecker previously told federal authorities Trump did not express any gratitude at the meeting. Pecker stuck Friday to the story he has given in court.

PUBLISHER CHALLENGED ON PAST STATEMENTS

In the most confrontational moment so far Friday in Donald Trump's hush money trial, defense lawyer Emil Bove said former National Enquirer publisher David Pecker's testimony has been inconsistent with statements to federal prosecutors in 2018.

Pecker testified that Trump thanked him for his help handling potential stories involving former Playboy model Karen McDougal and Dino Sajudin, a Trump Tower doorman, during a White House visit on Jan. 6, 2017.

But according to notes cited by Bove in court, Pecker had previously told federal authorities that Trump did not express any gratitude to him or American Media during the meeting.

Pecker stuck Friday to the story he has given in court.

"I know what the truth is," he said.

FORMER PLAYBOY MODEL'S WORK HIGHLIGHTED

A lawyer for Donald Trump in his hush money trial turned Friday to the 2016 deal the National Enquirer's parent reached with former Playboy model Karen McDougal.

The \$150,000 agreement gave American Media exclusive rights to McDougal's account of any relationship with "any then-married man." McDougal claims she and Trump had an affair. Trump denies it.

The contract also called for McDougal to do work for various American Media titles. Former Enquirer publisher David Pecker earlier testified the provision was really about keeping McDougal's story from becoming public and influencing Trump's chances at the presidency.

But under questioning Friday from Trump lawyer Emil Bove, Pecker added that American Media had pitched itself as a venue to help McDougal restart her career.

When American Media signed its agreement with her, "you believed it had a legitimate business purpose, correct?" Bove asked.

"I did," Pecker said.

The company ended up running more than 65 stories in her name, he said.

McDougal's story, and American Media's deal with her, ultimately became public anyway, in a Wall Street Journal article four days before the 2016 election, after early and absentee voting had started.

PROSECUTORS OBJECT TO USE OF 'PRESIDENT' TRUMP

The insistence of Donald Trump's defense in his hush money trial to refer to him as "President Trump," even when describing events that took place before his election, is rankling prosecutors.

Trump's lawyers said at the outset of the trial that they'd refer to their client as "president" out of respect for the office he held from 2017 to 2021.

But Assistant District Attorney Joshua Steinglass suggested Friday that using the title is anachronistic and confusing when tacked onto questions and testimony that involve things that happened while he was

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campaigning in 2015 and 2016.

"Objection. He wasn't President Trump in June of 2016," Steinglass noted after one such mention. The judge sustained the objection.

QUESTIONING TURNS TO EARLIER SALACIOUS TESTIMONY

A lawyer for Donald Trump in the former president's hush money trial Friday got to a salacious story at the center of former National Enquirer publisher David Pecker's earlier testimony.

Emil Bove brought out that the Enquirer's parent company — not Trump or his former lawyer and fixer Michael Cohen — paid a former Trump Tower doorman \$30,000 in 2015 for the rights to an unsubstantiated claim that Trump had fathered a child with an employee there.

Pecker testified earlier that the Enquirer thought the tale would make for a huge tabloid story if it were accurate but eventually concluded the story was "1,000% untrue" and never ran it. Trump and the woman involved both have denied the claims.

Bove asked Pecker whether he would run the story if it were true. Pecker replied: "Yes."

SPECIFICS OF HELPING TRUMP CAMPAIGN

Former National Enquirer publisher David Pecker has testified in Donald Trump's hush money trial that he hatched a plan with Trump and former Trump henchman Michael Cohen in August 2015 for the tabloid to help Trump's presidential campaign.

But under questioning by Trump's lawyer, Pecker acknowledged Friday there was no mention at that meeting of the term "catch-and-kill," which describes the practice of tabloids purchasing the rights to story so they never see the light of day.

Nor was there discussion at the meeting of any "financial dimension," such as the Enquirer paying people on Trump's behalf for the rights to their stories, Pecker said.

Pecker also acknowledged that the National Enquirer had been running negative stories about Trump's 2016 rival Hillary Clinton and her husband, former President Bill Clinton, long before the August 2015 meeting. Pecker previously testified that stories about the Clintons boosted sales of the supermarket tabloid.

DIGGING INTO NATIONAL ENQUIRER'S EDITORIAL PROCESS

Donald Trump's lawyer Emil Bove is getting under the hood of the National Enquirer's editorial process, seeking to show the tabloid had its own incentives unrelated to any deal with Trump, in the fourth day of testimony in the former president's hush money trial.

To underscore his point, Bove pulled up five unflattering headlines that ran in 2015 about Ben Carson, who ran against Trump in the 2016 GOP primary. Bove noted the information was pulled from publicly available information published in other outlets, including The Guardian.

In his testimony, former Enquirer publisher David Pecker, on the stand for a fourth day, acknowledged that it was standard practice at the publication to recycle stories from other outlets with a new slant.

"Because it's good, quick and cost efficient, and you would've done it without President Trump?" Bove asked.

"Um, yes," Pecker replied.

PECKER OFFERED INSIGHT INTO THE NATIONAL ENQUIRER

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.

GAG ORDER HEARING RESCHEDULED DUE TO CAMPAIGN EVENTS

A change in the court schedule means Donald Trump won't be forced off the campaign trail next week to attend a hearing in his hush money criminal trial in New York.

Judge Juan M. Merchan moved a hearing on the former president's alleged gag order violations to next Thursday, avoiding a conflict with his scheduled campaign events next Wednesday.

Merchan had initially set the hearing for next Wednesday, the trial's regular off day. Trump is scheduled to hold campaign events that day in Michigan and Wisconsin. His lawyers have urged the judge not to hold any proceedings on Wednesdays so he can campaign.

The hearing — now set for 9:30 a.m. next Thursday, May 2 — pertains to a prosecution request that Trump be penalized for violating his gag order this week on four separate occasions.

The order bars Trump from making comments about witnesses and others connected to the case. Merchan is already mulling holding Trump in contempt of court and fining him up to \$10,000 for other alleged gag order violations.

Fed's preferred inflation gauge shows price pressures stayed elevated last month

By CHRISTOPHER RUGABER AP Economics Writer

WASHINGTON (AP) — A measure of inflation closely tracked by the Federal Reserve remained uncomfortably high in March, likely reinforcing the Fed's reluctance to cut interest rates anytime soon and underscoring a burden for President Joe Biden's re-election bid.

Friday's report from the government showed that prices rose 0.3% from February to March, the same as in the previous month. It was the third straight month that the index has run at a pace faster than is consistent with the Fed's 2% inflation target. Measured from a year earlier, prices were up 2.7% in March, up from a 2.5% annual rise in February.

After peaking at 7.1% in 2022, the Fed's favored inflation index steadily cooled for most of 2023. Yet so far this year, the index has remained stuck above the central bank's target rate. More expensive gas and higher prices for restaurant meals, health care and auto repairs and insurance, among other items, have kept the overall pace of price increases elevated.

With new-car prices up sharply in the past few years, auto repair and replacement costs have risen especially fast. Auto insurance, a major driver of inflation in recent months, was up 8% in March from a year earlier.

Gas prices jumped again last month, the government said — up 1.6% just from February to March. So far in April, gas prices are up still further, to a national average of \$3.66 a gallon, from \$3.53 a month ago.

Grocery prices, though, were unchanged last month and are up only 1.5% from a year earlier.

"This isn't going to sit overly well with the Fed," said Ryan Sweet, chief U.S. economist at Oxford Economics. "I think it's clear that they're going to keep rates higher for longer."

Like many economists, Sweet envisions no rate cuts before September.

Friday's inflation data showed that excluding volatile food and energy costs, "core" prices rose by an elevated 0.3% from February to March, unchanged from the previous month. Compared with a year earlier, core prices rose 2.8% for a second straight month. The Fed closely tracks core prices, which tend to provide a particularly good read of where inflation is headed.

The chronically elevated measures of inflation have become a source of frustration for the Fed, whose policymakers had projected as recently as last month that they expected to cut their benchmark rate three times this year. Most economists expected the cuts to begin in June. More recently, though, several Fed officials, including Chair Jerome Powell, have signaled that they have no immediate plans to cut their key rate, a move that would eventually lead to lower rates for mortgages, auto loans, credit cards and many business loans.

"Recent data have clearly not given us greater confidence" that inflation is coming fully under control, Powell said last week, and "instead indicate that it's likely to take longer than expected to achieve that confidence."

"If higher inflation does persist," he added, "we can maintain the current level of (interest rates) for as

long as needed.”

Many economists say they think the Fed may end up cutting its key rate only once or twice this year, perhaps beginning in September. Others say they think the central bank may not cut its benchmark rate at all in 2024.

One reason why inflation has remained persistently elevated is that many Americans are still willing to spend even at higher prices. In March, consumer spending jumped 0.8% for a second straight month, well above the rate of inflation. The spending figure underscored that even while the U.S. economy slowed in the first three months of 2024, consumer demand remained healthy, suggesting that economic growth remains on track.

Sweet said Friday’s figures suggest strong consumer spending is a key reason inflation has stayed stubbornly high in the first three months of this year.

Despite the continuing inflation pressures, robust gains in jobs and average wages have allowed many American consumers to continue spending at a healthy clip, supporting a still-durable economy. That helps explain why Fed officials have said they can afford to keep borrowing rates where they are for now. The economy did slow in the first three months of the year, the government reported Thursday, but consumers continued to fuel growth with their steady spending.

Average incomes, adjusted for inflation, grew 0.2% in March, Friday’s report said. After-tax disposable incomes are 1.4% higher than they were a year earlier, a modest gain, the figures show.

Beginning in March 2022, the Fed raised its benchmark rate 11 times to attack the worst bout of inflation in 40 years. Those rate hikes helped cool inflation drastically — until the decline stalled out at the start of this year.

The still-elevated price levels pose a challenge for the Biden administration, which has sought to claim credit for inflation’s decline. The White House points to an unemployment rate that has remained below 4% for more than two years, the longest such stretch since the 1960s.

But prices for food, rent, gas and other necessities are still roughly 20% to 30% higher than they were four years ago, which has soured many Americans on the economy. Though average pay has also risen since then, many Americans feel they earned their larger paychecks, only to have the higher prices undercut those gains.

The Fed tends to favor the inflation gauge that the government issued Friday — the personal consumption expenditures price index — over the better-known consumer price index. The PCE index tries to account for changes in how people shop when inflation jumps. It can capture, for example, when consumers switch from pricier national brands to cheaper store brands.

In general, the PCE index tends to show a lower inflation rate than CPI. In part, that’s because rents, which have been high, carry double the weight in the CPI that they do in the index released Friday.

New leaders take on Haiti’s chaos as those living in fear demand swift solutions to gang violence

By DÁNICA COTO Associated Press

PORT-AU-PRINCE, Haiti (AP) — It has been only a day since the transitional presidential council was installed in Haiti, and the list of demands on the Caribbean nation’s new leaders is rapidly growing. Haitians want security, food, jobs — and they want them now.

The members of the council, tasked with bringing political stability to Haiti, are under immense pressure to produce quick results, despite a deep-seated crisis that has been years in the making.

Making Haiti safer is a priority. More than 2,500 people were killed or injured from January to March alone, and more than 90,000 have fled the capital of Port-au-Prince so far this year amid relentless gang violence.

“The task is really monumental,” said Robert Fatton, a Haitian politics expert at the University of Virginia. Gangs have burned police stations, opened fire on the main international airport that has been closed

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since early March, and stormed the country's two biggest prisons, releasing more than 4,000 inmates.

Gangs now control 80% of Port-au-Prince, and though they have long depended on powerful politicians and the country's economic elite for their survival, they are increasingly becoming self-sufficient.

"How you extricate yourself from that is very complicated," Fatton said. "I don't expect the presidential council to come up with a solution."

However, the council could push for disarmament and find ways to ease poverty in the slums, he added. "Those gangs are simply not going to go away by simply saying, 'We want you to be nice guys.'"

The nine-member council acknowledged the challenges it faces after it was sworn in early Thursday at the National Palace, located in an area in downtown Port-au-Prince that has been under attack by gangs in recent weeks.

Gunfire erupted during the ceremony as some officials looked around the room. Hours later, the new interim prime minister, Michel Boisvert, addressed the council.

"The task ahead is daunting," Boisvert said. "I would like to draw your attention to the fact that the population expects a lot from you ... everything becomes a priority alongside security."

How exactly the council plans to tackle the daunting tasks is unclear. Its members have met behind closed doors with top government officials as they prepare to choose a new prime minister, a Cabinet and a provisional electoral commission. They will also establish a national security council.

However, no strategy to quell gang violence has been publicly announced. Several council members did not return messages seeking comment on Friday.

After the swearing-in ceremony, curious pedestrians slowed down as they passed by the building of the prime minister's office.

Some were openly displeased. "Thieves and gangs! That's all they are!" yelled a man as he drove past on his motorcycle.

There wasn't much hope at a crowded makeshift shelter set up at Haiti's former Ministry of Communications — a building the government had abandoned due to gang violence.

Rose Hippolite, 66, was forced to flee her Port-au-Prince home with her four children after gangs raided their neighborhood. They have now spent two months in the yard of the ministry building, sleeping on the ground or sitting in a corner when it rains, waiting for the ground to dry out.

Gunshots ring out every day across the city. "We live in fear," she said. "Only God knows if the new leaders will help."

Nancy Philemon, a 42-year-old mother of six children, sat under a large and tattered umbrella nearby, selling candy and other small items to shelter refugees.

"I don't have any hope," she said. "Instead of things getting better, they are getting worse. ... There is no safe place anywhere."

Haiti's National Police remains largely overwhelmed by gangs that are better armed and have more resources. More than 15 officers have been killed by gangs so far this year.

Lionel Lazarre, general coordinator for the SYNAPPOHA police union, told The Associated Press over the phone on Friday that the council must prioritize security "above everything."

Police need so much, he said, including combat helicopters, armed vehicles, drones, high-caliber weapons and infrared thermal imaging for nighttime operations.

"It is important to us that the council meet with us urgently," Lazarre said. "I believe if there is political will, we have hope things can change."

There is hope because for the past three weeks, police have managed to prevent gangs from taking over the National Palace and multiple police stations, he said.

Fatton, the Haitian expert, said he heard predictions on the radio about how the council is doomed to fail "if things don't change with the security situation."

"They have a very short period of time to get their act together and get results," he said.

Long flu season winds down in US

By MIKE STOBBE AP Medical Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — The U.S. flu season appears to be over. It was long, but it wasn't unusually severe. Last week, for the third straight week, medical visits for flu-like illnesses dipped below the threshold for what's counted as an active flu season, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention said Friday.

Other indicators, like hospitalizations and patient testing, also show low and declining activity. No state is reporting a high amount of flu activity. Only New England is seeing the kind of patient traffic associated with an active flu season right now, but even there flu impact is considered modest.

Since the beginning of October, there have been at least 34 million illnesses, 380,000 hospitalizations and 24,000 deaths from flu, according to CDC estimates. The agency said 148 children have died of flu.

CDC officials called that a "moderate" flu season, an assessment shared by other doctors.

Even at the peak, "we felt strained but never over-capacitated" said Dr. Jay Varkey, infectious disease physician at Atlanta's Emory University Hospital.

"It felt more like a traditional respiratory virus season than when we had massive upswings of COVID confounding it," he added.

For much of the season, most illnesses were attributed to a milder flu strain, and one that officials say was well matched to the seasonal flu vaccines. Preliminary data presented in February suggested the vaccines were around 40% effective in preventing adults from getting sick enough from the flu that they had to go to a doctor's office, clinic or hospital.

COVID-19 illnesses seem to have peaked at around the same time as flu. So too did illnesses caused by another respiratory virus, RSV.

CDC data indicates coronavirus-caused hospitalizations haven't hit the same levels they did at the same point during the last three winters. Earlier this year, COVID-19 was putting more people in the hospital than flu. But right now the hospitalization rates are about the same, CDC data shows.

Although the season wasn't particularly bad, it was long — and springtime upticks in flu are always possible. COVID-19 scrambled the ways health officials track respiratory viruses.

The agency used to count the number of weeks of elevated visits to doctor's office for flu-like symptoms, but COVID-19's flu-like symptoms muddied that up. Now, the agency focuses on the number of weeks that a high percentage of specimens tested positive for flu.

Under the new measure, the 2023-24 flu season was 21 weeks long. Under the previous measure, flu seasons before the COVID-19 pandemic tended to run between 11 and 21 weeks.

Jerry Seinfeld's commitment to the bit

By JAKE COYLE AP Film Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — Jerry Seinfeld has been responsible for more movies than you think.

Yes, he co-wrote and lent his voice to 2007's "Bee Movie." But before that, "Seinfeld" — where going to the movies, with or without the aid of Moviefone, was nearly as regular a destination as the coffee shop — gave birth to dozens of (fake) films. "Rochelle, Rochelle." "Prognosis Negative." "Sack Lunch."

But nearly three decades after Seinfeld was, in one episode, cajoled into bootlegging "Death Blow," he has finally made his first film. Seinfeld directed, co-wrote and stars in "Unfrosted," a star-studded comedy about the invention of the Pop-Tart premiering May 3 on Netflix.

The film, which co-stars Melissa McCarthy, Jim Gaffigan, Hugh Grant and others, is an outlandish, "Mad Men"-inspired '60s-set satire in which Kellogg's and Post Cereal are engaged in a cutthroat race to "upend America's breakfast table."

"When you see any scene of it you go, 'What is that?' And I was very happy about that," Seinfeld said in a recent interview. "I like that you look at it and go, 'I don't know what this is.'"

For Seinfeld, who has resolutely stuck to stand-up since "Seinfeld" ended in 1998, it's a rare post-sitcom project, joining a short and sporadic list including the short-lived reality series "The Marriage Ref" and the popular streaming show "Comedians in Cars Getting Coffee."

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"Unfrosted," though, returns Seinfeld to one of his abiding passions. Remember all those cereal boxes in his apartment on "Seinfeld"? The Pop-Tart is a particular fascination, though. In his 2020 comedy special "23 Hours to Kill," it formed an extended bit beginning with the childhood memory: "When they invented the Pop-Tart, the back of my head blew right off."

For Seinfeld, the Pop-Tart has an almost mythical quality. A movie about Oreos or Milk Duds or even Junior Mints wouldn't work, he says. But the Pop-Tart is different.

"A lot of it is the word. It's a funny word," says Seinfeld. "I heard Mattel is trying to do a Hot Wheels movie. That could work. Certain things really got us when we were kids, you know?"

In a wide-ranging interview, Seinfeld discussed subjects large and small.

AP: Is it true that your moments on the "Curb Your Enthusiasm" finale were improvised with Larry David?

SEINFELD: The idea occurred right in that moment. I said, "Hey, let's talk about the finale right now." We had been talking about it all day because it was their finale. We were just talking about series finales all day. And I was saying that "Mad Men" was my favorite and I thought "The Sopranos" one was great, and obviously ours was what it was.

AP: What does that mean? You're happy with it or not?

SEINFELD: Well, I think what we said in that scene. We thought, "Yeah, that would have been better." (Laughs) It's very hard to remember. The emotional state I was in after nine years was a little ragged. Maybe we weren't thinking quite clearly. The idea of doing that on his show — the math of it is really amazing. To do that, two people have to have two successful long-running sitcoms and they have to be playing themselves, with a 25-year separation. When I was driving home that night on the 10 in LA, my head was exploding because of the math of what just happened — to set something up in '98 and pay it off in '23. For a joke person like me, I felt like I landed on the moon.

AP: "Unfrosted" began with an old stand-up bit of yours. Is it surprising to you that you've made a movie about it?

SEINFELD: It was all ("Seinfeld" writer) Spike Feresten's idea. I did not want to do it. I did not think it would work. What's a movie about inventing the Pop-Tart? That's not funny. And ("Seinfeld" writer) Andy Robin came up with the idea that it's "The Right Stuff." And I went, "Oh, that's funny."

AP: I think you have a line about "splitting the atom of breakfast" so this is also like a snack-size "Oppenheimer."

SEINFELD: Yes, "Oppenheimer." I think it's a fun game if anyone wants to play — how many movies we stole from. Obviously, "The Godfather," obviously "The Right Stuff." At one point, I was going to say, "I'll bury you under the ground, Eli," from "There Will Be Blood." And we weren't even going to explain it. The character's name wasn't Eli.

AP: You once in an interview suggested you only say you love Pop-Tarts to make the joke work.

SEINFELD: I probably just said that to make that point. But I do love Pop-Tarts. I had one yesterday. We were doing a social media piece with Jimmy Fallon and Meghan Trainor. I took a bite and I went, "This is fantastic." What I like about it is the man-made quality of it. I love great objects that fit in your hand in a nice way. A pack of cigarettes is one of the greatest things you can put in your hand. It just feels great. Dice feel great. I like a nice spoon. I like things. (Laughs)

AP: Were you aware of the recent trend of movies based on products?

SEINFELD: Yeah, but we were started long before that. I was a little disappointed that I suddenly became part of a trend but there was nothing we could do about it.

AP: Do you have any guesses as to why we've turned our focus to American consumerism? Your film is a big, silly satire of American consumerism.

SEINFELD: For me, I love men in suits talking about something stupid, like cereal and puffs and sprinkles.

AP: You've often spoken about your dedication to sharpening and sculpting a joke. Are you still driven by that?

SEINFELD: I started a bit the other night about your kitchen sponge on the sink looking up at you going: "I don't know how much more you think I have. I was done two months ago." Now it's just growing and

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growing into a monologue of your kitchen sponge telling you, "Let me go! Let me die a rectangle, not in pieces." When I lock on to something like that, I just want to see how far I can go with it, how long will they let me talk about this.

AP: You're about to turn 70. Is that meaningful to you?

SEINFELD: No.

AP: Some entertainers turn inward when they reach their 70s, like Steven Spielberg did with "The Fabelmans." But maybe this is a very personal movie for you.

SEINFELD: Very much. This is my "Fabelmans." Because I'm not interested in my life. I'm interested in eating.

AP: Why have you always avoided topicality or politics in your comedy?

SEINFELD: I don't have the fluency. Your comedic thing, whatever it is, it only works on certain things. My thing only works on these dumb things.

AP: Still, there is a kind of meaning in dedicating yourself to meaninglessness.

SEINFELD: I've discussed this at length with my friend Joel Hodgson ("Mystery Science 3000") and he's incredibly articulate on this subject, which is: The throw-away culture of our childhood was not throw-away to us. We deeply love these things and they were meaningful in their meaninglessness.

AP: You and Marc Maron had a great debate on his podcast as almost diametrically opposed comedians. He believes in baring his soul on stage and you pledge fidelity to the joke. I thought you were both right.

SEINFELD: My attitude, I think, was more talking to comedians. I think comedians, if they want to survive throughout their life doing this, they have to pay close attention to the laughs. No less value in what he's doing, but I would worry about how long would this last for in your life. But, yeah, that's a good point. We were both right, just different.

AP: You've said you want to do stand-up into your 80s and beyond.

SEINFELD: To the end. To the very end.

AP: You still feel that way?

SEINFELD: Yeah. The only hard part of my life is the other things. People do ask me about slowing down and I go, "The work part of my life is not stand-up. It's all the other things." Stand-up is an incredible, pure experience. Surfing is the great regret of my life that I never really got good at that. I did it for two weeks one time many years ago. But if you were a surfer, you would never stop doing it. That's what stand-up is for me. Feeling that energy, that natural life-force energy under you and around you, I never get tired of that.

AP: Are you thinking about another stand-up special?

SEINFELD: No, I'm not. I'm not sure of it as a comedy form for me right now. I would love to think of something else, if I even wanted to do it — which I don't right now. Like, "Comedians in Cars Getting Coffee," the subtext of that is: I'm really sick of talk shows on TV. That's why I did that. And let me show you why. We don't want to see them sitting on a couch anymore. The people who are doing it aren't having any fun doing it. That was my anti-talk show. So I would want to do an anti-stand-up special if I did one. I envy, sometimes, these little Italian artisans who don't really care if anybody knows who they are or what they do. And stand-up can be like that. Any writing work is very lonely work. Stand-up, in a way, is kind of a private, lonely world. I'm going to Dayton, Ohio, on Friday. No one's going to know what happened there. I'm very attracted to that. I'm more attracted to that than, "Hey everyone, I made a movie." My way, if I had my choice, is that I would like to do this work very quietly and privately.

AP: It's interesting you'd say that as someone who had one of the biggest TV shows ever. Maybe you had your fill of it.

SEINFELD: That's possible. But it never felt like me. Larry and I, when we first started to do the show thought: This will be a really fun, little boutique thing that will just get our people that like this kind of quirky, off-beat thing, and that would be cool. What it became was never on our radar. Then, suddenly, you're a big wave surfer. I think it was tougher on Larry than for me. Because you feel the pressure. I never minded the pressure.

AP: Have you experienced younger generations finding "Seinfeld" on Netflix?

SEINFELD: That age around 10 to 12, they seem to find it. They have no idea what it is at first. (Laughs) I think the credit all really goes to Jason (Alexander), Michael (Richards) and Julia (Louis-Dreyfus) — what they did with those characters, the color that they found in all of those characters. Larry and I, we were just doing these silly conversations, but they made it so accessible. They deserve the credit for the success of the show.

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, stressing the importance of "responsibly managing" the differences between the United States and China as the two sides butted heads over a number of contentious bilateral, regional and global issues.

Talks between the two sides have increased in recent months, even as differences have grown. Blinken said he raised concerns with Xi about China's support for Russia and its invasion of Ukraine, as well as other issues including Taiwan and the South China Sea, human rights and the production and export of synthetic opioid precursors.

Blinken sounded a positive note on recent progress made in bilateral cooperation, including in military communications, counternarcotics and artificial intelligence, on which the two sides agreed to start a dialogue on how to reduce risks from the rapidly emerging technology.

"We are committed to maintaining and strengthening lines of communication to advance that agenda, and again deal responsibly with our differences so we avoid any miscommunications, any misperceptions, any miscalculations," he said.

But he stressed that "even as we seek to deepen cooperation, where our interests align, the United States is very clear-eyed about the challenges posed by (China) and about our competing visions for the future. America will always defend our core interests and values."

Notably, he said he raised ongoing concerns about Beijing's supply of materials, including machine tools and micro electronics, to Moscow that President Vladimir Putin is using to boost Russia's defenses and its war on Ukraine.

"Russia would struggle to sustain its assault on Ukraine without China's support," Blinken told reporters after his meeting with Xi.

"Fueling Russia's defense industrial base not only threatens Ukrainian security, it threatens European security," he added. "As we've told China for some time, ensuring transatlantic security is a core U.S. interest. In our discussions today, I made clear that if China does not address this problem, we will."

Blinken did not elaborate on how the U.S. would address the matter if China did not, but Washington has imposed large numbers of sanctions against Chinese firms for doing business with countries such as Russia, Iran and North Korea.

He said he urged China to use its influence "to discourage Iran and its proxies from expanding the conflict in the Middle East" and convince North Korea "to end its dangerous behavior and engage in dialogue."

Russian Defense Minister Sergei Shoigu on Friday hailed military cooperation with China during a meeting with his Chinese counterpart Dong Jun in Kazakhstan's capital, Astana.

"Russian-Chinese military cooperation is an important element in increasing defense capability and maintaining global and regional stability. We regularly conduct joint operational and combat training on land, sea and in the air, and successfully practice combat training missions of varying degrees of complexity," Shoigu said.

He said the cooperation is important as "new hotbeds of tension are emerging and old ones are exacerbating. In essence, this is the result of geopolitical adventures, selfish neo-colonial actions of the West."

Blinken also discussed with Xi China's maritime maneuvers in the disputed South China Sea, and reiter-

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ated "ironclad" American support for the Philippines, its oldest treaty ally in Asia.

Xi stressed that China and the U.S. must seek common ground "rather than engage in vicious competition."

"China is happy to see a confident, open, prosperous and thriving United States," the Chinese leader said. "We hope the U.S. can also look at China's development in a positive light. This is a fundamental issue that must be addressed."

Earlier, Blinken held lengthy talks with Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi and Public Security Minister Wang Xiaohong.

He and Wang 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.

"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."

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, saying "China's legitimate development rights have been unreasonably suppressed."

"China's concerns are consistent," he said. "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.

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, although Blinken said this issue did not come up in his talks on Friday.

The bill also allots \$61 billion for Ukraine to defend itself from Russia's invasion. China's foreign ministry said the U.S. position on Chinese defense trade with Russia was hypocritical when considered alongside the amount of military assistance Washington is providing to Kyiv.

"It is extremely hypocritical and irresponsible for the U.S. side to introduce a bill for large-scale assistance to Ukraine while making groundless accusations against normal economic and trade exchanges between China and Russia," said ministry spokesperson Wang Wenbin.

"Shifting the blame to China will not solve the problem, nor will it alleviate the passive situation of the parties involved in the Ukraine crisis," he said.

These are the countries where TikTok is already banned

By KELVIN CHAN AP Business Writer

LONDON (AP) — TikTok is in the crosshairs of authorities in the U.S., where new law threatens a nationwide ban unless its China-based parent ByteDance divests. It would be the biggest blow yet to the popular video-sharing app, which has faced various restrictions around the world.

TikTok is already banned in a handful of countries and from government-issued devices in a number of others, due to official worries that the app poses privacy and cybersecurity concerns.

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Those fears are reflected in the U.S. law, which is the culmination of long-held bipartisan fears in Washington that China's communist leaders could force ByteDance to hand over U.S. user data, or influence Americans by suppressing or promoting certain content. TikTok has long maintained that it doesn't share data with the Chinese government and its CEO has taken a defiant stance, vowing to fight back.

Here are the places that have partial or total bans on TikTok:

AFGHANISTAN

TikTok has been banned since 2022, along with videogame PUBG, after the country's Taliban leadership decided to forbid access on the grounds of protecting young people from "being misled."

AUSTRALIA

TikTok is not allowed on devices issued by the Australian federal government. Attorney-General Mark Dreyfus said he made the decision after getting advice from the country's intelligence and security agencies.

BELGIUM

The National Security Council decided last month to indefinitely ban TikTok from devices owned or paid for by the federal government. The ban was issued on a temporary basis last year on worries about cybersecurity, privacy and misinformation. Prime Minister Alexander de Croo said it was based on warnings from the country's state security service and cybersecurity center.

CANADA

Devices issued by the federal government are forbidden from using TikTok. Officials cited an "unacceptable" risk to privacy and security and said the app would be removed from devices and employees blocked from downloading it.

CHINA

TikTok has never been available in mainland China, a fact that CEO Shou Chew has mentioned in testimony to U.S. lawmakers. ByteDance instead offers Chinese users Douyin, a similar video-sharing app that follows Beijing's strict censorship rules. TikTok also ceased operations in Hong Kong after a sweeping Chinese national security law took effect.

DENMARK

Denmark's Defense Ministry banned its employees from having TikTok on their work phones, ordering staffers who have installed it to remove the app from devices as soon as possible. The ministry said the reasons for the ban included both "weighty security considerations" as well as "very limited work-related need to use the app."

EUROPEAN UNION

The European Parliament, European Commission and the EU Council, the 27-member bloc's three main institutions, have imposed bans on TikTok on staff devices. Under the European Parliament's ban, lawmakers and staff were also advised to remove the TikTok app from their personal devices.

FRANCE

"Recreational" use of TikTok and other social media apps like Twitter and Instagram on government employees' phones has been banned because of worries about insufficient data security measures. The French government didn't name specific apps but noted the decision came after other governments took measures targeting TikTok.

INDIA

India imposed a nationwide ban on TikTok and dozens of other Chinese apps like messaging app WeChat in 2020 over privacy and security concerns. The ban came shortly after a clash between Indian and Chinese troops at a disputed Himalayan border killed 20 Indian soldiers and injured dozens. The companies were given a chance to respond to questions on privacy and security requirements but the ban was made permanent in 2021.

INDONESIA

TikTok isn't entirely banned in the sprawling, populous Southeast Asian nation, only its online retail function, after the authorities clamped down on e-commerce transactions carried out on social media platforms in a bid to protect small businesses.

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LATVIA

Foreign Minister Edgars Rinkevics tweeted that he deleted his TikTok account and that the app is also prohibited from official foreign ministry smartphones.

NETHERLANDS

The Dutch central government banned apps including TikTok from employee work phones citing data security concerns. A government statement did not name TikTok specifically but said civil servants are discouraged from having apps "from countries with an offensive cyber program against the Netherlands and/or Dutch interests installed and used on their mobile work devices."

NEPAL

The Himalayan country imposed a nationwide ban on TikTok, saying it was disrupting "social harmony" and goodwill and blaming it for a "flow of indecent materials." Authorities ordered the telecom company to block access to the app.

NEW ZEALAND

Lawmakers in New Zealand and staff at the nation's Parliament are prohibited from having the TikTok app on their work phones, following advice from government cybersecurity experts. The app was removed from all devices with access to the parliamentary network, although officials can make special arrangements for anybody who needs TikTok to perform their democratic duties.

NORWAY

The Norwegian parliament banned Tiktok on work devices after the country's Justice Ministry warned the app shouldn't be installed on phones issued to government employees. The Parliament's speaker said TikTok shouldn't be on devices that have access to the assembly's systems and should be removed as quickly as possible. The country's capital Oslo and second largest city Bergen also urged municipal employees to remove TikTok from their work phones.

PAKISTAN

Pakistani authorities have temporarily banned TikTok at least four times since 2020, citing concerns that the app promotes immoral content.

SOMALIA

The government ordered telecom companies to block access to TikTok, along with messaging app Telegram and gambling platform 1XBET. Officials said they were concerned that the platforms could spread extremist content, nude images and other material seen as offensive to Somali culture and Islam.

TAIWAN

Taiwan imposed a public sector ban on TikTok after the FBI warned that the app posed a national security risk. Government devices, including mobile phones, tablets and desktop computers, are not allowed to use Chinese-made software, which includes apps like TikTok, its Chinese equivalent Douyin, or Xiaohongshu, a Chinese lifestyle content app.

UNITED KINGDOM

British authorities banned TikTok from mobile phones used by government ministers and civil servants. Officials said the ban was a "precautionary move" on security grounds and doesn't apply to personal devices. The British Parliament followed up by banning TikTok from all official devices and the "wider parliamentary network." The semi-autonomous Scottish government and London City Hall also banned TikTok from staff devices. The BBC urged staff to delete TikTok from corporate devices unless they're using it for editorial and marketing reasons.

UNITED STATES

U.S. authorities ordered government agencies to delete TikTok from federal devices and systems over data security concerns. More than half of the 50 U.S. states also have banned the app from official devices, as have Congress and the U.S. armed forces. Montana's efforts to bring in a state-wide ban failed, as did a proposal in Virginia to block kids from using it.

USDA tells producers to reduce salmonella in certain frozen chicken products

By JONEL ALECCIA AP Health Writer

Poultry producers will be required to bring salmonella bacteria in certain chicken products to very low levels to help prevent food poisoning under a final rule issued Friday by U.S. agriculture officials.

When the regulation takes effect in 2025, salmonella will be considered an adulterant — a contaminant that can cause foodborne illness — when it is detected above certain levels in frozen breaded and stuffed raw chicken products. That would include things like frozen chicken cordon bleu and chicken Kiev dishes that appear to be fully cooked but are only heat-treated to set the batter or coating.

It's the first time the U.S. Department of Agriculture has declared salmonella an adulterant in raw poultry in the same way that certain E. coli bacteria are regarded as contaminants that must be kept out of raw ground beef sold in grocery stores, said Sandra Eskin, a USDA food safety official.

The new rule also means that if a product exceeds the allowed level of salmonella, it can't be sold and is subject to recall, Eskin said.

Salmonella poisoning accounts for more than 1.3 million infections and about 420 deaths each year in the U.S., according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Food is the source of most of those illnesses.

The breaded and stuffed raw chicken products have been associated with at least 14 salmonella outbreaks and at least 200 illnesses since 1998, CDC statistics show. A 2021 outbreak caused at least three dozen illnesses in 11 states and sent 12 people to the hospital.

Despite changes to labels emphasizing that the products needed to be thoroughly cooked, consumers continued to fall ill, Eskin said.

"Sometimes the salmonella is very virulent," she said.

Addressing a narrow category of poultry products lays the foundation for a new framework to regulate salmonella more broadly now being considered by federal officials, said Mike Taylor, a former U.S. Food and Drug Administration official.

Among other things, the proposal calls for greater testing for salmonella in poultry entering a processing plant, stricter monitoring during production and targeting three types of salmonella that cause one-third of all illnesses.

"It's no question that moving down this path toward regulating salmonella as an adulterant is way overdue," Taylor said.

Poultry industry officials have long said that the government already has tools to ensure product safety and that companies have invested in methods to reduce salmonella in raw chicken.

A representative for the National Chicken Council said officials had not seen the final rule. However, the trade group said in a statement it's concerned the regulation represents an abrupt policy shift and that it "has the potential to shutter processing plants, cost jobs, and take safe food and convenient products off shelves, without moving the needle on public health."

The USDA took similar action with E. coli bacteria in 1994 after deadly outbreaks of food poisoning tied to ground beef, and the number of related foodborne illnesses have fallen by more than 50%.

Seattle food safety lawyer Bill Marler — who represented clients in a deadly 1993 E. coli outbreak in fast-food hamburgers and has lobbied for broader changes in controlling salmonella — said the new regulation is a good first step.

"Setting a standard is going to force the industry to adjust," he said.

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

By MOHAMMAD JAHJOUH and WAFAA SHURAFI 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.

"We were attached to this baby in a crazy way," he said, speaking near Sabreen's grave in a cemetery in Rafah.

"God had taken something from us but given us something in return" with the baby surviving after her family died, he said. "But (now) he has taken them all. My brother's family is completely wiped out. It's been deleted from the civil registry. There is no trace of him left behind."

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.

Today in History: April 27, Magellan killed in the Philippines

By The Associated Press undefined

Today in History

Today is Saturday, April 27, the 118th day of 2024. There are 248 days left in the year.

Today's Highlight in History:

On April 27, 1521, Portuguese explorer Ferdinand Magellan was killed by natives in the Philippines.

On this date:

In 1810, Ludwig van Beethoven wrote one of his most famous piano compositions, the Bagatelle in A-minor.

In 1813, the Battle of York took place in Upper Canada during the War of 1812 as a U.S. force defeated the British garrison in present-day Toronto before withdrawing.

In 1865, the steamer Sultana, carrying freed Union prisoners of war, exploded on the Mississippi River near Memphis, Tennessee; death toll estimates vary from 1,500 to 2,000.

In 1941, German forces occupied Athens during World War II.

In 1973, acting FBI Director L. Patrick Gray resigned after it was revealed that he'd destroyed files removed from the safe of Watergate conspirator E. Howard Hunt.

In 1978, 51 construction workers plunged to their deaths when a scaffold inside a cooling tower at the Pleasants Power Station site in West Virginia fell 168 feet to the ground.

In 1992, Russia and 12 other former Soviet republics won entry into the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank.

In 1994, former President Richard M. Nixon was remembered at an outdoor funeral service attended by all five of his successors at the Nixon presidential library in Yorba Linda, California.

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In 2010, former Panamanian dictator Manuel Noriega was extradited from the United States to France, where he was later convicted of laundering drug money and received a seven-year sentence.

In 2011, powerful and deadly tornadoes raked the South and Midwest; more than 60 tornadoes crossed parts of Alabama, leaving about 250 people dead and thousands of others injured in the state.

In 2012, the space shuttle Enterprise, mounted atop a jumbo jet, sailed over the New York City skyline on its final flight before becoming a museum piece aboard the USS Intrepid.

In 2015, rioters plunged part of Baltimore into chaos, torching a pharmacy, setting police cars ablaze and throwing bricks at officers hours after thousands attended a funeral for Freddie Gray, a Black man who died from a severe spinal injury he'd suffered in police custody; the Baltimore Orioles' home game against the Chicago White Sox was postponed because of safety concerns.

In 2018, North Korean leader Kim Jong Un made history by crossing over to South Korea to meet with President Moon Jae-in; it was the first time a member of the Kim dynasty had set foot on southern soil since the end of the Korean War in 1953.

In 2019, a gunman opened fire inside a synagogue near San Diego as worshippers celebrated the last day of Passover, killing a woman and wounding the rabbi and two others. (John Earnest, a white supremacist, has been sentenced to both federal and state life prison terms.)

In 2021, President Joe Biden signed an executive order to increase the minimum wage to \$15 an hour for federal contractors, providing a pay bump to hundreds of thousands of workers.

In 2022, Russia cut off natural gas to NATO members Poland and Bulgaria and threatened to do the same to other countries, using its most essential export as an attempt to punish and divide the West for its united support of Ukraine.

In 2023, Jerry Springer, the onetime mayor and news anchor whose namesake TV show featured a three-ring circus of dysfunctional guests willing to bare all — sometimes literally — as they brawled and hurled obscenities before a raucous audience, died at 79.

Today's Birthdays: Actor Anouk Aimee (ah-NOOK' EM'-ee) is 92. Rock musician Jim Keltner is 82. Rock singer Kate Pierson (The B-52's) is 76. R&B singer Herb Murrell (The Stylistics) is 75. Actor Douglas Sheehan is 75. Rock musician Ace Frehley is 73. West Virginia Gov. Jim Justice is 73. Pop singer Sheena Easton is 65. Actor James Le Gros (groh) is 62. Rock musician Rob Squires (Big Head Todd and the Monsters) is 59. Singer Mica (MEE'-shah) Paris is 55. Sen. Cory Booker, D-N.J., is 55. Actor David Lascher is 52. Actor Maura West is 52. Actor Sally Hawkins is 48. Rock singer Jim James (My Morning Jacket) is 46. Rock musician Patrick Hallahan (My Morning Jacket) is 46. Rock singer-musician Travis Meeks (Days of the New) is 45. Country musician John Osborne (Brothers Osborne) is 42. Actor Francis Capra is 41. Actor Ari Graynor is 41. Rock singer-musician Patrick Stump (Fall Out Boy) is 40. Actor Sheila Vand is 39. Actor Jenna Coleman is 38. Actor William Moseley is 37. Singer Lizzo is 36. Actor Emily Rios is 35. Singer Allison Iraheta is 32.