

# Groton Daily Independent

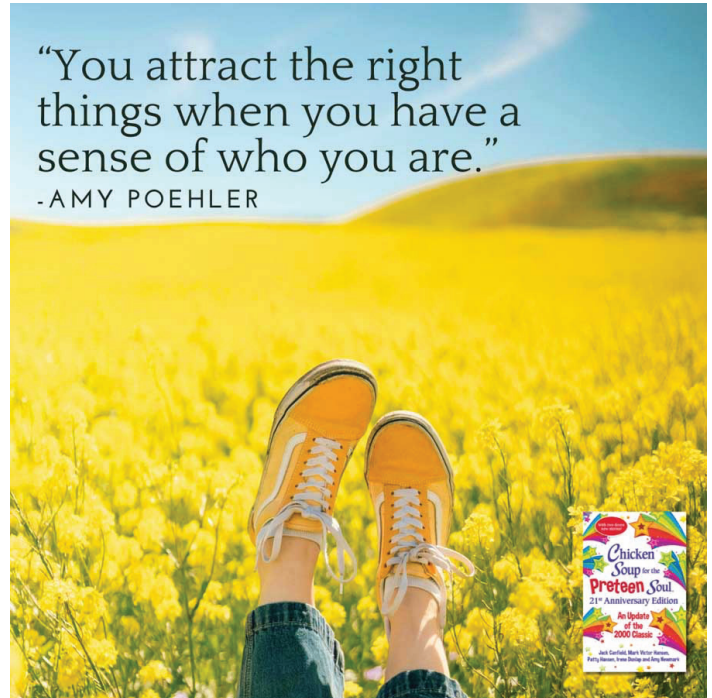
Tuesday, April 30, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 309 ~ 1 of 70

- [1- Upcoming Events](#)
- [2- 1440 News Headlines](#)
- [3- Weber Landscaping Greenhouse Ad](#)
- [4- Stanley County Fatal Crash](#)
- [5- Groton Area May Community Calendar](#)
- [10- Witte Exteriors Ad](#)
- [11- That's Life by Tony Bender](#)
- [12- SD News Watch: How SDSU put state at forefront of precision ag revolution](#)
- [14- SD Search Light: Governors, including Noem, oppose Air National Guard move to Space Force](#)
- [15- SD SearchLight: Chief justice, law school dean guarded, hopeful about AI in justice system](#)
- [16- SD SearchLight: What Noem's shot heard around the world says about her approach to problems](#)

- [19- Weather Pages](#)
- [23- Daily Devotional](#)
- [24- Subscription Form](#)
- [25- Lottery Numbers](#)
- [26- News from the Associated Press](#)

"You attract the right things when you have a sense of who you are."

-AMY POEHLER



**Tuesday, April 30**

Senior Menu: Teriyaki chicken, rice pilaf, cauliflower and broccoli, pineapple strawberry ambrosia whole wheat bread.

School Breakfast: Scones.

School Lunch: Hot dogs, baked beans.

**Cancelled:** Track at Milbank, 1:30 p.m.

Elementary Spring Concert, 7 p.m. **(will be livestreamed on GDILIVE.COM)**

Thrift Store open 3 p.m. to 6 p.m.

Food Pantry open 4 p.m. to 8 p.m.

United Methodist: Bible Study, 10 a.m.



**Now  
HIRING!**

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

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

**OPEN:** Recycling Trailer in Groton

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

© 2024 Groton Daily Independent

# Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, April 30, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 309 ~ 2 of 70

# 1440

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

US Secretary of State Antony Blinken urged Hamas yesterday to accept Israel's latest proposal for a temporary cease-fire in exchange for the release of some hostages. The proposal reportedly involves a two-part plan, with Israel seeking the initial release of 33 of the roughly 130 hostages remaining in Hamas' captivity (down from an original demand of 40).

A new reactor unit at Georgia's Vogtle nuclear power plant went into commercial operation yesterday, capping a 15-year expansion that makes the site the single biggest producer of carbon-free energy in

the country.

Humza Yousaf resigned as Scotland's first minister yesterday, prompting the Scottish National Party's second leadership election in just over a year. The 39-year-old leader faced a vote of no confidence in the Scottish parliament following the end of a power-sharing agreement with the Scottish Greens party over the abandonment of a key target to reduce carbon emissions by 75% by 2030.

## Sports, Entertainment, & Culture

French actor Gérard Depardieu to face criminal trial in October in France over alleged sexual assault on a film set in 2021; Depardieu has been accused by more than a dozen women of sexual misconduct.

English Premier League clubs agree in principle to salary cap; plan could become official this summer. Mike Tyson's boxing match with YouTube influencer Jake Paul (July 20) to be classified as a sanctioned, professional fight.

US actress Lily Gladstone, French actress Eva Green, and six others join filmmaker Greta Gerwig for competition jury at 2024 Cannes Film Festival (May 14-25).

## Science & Technology

OpenAI strikes deal with UK news publisher the Financial Times; deal allows OpenAI to use content to train models, provide Financial Times content in ChatGPT responses.

James Webb Space Telescope captures highest resolution of the Horsehead Nebula to date; interstellar dust cloud sits about 1,400 light-years away in the Orion constellation.

Researchers discover mechanism in fetal mice that heals damaged cartilage cells; discovery may lead to new treatments for joint and bone damage in humans.

## Business & Markets

US stock markets close higher (S&P 500 +0.3%, Dow +0.4%, Nasdaq +0.4%); Dow set to finish April down nearly 4%, with S&P 500 and Nasdaq down nearly 3%.

Paramount CEO Bob Bakish steps down as Paramount weighs merger with Skydance Media; Bakish will be replaced by trio of executives. Royal Philips shares close up 27% after the Dutch medical devices giant agrees to pay \$1.1B to settle US lawsuits over its recalled sleep apnea machines.

Tesla shares close up 15% after China clears way for electric vehicle maker to deploy its advanced self-driving software. US Supreme Court declines to hear Elon Musk's appeal over settlement agreement requiring US Securities and Exchange Commission to vet Musk's social media posts.

## Politics & World Affairs

Four officers killed, four others wounded in Charlotte, North Carolina, while serving arrest warrant; suspect found dead. Federal court rules North Carolina and West Virginia's state healthcare plans are discriminatory for excluding certain care for transgender people; cases likely headed to Supreme Court.

Roughly 50 people killed in western Kenya after dam collapses following heavy rain and flooding; more than 100 people have been killed due to flooding in Kenya in the past month.

Spain's Prime Minister Pedro Sánchez says he will not resign after announcing last week he was considering stepping down amid a corruption probe against his wife, Begoña Gómez.

# Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, April 30, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 309 ~ 3 of 70



**620 West Third Avenue  
Groton  
Hours: M-F 10-6  
Sat 10-4 ~ Sun 12-4**

## Stanley County Fatal Crash

What: Two vehicle fatal crash

Where: US Highway 14, mile marker 225, two miles west of Fort Pierre, SD

When: 3:38 p.m., Friday, April 12, 2024

Driver 1: Female, 53 years old, serious non-life-threatening injuries

Vehicle 1: 2010 Dodge Ram

Seat Belt Use: No

Driver 2: Male, 81 years old, fatal injuries

Vehicle 2: 2018 Chevy Silverado

Seat Belt Use: No

Stanley County, S.D.- An 81-year-old man has died as a result of injuries sustained in a two-vehicle crash on the afternoon of Friday April 12, two miles west of Fort Pierre, SD.

Preliminary crash information indicates the driver of a 2018 Chevy Silverado was traveling on US Highway 14 and crossed over into the oncoming lane. The driver of a 2010 Dodge Ram was in the oncoming lane and tried to swerve around to avoid the Silverado, but was unable to do so, resulting in a head on collision, on the passenger side of each truck. Both drivers sustained injuries and were transported by Pierre AMR ambulance to St. Mary Hospital in Pierre for treatment.

However, on Sunday April 28, the driver of the Silverado died as a result of his injuries.

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

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

# Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, April 30, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 309 ~ 5 of 70

## \$7 Meal Deal!

Includes Fries, Drink  
and Sundae!



SOMETHING DIFFERENT

Groton: (605) 397-8627

## Cheeseburger

or

## 3 Chicken Strips!



## Groton Area May Community Calendar

### Wednesday, May 1

Senior Menu: Meatloaf, baked potato with sour cream, creamed peas, frosted brownie, fruit, whole wheat bread.

School Breakfast: Cereal.

School Lunch: Cheese nachos, salsa.

Groton Chamber Meeting, noon, City Hall

Groton CM&A: Kids' Club, Youth Group and Adult Bible Study begins at 7 pm

High School Baseball at Sioux Valley, 7 p.m.

Emmanuel Lutheran: Sarah Circle, 5 p.m.; Confirmation, 6 p.m.

United Methodist: Community Coffee Hour 9:30 a.m.

Doubles Bowling Tournament, 7 p.m.

### Saturday, May 4

Doubles Bowling Tournament, Noon and 3:30 p.m.

Citywide Rummage Sale, 8 a.m. to 3 p.m.

Common Cents Community Thrift Store extended hours, 8 a.m. to 3 p.m.

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

### Sunday, May 5

High School Baseball at Bryant: O-R/R/A at 2 p.m., Hamlin at 4 p.m.

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

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

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

Emmanuel Lutheran: Worship with communion, 9 a.m., senior milestones and Faith Forever scholarships; choir singing; Last Day of Sunday School, 10:15 a.m.

St. John's Lutheran: Worship with communion at St. John's 9 a.m. (Graduate Recognition), at Zion, 11 a.m.

United Methodist: Worship with communion: At Conde, 8:30 a.m.; and at Groton, 10:30 a.m.; Coffee hour, 9:30 a.m.; Sunday School, 10:30 a.m.; Missions Taco Bar, 11:30 a.m.

### Thursday, May 2

Senior Menu: Breaded pork cutlet, creamy noodles, tomato spoon salad, peaches, whole wheat bread.

School Breakfast: Breakfast pizza.

School Lunch: Sloppy joes, baked beans.

Girls golf at Lee Park Golf Course, Aberdeen, 10 a.m.

Junior High Track meet at Aberdeen Roncalli 2 p.m.

High School Spring Concert 7 p.m.

Emmanuel Lutheran: Nigeria Circle, 2 p.m.

Weber Landscaping Greenhouse opens for the season, 10 a.m.

### Friday, May 3

Senior Menu: Tator tot hot dish, green beans, acini depepi fruit salad, whole wheat bread.

School Breakfast: Biscuits.

School Lunch: Hamburgers, fries.

Track at Sisseton, 1 p.m.

# Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, April 30, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 309 ~ 6 of 70

**GROTON**  
**VET CLINIC**



1503 N Broadway, Groton, 605/397-8145

## Monday, May 6

Senior Menu: Lasagna bake, tossed salad with dressing, fruit, cookie, whole wheat bread.

School Breakfast: Stuffed bagels.

School Lunch: Turkey gravy over mashed potatoes..

Girls Golf at Olive Grove Golf Course, 10 a.m.

Junior High Track Meet at Webster, 3 p.m.

The Pantry open at the Groton Community Center, 11 a.m. to 3 p.m.

Senior Citizens meet at the Groton Community Center, 1 p.m.

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

United Methodist: PEO (outside group), 7 p.m.

## Tuesday, May 7

Senior Menu: Creamed chicken, biscuit, vegetable Catalina blend pears, tapioca pudding.

School Breakfast: Waffles.

School Lunch: Chicken fajitas, Spanish rice.

Bramble Zoo Presentation/Assembly at Groton Area Elementary, 9:30 a.m.-1:45 p.m.

Common Cents Community Thrift Store, 3 p.m. to 6 p.m.

The Pantry at Groton Community Center, 4 p.m. to 8 p.m.

City Council Meeting, 7 p.m.

Baseball, Softball, T-Ball Parent meeting at the Groton Community Center, 7:30 p.m.

Emmanuel Lutheran Vacation Bible School, 3:30 p.m. to 5:30 p.m.

St. John's Lutheran: Ladies Aid LWML, 1 p.m.

United Methodist: Bible Study, 10 a.m.

## Wednesday, May 8

Scalloped potato with ham, mixed vegetables, sunset salad, whole wheat bread.

School Breakfast: Egg bake.

School Lunch: Taco burgers tater tots.

High School Baseball in Groton hosting Redfield, 5:30 .m.

Groton CM&A: Kids' Club, Youth Group and Adult Bible Study begins at 7 pm

Emmanuel Lutheran Vacation Bible School, 3:30 p.m. to 5:30 p.m.; League at church, go to Alleviate, 5:30 p.m.

United Methodist: Community Coffee Hour 9:30 a.m.

## Thursday, May 9

Salisbury steak, mashed potatoes with gravy, creamed peas, frosted brownies, fruit, whole wheat bread.

School Breakfast: Pop tarts.

School Lunch: Pizza, peas.

Northeast Conference Track at Sisseton, 11 a.m.

Images of the World at Groton Elementary, 1 p.m.

Groton Lions Club Meeting, 104 N Main, 6 p.m.

Emmanuel Lutheran Vacation Bible School, 3:30 p.m. to 5:30 p.m.; Ascension Worship, 7 p.m.

## Friday, May 10

Chicken pasta salad, grape juice, dinner roll apple crisp, carrots and peas.

School Breakfast: Egg wraps.

School Lunch: Hot dogs chips.

Elementary Track and Field Day, Groton, 12:30 p.m.

## Saturday, May 11

Common Cents Community Thrift Store hours 10 a.m. to 1 p.m.

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

# Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, April 30, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 309 ~ 7 of 70

**Aberdeen**

225-6772

1-800-843-1865



**Redfield**

1-800-247-4650



**Webster**

1-800-658-2252

**JOHN DEERE**

## Sunday, May 12

GHS Graduation, 2 p.m.  
Groton CM&A: Sunday School at 9:15 a.m., Worship Service at 10:30 a.m.  
Catholic: SEAS Confession, 7:45-8:15 a.m., SEAS Mass, 8:30 a.m.; Turton Confession, 10:30-10:45 a.m.; Turton Mass, 11 a.m.  
First Presbyterian Church: Bible Study, 9:30 a.m.; Worship, 11 a.m.  
Emmanuel Lutheran: Worship, 9 a.m.  
St. John's Lutheran: Worship at St. John's 9 a.m., and at Zion, 11 a.m.  
United Methodist: Conde worship, 8:30 a.m.; Coffee Hour, 9:30 a.m.; Honor graduates during coffee hour and worship; Sunday School Carnival, 9:30 a.m.; Groton worship, 10:30 a.m. (Sunday School sings); Doris Strom's 99th Birthday, 3 p.m.

## Monday, May 13

Senior Menu: Sloppy Joe on bun, oven roasted potatoes, ice cream sundae, fruit, whole wheat bread.  
School Breakfast: Oatmeal.  
School Lunch: French bread pizza, green beans.  
Northeast Conference Girls Golf at Fisher Grove Golf Course, Redfield, 10 a.m.  
Northeast Conference Junior High Track Meet at Redfield, 10 a.m.  
Varsity Track at Hamlin, 3 p.m.  
School Board Meeting, 7 p.m.  
The Pantry open at the Groton Community Center, 11 a.m. to 3 p.m.  
Baseball, Softball and T-Ball uniform pickup at City Hall, 1 p.m. to 6 p.m.  
Senior Citizens meet at the Groton Community Center, 1 p.m.  
Emmanuel Lutheran: Bible Study, 6:30 a.m.

## Tuesday, May 14

Senior Menu: Baked pork chop, au gratin potatoes, vegetable capri bend, honey fruit salad, whole wheat bread.  
School Breakfast: Breakfast pizza.  
School Lunch: Chicken nuggets, fries.  
Baseball, Softball and T-Ball uniform pickup at City Hall, 1 p.m. to 6 p.m.  
Common Cents Community Thrift Store open, 3 p.m. to 6 p.m.  
The Pantry at the Groton Community Center, hours 4 p.m. to 8 p.m.  
D.A.R.E. graduation, 2 p.m.  
Emmanuel Lutheran: Council, 6 p.m.  
United Methodist: Bible Study, 10 a.m.

## Wednesday, May 15

Senior Menu: Swiss steak, mashed potatoes with gravy, peas and carrots, apricots,, whole wheat bread.  
School Breakfast: Cereal.  
School Lunch: Sack lunch made by kitchen.  
End of Fourth Quarter - LAST DAY OF SCHOOL  
Groton CM&A: Kids' Club, Youth Group and Adult Bible Study begins at 7 pm  
Emmanuel Lutheran: Pastor at Rosewood Court, 10 a.m.  
United Methodist: Community Coffee Hour 9:30 a.m.; Groton Ad Council, 7 p.m.

## Thursday, May 16

Senior Menu: Chesseburger quinoa casserole, cheesy breadstick, steamed Brussel sprouts, fruit.  
Faculty Inservice  
Girls Golf at Sisseton, 10 a.m.  
Track at Webster, 1 p.m.

# Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, April 30, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 309 ~ 8 of 70

**BLOCKER**  
CONSTRUCTION LLC

New Construction  
Remodeling  
Hoop Barns  
Shops

**Perry Blocker**

13379 Sperry Ln, Bath  
605/216-2677  
prblocker@hotmail.com

## Friday, May 17

Senior Menu: Spanish rice with hamburger, green beans, vanilla pudding with mandarin oranges, whole wheat read.

Region Track at Mobridge.

## Saturday, May 18

Common Cents Community Thrift Store hours 10 a.m. to 1 p.m.

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

## Sunday, May 19

High School Region baseball at highest two seeds  
Groton CM&A: Sunday School at 9:15 a.m., Worship Service at 10:30 a.m.

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

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

Emmanuel Lutheran: Worship with communion, 9 a.m.

St. John's Lutheran: Worship with communion at St. John's 9 a.m. and at Zion, 11 a.m.

United Methodist: Conde worship, 8:30 a.m.; Coffee Hour, 9:30 a.m.; Groton worship, 10:30 a.m.

## Monday, May 20

Senior Menu: Ranch chicken breast, sweet potatoes, mixed Monterey blend, apple sauce bars, whole wheat bread.

High School Region baseball at highest two seeds  
The Pantry open at the Groton Community Center, 11 a.m. to 3 p.m.

Senior Citizens meet at the Groton Community Center, Potluck at Noon

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

St. John's Lutheran: Christian Literature Circle, 7:30 p.m.

## Tuesday, May 21

Senior Menu: Lemon baked fish, au gratin potatoes, 3 bean salad, tropical fruit, whole wheat bread.

High School Region baseball at highest two seeds  
Common Cents Community Thrift Store open, 3 p.m. to 6 p.m.

The Pantry at the Groton Community Center, hours 4 p.m. to 8 p.m.

St. John's Lutheran: Quilting, 9 a.m.

United Methodist: Bible Study, 10 a.m.

## Wednesday, May 22

Senior Menu: Hamburger on bun, lettuce/tomato/onion, potato salad, fruit, cookie.

High School Region baseball at highest two seeds  
City Council Meeting, 7 p.m.

Groton CM&A: Kids' Club, Youth Group and Adult Bible Study begins at 7 pm

United Methodist: Community Coffee Hour 9:30 a.m.

## Thursday, May 23

Senior Menu: Cheese tortellini Alfredo with diced chicken, green beans, mandarin oranges, whole wheat bread.

State Track Meet at Sioux Falls

Girls Golf Regional at Groton, 10 a.m.

High School Region baseball at highest two seeds  
Story Time at Wage Memorial Library, 10 a.m.



# Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, April 30, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 309 ~ 9 of 70

## DID YOU KNOW . . .

**You can use the GDI Fitness Center by paying by the month and you can cancel any time without penalty.**

**Call/Text Paul at 605-397-7460 for details!**

### Friday, May 24

Senior Menu: Bratwurst on bun, mashed potatoes, sauerkraut, 3 bean salad, chocolate pudding with bananas.

State Track Meet at Sioux Falls  
Groton Locke Electric Amateurs at Clark, 8 p.m.

### Saturday, May 25

State Track Meet at Sioux Falls  
Common Cents Community Thrift Store hours 10 a.m. to 1 p.m.  
Catholic: SEAS Confession, 3:45-4:15 p.m.; SEAS Mass, 4:30 p.m.

### Sunday, May 26

Groton CM&A: Sunday School at 9:15 a.m., Worship Service at 10:30 a.m.  
Catholic: SEAS Confession, 7:45-8:15 a.m., SEAS Mass, 8:30 a.m.; Turton Confession, 10:30-10:45 a.m.; Turton Mass, 11 a.m.  
First Presbyterian Church: Bible Study, 9:30 a.m.; Worship, 11 a.m.  
Emmanuel Lutheran: Worship, 9 a.m.  
St. John's Lutheran: Worship at St. John's 9 a.m., and at Zion, 11 a.m.  
United Methodist: Conde worship, 8:30 a.m.; Coffee Hour, 9:30 a.m.; Groton worship, 10:30 a.m.

### Monday, May 27

Memorial Day  
Groton Legion Memorial Day service at Groton Union Cemetery

### Tuesday, May 28

Senior Menu: Baked turkey crunch with dressing, Italian blend vegetables, carrot bars, corn muffin, fruit.  
Common Cents Community Thrift Store open, 3 p.m. to 6 p.m.  
The Pantry at the Groton Community Center, hours 4 p.m. to 8 p.m.  
Junior Teeners host Miller, 5:30 p.m., doubleheader  
United Methodist: Bible Study, 10 a.m.

### Wednesday, May 29

Senior Menu: Chicken fried steak, mashed potatoes with gravy, oriental blend vegetables, cinnamon apple sauce, whole wheat bread.  
Groton CM&A: Kids' Club, Youth Group and Adult Bible Study begins at 7 pm  
United Methodist: Community Coffee Hour 9:30 a.m.

### Thursday, May 30

Senior Menu: Spaghetti with meat sauce, corn, garlic toast, fudgey cake squares, fruit.  
James Valley Annual Meeting, 11 a.m., GHS Gym/Arena  
Story Time at Wage Memorial Library, 10 a.m.

### Friday, May 31

Senior Menu: Breaded chicken on bun, oven roasted potatoes, pea and cheese salad, honey fruit salad.  
High School State Tournament at Augusta University through June 1  
Junior Teeners at Clark, 5:30 p.m., double header  
Groton Legion hosts Aberdeen Smitty's, 4 p.m., double header

# **Storm Damage To Your Roof?**



**WITTE**   
**EXTERIORS LLC**

**Specializing in Asphalt and Wood Shingles**

Call for an estimate

**Zack Witte ~ 605-695-7874**

Webster, SD

**No Contracts!**

## That's Life by Tony Bender

### He Fixed Things

Every town has one. One old man to fix the broken toys. One old man to tell the stories. One old man to bring us joy.

In Ashley, ND, where I was born, it was Mr. Miller. He made wooden moons with petite shelves for knick-knacks to hang on Mom's walls. His garage was loaded with them. They were scattered among the sawdust, and each one was unique. He made glorious birdhouses, and I remember erecting his creations in the yards of my youth. A pale green home for sparrows stood proudly in our yard, and a huge red birdhouse survives to this very day. It could house overweight ostriches.

In Frederick, SD, where I grew up, the place I call my hometown, there was another man. Cut from the same cloth. Same Union. God or Fate or Luck deposited my family next door. We rented his house while he lived in the faded green trailer to the west. Somehow it didn't seem fair that Glenn and Ethel should live in a closet while we lived in a castle. It seemed that way to me then. There were wooden pillars that separated the living and dining rooms, fancy hanging light fixtures and two bathrooms. The house had two porches and the front screens soon became bowed from the force of whiffle balls missed by inept batsmen. This, of course, didn't please Ethel, but Glenn never said a word and once in awhile he replaced the screens. And then we had a fresh backstop Glenn would fix our bikes and assemble new toys. His stored paint in our basement became community property, and my two-wheeler soon was a horrid maroon.

He'd drag home wrecked cars to dismantle, though he never found the time. Seems he could never let anything go to waste. That old Ford soon became a permanent third base.

When Glenn was finally retired from his job at the Ford Garage, it hurt us almost as much as it hurt him. He still had a lot of years left to give. We knew that. They got lost in the numbers. But it all turned out for the best. He had more time to fix our dented screens and our wobbly bikes, and he had more time to go fishing. He loved to fish. We ate the extras, and his mangy cats got the rest.

Fishing wasn't enough to keep him occupied, and soon every odd job that needed doing was being done by Glenn. He could do anything...or at least he thought he could and most everyone believed him.

I remember Glenn and "Shorty" coming over to fix an electrical malady that had plagued the family. In classic Abbott and Costello style, they argued over who would have to torture aged knees to test the socket near the floor. Glenn finally decreed that it should be Shorty since he was built closer to the floor. I don't remember if they ever solved the problem or what the final charge was, but in entertainment value it was a bargain.

After Ethel had passed on, Mom and Dad would invite Glenn over for supper, and he'd tell the same old stories over again. A wicked mimic, Mom would go, "To make a short story realllly long..." in perfect imitation of Glenn. But it was done in fun, and we loved hearing those old stories as much as he loved telling them.

It was Mom who called to tell me that Glenn had died. She never calls unless it's really important. I hate it when she calls.

At the funeral I sat beside little brother, Mike. He cried as we sat in the pew nearest the coffin. I wanted to comfort him, but I didn't know how, I was crying too.

Now, at the Community Store, where everyone meets for 8 a.m. for coffee, one chair is still vacant. No one dares sit there. It's Glenn's chair.



## How SDSU put state at forefront of precision ag revolution **SDSU was the first university in the country to create a program that teaches and helps farmers use precision ag**

BROOKINGS, S.D. – South Dakota State University's new precision agriculture program has had success at persuading in-state and some other Midwestern farmers to use more technology in their operations, while other states lag in their adoption of it.

SDSU was the first university in the country to create a program that teaches and helps farmers use precision ag, the science of new technologies and traditional methods that make operations more efficient to increase crop yields while reducing environmental impacts. For example, the use of global positioning satellites helps target chemicals and fertilizers where they're needed most.

Ali Mirzakhani Nafchi, an assistant professor at the precision ag center, said the school is working to increase usage through education and research to make the technology more practical for farmers.

### **Ali Mirzakhani Nafchi**

"I am very, very optimistic it is going to work. And we will see the changes not only in South Dakota, in the nation and in the world," Nafchi said.

South Dakota has one of the highest percentages of usage, with 53% of farmers using precision ag technology, according to a study from the U.S. Department of Agriculture.

Other Midwest states where more than half the farmers also use precision ag include North Dakota, Iowa, Illinois and Nebraska, according to a study done by the SDSU Ness School of Management and Economics.

Nationally, just 27% of farmers use precision ag practices to manage crops or livestock, the Ness study found.

### **Precision ag benefits, challenges to adoption**

The most widely adopted precision ag technologies include auto-steering in machinery and guidance or "georeferencing technology," the process of taking digital images.

Satellite imagery is the next most widely adopted technology, with nearly 60% of farmers having used it, according to the Ness study.

The technology typically increases crop production by 4% and fertilizer placement efficiency by 7%, according to a study done by the Association of Equipment Manufacturers. Precision ag also reduces herbicide and pesticide, fossil fuel and water use.

Despite the benefits to optimizing returns and yields, factors such as cost and lack of general knowledge about precision ag have prevented most farmers from using the tech products as widely as originally hoped.

Anna Karels, a student at the precision ag center, said it takes money to get started but will save money in the long term.

### **Anna Karels**

"I think it's hard for a lot of farmers to (understand) that, yes, it (might increase) my costs ... upfront, but it pays off over a certain number of years," Karels said.

Nafchi said lowering the initial rate will incentivize more farmers to use the technology.

"Initial costs for variable rate application is too high," Nafchi said. "So imagine if we get help. Somehow maybe make it less inexpensive, or lower the initial costs, or just go and do an incentive, investment for them, and ask them to just try it. And then they see the return on their investment is really good. I'm very optimistic they will use it."

If the initial costs are unattainable for some farmers, there are programs in place to help operations use this technology. USDA and the National Science Foundation have provided almost \$200 million for precision ag research and developmental funding from 2017 to 2021, according to the U.S. Government

# Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, April 30, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 309 ~ 13 of 70

Accountability Office.

Another factor for the low adoption rates is the lack of knowledge around the new technology. But there are options for South Dakota farmers to learn more about this technology.

"Dealerships like John Deere, I know they have a lot of clinics that they put on and stuff like that. (The school) does a lot of that to where they go out and show farmers, 'OK, this is what this does and how it can help you and benefit you and kind of like go through and show them how to use it,'" Karels said.

## **The Raven Precision Agriculture Center**

The Raven Precision Agriculture Center was built for students in the major to learn about precision ag in interactive ways.

The building features rooms full of equipment and precision ag products students use to learn through hands-on technology. The \$46.2 million building opened in August 2021, making it the first precision ag program in the nation.

Kasiviswanathan Muthukumarappan, endowed department head and professor at the center, said the department is proud of being the first but is now changing its curriculum to become the best program in the nation.

## **Kasiviswanathan Muthukumarappan**

"We would like to grow our precision ag program to the next level, and elevate the experiences for our students," Muthukumarappan said.

The department has to continue to make changes to keep up with the new technologies, and that is one thing the program can improve on, according to some students.

"The precision ag program is something that is going to have to keep changing to evolve to all the new technology that's going on. And I think that maybe SDSU could do a little bit better job of keeping up with that," Karels said.

This is something the program is working on.

One change is to add more specialized majors to collect more data on precision ag.

"Previously, we had a one recipe for all the students who are enrolled in (the) precision ag program, meaning that we combine agronomy and technologies together and make it one robust program," Muthukumarappan said. "Now, we are making it more user friendly. And we have three different tracks. One is for technology track. The other one is for agronomy track. And the other one is for data track, electronic strikers."

The program is also working on developing new technology.

"Currently, our new faculty are working on developing biosensors (and) developing unmanned vehicles," Muthukumarappan said.

The program's goal is to do more research that will make precision ag more practical for farmers, which in turn may raise the adoption rates.

The program is trying to raise enrollment rates by 20% in the next five years to make this goal attainable. SDSU's mission is to simplify this technology and make it more practical for farmers, Nafchi said.

The program currently has 66 students.

"We have great resources as a building. And we didn't have a lot of faculty resources, human resources, in doing things, offering things and doing research activities in this space," Muthukumarappan said. "The last two years, we were able to hire three new faculty to do high-end research activities, bring in more research dollars and help our research program to grow."

*This story was produced by South Dakota News Watch, an independent, nonprofit news organization. Read more in-depth stories at [sdnewswatch.org](http://sdnewswatch.org) and sign up for an email every few days to get stories as soon as they're published. Contact Greta Goede at [greta.goede@sdnewswatch.org](mailto:greta.goede@sdnewswatch.org).*



## SOUTH DAKOTA SEARCHLIGHT

<https://southdakotasearchlight.com>

### **Governors, including Noem, oppose Air National Guard move to Space Force**

**BY: ROBIN OPSAHL - APRIL 29, 2024 5:06 PM**

South Dakota Gov. Kristi Noem signed on to a letter Monday alongside 47 other state governors, as well as five territories and commonwealths, opposing the Biden administration's move to incorporate Air National Guard service members into the Space Force.

The letter from the National Governors' Association, addressed to Secretary of Defense Lloyd Austin, is written in opposition to a legislative proposal submitted by the Department of Defense to the Senate Armed Services Committee that would transfer some Air National Guard personnel and equipment currently being used on space missions to the Space Force.

The Defense Department proposal would require Congress to override existing law requiring that governors approve changes to National Guard units, through Title 10 and 32 of the U.S. Code, that outlines gubernatorial authority over their states' National Guard.

The bipartisan group of governors signing the letter said the proposed measure would hurt governors' abilities to use the National Guard in response to crises. Governors must retain full authority over these units "to protect operational readiness and America's communities," the letter states.

"Legislation that sidesteps, eliminates or otherwise reduces Governors' authority within their states and territories undermines longstanding partnerships, precedence, military readiness and operational efficacy," the letter states. "This action also negatively affects the important relationships between Governors and DOD at a time when we need to have full trust and confidence between the two to meet the growing threats posed by the era of strategic competition as well as natural disasters."

Air Force Secretary Frank Kendall told federal lawmakers earlier in April that the proposal would shift roughly 700 National Guard members to Space Force as part of a one-time transfer. There are currently 14 units, with about 1,000 personnel, working on space-related missions in seven states — Alaska, California, Colorado, Florida, Hawaii, New York and Ohio — that could be impacted by the move, according to the National Guard Association of the United States.

The National Guard advocacy group also released a statement opposing the draft legislation. Kendall told reporters in April that he doesn't "see a reason why a state needs a Space Force militia." But Retired Maj. Gen. Frank M. McGinn, the organization's president, said keeping space missions within the National Guard keeps the personnel current serving on space missions in work, as many are not able to move or take on full-time responsibilities. It allows states to retain the same defense and military capabilities as other parts of the country, he said — comparing the issue to states having artillery and cyber units in the National Guard, separate from the U.S. military.

"Here is what Secretary Kendall is asking to do: Skirt federal law to transfer nearly empty units to the Space Force, thereby reducing the nation's military space capabilities at a time when our nation is seeing growing competition in space," McGinn said. "I don't see why he wants to take this action. And a growing number in Congress wonder the same."

Only two state governors, Florida Gov. Ron DeSantis and Texas Gov. Greg Abbott, did not sign on to the letter. Both states have a vested interest in Space Force operations and development, with Patrick Space Force Base in Brevard County, Florida being one of the five current bases of the military branch. National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) also has operations in both states.

*Robin Opsahl is an Iowa Capital Dispatch reporter covering the state Legislature and politics. Robin has experience covering government, elections and more at media organizations including Roll Call, the Sacramento Bee and the Wausau Daily Herald, in addition to working on multimedia projects, newsletters and visualizations. They were a political reporter for the Des Moines Register covering the Iowa caucuses leading up to the 2020 presidential election, assisting with the Register's Iowa Poll, and reporting on Iowa's 4th District elections.*

## Chief justice, law school dean guarded, hopeful about AI in justice system

**Leaders tell Sioux Falls audience that human guidance could mean efficiencies, lower bills**

**BY: JOHN HULT - APRIL 29, 2024 4:02 PM**

SIOUX FALLS — Artificial intelligence (AI) could mean more efficient legal offices and lower bills for clients – provided human beings use the technology ethically.

South Dakota Supreme Court Chief Justice Steven Jensen and University of South Dakota Knudson School of Law Dean Neil Fulton offered that tentative conclusion on AI in the legal profession to members of the Sioux Falls Downtown Rotary Club on Monday.

The law school is teaching AI to students and offering its law librarian as a trainer for practicing lawyers, Fulton said. The judicial system is considering ways the technology might improve efficiency, Jensen said, and not yet pondering regulations on its use by attorneys.

But both leaders agreed that human decision-making and judgment ought to be top of mind in the use of AI for legal work.

"I gave a speech to the class of 2024 on Friday, and the centrality of the human person to the law was the thrust of it," Fulton said. "One of the things I tell them is that a lot of disciplines will just say, 'Can we?' The law has to step back and say, 'Should we?'"

Some forms of AI have been a modern part of life for years. It undergirds consumer-facing tools like voice dictation on smartphones, spell checkers on word processors or chatbots that screen customer service queries and hold your place in line.

Public awareness of generative AI exploded mostly because of ChatGPT, a text creation tool released in November 2022. Generative AI involves asking a tool like ChatGPT (for text) or Midjourney (for art) to produce something. That could be a term paper, an image, a screenplay or a legal brief in a matter of seconds, though concerns about "hallucinations" – wherein an AI tool makes up facts to include in the final product – quickly emerged as a danger of relying too heavily on AI-only material.

In the legal field, AI tools have returned legal briefs citing cases that don't exist. A federal judge in New York sanctioned a lawyer in that state last June for submitting briefs with phony citations.

"The running joke is now, 'Did you write this brief, or did AI write it?'" said Barry Sackett, a Rotarian and lawyer who led the Monday discussion with Jensen and Fulton.

Sackett wanted to know how the chief justice and law school dean are thinking about the technology, given its prominence across multiple areas of work and play.

The initial stumbles with hallucination and worries of students using AI to cheat factored into some of Fulton's first conversations about it with law school faculty in Vermillion.

That was a year ago. Now, Fulton said, the school works with – and teaches students about – the AI tools embedded in LexisNexis, one of two major legal research companies in the U.S.

Right now, he said, it can generate a brief that's "about 50% accurate."

"The human element is working out that other 50%," Fulton said. "But that is a savings to your client. It's a savings of time."

Jensen agreed, saying it's possible that AI could make offices efficient enough to shave dollars off legal bills. Lawyers often charge billable hours in 15-minute increments.

"We've not developed the rules, because frankly, if you start developing rules, sometimes you preclude innovation and the ability to improve what you're doing," Jensen said.

The state already has strict ethical standards on the truthfulness of evidence, he said. Those standards apply to any brief signed by any lawyer, regardless of whether someone on their staff or an AI tool helped write it.

"Are we getting briefs from AI right now? Maybe, and I don't have a problem with it, as long as the lawyers are doing the homework to make sure that the briefs are accurate," Jensen said.

He said the state has begun looking at ways to streamline certain processes for the sake of efficiency.

But there are lines to be drawn on AI and its use in the justice system, he said.

"We can't depend mostly on a machine to decide cases," Jensen said. "We can't depend upon a machine to argue our cases. There's so much of a human aspect in what lawyers do and what judges do that we have to make sure that that human aspect isn't lost."

Both leaders also told the Rotary Club that the law will need to keep up with the technology, wherever it winds up.

"We're just like everyone else, in that we're trying to figure this out as we go because it is moving so quickly," Fulton said. "I think anybody who tells you they have this figured out is fibbing."

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

## COMMENTARY

# What Noem's shot heard around the world says about her approach to problems

KEVIN WOSTER

APRIL 29, 2024 9:17 AM

Cricket might have turned out to be a fine hunting dog, or just a good companion.

We'll never know, because Kristi Noem killed her, with a shot years ago that is now being heard around the world of politics in South Dakota and beyond.

At least, that's one of the stories our governor tells in her forthcoming memoir, an advanced copy of which was apparently obtained by The Guardian, a British newspaper that broke the story.

When I heard that Noem's new book describes how she shot and killed one of her dogs, I figured the animal was old or sick or badly injured. I assumed it was a mercy killing. Such things happen with some regularity in farm country.

But I soon learned that, no, the dog Noem killed was a perfectly healthy, 14-month-old German wirehaired pointer, a really cool-looking, hard-charging breed that is widely respected in the hunting community.

Cricket wasn't sick or old or dying. She was misbehaving, according to excerpts from the memoir "No Going Back: The Truth on What's Wrong with Politics and How We Move America Forward."

As reported in The Guardian, the governor writes of Cricket's unruly behavior and "aggressive personality" and admits: "I hated that dog."

Noem writes of a time when Cricket went "out of her mind with excitement" during a pheasant hunt and spoiled the hunt for others. Eventually, she decided Cricket was "untrainable" and "less than worthless ... as a hunting dog" and possibly a danger to others because of her aggressiveness.

Noem also writes about how Cricket got loose and killed some of another family's chickens, then "whipped around to bite me" when Noem caught the dog. Noem wrote that she realized she had to "put her down."



# Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, April 30, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 309 ~ 17 of 70

So she did it herself, as Noem's story goes, with a gun. And after she blasted Cricket, she decided it was time to give the lead gift to a "nasty and mean" goat on the Noem farm.

Noem used the incidents as part of the pitch for her memoir on X (formerly Twitter), posting a link to the book and writing: "If you want more real, honest, and politically INcorrect stories that'll have the media gasping, preorder 'No Going Back.'"

So, there's a lot of marketing going on in this, as well, perhaps, as some enriched storytelling. And while Noem writes in the book that "a better politician" probably wouldn't tell the stories of her animal executions, it's clearly all about politics.

It's certainly not about thoughtful, responsible dog ownership.

I never knew Cricket. But I've known many hunting dogs, some of them mine, that have lost their minds in a field full of pheasants and scent. It's especially tough for a young dog. And pointing breeds like wire-hairs tend to be a bit more hard-charging and difficult to control in such situations.

So it's the responsibility of the dog owner to have the young dog as well trained and prepared as possible long before the hunt. Then the owner must try to put the dog in situations where it's least likely to "lose its mind" and most likely to succeed.

It's an imperfect process, where failure is common and usually more on the owner than on the dog. And owners fail a lot, especially in pheasant fields. I know. I've failed there plenty myself. Over the years, my dogs have sometimes made me angry and frustrated. But I've never hated them. And I've certainly never wanted to kill them.

And each dog, with its various idiosyncrasies and challenges, has enriched my hunting experience and my life.

Since the story broke, it has blown up on social media and made the rounds of the usual suspects in the actual news media. I assume that's exactly what Noem and her political advisers expected and wanted.

It's almost certain that the Cricket portions of the memoir were read and approved by those advisers before publication. I guess the Noem team figured it would be good for her national profile and, especially, her effort to be selected as Donald Trump's running mate.

The blowback so far seems mostly from the left or middle. But you'd think some conservative dog lovers would be upset, too. We'll see.

Meanwhile, Noem promotes herself as a country tough problem-solver who is willing to do the "difficult, messy, ugly" things, like killing her own dog, when necessary.

No question, shooting a family dog is difficult, messy and ugly. I know from personal experience. When I was in college I came home on a Friday night to find our old, terminally ill dog Muffin in agony. My dad had died a few years earlier and my mother was living alone and had been unable to bring herself to take Muffin to the vet for the final time.

With veterinary care maybe unavailable until Monday, I did what I thought was right. I took Muffin out into the river breaks and shot her. Then I broke down and sobbed. And sobbed. And sobbed. More than 50 years later, my eyes still fill with tears whenever I talk about it, and as I write this.

Maybe I could have done something different. Maybe I should have done something different. But Muffin was at the end of her life, and in agony. And I couldn't stand to see it prolonged.

Cricket was young and healthy and had a full dog's life ahead. Maybe a very good life. And I have to believe that someone out there could have given it to her, if Noem had taken the time to look for the right person or right place.

Or she could have kept Cricket and tried more training and handling techniques — including patience — to find ways to make Cricket work in the fields and at home. Instead, she gave up and solved the problem with a gun.

Boom.

Sure, the moment was "difficult, messy and ugly." But it was also a simple solution to a complicated problem — and, really, an easy way out.

Which brings me back to the title of Noem's book: "No Going Back: The Truth on What's Wrong with

# Groton Daily Independent

**Tuesday, April 30, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 309 ~ 18 of 70**

Politics and How We Move America Forward.”

Gov. Noem wants us to believe that she can solve the multiplicity of complex problems facing our nation, yet she couldn't even solve the problem of an unruly dog.

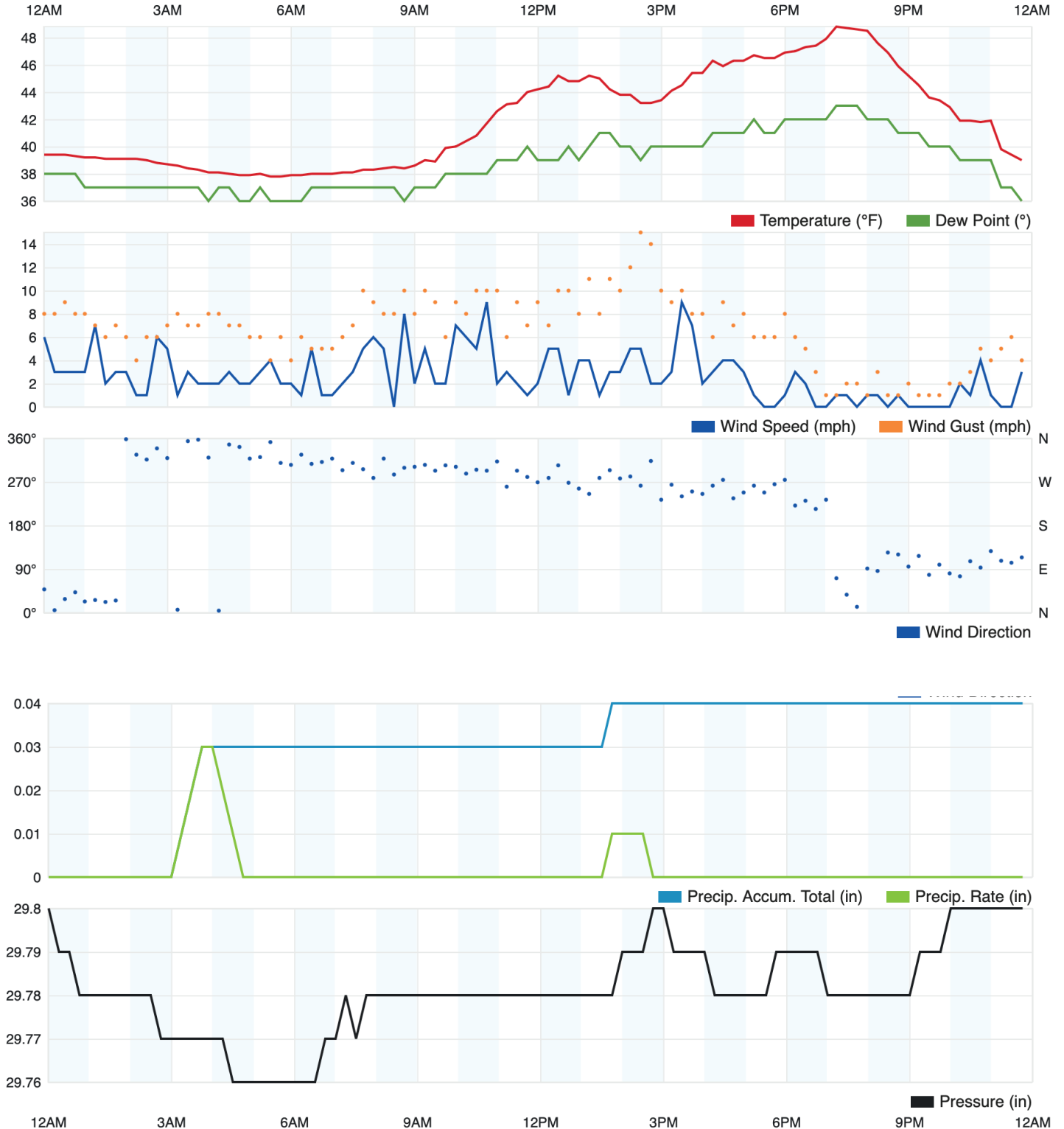
At least, not without a gun.

*Kevin Woster grew up on a farm near Reliance and worked for decades as a journalist, including stops at the Brookings Register, Sioux Falls Argus Leader, Rapid City Journal, KELO-TV and South Dakota Public Broadcasting, plus freelance assignments for outdoors and agricultural magazines. He lives in Rapid City.*

# Groton Daily Independent






Tuesday, April 30, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 309 ~ 19 of 70

## Yesterday's Groton Weather Graphs



# Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, April 30, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 309 ~ 20 of 70

Today	Tonight	Wednesday	Wednesday Night	Thursday
				
50% → 90%	10%		20% → 50%	60%
Chance Showers then Showers	Slight Chance T-storms then Mostly Clear	Increasing Clouds	Slight Chance Showers then Chance Showers	Showers Likely
High: 65 °F	Low: 36 °F	High: 65 °F	Low: 45 °F	High: 56 °F

## Rain Continues Next Few Days...

### Tuesday

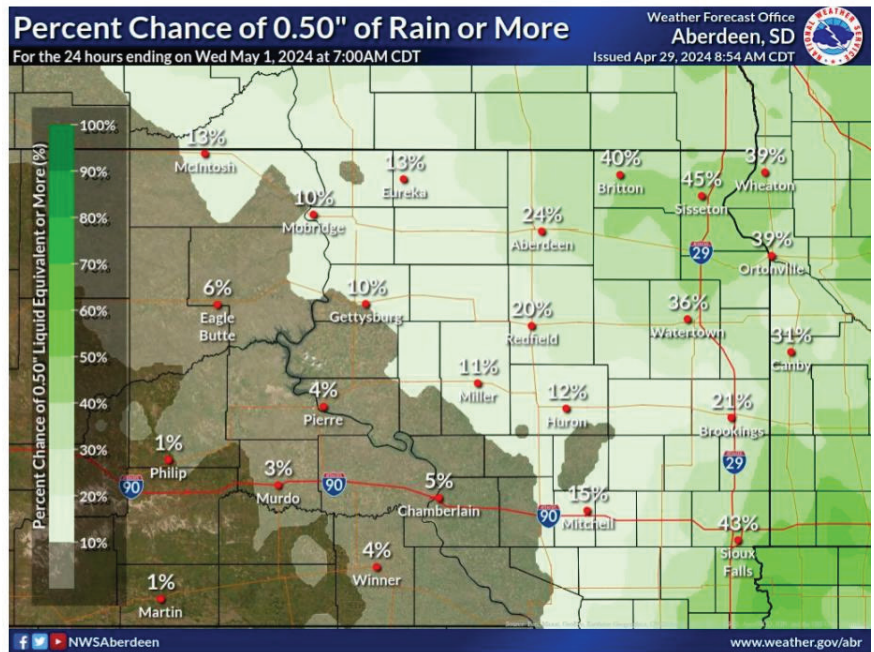
- Highs 59-63°F
- Rain moves west to east through the morning hours exiting far east SD after sunset.

### Wednesday

- Highs 61-66°F
- Rain chances (15 to 40%) increasing into the overnight hours

### Thursday

- Highs 54-57°F
- Chance of rain 35 to 50%, decreasing after sunset



National Weather Service  
Aberdeen, South Dakota

April 29, 2024 3:11 PM

Rain returns Tuesday morning moving west to east across the region before exiting far east SD after sunset. Chances of getting more than a half an inch are 45% or less. Wednesday we get a little bit of a break before rain chances return overnight and into Thursday.

# Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, April 30, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 309 ~ 21 of 70

## Yesterday's Groton Weather

High Temp: 49 °F at 7:54 PM

Low Temp: 38 °F at 4:56 AM

Wind: 15 mph at 2:24 PM

Precip: : 0.04

Day length: 14 hours, 20 minutes

## Today's Info

Record High: 98 in 1992

Record Low: 5 in 1966

Average High: 64

Average Low: 37

Average Precip in April.: 1.91

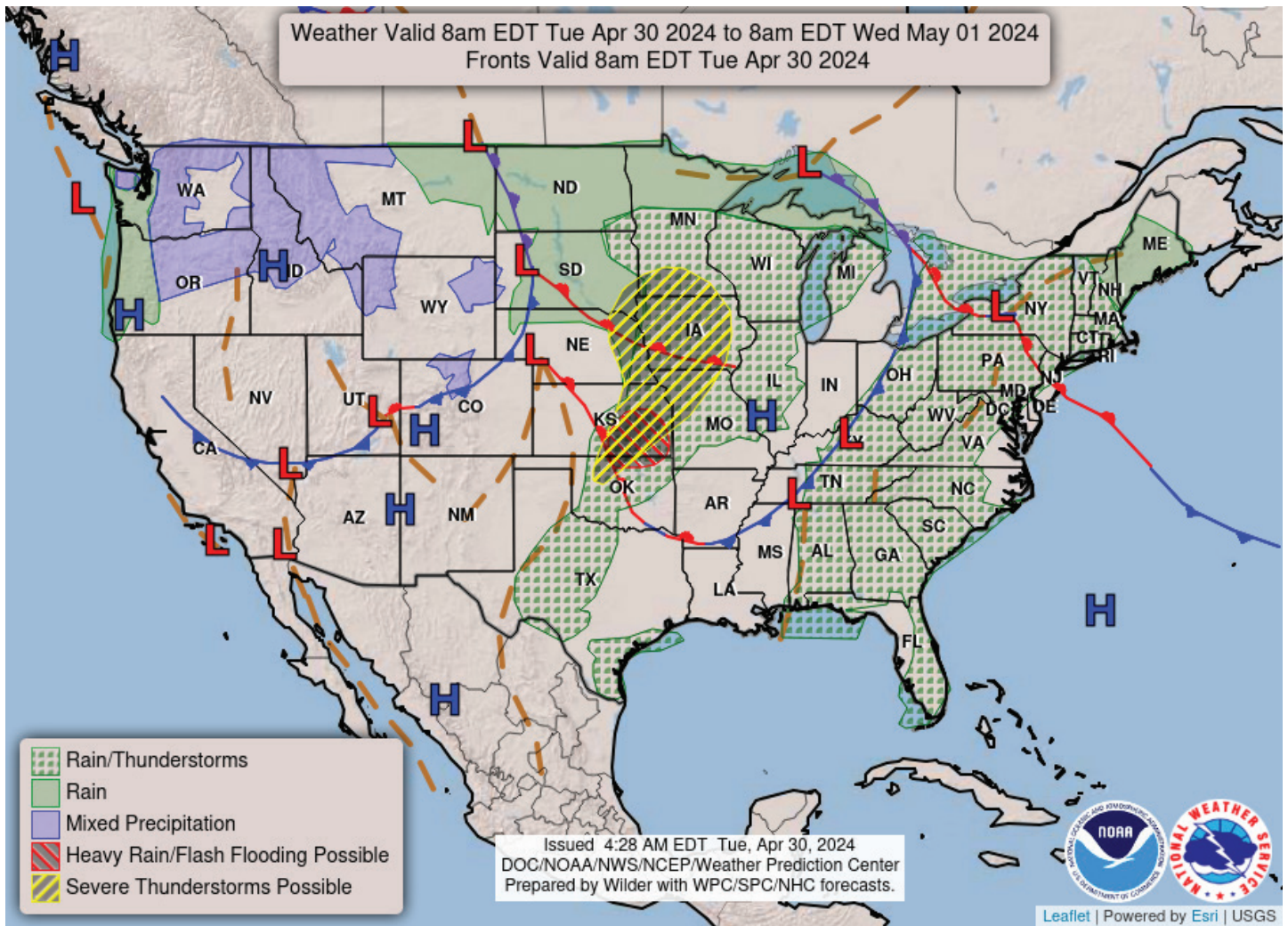
Precip to date in April: 3.29

Average Precip to date: 3.97

Precip Year to Date: 4.24

Sunset Tonight: 8:39:54 pm

Sunrise Tomorrow: 6:17:39 am



# Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, April 30, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 309 ~ 22 of 70

## Today in Weather History

April 30, 1942: A tornado hit three farms near the northeastern edge of Castlewood. One barn was blown apart, and debris was swept into the house, killing one person. Damage from the estimated F2 tornado was \$20,000.

April 30, 2011: An unyielding low-pressure system moving across North Dakota brought high winds to much of central into parts of northeast South Dakota. Northwest winds of 35 to 50 mph with gusts to over 60 mph occurred from the morning to the late evening of the 30th. The high winds did cause some property damage across the region. A semi was tipped over on Highway 50 in Buffalo County; a large sign was brought down in Highmore, with some damage to security lights and twisted traffic signals in Pierre. Some of the highest wind gusts included 59 mph at Eagle Butte, 61 mph at Oacoma, 66 mph in Corson County, and 69 mph at Hayes in Stanley County.

1852 - A tornado, following the same track as the famous "Tri-state Tornado" of 1925, struck the town of New Harmony IND. Just sixteen persons were killed by the twister, due to the sparse settlement. The "Tri-state Tornado" killed 695 persons. (David Ludlum)

1888: 246 people died in the world's deadliest hailstorm in India. Hailstones were reportedly the size of baseballs. 1600 domesticated animals at Moradabad perished.

1924: A significant tornado outbreak occurred from Alabama to Virginia on the 29 through the 30th. 26 tornadoes were of F2 intensity or greater. A total of 111 people were killed, and over 1,100 injured. An estimated F4 tornado tore through Steedman and Horrell Hill, SC. This tornado killed 55 people.

1953: An F4 tornado 300 yards in width leveled homes on the north side of Warner-Robins Georgia, and barracks on the south side of the Warner-Robins Air Force Base. 19 people were killed and were 300 injured. Estimated damage was \$15 million.

1987 - Thunderstorms developing along a cold front produced severe weather in Idaho, Utah, Wyoming and Montana. Thunderstorms produced wind gusts to 100 mph in Lincoln, Mineral and Sanders counties. Twenty-three cities in the central and southeastern U.S. reported record high temperatures for the date. Memphis TN was the hot spot in the nation with a record high of 94 degrees. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1988 - A cold front produced high winds in the southwestern U.S. Winds gusting to 90 mph in southwestern Utah downed power lines, and damaged trees and outbuildings. The high winds also downed power lines in Nevada, completely knocking out power in the town of Henderson. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1989 - Thunderstorms produced severe weather in central and eastern Texas. Hail three inches in diameter was reported at Cool, and thunderstorm winds gusted to 80 mph at Hillsboro. For the first time of record Oklahoma City went through the entire month of April without a single thunderstorm. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data) (The Weather Channel)

1990 - Late afternoon and evening thunderstorms produced severe weather in southern Virginia and the Carolinas, with tennis ball size hail reported southeast of Chesnee SC. Thunderstorms moving over the Chesapeake Bay flooded U.S. Highway 50 on Kent Island MD with several inches of water resulting in a seventeen-mile long traffic jam. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

# Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, April 30, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 309 ~ 23 of 70

Daily Devotionals

## Seeds of Hope

### WHEN SILENCE IS GOLDEN

He was a new Christian. But it didn't matter: he wanted to be a witness for the Lord and let everyone know how grateful he was for his salvation.

On the final night of a revival meeting, he went to his pastor and asked if he could give his testimony. The pastor was pleased and said that he would call him to the platform when it was time for him to speak.

As the service progressed, George became rather nervous and fearful of standing before a group of people he did not know. But he smiled, asked God for strength and peace, and looked forward to the time to share his story.

Finally, his moment came. He walked boldly to the pulpit, placed his hands on each side as he had seen his pastor do on many occasions, and said, "Brethren."

And that was it. His fear overwhelmed him. Not able to remember what he was planning to say, the only thing he could utter was, "Will you please join me in three minutes of silence to honor our beloved Savior."

Our words of worship and witness need not be eloquent, only sincere. A genuine Christian is the best proof of genuine Christianity. Standing to honor our beloved Savior may, at times, be the best thing we can do.

Prayer: Father, there are times when our lives speak so loudly that words are not necessary. May we realize, however, that in word or deed, we witness for You. In Jesus' Name, Amen.

Scripture For Today: May you always be filled with the fruit of your salvation—the righteous character produced in your life by Jesus Christ—for this will bring much glory and praise to God. Philippians 1:7-12



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

# Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, April 30, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 309 ~ 24 of 70

## The Groton Independent Printed & Mailed Weekly Edition

### Subscription Form

All prices listed include 6.5% Sales Tax

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

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

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Mailing Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_

State, Zip Code \_\_\_\_\_

E-mail \_\_\_\_\_

Phone Number \_\_\_\_\_

Mail Completed Form to:

Groton Independent

P.O. Box 34

Groton, SD 57445-0034

or scan and email to [paperpaul@grotonsd.net](mailto:paperpaul@grotonsd.net)

## Groton Daily Independent

[www.397news.com](http://www.397news.com)

### Subscription Form

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

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

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Mailing Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_

State, Zip Code \_\_\_\_\_

Phone Number \_\_\_\_\_

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

E-mail \_\_\_\_\_

Password \_\_\_\_\_

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

[paypal.me/paperpaul](https://paypal.me/paperpaul)





# Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, April 30, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 309 ~ 25 of 70



## 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: 17 Hrs 31 Mins 54 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

### LOTTO AMERICA

WINNING NUMBERS:  
04.29.24

3 14 31 32 50 1

All Star Bonus: 2x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:  
**\$2,100,000**

NEXT DRAW: 1 Days 16 Hrs 46 Mins 54 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

### LUCKY FOR LIFE

WINNING NUMBERS:  
04.29.24

12 14 16 25 46 16

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

NEXT DRAW: 17 Hrs 1 Mins 54 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

### DAKOTA CASH

WINNING NUMBERS:  
04.27.24

6 7 25 28 34

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:  
**\$75,000**

NEXT DRAW: 1 Days 17 Hrs 1 Mins 54 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

### POWERBALL

DOUBLE PLAY

WINNING NUMBERS:  
04.29.24

11 44 50 54 59 13

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

NEXT DRAW: 1 Days 17 Hrs 30 Mins 54 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

### POWERBALL

WINNING NUMBERS:  
04.29.24

11 38 47 67 69 14

Power Play: 2x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:  
**\$178,000,000**

NEXT DRAW: 1 Days 17 Hrs 30 Mins 53 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

## News from the Associated Press

### Politicians and dog experts vilify South Dakota governor after she writes about killing her dog

By HEATHER HOLLINGSWORTH Associated Press

Politicians and dog experts are criticizing South Dakota Gov. Kristi Noem after she wrote in a new book about killing a rambunctious puppy. The story — and the vilification she received on social media — has some wondering whether she's still a viable potential running mate for presumptive Republican presidential candidate Donald Trump.

Experts who work with hunting dogs like Noem's said she should have trained — not killed — the pup, or found other options if the dog was out of control.

Noem has tried to reframe the story from two decades ago as an example of her willingness to make tough decisions. She wrote on social media that the 14-month-old wirehaired pointer named Cricket had shown aggressive behavior by biting.

"As I explained in the book, it wasn't easy," she said on X. "But often the easy way isn't the right way."

Still, Democrats and even some conservatives have been critical.

"This story is not landing. It is not a facet of rural life or ranching to shoot dogs," conservative commentator Tomi Lahrenco posted online.

Several posters described Noem as Cruella de Vil, the villain from the Disney classic "101 Dalmatians." A meme features a series of dogs offering looks of horror.

"I'm not sure which thing she did was stupider: The fact that she murdered the dog, or the fact that she was stupid enough to publish it in a book," said Joan Payton, of the German Wirehaired Pointer Club of America. The club itself described the breed as "high-energy," and said Noem was too impatient and her use of a shock collar for training was botched.

But South Dakota Democratic Senate Minority Leader Reynold Nesiba considered the disclosure more calculated than stupid. He said the story has circulated for years among lawmakers that Noem killed a dog in a "fit of anger" and that there were witnesses. He speculated that it was coming out now because Noem is being vetted as a candidate for vice president.

"She knew that this was a political vulnerability, and she needed to put it out there, before it came up in some other venue," he said. "Why else would she write about it?"

In her soon-to-be-released book, "No Going Back: The Truth on What's Wrong with Politics and How We Move America Forward," of which The Guardian obtained a pre-release copy, Noem writes that she took Cricket on a bird hunting trip with older dogs in hopes of calming down the wild puppy. Instead, Cricket chased the pheasants, attacked a family's chickens during a stop on the way home and then "whipped around to bite me," she wrote.

Noem's spokesperson didn't immediately respond to questions from The Associated Press about whether the dog actually bit her or just tried to do so, or whether Noem had to seek medical treatment. The book's publisher declined to provide AP an advance copy of the book.

Afterward, Noem wrote, she led Cricket to a gravel pit and killed her. She said she also shot a goat that the family owned, saying it was mean and liked to chase her kids.

The response to the story was swift: "Post a picture with your dog that doesn't involve shooting them and throwing them in a gravel pit. I'll start," Democratic Minnesota Gov. Tim Walz posted on X. The post included a photo of him feeding ice cream off a spoon to his Labrador mix named Scout.

President Joe Biden's reelection campaign added a photo of the president strolling on the White House lawn with one of his three German Shepherds. Two of Biden's dogs, Major and Commander, were removed following aggressive behavior, including toward White House and Secret Service personnel. The oldest, Champ, died.

Democrat Hillary Clinton reposted a 2021 comment in which she warned, "Don't vote for anyone you

# Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, April 30, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 309 ~ 27 of 70

wouldn't trust with your dog." She added Monday, "Still true."

Conservative political commentator Michael Knowles said on his titular podcast that while Noem could have handled the situation differently, "there is nothing wrong with a human being humanely killing an animal." He later added: "Fifty years ago, this political story would not have made anyone in most of America bat an eyelash. And the fact that it does today tells you something, not about the changing morality of putting down a farm animal, but about the changing politics of America."

He later said that the story is "extremely stupid and insignificant" because Noem doesn't have a chance of being selected as Trump's running mate.

Payton, who is a delegate to the American Kennel Club and lives in Bakersfield, California, said the situation was a mess from beginning to end.

"That was a puppy that had no experience, obviously no training," she said. "If you know a minuscule amount about a bird dog, you don't take a 14 month old out with trained adult dogs and expect them to perform. That's not how it works."

The club itself said puppies learn best by hunting one-to-one with their owners, not with other dogs.

When problems arose she should have called the breeder, Payton said, or contacted rescue organizations that find new homes for the breed.

Among those groups is the National German Wirehaired Pointer Rescue, which called on Noem in a Facebook post to take accountability for her "horrific decision" and to educate the public that there are more humane solutions.

"Sporting breeds are bred with bird/hunting instincts but it takes training and effort to have a working field dog," the group's Board of Directors wrote in the post.

Payton described Cricket as nothing more than "a baby," saying the breed isn't physically mature until it is 2 years old and not fully trained it's 3- to 5-years old.

"This was a person that I had thought was a pretty good lady up until now," she said. "She was somebody that I would have voted for. But I think she may have shot herself in the foot."

## Conservative states challenge federal rule on treatment of transgender students

By GEOFF MULVIHILL and SARA CLINE Associated Press

Several Republican state attorneys general are challenging a federal regulation that seeks to protect the rights of transgender students in the nation's schools by banning blanket policies that bar transgender students from school bathrooms aligning with their gender, among other provisions.

The officials argue the new policies would hurt women and girls, trample free speech rights and create burdens for the states, which are among those with laws adopted in recent years that conflict with the new regulations.

"This is federal government overreach, but it's of a degree and dimension like no other," Louisiana Attorney General Liz Murrill said in a news conference Monday.

One lawsuit was filed in U.S. District Court in Monroe, Louisiana on Monday, the same day the Education Department regulations on how to enforce Title IX were officially finalized. The top state government lawyers for Idaho, Louisiana, Mississippi and Montana want the court to delay the date they take effect, which is scheduled for Aug. 1.

Alabama, Florida, Georgia and South Carolina, along with four advocacy organizations filed a suit in federal court in Tuscaloosa, Alabama on Monday, and Texas filed a similar suit in federal court in Amarillo.

The attorney general's office in Indiana said that state was joining a lawsuit to be filed in Tennessee on Tuesday. Tennessee's attorney general's office said they are leading a multi-state suit to be filed, but did not confirm details.

Top government officials from South Dakota said in a news release that the state "looks forward to joining efforts to enjoin this Rule."

Filing in multiple federal courts gives the states a better chance that one of them will put the rule on

# Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, April 30, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 309 ~ 28 of 70

hold nationally.

"The Final Rule drives a dagger through the heart of Title IX's mandate," states contend in the Louisiana court filing. "The central feature of the Final Rule is the Department's extraordinary move to transform Title IX's prohibition of discrimination based on 'sex' to include discrimination based on 'gender identity,'" which the lawyers call "a wildly ambiguous term."

The regulation, left unchallenged, could invalidate several state laws adopted in recent years — and it could preempt some under consideration by state lawmakers, including in Louisiana. The regulation applies to all schools that receive federal funding.

The states say the rule prohibits single-sex bathrooms and locker rooms, "compels school officials both to use pronouns associated with a student's claimed 'gender identity' and to force students to do so as well," and that it "cannot help but sound the death knell for female sports."

Even without the regulation, whether transgender girls can be kept out of girls sports is an unsettled legal question. Last week, a federal appeals court ruled in a 2-1 decision that West Virginia cannot bar one teenage transgender athlete from her school's girls track and field and cross country teams. The state government said it was appealing to the U.S. Supreme Court.

The federal rule opposes sweeping policies to allow transgender people from using the school bathrooms that align with their gender. At least 11 states, including Alabama, have such laws in their books already.

The lawsuit says that even though the regulation does not address sports participation specifically, it would apply there, too. In the last few years, at least 25 states have adopted laws keeping transgender girls out of girls sports competitions — all in the name of preserving girls sports.

President Joe Biden's administration previously planned to announce a policy forbidding schools from enacting outright bans on transgender girls in girls sports, but it has backed off that plan and did not include it as part of the regulation.

Still, advocates on both sides of the issue say that the new rule seems to bar at least complete bans of those sports laws.

The regulation is also murky when it comes to laws intended to protect students and/or teachers from discipline if they misgender transgender or binary students by using the wrong pronouns for them; at least four states have such laws. The regulation says that using the wrong pronoun "can constitute discrimination on the basis of sex under Title IX in certain circumstances." But it also spells out that a "stray remark" doesn't constitute harassment.

A handful of states — including Texas on Monday — have told local school districts not to change their policies against sex discrimination in light of the new regulation.

It's no surprise that the conservative states would challenge the regulation.

Attorneys general often sue over federal administrative actions, especially those from presidents of the opposite party. And the battle over the rights of transgender kids has become a huge political issue over the last few years and remains one in this presidential election year.

## Two more people sentenced for carjacking and kidnapping an FBI employee in South Dakota

RAPID CITY, S.D. (AP) — The last two members of a trio who carjacked and kidnapped an FBI employee in South Dakota in 2022 have been sentenced to lengthy prison sentences.

Deyvin Morales, 29, was sentenced Friday to 47 years in prison, the Rapid City Journal reported. At the same hearing, 29-year-old Karla Lopez-Gutierrez, was sentenced to more than 26 years in prison.

The third person involved in the crime, Juan Alvarez-Sorto, 25, was sentenced earlier this month to 37 years.

Alvarez-Sorto and Morales had pleaded not guilty to kidnapping, carjacking and other crimes, but were convicted in January. Alvarez-Sorto also was convicted of unlawfully entering the U.S. after being deported to his home country, El Salvador. Lopez-Gutierrez pleaded guilty in August to aiding and abetting kidnapping and a weapons charge.

At the hearing on Friday, the victim said the assailants “showed me no mercy” before he was able to escape.

“You had everything of mine already,” he said. “Why did you have to kidnap me?”

Prosecutors said the three attackers left Greeley, Colorado, on May 5, 2022, and were on a “drug trafficking trip” to South Dakota in a Ford Expedition. Nearly out of gas at the Pine Ridge Indian Reservation, Morales told the others they needed to “take over” a new vehicle, Lopez-Gutierrez testified in January.

A short time later, the FBI employee speeding in his Dodge Durango saw the Expedition and pulled over, believing it was a tribal officer. Prosecutors said the suspects took the Durango at gunpoint and forced the victim to go along. The victim said Alvarez-Sorto threatened his family and held a gun to the back of his head as he was facedown in the Badlands.

When the group stopped to buy gas and zip ties in the town of Hermosa, South Dakota, the victim decided to try and escape. He said at the hearing that he crawled over Morales and “clawed” his way out of the car. Morales grabbed his jacket and the victim fell, but managed to get to his feet. He “ran like a chicken with my head cut off” to get away, he said.

Morales and Alvarez-Sorto were arrested in Greeley a week later. Lopez-Gutierrez was arrested in August 2022 in Loveland, Colorado.

Morales’ attorney, Jonathan McCoy asked the judge for a sentence of 20-25 years. He said Morales was granted asylum in 2017 because a gang in Guatemala wanted to kill him.

“Deportation sentences him to death in Guatemala,” McCoy said.

Assistant U.S. Attorney Jeremy Jehangiri said Morales squandered “the good will of our country” in committing the crime.

“It’s absolutely shameful,” Jehangiri said. “Asylum was to escape gang activity, and now you’re active in gang activity.”

The attorney for Lopez-Gutierrez, also sought a lenient sentence, citing in part the fact that she is a mother of three and has taken responsibility for her role.

“I am very sorry,” Lopez-Gutierrez said through tears at the hearing. “I apologize to him and his family for the pain I’ve caused.”

## **Protesters take over Columbia University’s Hamilton Hall in escalation of anti-war demonstrations**

By JIM VERTUNO, CEDAR ATTANASIO, JAKE OFFENHARTZ and JONATHAN MATTISE Associated Press  
NEW YORK (AP) — Dozens of protesters took over a building at Columbia University in New York early Tuesday, barricading the entrances and unfurling a Palestinian flag out of a window in the latest escalation of demonstrations against the Israel-Hamas war that have spread to college campuses nationwide.

Video footage showed protesters on Columbia’s Manhattan campus locking arms in front of Hamilton Hall early Tuesday and carrying furniture and metal barricades to the building, one of several that was occupied during a 1968 civil rights and anti-Vietnam War protest on the campus. Posts on an Instagram page for protest organizers shortly after midnight urged people to protect the encampment and join them at Hamilton Hall.

“An autonomous group reclaimed Hind’s Hall, previously known as “Hamilton Hall,” in honor of Hind Rajab, a martyr murdered at the hands of the genocidal Israeli state at the age of six years old,” CU Apartheid Divest posted on X, formerly known as Twitter, early Tuesday.

The student radio station, WKCR-FM, broadcast a play-by-play of the hall’s takeover – which occurred nearly 12 hours after Monday’s 2 p.m. deadline for the protesters to leave an encampment of around 120 tents or face suspension. Representatives for the university did not immediately respond to emails requesting comment early Tuesday but Public Safety said in a statement that members of the university community who can avoid coming to the Morningside campus Tuesday should do so, adding that essential personnel should report to work.

In the X post, protestors said they planned to remain at the hall until the university conceded to the

# Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, April 30, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 309 ~ 30 of 70

CUAD's three demands: divestment, financial transparency and amnesty.

Universities across the U.S. are grappling with how to clear out encampments as commencement ceremonies approach, with some continuing negotiations and others turning to force and ultimatums that have resulted in clashes with police. Dozens of people were arrested Monday during protests at universities in Texas, Utah and Virginia, while Columbia said hours before the takeover of Hamilton Hall that it had started suspending students.

Demonstrators are sparring over the Israel-Hamas war and its mounting death toll, and the number of arrests at campuses nationwide is approaching 1,000 as the final days of class wrap up. The outcry is forcing colleges to reckon with their financial ties to Israel, as well as their support for free speech. Some Jewish students say the protests have veered into antisemitism and made them afraid to set foot on campus.

At the University of Texas at Austin, an attorney said at least 40 demonstrators were arrested Monday. The confrontation was an escalation on the 53,000-student campus in the state's capital, where more than 50 protesters were arrested last week.

Later Monday, dozens of officers in riot gear at the University of Utah sought to break up an encampment outside the university president's office that went up in the afternoon. Police dragged students off by their hands and feet, snapping the poles holding up tents and zip-tying those who refused to disperse. Seventeen people were arrested. The university says it's against code to camp overnight on school property and that the students were given several warnings to disperse before police were called in.

The plight of students who have been arrested has become a central part of protests, with the students and a growing number of faculty demanding amnesty for protesters. At issue is whether the suspensions and legal records will follow students through their adult lives.

The Texas protest and others — including in Canada and Europe — grew out of Columbia's early demonstrations that have continued. On Monday, student activists defied the 2 p.m. deadline to leave the encampment. Instead, hundreds of protesters remained. A handful of counter-demonstrators waved Israeli flags, and one held a sign reading, "Where are the anti-Hamas chants?"

While the university didn't call police to roust the demonstrators, school spokesperson Ben Chang said suspensions had started but could provide few details. Protest organizers said they were not aware of any suspensions as of Monday evening.

Columbia's handling of the demonstrations also has prompted federal complaints.

A class-action lawsuit on behalf of Jewish students alleges a breach of contract by Columbia, claiming the university failed to maintain a safe learning environment, despite policies and promises. It also challenges the move away from in-person classes and seeks quick court action requiring Columbia to provide security for the students.

Meanwhile, a legal group representing pro-Palestinian students is urging the U.S. Department of Education's civil rights office to investigate Columbia's compliance with the Civil Rights Act of 1964 for how they have been treated.

A university spokesperson declined to comment on the complaints.

In a rare case, Northwestern University said it reached an agreement with students and faculty who represent the majority of protesters on its campus near Chicago. It allows peaceful demonstrations through the June 1 end of spring classes and in exchange, requires removal of all tents except one for aid, and restricts the demonstration area to allow only students, faculty and staff unless the university approves otherwise.

At the University of Southern California, organizers of a large encampment sat down with university President Carol Folt for about 90 minutes on Monday. Folt declined to discuss details but said she heard the concerns of protesters and talks would continue Tuesday.

USC sparked a controversy April 15 when officials refused to allow the valedictorian, who has publicly supported Palestinians, to make a commencement speech, citing nonspecific security concerns for their rare decision. Administrators then scrapped the keynote speech by filmmaker Jon M. Chu, who is an alumnus, and declined to award any honorary degrees.

# Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, April 30, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 309 ~ 31 of 70

The backlash, as well as Columbia's demonstrations, inspired the encampment and protests on campus last week where 90 people were arrested by police in riot gear. The university has canceled its main graduation event.

Administrators elsewhere tried to salvage their commencements and several have ordered the clearing of encampments in recent days. When those efforts have failed, officials threatened discipline, including suspension, and possible arrest.

But students dug in their heels at other high-profile universities, with standoffs continuing at Harvard, the University of Pennsylvania, Yale and others. Police in riot gear at Virginia Commonwealth University sought to break up an encampment there late Monday and clashed with protesters.

## U.S. and Mexico drop bid to host 2027 World Cup, Brazil and joint German-Dutch-Belgian bids remain

By RONALD BLUM AP Sports Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — The U.S. Soccer Federation and its Mexican counterpart dropped their joint bid to host the 2027 Women's World Cup on Monday and said they will focus on trying to host the 2031 tournament.

The decision left a proposal from Brazil and a joint Germany-Netherlands-Belgium plan competing to be picked for 2027 by the FIFA congress that meets May 17 in Bangkok.

The USSF said the 2031 bid will call for FIFA to invest equally in the men's and women's World Cups.

FIFA said last year it planned to spend \$896 million in combined prize money to teams and payments to clubs for releasing players for the 2026 men's World Cup in the U.S., Mexico and Canada. FIFA devoted \$110 million in prize money for last year's Women's World Cup in Australia and New Zealand from a \$152 million fund that included payments to clubs.

"Hosting a World Cup tournament is a huge undertaking — and having additional time to prepare allows us to maximize its impact across the globe," USSF President Cindy Parlow Cone said in a statement. "I'm proud of our commitment to provide equitable experiences for the players, fans and all our stakeholders. Shifting our bid will enable us to host a record-breaking Women's World Cup in 2031 that will help to grow and raise the level of the women's game both here at home as well as across the globe."

In detailing the bid in December, the USSF proposed U.S. sites from among the same 11 to be used in the 2026 men's World Cup. Mexico listed Guadalajara, Mexico City and Monterrey — its three sites for the men's World Cup — and for 2027 listed as possibilities Leon and Querétaro.

"We feel that moving our bid back to 2031 will allow us to promote and build up to the most successful Women's World Cup ever," MFF President Ivar Sisnieg said in a statement. "The strength and universality of our professional women's leagues, coupled with our experience from organizing the 2026 World Cup, means that we will be able to provide the best infrastructure as well as an enthusiastic fan base that will make all the participating teams feel at home and to put together a World Cup that will contribute to the continued growth of women's football."

## The Latest | Hamas officials leave Cairo after talks on a cease-fire proposal

By The Associated Press undefined

Officials from Hamas have left Cairo after talks with Egyptian officials on a new proposal for a cease-fire in Gaza, Egypt's state-owned Al-Qahera News satellite channel said Tuesday.

The channel, which has close ties with Egyptian security agencies, said a Hamas delegation will return to Cairo with a written response to the cease-fire proposal, without saying when.

U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken is expected to visit Israel on his latest trip to the region, which began Monday in Saudi Arabia. He said Israel needs to do more to allow aid to enter Gaza, but that the best way to alleviate the humanitarian crisis is for the two sides to agree to a cease-fire.

The Israel-Hamas war was sparked by the unprecedented Oct. 7 raid into southern Israel in which militants killed around 1,200 people, mostly civilians, and abducted around 250 hostages. Israel says the

# Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, April 30, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 309 ~ 32 of 70

militants are still holding around 100 hostages and the remains of more than 30 others.

The war in Gaza has killed more than 34,000 Palestinians, according to local health officials. The war has driven around 80% of Gaza's population of 2.3 million from their homes, caused vast destruction in several towns and cities, and pushed northern Gaza to the brink of famine.

Currently:

- Ahead of visit to Israel, Blinken presses Hamas to accept the new cease-fire proposal.
- U.S. military ships are helping build a pier for Gaza aid. It's going to cost at least \$320 million.
- The top United Nations court is set to rule on Nicaragua's request for Germany to halt aid to Israel.
- Student protests over the war in Gaza roil U.S. campuses ahead of graduations.
- A missile attack by Yemen's Houthi rebels damages a ship in the Red Sea.

Follow AP's coverage of the war at <https://apnews.com/hub/israel-hamas-war>

Here's the latest:

## GAZA HEALTH MINISTRY REPORTS 47 KILLED IN THE LAST 24 HOURS

CAIRO — The Gaza Health Ministry said Tuesday the bodies of 47 people killed by Israeli strikes have been brought to hospitals over the past 24 hours. Hospitals also received 61 wounded, it said in its daily report.

That brings the overall Palestinian death toll from the Israel-Hamas war to at least 34,536, the ministry said. Another 77,704 have been wounded, it said.

The Health Ministry does not distinguish between fighters and civilians in its tallies, but says that women and children make up around two thirds of those killed.

The Israeli military says it has killed roughly 13,000 militants during the war, without providing evidence to back up the claim.

## HAMAS DELEGATION LEAVES CAIRO AFTER CEASE-FIRE TALKS

CAIRO — Officials from Hamas have left Cairo after talks with Egyptian officials on a new cease-fire proposal in Gaza, Egypt's state-owned Al-Qahera News satellite channel said Tuesday.

The channel, which has close ties with Egyptian security agencies, said a Hamas delegation will return to Cairo with a written response to the cease-fire proposal, without saying when.

The delegation, chaired by senior Hamas official Khalil al-Hayya, held talks with Egyptian officials Monday that focused on an Egyptian-crafted proposal to establish a cease-fire in the Gaza Strip.

Along with Qatar and the United States, Egypt is mediating between Israel and Hamas to secure a truce after nearly seven months of war. In recent weeks, Egypt has stepped up mediation efforts in hopes of averting an assault on Rafah, Gaza's southernmost city on the border with Egypt where more than half of Gaza's population is sheltering.

The terms of the draft deal were not made public. But Israeli media said Israel softened its position, now seeking the release of 33 hostages — down from 40 — in return for the release of some 900 Palestinian prisoners. Hamas is believed to hold around 100 Israelis in Gaza and the remains of at least 30 more.

## Talks advance on a treaty to end plastic pollution

By JENNIFER McDERMOTT Associated Press

OTTAWA, Ontario (AP) — Nations made progress on a treaty to end plastic pollution as their fourth round of talks finished early Tuesday in Canada.

For the first time in the process, negotiators discussed the text of what is supposed to become a global treaty. Delegates and observers at the Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee on Plastic Pollution called it a welcome sign that talk shifted from ideas to treaty language at this fourth of five scheduled meetings.

Most contentious is the idea of limiting how much plastic is manufactured. That remains in the text over the strong objections of plastic-producing countries and companies and oil and gas exporters. Most plastic is made from fossil fuels and chemicals.

As the Ottawa session ended, the committee agreed to keep working on the treaty before its final meeting later this year in South Korea.

The preparations for that session will focus on how to finance the implementation of the treaty, assess



# Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, April 30, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 309 ~ 33 of 70

the chemicals of concern in plastic products and look at product design. Rwanda's representative said they ignored the elephant in the room by not addressing plastic production.

"In the end, this is not just about the text, it's not just about the process," said Jyoti Mathur-Filipp, executive secretary of the committee. "It is quite simply about providing a better future for generations and for our loved ones. This is multilateralism at its best, and we can and will succeed."

Stewart Harris, an industry spokesperson with the International Council of Chemical Associations, said the members want a treaty that focuses on recycling plastic and reuse, sometimes referred to as "circularity."

They don't want a cap on plastic production, and think chemicals should not be regulated through this agreement. Harris said the association is pleased to see governments coming together and agreeing to complete additional work, especially on financing and plastic product design.

Dozens of scientists from the Scientists' Coalition for an Effective Plastics Treaty came to the meeting to provide scientific evidence on plastic pollution to negotiators, in part, they said, to dispel misinformation.

"I heard yesterday that there's no data on microplastics, which is verifiably false: 21,000 publications on micro and nanoplastics have been published," said Bethanie Carney Almroth, an ecotoxicology professor at Sweden's University of Gothenburg who co-leads the coalition. "It's like Whac-A-Mole."

She said scientists were being harassed and intimidated by lobbyists and she reported to the U.N. that a lobbyist yelled in her face at a meeting.

Despite their differences, the countries represented share a common vision to move forward in the treaty process, Ecuador's chief negotiator, Walter Schuldt, said.

"Because at the end of the day, we're talking about the survival of the future of life, not only of human life but all sorts of life on this planet," he said in an interview.

He said he was proud to participate, to contribute his "grain of sand" to global action to address an environmental crisis.

The treaty talks began in Uruguay in December 2022 after Rwanda and Peru proposed the resolution that launched the process in March 2022. Progress was slow during Paris talks in May 2023 and in Nairobi in November as countries debated rules for the process.

When thousands of negotiators and observers arrived in Ottawa, Luis Vayas Valdivieso, the committee chair from Ecuador, reminded them of their purpose to deliver a future free of plastic pollution. He asked them to be ambitious.

The delegates have been discussing not only the scope of the treaty, but chemicals of concern, problematic and avoidable plastics, product design, and financing and implementation.

Delegates also streamlined the unwieldy collection of options that emerged from the last meeting.

"We took a major step forward after two years of lots of discussion. Now we have text to negotiate," said Björn Beeler, international coordinator for the International Pollutants Elimination Network. "Unfortunately, much more political will is needed to address the out of control escalating plastic production."

Many traveled to Ottawa from communities affected by plastic manufacturing and pollution. Louisiana and Texas residents who live near petrochemical plants and refineries handed out postcards aimed at the U.S. State Department saying, "Wish you were here."

They traveled together as a group from the Break Free From Plastic movement, and asked negotiators to visit their states to experience the air and water pollution firsthand.

"This is still the best option we have to see change in our communities. They're so captured by corporations. I can't go to the parish government," said Jo Banner, of the St. John the Baptist Parish in Louisiana. "It feels this is the only chance and hope I have of helping my community repair from this, to heal."

Members of an Indigenous Peoples' Caucus held a news conference Saturday to say microplastics are contaminating their food supply and the pollution threatens their communities and ways of life guaranteed to them in perpetuity. They felt their voices weren't being heard.

"We have bigger stakes. These are our ancestral lands that are being polluted with plastic," Juressa Lee of New Zealand said after the event. "We're rightsholders, not stakeholders. We should have more space to speak and make decisions than the people causing the problem."

In the Bay of Plenty, a source of seafood on New Zealand's northern coast, the sediment and shellfish

are full of tiny plastic particles. They regard nature's "resources" as treasures, Lee added.

"Indigenous ways can lead the way," Lee said. "What we're doing now clearly is not working."

Vi Waghiyi traveled from Alaska to represent Arctic Indigenous peoples. She's reminding decision-makers that this treaty must protect people from plastic pollution for generations to come.

She said, "We come here to be the conscience, to ensure they make the right decision for all people."

## These cities raised taxes — for child care.

### Parents say the free day care 'changed my life'

By ARIEL GILREATH of The Hechinger Report undefined

NEW ORLEANS (AP) — Last summer, Derrika Richard felt stuck. She didn't have enough money to afford child care for her three youngest children, ages 1, 2 and 3. Yet the demands of caring for them on a daily basis made it impossible for Richard, a hairstylist, to work. One child care assistance program rejected her because she wasn't working enough. It felt like an unsolvable quandary: Without care, she couldn't work. And without work, she couldn't afford care.

But Richard's life changed in the fall, when, thanks to a new city-funded program for low-income families called City Seats, she enrolled the three children at Clara's Little Lambs, a child care center in the West-bank neighborhood of New Orleans. For the first time, she's earning enough to pay her bills and afford online classes.

"It actually paved the way for me to go to school," Richard said one morning this spring, after walking the three children to their classrooms. City Seats, she said, "changed my life."

---

This series on how the child care crisis affects working parents — with a focus on solutions — is produced by the Education Reporting Collaborative, a coalition of eight newsrooms, including The Hechinger Report, AL.com, The Associated Press, The Christian Science Monitor, The Dallas Morning News, Idaho Education News, The Post & Courier, and The Seattle Times.

---

Last year, New Orleans added more than 1,000 child care seats for low-income families after voters approved a historic property tax increase in 2022. The referendum raised the budget of the program seven-fold — from \$3 million to \$21 million a year for 20 years. Because Louisiana's early childhood fund matches money raised locally for child care, the city gets an additional \$21 million to help families find care.

New Orleans is part of a growing trend of communities passing ballot measures to expand access to child care. In Whatcom County, Washington, a property tax increase added \$10 million for child care and children's mental health to the county's annual budget. A marijuana sales tax approved last year by voters in Anchorage, Alaska, will generate more than \$5 million for early childhood programs.

The state of Texas has taken a somewhat different tack. In November, voters approved a state constitutional amendment that allows tax relief for qualifying child care providers. Under this provision, cities and counties can choose to exempt a child care center from paying all or some of its property taxes. Dallas was among the first city-and-county combo in Texas to provide the tax break.

The recent local initiatives are focused on younger children — infants and toddlers — more than ever before, said Diane Girouard, a senior state policy analyst with Child Care Aware, a nonprofit research and advocacy group.

"In the past, we saw more of these local or state-driven initiatives focusing on pre-K, but over the last three years, we've seen voters approve ballot measures to invest in child care and early learning," she said.

One reason: People saw the economic impact of a lack of child care during the pandemic, said Olivia Allen, a co-founder of the nonprofit Children's Funding Project.

"The value of child care and other parts of the care economy became abundantly clear to a lot of business leaders in a painful way," Allen said.

For some Americans, the child care crisis has continued, keeping them from being able to hold down

# Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, April 30, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 309 ~ 35 of 70

jobs and advance in their careers. The number of parents who reported missing work because of child care surged in 2020 at the start of the COVID-19 outbreak; it has yet to recede to pre-pandemic levels. In Louisiana, 27% of households with kids under age 5 reported a child care disruption in February or March, according to Census Household Pulse Survey data analyzed by the Associated Press in partnership with the Education Reporting Collaborative.

In New Orleans, a city with many in the service industry and other low-wage jobs, the City Seats funding has been transformative for parents struggling to hold down demanding, mostly non-unionized jobs. The program has also been a boon for the child care centers themselves.

Richard had struggled off and on to find affordable child care since dropping out of college when she gave birth to her oldest son, now 12. That's even though she immediately put her name down for a spot at child care centers when she discovered she was pregnant. "Literally, when you see the 'positive' line, you fill out an application," she said of taking a pregnancy test.

Now that she can think about building a career again, Richard has set her sights on finishing her college degree. Her dream is to have a career in forensics.

Another parent, Mike Gavion, who has two children enrolled at Early Partners in the Garden District, said City Seats allowed his wife to finish school and get a nursing job. Before the program was available, Gavion's wife had to care for the children, now 2 and 4, and could only make slow progress through the coursework she needed to qualify for a job.

"It really gave us an opportunity," Gavion said. "If we had to pay for two kids, I don't think she would have been able to do nursing school."

Families in New Orleans qualify for City Seats if they have children from newborn to age 3 and earn within 200% of the federal poverty level. But many don't immediately get a spot: As of April, City Seats had 821 students on its waitlist, according to Agenda for Children, the nonprofit that administers the program.

About 70% of the City Seats budget pays for children to attend centers ranked as high quality on the state's rating system. The rest of the budget goes to improving quality: Child care providers have access to a team that includes a speech pathologist, a pediatrician and social workers.

Participating providers are required to pay their staff at least \$15 an hour — on average, Louisiana child care workers made \$9.77 an hour in 2020 — and abide by strict teacher-to-child ratios and class sizes. They also receive professional development from early learning experts.

Funding from City Seats has allowed Wilcox Academy's three centers in the city's North Broad, Central City and Uptown neighborhoods to raise average staff pay to \$18 an hour. The Academy's goal is to raise it even higher — to \$25 an hour.

"Teachers deserve it," said Rochelle Wilcox, the Academy's founder and director. "They deserve to go on vacation, they deserve to buy a home, they deserve to buy a car. ... This is not a luxury." \_\_\_\_

Valeria Olivares of The Dallas Morning News and Sharon Lurye of The Associated Press contributed reporting. \_\_\_\_

The Associated Press' education coverage receives financial support from multiple private foundations. AP is solely responsible for all content. Find AP's standards for working with philanthropies, a list of supporters and funded coverage areas at AP.org.

## The Taliban are working to woo tourists to Afghanistan

By RIAZAT BUTT Associated Press

KABUL, Afghanistan (AP) —

Around 30 men are crammed into a Kabul classroom, part of the debut student cohort at a Taliban-run institute training tourism and hospitality professionals.

It's a motley crew. One student is a model. Another is 17 and has no job history.

The students vary in age, education level and professional experience. They're all men — Afghan women are banned from studying beyond sixth grade — and they don't know anything about tourism or hospitality. But they are all eager to promote a different side of Afghanistan. And the Taliban are happy to help.

# Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, April 30, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 309 ~ 36 of 70

Afghanistan's rulers are pariahs on the global stage, largely because of their restrictions on women and girls. The economy is struggling, infrastructure is poor, and poverty is rife.

And yet, foreigners are visiting the country, encouraged by the sharp drop in violence, increased flight connections with hubs like Dubai, and the bragging rights that come with vacationing in an unusual destination. The numbers aren't huge — they never were — but there's a buzz around Afghan tourism.

In 2021, there were 691 foreign tourists. In 2022, that figure rose to 2,300. Last year, there were 7,000.

Mohammad Saeed, the head of the Tourism Directorate in Kabul, said the biggest foreign visitor market is China because of its proximity and large population. Afghanistan also has advantages over some of its neighbors.

"They've told me they don't want to go to Pakistan because it's dangerous and they get attacked. The Japanese have said this to me also," Saeed said. "This is good for us."

But there are disadvantages, too.

Visas are difficult and expensive to access. Many countries severed ties with Afghanistan after the Taliban returned to power, and no country recognizes them as the legitimate rulers of the country.

Afghan embassies either closed or suspended their operations. There's an ongoing power struggle between Afghanistan's embassies and consulates staffed by people from the former Western-backed administration, and those under the Taliban administration's full control.

Saeed concedes there are obstacles for Afghan tourism to develop but said he was working with ministries to overcome them.

His ultimate aim is to have a visa on arrival for tourists, but that could be years away. There are problems with the road network, which is half-paved or non-existent in some parts of the country, and airlines largely avoid Afghan airspace.

The capital Kabul has the most international flights, but no Afghan airport has direct routes with major tourist markets like China, Europe, or India.

Despite the challenges, Saeed wants Afghanistan to become a tourism powerhouse, an ambition that appears to be backed by the Taliban's top leaders.

"I have been sent to this department on the instructions of the elders (ministers). They must trust me because they've sent me to this important place."

The students also have aspirations. The model, Ahmed Massoud Talash, wants to learn about Afghanistan's picturesque spots for Instagram posts and its history for media appearances.

Business school graduate Samir Ahmadzai wants to open a hotel but thinks he should know more about tourism and hospitality first.

"They hear that Afghanistan is backwards, poverty and all about war," said Ahmadzai. "We have 5,000 years of history. There should be a new page of Afghanistan."

Classes include Afghan handicrafts and anthropology basics.

An unofficial subject is how to interact with foreign women and how their behavior or habits could clash with local customs and edicts. Examples might be women smoking or eating in public, to mixing freely with men who are not related to them by blood or marriage.

The Taliban have imposed a dress code for women and requirements for them to have a male guardian, or mahram, when they travel. Dining alone, traveling alone, and socializing with other women in public have become harder. With gyms closed to women and beauty salons banned, there are fewer places where they can meet outside the home.

In a sign that the country is preparing for more overseas visitors, the country's only five-star hotel, the Serena, has reopened its women's spa and salon for foreign females after a monthslong closure.

Foreigners must show their passport to access services. Women with "born in Afghanistan" on their ID are barred.

The restrictions on Afghan women and girls weigh on overseas travel companies, who say they try to focus on the positive aspect of cultural interactions by making donations, supporting local projects or only visiting family-run businesses.

Shane Horan, the founder of Rocky Road Travel, said visiting Afghanistan should not be seen as an endorsement of any particular government or political regime.

"Ultimately, the goal should be to support responsible tourism practices that contribute positively to the local economy and foster mutual respect and understanding, while also remaining cognizant of the broader political context in Afghanistan."

He said there was no input from authorities about what tour groups saw or did, and that the company worked closely with a women's rights organization in Afghanistan. A percentage of the tour cost went into supporting this organization's programs, Horan added.

There are no women at the Institute of Tourism & Hotel Management. The students don't mention it. But an official at the Tourism Directorate does.

"It's a heartbreaking situation," said the official, who wished to remain anonymous for fear of reprisals. "Even female family members ask if they can study here. But there was a change in policy with the change in government. The women who were studying before (the takeover) never came back. They never graduated."

## **Ahead of visit to Israel, US's Blinken presses Hamas to accept new proposal for Gaza cease-fire**

By SAMY MAGDY and LEE KEATH Associated Press

CAIRO (AP) — The United States stepped up pressure Monday for a cease-fire deal in Gaza as the secretary of state said a new proposal had been put to Hamas, whose officials were in Cairo talking to Egyptian mediators. Israeli airstrikes killed 26 people in Gaza's southernmost town of Rafah, according to hospital records.

U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken, ahead of a visit to Israel this week, urged Hamas to accept the latest proposal, calling it "extraordinarily generous" on Israel's part.

The terms were not made public. But according to an Egyptian official and Israeli media, Israel has softened its position, lowering the number of hostages it demands that Hamas free during the initial six-week phase of the cease-fire in return for the release of hundreds of Palestinians from Israeli prisons.

One question is whether that will be enough to overcome Hamas concerns over the cease-fire's second phase.

Hamas has demanded assurances that an eventual release of all hostages will bring a complete end to Israel's nearly seven-month assault in Gaza and a withdrawal of its troops from the devastated territory. Israel has offered only an extended pause, vowing to resume its offensive once it is over. The issue has repeatedly obstructed efforts by U.S., Egyptian and Qatari mediators during months of talks.

Some Israeli commentators depicted Israel as at a crossroads: Go for a deal with a potential end to the war, bringing benefits that could include normalization of ties with Saudi Arabia, or push ahead with plans including an attack on Rafah in the hope of crushing Hamas and risk international isolation.

Israel's closest ally, the United States, and others have repeatedly warned against an offensive on Rafah, saying it would bring a surge in casualties and worsen a humanitarian catastrophe. More than 1 million Palestinians have sought shelter in Rafah after fleeing fighting elsewhere.

Israel's offensive in Gaza has killed more than 34,000 people.

Overnight and Monday morning, Israeli strikes flattened at least three homes where extended families of Palestinians were gathered. The dead included nine women and six children, one them just five days old, according to hospital records and an Associated Press reporter.

"Everyone was sleeping in their beds," said Mahmoud Abu Taha, whose cousin was killed with his wife and their year-old baby in a house where at least 10 died. "They have nothing to do with anything."

Egypt has stepped up mediation efforts for a cease-fire deal in hopes of averting an assault on Rafah, on Gaza's border with Egypt.

An Egyptian official said Israel has lowered the number of hostages it wants freed in the first stage, down from earlier demands for 40. He did not specify the new number. Israeli media said it now seeks

the release of 33 hostages in return for the release of some 900 Palestinian prisoners. Hamas is believed to hold around 100 Israelis in Gaza.

Israel has also shown flexibility on allowing residents to return to northern Gaza, the Egyptian official said, speaking on condition of anonymity to discuss the internal talks.

There was no immediate comment from Hamas or Israeli officials.

Netanyahu has repeatedly rejected stopping the war in return for hostage releases and says an offensive on Rafah is crucial to destroying the militants after their Oct. 7 attacks on Israel that triggered the fighting. His government could be threatened if he agrees to a deal, since hardline Cabinet members demand an attack on Rafah.

At the same time, Netanyahu faces pressure to reach a deal from families of hostages.

On Monday, the families of two hostages — Keith Siegel and Omri Miran — urged both sides to reach an agreement, days after Hamas released a video showing the men.

"I appeal to Sinwar, please approve this deal. And to the members of the (Israeli) Cabinet, please approve any deal," said Omri's father, Dany Miran, referring to Yehiya Sinwar, the top Hamas official in Gaza. He spoke at a news conference in a Tel Aviv square where supporters of hostage families regularly hold rallies.

Israeli officials, meanwhile, appeared increasingly concerned that the International Criminal Court may issue arrest warrants against the country's leaders.

It was not clear what sparked the concerns. The ICC launched a probe three years ago into possible war crimes committed by Israel and Palestinian militants going back to the 2014 Israel-Hamas war. The probe is also looking at Israel's construction of settlements in occupied territory the Palestinians want for a future state.

There was no comment from the court on Monday, and it has given no indication warrants in the case are imminent.

But Israel's Foreign Ministry said late Sunday that it had informed Israeli missions of "rumors" that warrants might be issued against senior political and military officials. Netanyahu said Friday that Israel "will never accept any attempt by the ICC to undermine its inherent right of self-defense."

Neither Israel nor the United States accept the ICC's jurisdiction, but any warrants could put Israeli officials at risk of arrest in other countries. They would also serve as a major rebuke of Israel's actions at a time when pro-Palestinian protests have spread across U.S. college campuses.

The International Court of Justice, a separate body, is investigating whether Israel has committed acts of genocide in the ongoing war in Gaza, with any ruling expected to take years. Israel has rejected allegations of wrongdoing and accused both international courts of bias.

In the Hamas-led attack on Oct. 7, militants stormed through army bases and farming communities across southern Israel, killing some 1,200 people, mostly civilians, and taking around 250 hostages. Israel's air, sea and ground offensive in Gaza has killed at least 34,488 Palestinians, mostly women and children, according to Gaza's Health Ministry, which does not distinguish between civilians and combatants in its tally.

Israel blames the high civilian death toll on Hamas because the militants fight from dense, residential areas. The military says it has killed over 12,000 militants, without providing evidence.

The war has driven around 80% of Gaza's population of 2.3 million from their homes and pushed northern Gaza to the brink of famine.

## **The top UN court is set to rule on Nicaragua's request for Germany to halt aid to Israel**

By MIKE CORDER Associated Press

THE HAGUE, Netherlands (AP) — The United Nations' top court is ruling Tuesday on a request by Nicaragua for judges to order Germany to halt military aid to Israel, arguing that Berlin's support enables acts of genocide and breaches of international humanitarian law in Gaza.

Nicaragua's case is the latest legal bid by a country with historic ties to the Palestinian people to stop

# Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, April 30, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 309 ~ 39 of 70

Israel's offensive. Late last year, South Africa accused Israel of genocide at the court. The cases come as Israel's allies face growing calls to stop supplying it with weapons, and as some including Germany have grown more critical of the war.

On Monday, U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken said that Israel must still do more to increase the flow of humanitarian aid into the besieged Gaza Strip.

At hearings early this month, Nicaragua's Ambassador to the Netherlands Carlos José Argüello Gómez told the 16-judge panel that "Germany is failing to honor its own obligation to prevent genocide or to ensure respect of international humanitarian law."

Nicaragua also wants Germany to reinstate direct funding to the U.N. aid agency in Gaza.

The head of Germany's legal team, Tania von Uslar-Gleichen, said Nicaragua's claims "have no basis in fact or law."

Israel strongly denies that its assault on Gaza amounts to genocidal acts, saying it is acting in self defense after Hamas-led militants stormed into southern Israel on Oct. 7, killing some 1,200 people. Israeli legal adviser Tal Becker told judges at the court earlier this year in the case brought by South Africa that Israel is fighting a "war it did not start and did not want."

Since Israel launched its offensive, more than 34,000 Palestinians have been killed in Gaza, according to the territory's Health Ministry. Its toll doesn't differentiate between civilians and combatants, but it has said women and children make up the majority of the dead.

Israel blames the high civilian death toll on Hamas because the militants fight in dense, residential areas. The military says it has killed over 12,000 militants, without providing evidence.

Germany has for decades been a staunch supporter of Israel. Berlin, however, has gradually shifted its tone as civilian casualties in Gaza have soared, becoming increasingly critical of the humanitarian situation in Gaza and speaking out against a ground offensive in Rafah.

In the case brought by South Africa, the ICJ ordered Israel in January to do all it can to prevent death, destruction and acts of genocide in Gaza. In March, the court issued fresh provisional measures ordering Israel to take measures to improve the humanitarian situation in Gaza, where experts say a famine is imminent.

Meanwhile, a separate investigation by another international court — the International Criminal Court — is also worrying Israeli officials.

The ICC probe was launched in 2021 into possible war crimes committed by Israel and Palestinian militants going back to the 2014 Israel-Hamas war. The probe is also looking at Israel's construction of settlements in occupied territory the Palestinians want for a future state. Israeli officials in recent days have expressed concern about possible arrest warrants upcoming in that case.

## **A massive Powerball win draws attention to a little-known immigrant culture in the US**

By CLAIRE RUSH and GENE JOHNSON Associated Press

SALEM, Ore. (AP) — Cheng "Charlie" Saephan wore a broad smile and a bright blue sash emblazoned with the words "Iu-Mien USA" as he hoisted an oversized check for \$1.3 billion above his head.

The 46-year-old immigrant's luck in winning an enormous Powerball jackpot in Oregon earlier this month — a lump sum payment of \$422 million after taxes, which he and his wife will split with a friend — has changed his life. It also raised awareness about Iu Mien people, a southeast Asian ethnic group with origins in China, many of whose members fled from Laos to Thailand and then settled in the U.S. following the Vietnam War.

"I am born in Laos, but I am not Laotian," Saephan told a news conference Monday at Oregon Lottery headquarters, where his identity as one of the jackpot's winners was revealed. "I am Iu Mien."

During the Vietnam War, the CIA and U.S. military recruited Iu Mien in neighboring Laos, many of them subsistence farmers, to engage in guerrilla warfare and to provide intelligence and surveillance to disrupt

# Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, April 30, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 309 ~ 40 of 70

the Ho Chi Minh Trail that the North Vietnamese used to send troops and weapons through Laos and Cambodia into South Vietnam.

After the conflict as well as the Laotian civil war, when the U.S.-backed government of Laos fell in 1975, they fled by the thousands to avoid reprisals from the new Communist government, escaping by foot through the jungle and then across the Mekong River into Thailand, according to a history posted on the website of Iu Mien Community Services in Sacramento, California. More than 70% of the Iu Mien population in Laos left and many wound up in refugee camps in Thailand.

Thousands of the refugees were allowed to come to the U.S., with the first waves arriving in the late 1970s and most settling along the West Coast. The culture had rich traditions of storytelling, basketry, embroidery and jewelry-making, but many initially had difficulty adjusting to Western life due to cultural and language differences as well as a lack of formal education.

There are now tens of thousands of Iu Mien — pronounced “yoo MEE’-en” — in the U.S., with many attending universities or starting businesses. Many have converted to Christianity from traditional animist religions. There is a sizeable Iu Mien community in Portland and its suburbs, with a Buddhist temple and Baptist church, active social organization, and businesses and restaurants.

Cayle Tern, president of the Iu Mien Association of Oregon, arrived in Portland with his family in 1980, when he was 3 years old. He is now running for City Council. Saephan’s Powerball win is significant for other Iu Mien, he said.

“It means so much because all of us came with so little,” Tern said. “I take pride in seeing our members of the community advance and flourish, and I just feel so good for him.”

Saephan, 46, said he was born in Laos and moved to Thailand in 1987, before immigrating to the U.S. in 1994. He graduated from high school in 1996 and has lived in Portland for 30 years. He worked as a machinist for an aerospace company.

He said Monday that he has had cancer for eight years and had his latest chemotherapy treatment last week.

“I will be able to provide for my family and my health,” he said, adding that he’d “find a good doctor for myself.”

Saephan, who has two young children, said that as a cancer patient, he wondered, “How am I going to have time to spend all of this money? How long will I live?”

He said he and his 37-year-old wife, Duanpen, are taking half the money, and the rest is going to a friend, Laiza Chao, 55, of the Portland suburb of Milwaukie. Chao had chipped in \$100 to buy a batch of tickets with them.

Chao, was on her way to work when Saephan called her with the news: “You don’t have to go anymore,” he said.

In the weeks leading up to the drawing, he wrote out numbers for the game on a piece of paper and slept with it under his pillow, he said. He prayed that he would win, saying, “I need some help — I don’t want to die yet unless I have done something for my family first.”

The winning Powerball ticket was sold in early April at a Plaid Pantry convenience store in Portland, ending a winless streak that had stretched more than three months. The Oregon Lottery said it had to go through a security and vetting process before announcing the identity of the person who came forward to claim the prize.

Under Oregon law, with few exceptions, lottery players cannot remain anonymous. Winners have a year to claim the top prize.

The jackpot had a cash value of \$621 million before taxes if the winner chose to take a lump sum rather than an annuity paid over 30 years, with an immediate payout followed by 29 annual installments. The prize is subject to federal taxes and state taxes in Oregon.

The \$1.3 billion prize is the fourth largest Powerball jackpot in history, and the eighth largest among U.S. jackpot games, according to the Oregon Lottery.

The biggest U.S. lottery jackpot won was \$2.04 billion in California in 2022.



## What is the International Criminal Court and why it has Israeli officials worried

By MIKE CORDER Associated Press

THE HAGUE, Netherlands (AP) — Israeli officials sound increasingly concerned that the International Criminal Court could issue arrest warrants for the country's leaders more than six months into the Israel-Hamas war.

Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has written in general terms about ICC action against Israeli troops and officials, and Israel's foreign ministry has said it is also tracking reports of pending action.

The ICC was established in 2002 as the permanent court of last resort to prosecute individuals responsible for the world's most heinous atrocities — war crimes, crimes against humanity, genocide and the crime of aggression.

The Rome Statute creating the ICC was adopted in 1998 and entered into force when it got 60 ratifications on July 1, 2002. The U.N. General Assembly endorsed the ICC, but the court is independent.

Without a police force, the ICC relies on member states to arrest suspects, which has proven to be a major obstacle to prosecutions.

Netanyahu said Friday on the social platform X that Israel "will never accept any attempt by the ICC to undermine its inherent right of self-defense."

"While the ICC will not affect Israel's actions, it would set a dangerous precedent," he wrote.

Israel's Foreign Ministry said late Sunday that it had informed missions abroad of "rumors" that the court could order the arrest of senior Israeli political and military officials. The ministry did not give a source for the rumors.

In a statement emailed to The Associated Press, the court's prosecution office declined to comment in detail.

### WHAT IS THE ICC?

The ICC's 124 member states have signed on to the Rome Statute. Dozens of countries did not sign and do not accept the court's jurisdiction over war crimes, genocide and other crimes. They include Israel, the United States, Russia and China.

The ICC becomes involved when nations are unable or unwilling to prosecute crimes on their territory. Israel argues that it has a functioning court system, and disputes over a nation's ability or willingness to prosecute have fueled past disputes between the court and individual countries.

In 2020, then-President Donald Trump slapped economic and travel sanctions on the ICC prosecutor and another senior prosecution office staffer. The ICC staff were looking into U.S. and allies' troops and intelligence officials for possible war crimes in Afghanistan.

President Joe Biden, whose administration has provided crucial military and political support for the Gaza offensive, lifted the sanctions in 2021.

The ICC has 17 ongoing investigations, has issued a total of 42 arrest warrants and taken 21 suspects into custody. Its judges have convicted 10 suspects and acquitted four.

In its early years, the court was criticized for focusing on crimes in Africa — 10 of its investigations are in African nations — but now it has investigations in Asia, Europe, the Middle East and Latin America.

### WHAT IS THE ICC'S RELATIONSHIP TO ISRAEL AND PALESTINIAN TERRITORIES?

The U.N. General Assembly raised the Palestinians' status in 2012 from a U.N. observer to a non-member observer state. That opened the door for the Palestinian territories to join international organizations including the ICC.

The ICC accepted "The State of Palestine" as a member in 2015, a year after the Palestinians accepted the court's jurisdiction.

The court's chief prosecutor at the time announced in 2021 that she was opening an investigation into possible crimes on Palestinian territory. Israel often levies accusations of bias at U.N. and international bodies, and Netanyahu slammed the decision as hypocritical and antisemitic.

Current ICC Prosecutor Karim Khan visited Ramallah and Israel in December, meeting Palestinian of-

ficials and families of Israelis killed or taken hostage by Hamas militants in the Oct. 7 attack that sparked the Israel-Hamas war.

Khan called Hamas' actions "some of the most serious international crimes that shock the conscience of humanity, crimes which the ICC was established to address," and called for the immediate and unconditional release of all hostages.

Khan said "international humanitarian law must still apply" in the Israel-Hamas war and "the Israeli military knows the law that must be applied." After the visit, Khan said an ICC investigation into possible crimes by Hamas militants and Israeli forces "is a priority for my office."

#### WHO ELSE HAS THE ICC CHARGED?

A year ago after the court issued a warrant for Russian President Vladimir Putin on charges of responsibility for the abductions of children from Ukraine. Russia responded by issuing its own arrest warrants for Khan and ICC judges.

Other high-profile leaders charged by the court include ousted Sudanese strongman Omar al-Bashir on allegations including genocide in his country's Darfur region. Former Libyan leader Moammar Gadhafi was captured and killed by rebels shortly after the ICC issued a warrant for his arrest on charges linked to the brutal suppression of anti-government protests in 2011.

## Florida Democrats hope abortion, marijuana questions will draw young voters despite low enthusiasm

By STEPHANY MATAT Associated Press

WEST PALM BEACH, Fla. (AP) — Jordan Vassallo is lukewarm about casting her first presidential ballot for President Joe Biden in November. But when the 18-year-old senior at Jupiter High School in Florida thinks about the things she cares about, she says her vote for the Democratic incumbent is an "obvious choice."

Vassallo will be voting for a constitutional ballot amendment that would prevent the state of Florida from prohibiting abortion before a fetus can survive on its own — essentially the standard that existed nationally before the U.S. Supreme Court struck down the constitutional protections to abortion and left the matter for states to decide.

Passage of the amendment would wipe away Florida's six-week abortion law, which Vassallo says makes no sense.

"Most people don't know they are pregnant at six weeks," she said.

Biden, despite her reticence, will get her vote as well.

In Florida and across the nation, voters in Vassallo's age group could prove pivotal in the 2024 election, from the presidency to ballot amendments and down-ballot races that will determine who controls Congress. She is likely to be among more than 8 million new voters eligible to vote this November since the 2022 elections, according to Tufts University Center for Information and Research on Civic Learning and Engagement.

While some of those voters share Vassallo's priorities of gun violence prevention and abortion rights, recent protests on college campuses about the war between Israel and Hamas, including at some Florida campuses, have thrown a new element of uncertainty into the mix. In Florida and elsewhere, observers across the political spectrum are looking on with intense interest.

Florida Democrats hope young voters will be driven to the polls by ballot amendments legalizing marijuana and enshrining abortion rights. They hope the more tolerant views of young voters on those issues will reverse an active voter registration edge of nearly 900,000 for Republicans in Florida, which has turned from the ultimate swing state in 2000 to reliably Republican in recent years.

According to AP VoteCast, an expansive survey of the electorate, about 8 in 10 Florida voters under age 45 in the 2022 midterm elections said the Supreme Court decision overturning *Roe v. Wade* had an impact on their decision to vote and who to support. The youngest voters, under age 30, appeared more likely than others to say the decision was the single most important factor in their votes, with about 3 in 10 saying that, compared with about 2 in 10 older voters.

# Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, April 30, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 309 ~ 43 of 70

Nathan Mitchell, president of Florida Atlantic University's College Republicans, questions how impactful abortion will be in the election.

According to AP VoteCast, relatively few Florida voters in the 2022 midterms believed abortion should be either completely banned or fully permitted in all cases. Even among Republicans, just 12% said abortion should be illegal in all cases. About half of Republicans said it should be banned in most cases.

Voters under 45 were slightly more likely than others to say abortion should always be legal, with 30% taking that position.

Mitchell said while abortion is a strong issue, especially for women, he doesn't think it will drive many younger voters to the polls.

"I think other amendments will probably do that, especially the recreational marijuana amendment," Mitchell said. "I think that's going to bring out a lot more voters than abortion will."

The AP VoteCast survey lends some credence to his thinking. About 6 in 10 Florida voters in the 2022 elections favored legalizing the recreational use of marijuana nationwide, the survey found. Among voters under 45, that was 76%. Still, it's unclear how important that issue is for younger voters compared with other issues.

The big question is whether other issues can override Biden's enthusiasm problem among young Florida voters, and elsewhere.

Six in 10 adults under 30 nationally said in a December AP-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research poll that they would be dissatisfied with Biden as the Democratic Party nominee in 2024. And only about 2 in 10 said in a March poll that "excited" would describe their emotions if Biden were re-elected.

Young voters were crucial to the broad and racially diverse coalition that helped elect Biden in 2020. About 6 in 10 voters under 30 backed Biden nationally, according to AP VoteCast. A Pew Research Center survey showed that those under age 30 made up 38% of new or irregular voters in that election.

In Florida, Biden won 64% of young voters – similar to his national numbers.

New issues that concern young voters have emerged this year. Biden's handling of the Israel-Hamas war has sparked protests at college campuses across the country, and Biden's inability to deliver broad-based student loan forgiveness affects many young voters directly. Concern about climate change also continues to grow. AP-NORC data from February shows that majorities of Americans under 30 disapprove of how Biden is handling a range of issues, including the conflict between the Israelis and Palestinians, immigration, the economy, climate change and abortion policy.

But in Florida, it will be abortion rights and marijuana that give voters actual control over issues beyond a presidential rematch most did not want but got anyway, said Trevian Briskey, a 21-year-old FAU student.

Tony Figueroa, president of Miami Young Republicans, said the abortion issue is important to many young voters, regardless of where they stand. He noted, however, that Florida "is a very conservative state." That means some of the young voters motivated by the issue favor stricter abortion laws.

"Given how Florida has become so much more red over the past couple of years, really it's more of a way to galvanize or mobilize young voters where this is an important issue for them," Figueroa said. "It's really a way to get them to come out in droves."

Matheus Xavier, 21, who studies biology at Florida Atlantic University, said he considered voting for Trump at some point, but changed his mind since Biden fell more in line with the things he cares about, including the preservation of abortion rights.

"At the end of the day, you gotta go with what you support," he said. "I guess Biden kinda shows more of that. If there was another option that was actually good, I'd probably go for that."

## Prosecutors at Donald Trump's hush money trial zero in on the details

By MICHAEL R. SISAK, JENNIFER PELTZ, JAKE OFFENHARTZ and COLLEEN LONG Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — The first week of testimony at Donald Trump's hush money trial was the scene-setter for jurors: Manhattan prosecutors portrayed what they say was an illegal scheme to influence the 2016 presidential campaign by burying negative stories. Now prosecutors are working on filling in the details of how they believe Trump and his allies pulled it off.

# Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, April 30, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 309 ~ 44 of 70

Court resumes Tuesday with Gary Farro, a banker who helped Trump's former attorney Michael Cohen open accounts, including one that Cohen used to buy the silence of porn performer Stormy Daniels. She alleged a 2006 sexual encounter with Trump, which he denies.

For his part, the former president and presumptive Republican nominee has been campaigning in his off-hours, but is required to be in court when it is in session, four days a week.

Jurors so far have heard from two other witnesses. Trump's former longtime executive assistant, Rhona Graff, recounted that she recalled once seeing Daniels at Trump's office suite in Trump Tower and figured the performer was a potential contestant for one of Trump's "Apprentice"-brand shows. Former National Enquirer publisher David Pecker laid out how he agreed to serve as the Trump campaign's "eyes and ears" by helping to squelch unflattering rumors and claims about Trump and women.

Through detailed testimony on email exchanges, business transactions and bank accounts, prosecutors are forming the foundation of their argument that Trump is guilty of 34 felony counts of falsifying business records in connection with the hush money payments. The prosecution is leading up to crucial testimony from Cohen himself, who went to federal prison after pleading guilty to campaign finance violations and other crimes. Trump has denied any wrongdoing and pleaded not guilty.

It's not clear when Cohen will take the stand; the trial is expected to go on another month or more. And with every moment Trump is in court as the first of his four criminal trials plays out, he's growing increasingly frustrated while the November election moves ever closer.

"Our country's going to hell and we sit here day after day after day, which is their plan, because they think they might be able to eke out an election," Trump declared last week in the courthouse hallway.

Also this week, Judge Juan M. Merchan may decide on prosecutors' request to fine Trump for what they say were violations of a gag order that bars him from making public statements about witnesses, jurors and some others connected to the case. The judge also has set a hearing Thursday on another batch of alleged gag order violations.

Prosecutors used Pecker, Trump's longtime friend, to detail a "catch and kill" arrangement in which he collected seamy stories about the candidate so the National Enquirer or Trump's associates could buy and bury the claims. Pecker described how he paid \$180,000 to scoop up and sit on stories from a doorman and former Playboy model Karen McDougal. He didn't involve himself in the Daniels payout, he said. He testified for parts of four days.

Trump says all the stories were false. His attorneys used cross-examination to suggest Trump was really engaged in an effort to protect his name and his family — not to influence the outcome of the presidential election.

Farro first took the stand Friday. While a senior managing director at First Republic Bank, he was assigned to work with Trump's lawyer for about three years, in part because of his "ability to handle individuals who may be a little challenging," Farro said, adding that he didn't find Cohen difficult.

Farro detailed to jurors the process of helping Cohen create accounts for two limited liability companies — corporate-speak for a business account that protects the person behind the account from liability, debt and other issues. Farro testified that Cohen indicated the companies, Resolution Consultants LLC and Essential Consultants LLC, would be involved in real estate consulting.

Prosecutors showed jurors emails in which Cohen describes the opening of the Resolution Consultants account as an "important matter."

Cohen acknowledged when he pleaded guilty to federal charges in 2018 that it had been formed to send money to American Media, Inc., the Enquirer publisher. It was meant as a payoff for their purchase of McDougal's story. But the deal never went through.

Farro said that since the account was never funded, it was never technically opened. Instead, Cohen pivoted to starting up the Essential Consultants account, which he later used to pay Daniels \$130,000.

When asked whether Cohen seemed anxious to get the bank accounts set up, Farro testified: "Every time Michael Cohen spoke to me, he gave a sense of urgency."

Farro told the 12-person panel that the bank's policy prohibited doing business with entities tied to "adult entertainment," including pornography and strip clubs. Trump's lawyers have not yet had a chance to cross-examine Farro.

## Israel-Hamas war protesters and police clash on Texas campus, Columbia University begins suspensions

By JIM VERTUNO, CEDAR ATTANASIO, JAKE OFFENHARTZ and JONATHAN MATTISE Associated Press  
NEW YORK (AP) — Protesters and police clashed Monday at the University of Texas in a confrontation that resulted in dozens of arrests, and Columbia University began suspending students as colleges around the U.S. begged pro-Palestinian demonstrators to clear out tent encampments as commencement ceremonies approach.

From coast to coast, demonstrators are sparring over the Israel-Hamas war and its mounting death toll, and the number of arrests at campuses nationwide is approaching 1,000 as the final days of class wrap up. The outcry is forcing colleges to reckon with their financial ties to Israel, as well as their support for free speech. Some Jewish students say the protests have veered into antisemitism and made them afraid to set foot on campus.

The protests have even spread to Europe, with French police removing dozens of students from the Sorbonne university after pro-Palestinian protesters occupied the main courtyard. In Canada, student protest camps have popped up at the University of Ottawa, McGill University in Montreal and the University of British Columbia in Vancouver, The Canadian Press reported.

At the University of Texas at Austin, an attorney said at least 40 demonstrators had been arrested Monday on charges of trespassing and disorderly conduct, some of them by officers in riot gear who encircled about 100 sitting protesters, dragging or carrying them out one by one amid screams. Another group of demonstrators trapped police and a van full of arrestees between buildings, creating a mass of bodies pushing and shoving and prompting the officers to use pepper spray and flash-bang devices to clear the crowd.

The confrontation was an escalation on the 53,000-student campus in the state's capital, where more than 50 protesters were arrested last week.

The university late Monday issued a statement saying that many of Monday's protesters were not affiliated with the school and that encampments are prohibited on campus. The school also alleged that some demonstrators were "physically and verbally combative" with university staff, prompting officials to call law enforcement.

The plight of students who have been arrested has become a central part of protests, with the students and a growing number of faculty demanding amnesty for protesters. At issue is whether the suspensions and legal records will follow students through their adult lives.

The Texas protest and others grew out of Columbia's early demonstrations that have continued. On Monday, student activists on the school's Manhattan campus defied a 2 p.m. deadline to leave an encampment of around 120 tents. If they left by the deadline and signed a form committing to abide by university policies through June 2025, officials said they could finish the semester in good standing. If not, they would be suspended, pending further investigation.

Instead, hundreds of protesters remained, marching around the quad and weaving around piles of temporary flooring and green carpeting meant for graduation ceremonies that are supposed to begin next week.

A handful of counter-demonstrators waved Israeli flags, and one held a sign reading, "Where are the anti-Hamas chants?"

While the university didn't call police to roust the demonstrators, school spokesperson Ben Chang said suspensions had started. He said that while the university appreciated the free speech rights of students, the encampment was a "noisy distraction" that was interfering with teaching and preparation for final exams. The university said it will offer an alternative venue for the protests after exams and graduation.

The protests also made some Jewish students deeply uncomfortable, he said.

Few other details from the university were immediately available, such as how students were involved, how the suspensions would be carried out or whether suspended students would be ejected from the campus. Protest organizers said they were not aware of any suspensions as of Monday evening.

Columbia's handling of the protests also has prompted federal complaints.

# Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, April 30, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 309 ~ 46 of 70

A class-action lawsuit on behalf of Jewish students alleges a breach of contract by Columbia, claiming the university failed to maintain a safe learning environment, despite policies and promises. It also challenges the move away from in-person classes and seeks quick court action requiring Columbia to provide security for the students.

Meanwhile, a legal group representing pro-Palestinian students is urging the U.S. Department of Education's civil rights office to investigate Columbia's compliance with the Civil Rights Act of 1964 for how they have been treated.

A university spokesperson declined to comment on the complaints.

In a rare case, Northwestern University said it reached an agreement with students and faculty who represent the majority of protesters on its campus near Chicago. It allows peaceful demonstrations through the June 1 end of spring classes and in exchange, requires removal of all tents except one for aid, and restricts the demonstration area to allow only students, faculty and staff unless the university approves otherwise.

At the University of Southern California, organizers of a large encampment sat down with university President Carol Folt for about 90 minutes on Monday. Folt declined to discuss details of what was discussed, but said the purpose of the meeting was to allow her to hear the concerns of protesters.

USC sparked a controversy April 15 when officials refused to allow the valedictorian, who has publicly supported Palestinians, to make a commencement speech, citing nonspecific security concerns for their rare decision. Administrators then scrapped the keynote speech by filmmaker Jon M. Chu, who is an alumnus, and declined to award any honorary degrees.

The backlash, as well as Columbia's demonstrations, inspired the encampment and protests on campus last week where 90 people were arrested by police in riot gear. The university has canceled its main graduation event that typically draws 65,000 people to the Los Angeles campus.

"The students said at the end they wouldn't have considered this meeting a win from their perspective, and I can fully appreciate that," Folt said in a statement late Monday. "For me, the most important point was that we were starting to talk, and I think that was vital."

Another meeting between Folt and protesters was scheduled for Tuesday.

Administrators elsewhere tried to salvage their commencements and several have ordered the clearing of encampments in recent days. When those efforts have failed, officials threatened discipline, including suspension, and possible arrest.

But students dug in their heels at other high-profile universities, with standoffs continuing at Harvard, the University of Pennsylvania, Yale and others. Police in riot gear at Virginia Commonwealth University sought to break up an encampment there late Monday, clashing with protesters and deploying pepper spray and zip-ties to take them into custody.

Jacob Ginn, a second-year University of North Carolina sociology graduate student, said he had been protesting at the encampment for four days, including negotiations with administrators Friday.

"We are prepared for everything and we will remain here until the university meets our demands and we will remain steadfast and strong in the face of any brutality and repression that they try to attack us with," Ginn said in reference to a potential police sweep of the encampment.

## **Abducted retired Catholic bishop who mediated between cartels in Mexico is located, hospitalized**

By MARK STEVENSON Associated Press

MEXICO CITY (AP) — A retired Roman Catholic bishop who was famous for trying to mediate between drug cartels in Mexico was located and taken to a hospital after apparently being briefly kidnapped, the Mexican Council of Bishops said Monday.

The church leadership in Mexico said in a statement earlier that Msgr. Salvador Rangel, a bishop emeritus, disappeared on Saturday and called on his captors to release him.

But the council later said he "has been located and is in the hospital," without specifying how he had

# Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, April 30, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 309 ~ 47 of 70

been found or released, or providing the extent of his injuries.

Uriel Carmona, the chief prosecutor of Morelos state, where the bishop disappeared, said "preliminary indications are that it may have been an 'express' kidnapping."

In Mexico, regular kidnappings are often lengthy affairs involving long negotiations over ransom demands. "Express" kidnappings, on the other hand, are quick abductions usually carried out by low-level criminals where ransom demands are lower, precisely so the money can be handed over more quickly.

Earlier, the council said Rangel was in ill health, and begged the captors to allow him to take his medications as "an act of humanity."

Rangel was bishop of the notoriously violent diocese of Chilpancingo-Chilapa, in the southern state of Guerrero, where drug cartels have been fighting turf battles for years. In an effort later endorsed by the government, Rangel sought to convince gang leaders to stop the bloodshed and reach agreements.

Rangel was apparently abducted in Morelos state, just north of Guerrero. The bishops' statement reflected the very fine and dangerous line that prelates have to walk in cartel-dominated areas of Mexico, to avoid antagonizing drug capos who could end their lives in an instant, on a whim.

"Considering his poor health, we call firmly but respectfully to those who are holding Msgr. Rangel captive to allow him to take the medications he needs in a proper and timely fashion, as an act of humanity," the bishops' council wrote before he was found.

It was unclear who may have abducted Rangel. The hyper violent drug gangs known as the Tlacos, the Ardillos and the Familia Michoacana operate in the area. Nobody immediately claimed responsibility for the crime.

If any harm were to have come to Rangel, it would have been the most sensational crime against a senior church official since 1993, when drug cartel gunmen killed Bishop Juan Posadas Ocampo in what was apparently a case of mistaken identity during a shootout at the Guadalajara airport.

Prosecutors in Guerrero state confirmed the abduction but offered no further details, saying only they were ready to cooperate with their counterparts in Morelos. Morelos, like Guerrero, has been hit by violence, homicides and kidnappings for years.

In a statement, Rangel's old diocese wrote that he "is very loved and respected in our diocese."

In February, other bishops announced that they had helped arrange a truce between two warring drug cartels in Guerrero.

Rev. José Filiberto Velázquez, who had knowledge of the February negotiations but did not participate in them, said the talks involved leaders of the Familia Michoacana cartel and the Tlacos gang, which is also known as the Cartel of the Mountain.

Bishops and priests try to get cartels to talk to each other in hopes of reducing bloody turf battles. The implicit assumption is that the cartels will divide up the territories where they charge extortion fees and traffic drugs, without so much killing.

Earlier, the current bishop of Chilpancingo-Chilapa, José de Jesús González Hernández, said he and three other bishops in the state had talked with cartel bosses in a bid to negotiate a peace accord in a different area.

Hernández said at the time that those talks failed because the drug gangs didn't want to stop fighting over territory in the Pacific coast state. Those turf battles have shut down transportation in at least two cities and led to dozens of killings in recent months.

"They asked for a truce, but with conditions" about dividing up territories, González Hernández said of the talks, held a few weeks earlier. "But these conditions were not agreeable to one of the participants."

In February, President Andrés Manuel López Obrador said he approves of such talks.

"Priests and pastors and members of all the churches have participated, helped in pacifying the country. I think it is very good," López Obrador said.

Critics say the talks illustrate the extent to which the government's policy of not confronting cartels has left average citizens to work out their own separate peace deals with the gangs.

One parish priest whose town in Michoacan state has been dominated by one cartel or another for years

# Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, April 30, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 309 ~ 48 of 70

said in February that the talks are "an implicit recognition that they (the government) can't provide safe conditions."

The priest, who spoke on condition of anonymity for security reasons, said "undoubtedly, we have to talk to certain people, above all when it comes to people's safety, but that doesn't mean we agree with it."

For example, he said, local residents have asked him to ask cartel bosses about the fate of missing relatives. It is a role the church does not relish.

"We wouldn't have to do this if the government did its job right," the priest said.

In February, Rangel told The Associated Press that truces between gangs often don't last long.

They are "somewhat fragile, because in the world of the drug traffickers, broken agreements and betrayal occur very easily," Rangel said at the time.

## Winner of \$1.3 billion Powerball jackpot is an immigrant from Laos who has cancer

By CLAIRE RUSH and GENE JOHNSON Associated Press

SALEM, Ore. (AP) — One of the winners of a \$1.3 billion Powerball jackpot this month is an immigrant from Laos who has had cancer for eight years and had his latest chemotherapy treatment last week.

Cheng "Charlie" Saephan, 46, of Portland, told a news conference held by the Oregon Lottery on Monday that he and his 37-year-old wife, Duanpen, are taking half the money, and the rest is going to a friend, Laiza Chao, 55, of the Portland suburb of Milwaukie. Chao had chipped in \$100 to buy a batch of tickets with them. They are taking a lump sum payment, \$422 million after taxes.

"I will be able to provide for my family and my health," he said, adding that he'd "find a good doctor for myself."

Saephan, who has two young children, said that as a cancer patient, he wondered, "How am I going to have time to spend all of this money? How long will I live?"

After they bought the shared tickets, Chao sent a photo of the tickets to Saephan and said, "We're billionaires." It was a joke before the actual drawing, he said, but the next day they won.

Chao, 55, was on her way to work when Saephan called her with the news: "You don't have to go anymore," he said.

Saephan said he was born in Laos and moved to Thailand in 1987, before immigrating to the U.S. in 1994. He wore a sash at the news conference identifying himself as Iu Mien, a southeast Asian ethnic group with roots in southern China. Many Iu Mein were subsistence farmers and assisted American forces during the Vietnam war; after the conflict, thousands of Iu Mien families fled to Thailand to avoid retribution and eventually settled in the U.S.

Tens of thousands of Iu Mien people live along the West Coast, with a sizeable and active community in Portland.

Saephan graduated from high school in 1996 and has lived in Portland for 30 years. He worked as a machinist for an aerospace company.

In the weeks leading up to the drawing, he wrote out numbers for the game on a piece of paper and slept with it under his pillow, he said. He prayed that he would win, saying, "I need some help — I don't want to die yet unless I have done something for my family first."

The winning Powerball ticket was sold in early April at a Plaid Pantry convenience store in Portland, ending a winless streak that had stretched more than three months. The Oregon Lottery said it had to go through a security and vetting process before announcing the identity of the person who came forward to claim the prize.

Under Oregon law, with few exceptions, lottery players cannot remain anonymous. Winners have a year to claim the top prize.

The jackpot had a cash value of \$621 million before taxes if the winner chose to take a lump sum rather than an annuity paid over 30 years, with an immediate payout followed by 29 annual installments. The prize is subject to federal taxes and state taxes in Oregon.



# Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, April 30, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 309 ~ 49 of 70

The \$1.3 billion prize is the fourth largest Powerball jackpot in history, and the eighth largest among U.S. jackpot games, according to the Oregon Lottery.

The biggest U.S. lottery jackpot won was \$2.04 billion in California in 2022.

## **Blinken says Israel still must do more to boost humanitarian aid to Gaza**

By MATTHEW LEE AP Diplomatic Writer

RIYADH, Saudi Arabia (AP) — U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken said Monday that Israel must still do more to increase the flow of humanitarian aid into the besieged Gaza Strip and that he would use his Middle East trip — his seventh to the region since the Israel-Hamas war started in October — to press that case with Israeli leaders.

Speaking at events in Saudi Arabia's capital, Blinken said the best way to ease the humanitarian catastrophe in Gaza would be to conclude an elusive cease-fire agreement, which also would release Israeli hostages held by Hamas since its Oct. 7 attacks launched the war. Hamas has been presented with an "extraordinarily generous" offer by Israel that he hoped the group would accept, he said.

"Hamas has before it a proposal that is extraordinarily, extraordinarily generous on the part of Israel, and in this moment, the only thing standing between the people of Gaza and cease-fire is Hamas," he said at a World Economic Forum gathering in Riyadh.

"They have to decide, and they have to decide quickly. So, we're looking to that, and I'm hopeful that they will make the right decision and we can have a fundamental change in the dynamic," Blinken said.

Although talks continue, Hamas has so far balked at a series of offers negotiated by Egypt, Qatar and the United States and agreed to by Israel. Even without a deal, Blinken said it was critical to improve conditions in Gaza now.

"We're also not waiting on a cease-fire to take the necessary steps to meet the needs of civilians in Gaza," Blinken told Gulf Cooperation Council foreign ministers earlier Monday, when he arrived in Saudi Arabia for the first stop on his Middle East tour, which includes stops in Jordan and Israel on Tuesday and Wednesday.

"We have seen measurable progress in the last few weeks, including the opening of new crossings and increased volume of aid delivery to Gaza and within Gaza, and the building of the U.S. maritime corridor, which will open in the coming weeks. But it is not enough. We still need to get more aid in and around Gaza," he said.

He said safety for humanitarian relief workers must be improved and that there's a focus on ensuring the aid is making a proper impact for Palestinian civilians.

Scores of relief workers have been killed since the conflict began, and an Israeli attack on a World Central Kitchen convoy in Gaza this month that killed seven aid workers only highlighted the dangers and difficulties of protecting them. Israel has said the strike was a mistake and has disciplined officials involved.

World Central Kitchen said it would resume operations in Gaza on Monday after a four-week suspension.

Blinken, who also is meeting with Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman on Monday, has his work cut out for him.

The war in Gaza has ground on with little end in sight: More than 34,000 Palestinians have been killed, hundreds of thousands more are displaced and a humanitarian crisis in Gaza is worsening.

The conflict has fueled mass protests around the world that have spread to American college campuses. U.S. support for Israel, particularly arms transfers, has come under particular criticism, something the administration is keenly aware poses potential problems for U.S. President Joe Biden in an election year.

Blinken's trip comes as there are renewed concerns about the conflict spreading in the Middle East and with once-promising prospects for Israeli-Saudi rapprochement effectively on hold as Israel refuses to consider one of the Saudis' main conditions for normalized relations: the creation of a Palestinian state.

Meanwhile, the Biden administration has been warning Israel against a major military operation in the southern Gaza city of Rafah, where more than a million Palestinians have fled to escape fighting farther north. Israel has not yet launched such an offensive, but Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has

repeatedly said that one will take place, asserting that it is the only way to wipe out Hamas.

Both topics were discussed during a Biden-Netanyahu phone call on Sunday, according to the White House and U.S. officials.

During his trip, Blinken said he would also underscore the absolute importance of not allowing the Israel-Hamas conflict to engulf the region.

The danger of conflagration was underscored this month when a suspected Israeli attack on an Iranian consular building in Syria prompted an unprecedented direct missile and drone response by Iran against Israel. An apparent retaliatory Israeli strike on Iran followed.

Although the tit-for-tat cycle appears to have ended for now, deep concerns remain that Iran or its proxies in Iraq, Lebanon, Syria or Yemen could act in such a way as to provoke a greater response from Israel or that Israel might take action that Iran feels it must retaliate for.

## **Supreme Court rejects Musk appeal over social media posts that must be approved by Tesla**

WASHINGTON (AP) — The Supreme Court on Monday rejected an appeal from Elon Musk over a settlement with securities regulators that requires him to get approval in advance of some social media posts that relate to Tesla, the electric vehicle company he leads.

The justices did not comment in leaving in place lower-court rulings against Musk, who complained that the requirement amounts to “prior restraint” on his speech in violation of the First Amendment.

The case stems from messages Musk posted on Twitter in 2018 in which he claimed he had secured funding to take Tesla private. The tweets caused the company’s share price to jump and led to a temporary halt in trading.

The settlement with the Securities and Exchange Commission included a requirement that his posts on Twitter, now known as X, be approved first by a Tesla attorney. It also called for Musk and Tesla to pay civil fines over the tweets in which Musk said he had “funding secured” to take Tesla private at \$420 per share.

The funding wasn’t secured, and Tesla remains public.

The SEC’s initial enforcement action against Musk alleged that his tweets about going private violated antifraud provisions of securities laws. The agency began investigating whether Musk violated the settlement in 2021 when he did not get approval before asking followers on Twitter if he should sell 10% of his Tesla stock.

Musk acquired Twitter in 2022.

## **President Joe Biden, Mexican President Andrés Manuel López Obrador discuss migration in latest call**

By SEUNG MIN KIM and MARÍA VERZA Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Joe Biden spoke with his Mexican counterpart, Andrés Manuel López Obrador, about cooperating on migration policy as the U.S. leader continues to deliberate whether to take executive action that would crack down on the number of migrants arriving at the southern U.S. border.

The call occurred on Sunday at Biden’s request, López Obrador said during his daily news conference Monday in Mexico City. In a joint statement, Biden and López Obrador said the call centered on their joint efforts to “effectively manage” migration and “strengthen operational efficiency” on the U.S.-Mexico border.

“We talk periodically,” López Obrador said. “I seek him out, he seeks me out, we chat.”

The joint statement said Biden and López Obrador have directed their national security aides to “immediately” put in place concrete measures to reduce the number of unauthorized border crossings. The policies would also protect human rights, according to the statement. White House press secretary Karine Jean-Pierre would not elaborate what those new measures were, nor would officials from the National Security Council.

The Mexican leader said the two countries have made progress in controlling unauthorized migration by

persuading many migrants not to use illegal methods to move from country to country. López Obrador also applauded a January decision by the U.S. Supreme Court that allowed Border Patrol agents to resume cutting razor wire that the state of Texas had installed along the border to try and deter migration.

Since the collapse of border legislation in Congress earlier this year, the White House has not ruled out Biden issuing an executive order on asylum rules to try and reduce the number of migrants arriving at the U.S. southern border. Any unilateral action would likely lean on a president's authority under Section 212(f) of the Immigration and Nationality Act, which offers broad powers to block entry of certain immigrants if doing so is deemed detrimental to the national interest.

Administration officials have been poring over various options for months, but Biden has made no decision on how to proceed with any executive actions. White House aides have also seen little immediate urgency for the president to take any action, considering the number of illegal border crossings have declined since a record high of 250,000 in December as Mexican officials stepped up their enforcement efforts.

## **West Virginia's and North Carolina's transgender care coverage policies discriminate, judges rule**

By LEAH WILLINGHAM Associated Press

CHARLESTON, W.Va. (AP) — West Virginia's and North Carolina's refusal to cover certain health care for transgender people with government-sponsored insurance is discriminatory, a federal appeals court ruled Monday in a case likely headed to the U.S. Supreme Court.

The Richmond-based 4th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals ruled 8-6 in the case involving coverage of gender-affirming care by North Carolina's state employee health plan and the coverage of gender-affirming surgery by West Virginia Medicaid.

Specifically, North Carolina's policy bars treatment or studies "leading to or in connection with sex changes or modifications and related care," while West Virginia's bars coverage of "transsexual surgery."

"The coverage exclusions facially discriminate on the basis of sex and gender identity, and are not substantially related to an important government interest," Judge Roger Gregory, first appointed by former President Bill Clinton and re-appointed by former President George W. Bush, wrote in the majority opinion.

Similar cases are under consideration in courts across the country, but Monday's is the first U.S. Court of Appeals decision to consider government-sponsored coverage exclusions of gender affirming medical care — and whether those exclusions are lawful.

The ruling follows a decision earlier this month by 4th Circuit judges that West Virginia's transgender sports ban violates the rights of a teen athlete under Title IX, the federal civil rights law that prohibits sex-based discrimination in schools.

Like with the transgender sports law ruling, West Virginia Attorney General Patrick Morrisey said his office planned to appeal Monday's health care case decision.

"Decisions like this one, from a court dominated by Obama- and Biden-appointees, cannot stand: we'll take this up to the Supreme Court and win," Morrisey said in a statement.

North Carolina State Treasurer Dale Folwell, whose department oversees the state's health plan, said in a news release that Monday's majority decision was in "direct conflict" with other decisions from federal appeals courts and hopefully will be corrected by the U.S. Supreme Court.

Folwell said the State Health Plan is threatened by financial challenges as the plan's member grows older and their health declines.

"Accordingly, the Plan cannot be everything for everyone," Folwell said. "Untethered to the reality of the Plan's fiscal situation, the majority opinion opens the way for any dissatisfied individual to override the Plan's reasoned and responsible decisions and drive the Plan towards collapse."

In the majority opinion, judges said the cost of treatment is not a sufficient argument to support upholding a policy found to be discriminatory.

"Especially where government budgets are involved, there will frequently be a 'rational' basis for discrimination," Judge Gregory wrote.

Both states appealed separate lower court rulings that found the denial of gender-affirming care to be discriminatory and unconstitutional. Two panels of three Fourth Circuit judges heard arguments in both cases last year before deciding to intertwine the two cases and see them presented before the full court.

In June 2022, a North Carolina trial court demanded the state plan pay for "medically necessary services," including hormone therapy and some surgeries, for transgender employees and their children. The judge had ruled in favor of the employees and their dependents, who said in a 2019 lawsuit that they were denied coverage for gender-affirming care under the plan.

The North Carolina state insurance plan provides medical coverage for more than 750,000 teachers, state employees, retirees, lawmakers and their dependents.

In August 2022, a federal judge ruled West Virginia's Medicaid program must provide coverage for gender-affirming care for transgender residents.

An original lawsuit filed in 2020 also named state employee health plans. A settlement with The Health Plan of West Virginia Inc. in 2022 led to the removal of the exclusion on gender-affirming care in that company's Public Employees Insurance Agency plans.

The states' lawyers argued that treatments for gender dysphoria — all treatments in North Carolina and surgical treatments in West Virginia — are excluded from coverage for everyone, regardless of their gender identity. They claimed only a subset of transgender people suffer from gender dysphoria, a diagnosis of distress over gender identity that does not match a person's assigned sex.

Before offering pharmaceutical or surgical intervention, medical guidelines call for thorough psychological assessments to confirm gender dysphoria before starting any treatment.

In his opinion, Gregory said that in his view, gender dysphoria is "so intimately related to transgender status as to be virtually indistinguishable from it."

"We hold that gender dysphoria, a diagnosis inextricable from transgender status, is a proxy for transgender identity," the judge wrote. "And coverage exclusions that bar treatments for gender dysphoria bar treatments on the basis of transgender identity by proxy."

Unlike North Carolina, West Virginia has covered hormone therapy and other pharmaceutical treatments for transgender people since 2017. Gregory noted that West Virginia's program partially or fully covers surgeries to remove and reconstruct sexual organs for non-gender dysphoria-related diagnoses, such as cancer.

After the ruling, West Virginia plaintiff Shauntae Anderson, a Black transgender woman and West Virginia Medicaid participant, called her state's refusal to cover her care "deeply dehumanizing."

"I am so relieved that this court ruling puts us one step closer to the day when Medicaid can no longer deny transgender West Virginians access to the essential healthcare that our doctors say is necessary for us," Anderson said in a statement.

## **Family of a Black teen who was shot after ringing the wrong doorbell files lawsuit against homeowner**

By HANNAH FINGERHUT Associated Press

The family of a Black teenager who was shot by a white homeowner when he mistakenly went to the wrong Kansas City, Missouri, address filed a lawsuit Monday, described by the family's attorney as an attempt to put pressure on the criminal trial later this year.

The complaint, filed by Cleo Nagbe on behalf of her son, Ralph Yarl, alleges that Andrew Lester, 84, was negligent when he shot the 16-year-old without warning more than a year ago, on April 13. It states that Yarl suffered and sustained permanent injuries, as well as pain and suffering, as a direct result of Lester's actions.

Lee Merritt, the family's attorney, said the civil suit is to "give the family a chance to be in the driver's seat in pursuing justice for Ralph" as the state's criminal case against Lester unfolds.

Lester pleaded not guilty in September 2023. The trial was scheduled to begin more than a year later on October 7, 2024.

Lester's attorney in the criminal case, Steve Salmon, said he is evaluating the civil complaint and will discuss it with Lester. He said at a preliminary hearing for the criminal case that Lester was acting in self-defense, terrified by the stranger who knocked on his door as he settled into bed for the night.

"The suit is based on what he has said," Merritt told The Associated Press. "If he's saying, 'I mistakenly thought this person was a robber,' we're saying that's negligence. You weren't paying close enough attention. Everybody who rings your doorbell can't be a robber."

Yarl mixed up the street name of the house where he was sent to pick up his siblings. Yarl testified at the hearing that he rang the doorbell and then reached for the storm door as Lester opened the inner door. Lester told him, "Don't come here ever again," Yarl recalled.

He said he was shot in the head, the impact knocking him to the ground, and was then shot in the arm. The case, which drew international attention, animated national debates about gun policies and race in America.

In a statement, Nagbe said the shooting "not only shattered our family but also exposed a critical gap in our societal fabric, where the safety of our children is jeopardized by reckless actions."

The lawsuit also names the homeowner's association, Highland Acres Homes Association, Inc., as a defendant. The association did not immediately respond to an email requesting comment.

Merritt said the family is aware the litigation might be delayed pending the outcome of the criminal case but wanted to still begin the process. He cited state law that allows the victim access to the criminal case records that has not yet been satisfied, as the prosecutor seeks clarification from the judge on the case's gag order.

Yarl was "uniquely resilient" after the shooting, Merritt said, but "his resiliency has kind of grown into some impatience with being the person who was shot a year ago."

"He doesn't want to be that person," Merritt said. "He wants to be an amazing band player, a good friend, a student, a rising college student."

## A horse-shaped nebula gets its close-up in new photos by NASA's Webb telescope

By ADITHI RAMAKRISHNAN AP Science Writer

DALLAS (AP) — NASA's Webb Space Telescope has revealed the sharpest images yet of a portion of a horse-shaped nebula, showing the "mane" in finer detail.

The Horsehead Nebula, in the constellation Orion, is 1,300 light-years away. A light-year is nearly 6 trillion miles (9.7 trillion kilometers).

Discovered over a century ago, its nickname derives from its striking appearance — a wispy pillar of gas and dust that resembles a horse



**This image shows three views of the Horsehead Nebula. Image left, released in November 2023, features the Horsehead Nebula as seen in visible light by ESA's Euclid telescope, which has contributions from NASA. The second image, middle, shows a view of the Horsehead Nebula in near-infrared light from NASA's Hubble Space Telescope in 2013. The third image, right, features a new view of the Horsehead Nebula from NASA's James Webb Space Telescope's NIRCam (Near-Infrared Camera) instrument. (NASA via AP)**

rearing its head.

Webb's latest infrared images released Monday captured the top of Horsehead in greater detail, illuminating clouds of chilly hydrogen molecules and soot-like chemicals. These glamour shots can help refine astronomers' understanding of the nebula, which acts as a nursery for big stars to brew.

Horsehead is a favorite target of space observatories including the Hubble Space Telescope. Last year, the European space telescope Euclid took fresh photos of the nebula.

## Oklahoma towns hard hit by tornadoes begin long cleanup after 4 killed in weekend storms

By GRAHAM LEE BREWER Associated Press

SULPHUR, Okla. (AP) — When a monster nighttime tornado came roaring into the southern Oklahoma town of Sulphur, Sheila Hilliard Goodman, a grandmother and casino worker, hunkered down inside Raina's Sport Lounge with about 30 other customers in the popular downtown hangout.

The roof of the bar collapsed Saturday as other brick buildings down the block crumbled. Family members who arrived Sunday to search for her learned she was the only one inside who didn't survive.

"She loved her family, loved to cook," said her cousin Wes Hilliard, who confirmed Monday that Goodman was one of the four people in Oklahoma, including an infant, who lost their lives in the storm. "She lived a good life. She was an amazing person who loved big."

The storms, part of an outbreak of severe weather across the middle of the U.S., also left at least 100 others injured, authorities said. The deadly weather in Oklahoma followed dozens of tornadoes that raked Iowa and Nebraska on Friday, killing one person.

At least 22 tornadoes touched down in Oklahoma, the most powerful of which ripped through Holdenville, Marietta and Sulphur, said National Weather Service meteorologist Rick Smith.

Those tornadoes were rated as EF3 or higher, meaning they were powerful enough to uproot or snap large trees, remove roofs and knock down walls of well-built homes and easily toss cars and heavy vehicles. They were particularly dangerous because they hit after 10 p.m.

"It's human nature to want to see the tornado before you take action," Smith said. "And you're not going to be able to see these tornadoes at night."

In Sulphur, a town of about 5,000 people south of Oklahoma City, a tornado crumpled many downtown buildings, tossed cars and buses, and sheared the roofs off houses across a 15-block radius.

"We live less than a mile away, but last night it took us more than an hour to get here," said Kathy John, the publisher of the local weekly newspaper, the Sulphur Times-Democrat, who spent Monday helping her staff move equipment from the downtown newsroom to her nearby home.

The paper hasn't missed a printing in 82 years, she said, and "we're not going to now."

Hospitals across the state reported about 100 injuries, including people apparently cut or struck by debris, according to the Oklahoma Department of Emergency Management. A baby was among those killed, Hughes County Emergency Management Director Mike Dockrey told Oklahoma television station KOCO.

At least 17 tornadoes touched down Friday in Iowa, the National Weather Service in Des Moines said in a preliminary report issued Monday. The agency said damage to homes was reported in several counties. Crews are continuing to evaluate damage and a final count may take weeks.

Several tornadoes also were reported in Kansas and Missouri over the weekend, but crews were still determining how many.

In Sulphur, a 1930s natural springs fountain continued to pump on Monday, but the landscape around it was devastated. Giant trees that shaded the park were uprooted and splintered, with branches scattered across the forest floor.

In town, the sound of chainsaws echoed through neighborhoods as residents cut up fallen trees that blocked entry to their homes. A creek that runs through the center of town was filled to its banks with muddy water churned up during the weekend storms. The area also was battered with heavy rain, and many residents spent the day Monday sifting through soggy belongings or pumping standing water from

basements.

"How do you rebuild it? This is complete devastation," said Kelly Trussell, a lifelong Sulphur resident as she surveyed the damage. "It is crazy, you want to help but where do you start?"

Farther north, a tornado near Holdenville killed two people and damaged or destroyed more than a dozen homes, according to the Hughes County Emergency Medical Service. Another person was killed along Interstate 35 near the southern Oklahoma community of Marietta, state officials said.

White House officials said President Joe Biden spoke to Gov. Kevin Stitt on Sunday and offered the full support of the federal government. Stitt declared a state of emergency in 12 counties.

On Monday, Vicki Combs sat on a pink trunk of records that a first responder salvaged from her consignment store while her husband, Larry, pulled up his truck to help load what was left inside the crumpled building. The retired couple moved to Sulphur a few years ago to start their business, which they hope to eventually reopen.

"We're just devastated, like it can't be," said Larry, a retired pastor. "All my life I've ministered to people who have gone through stuff like this, but it never really hits home until it happens to you."

## **'Vampire facials' were linked to cases of HIV. Here's what to know about the beauty treatment**

By ALEXA ST. JOHN Associated Press

Three women were diagnosed with HIV after getting "vampire facial" procedures at an unlicensed New Mexico medical spa, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention said in a report last week, marking the first documented cases of people contracting the virus through cosmetic services using needles.

Federal health officials said in a new report that an investigation from 2018 through 2023 into the clinic in Albuquerque, VIP Spa, found it apparently reused disposable equipment intended for one-time use, transmitting HIV to clients through its services via contaminated blood.

WHAT IS A VAMPIRE FACIAL? IS IT SAFE?

Vampire facials, formally known as platelet-rich plasma microneedling facials, are cosmetic procedures intended to rejuvenate one's skin, making it more youthful-looking and reducing acne scars and wrinkles, according to the American Academy of Dermatology.

After a client's blood is drawn, a machine separates the blood into platelets and cells.

The plasma is then injected into the client's face, either through single-use disposable or multiuse sterile needles.

Vampire facials have gained popularity in recent years as celebrities such as Kim Kardashian have publicized receiving the procedure.

HIV transmission via unsterile injection is a known risk of beauty treatments and other services, officials say.

Despite this, the Academy says vampire facials are generally safe.

Health officials say spa facilities that offer cosmetic injection services should practice proper infection control and maintain client records to help prevent the transmission of bloodborne pathogens such as HIV.

IS THIS PROCESS USED IN OTHER PROCEDURES?

Platelet-rich plasma injections were initially most used medically for bone grafting and osteoarthritis, and then became popular in cosmetic treatments.

Other services, such as Botox and lip fillers, are also delivered with needles, as are tattoos.

Though this procedure works for hair growth, its use for rejuvenation purposes is not Food and Drug Administration-approved, said Zakia Rahman, a clinical professor of dermatology at Stanford University.

But as such procedures grow in popularity, she said, it is "important for people to know and understand a medical procedure should be done in a medical setting."

HOW WERE THE HIV CASES LINKED TO THE SPA?

The New Mexico Department of Health was notified during summer 2018 that a woman with no known

# Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, April 30, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 309 ~ 56 of 70

HIV risk factors was diagnosed with an HIV infection after receiving the spa's vampire facial services that spring.

During the investigation, similar HIV strains were found among three women, all former clients of the spa. Evidence suggested that contamination from services at the spa resulted in the positive HIV infection tests for these three patients, according to the CDC report.

Another woman, who also received services at the spa, and her male sexual partner, who did not go to the spa, were both found to have a close HIV strain as well, but the HIV diagnoses for these two patients "were likely attributed to exposures before receipt of cosmetic injection services," the CDC said.

Health officials found equipment containing blood on a kitchen counter, unlabeled tubes of blood and injectables in the refrigerator alongside food and unwrapped syringes not properly disposed of. The CDC report said that a steam sterilizer, known as an autoclave — which is necessary for cleaning equipment that is reused — was not found at the spa.

ARE ANY OTHER PATIENTS AT RISK?

Through the New Mexico Department of Health's investigation, nearly 200 former clients of the spa, and their sexual partners, were tested for HIV, and no additional infections were found.

According to the CDC, free testing remains available for those who previously frequented the spa.

"Having a medical procedure in a nonmedical setting, I think is the biggest danger of all," Rahman said. "Having that discount or the lower cost is not worth potentially putting your life at risk."

"There are a number of procedures and processes in place to make sure that these treatments are done safely and in medical settings," she said. "All of these things are in place to really reduce that risk, and when done safely, the risks are extraordinarily low."

WHAT HAPPENED TO THE SPA OWNER?

The former owner of VIP Spa, Maria de Lourdes Ramos de Ruiz, pleaded guilty in 2022 to five felony counts of practicing medicine without a license, including conducting the unlicensed vampire facials.

The New Mexico Attorney General's office said Ramos de Ruiz also did illegal plasma and Botox-injection procedures.

According to prosecutors, inspections by state health and regulation and licensing departments found the code violations, and the spa closed in fall 2018 after the investigation was launched.

Ramos de Ruiz was sentenced to 7 1/2 years, with four years being suspended on supervised probation, 3 1/2 years time in prison and parole, according to court documents.

Raul A. Lopez, attorney for Ramos de Ruiz, did not immediately respond to requests for comment.

## Study says California's 2023 snowy rescue from megadrought was a freak event. Don't get used to it

By BRITTANY PETERSON and SETH BORENSTEIN Associated Press

DENVER (AP) — Last year's snow deluge in California, which quickly erased a two decade long megadrought, was essentially a once-in-a-lifetime rescue from above, a new study found.

Don't get used to it because with climate change the 2023 California snow bonanza — a record for snow on the ground on April 1 — will be less likely in the future, said the study in Monday's journal Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences.

The study authors coined the term "snow deluge" for one-in-20-year heavy snowfalls, when it's cold and wet enough to maintain a deep snowpack through April 1. But even among these rare snow deluges, last year's stood out as the snowiest, edging out 1922 in snow water equivalent, said study lead author Adrienne Marshall, a hydrologist at the Colorado School of Mines.

It's timing couldn't be better. Last year's snow came after a megadrought that started around the turn of the century and was one of the worst in more than 1,000 years. That drought is gone now.

"We shouldn't count on these big snow years coming every couple of years to bail us out," Marshall said. Looking at different scenarios of emissions of heat-trapping gases in the future, she said it would be



"increasingly rare" for most people alive now to see snow like this in California in the future. Her team's calculations show that these 1-in-20 year deluges will be 58% smaller by the end of this century compared to recent decades, with even just moderate climate change.

UCLA climate scientist Daniel Swain, who wasn't part of the study but specializes in weather in the U.S. West, said, "I would not be surprised if 2023 was the coldest, snowiest winter for the rest of my own lifetime in California."

And given climate change it's even more of a sure thing that winter was likely the coldest that most Californians will experience in the rest of their lives, Swain said.

The snow deluges came from repeated atmospheric rivers, said Mark Serreze, director of the National Snow and Ice Data Center, who was not part of the research.

"California is no stranger to atmospheric rivers, but having so many was pretty bizarre," Serreze said. "Maybe we are moving back to a wetter regime, but even if we are, there is simply not enough water go around anymore. And as the climate warms, the snowpack will keep shrinking, making it harder and harder to manage the water resources."

California snowpack meets on average just 30% of the state's water needs - the rest is mostly imported or pumped from the ground. This year's April 1 snowpack was the second consecutive year of above average accumulation.

Residents and especially officials negotiating water rights, a contentious issue in the West, have to keep snow droughts in their memory even if California is flush from last year's "gift" of a snow deluge, Marshall said.

Her team focused on snow rather than all types of precipitation. That's because a rainy winter doesn't help bank as much water for California's hot dry summers.

"Dams and reservoirs have kind of long been environmentally contentious in California and elsewhere, and we have this massive natural reservoir in the mountains, and that's snowpack," Marshall said. "So when water falls as snow, it sits around in the mountains for often quite a long time and then melts in the late spring and the summer when we need it the most."

The study also found that as the climate warms, there still will be years with snow deluges but they will be far lighter than now if greenhouse gas emissions aren't rapidly reduced.

Although the study looked at just California, Marshall said her team saw similar projected patterns for across the West.

"Despite the inconveniences and even dangers of excessive snowfall in the Sierras, all should remain grateful that water 'rescues' have taken place as recently as 2023," said Rutgers University Global Snow Lab Director David Robinson, who wasn't part of the study.

But Robinson said these exceptionally wet, cold years will occur even less in the future so it's a reminder "how precious and finite our freshwater resources are now and will remain so in our ongoing warming world."

Read more of AP's climate coverage at <http://www.apnews.com/climate-and-environment>

## **Ecuador files complaint against Mexico at top UN court in spat over embassy raid**

QUITO, Ecuador (AP) — Ecuador filed a complaint Monday at the top U.N. court over what it called Mexico's illegal move to grant political asylum to a former Ecuadorian vice president, which led to Ecuador's highly criticized raid on a Mexican embassy earlier this month.

The Ecuadorian complaint at the International Court of Justice in the Netherlands intensifies a high-profile diplomatic quarrel with Mexico, which has filed its own complaint with the panel alleging that Ecuador's highly unusual April 5 raid to arrest Jorge Glas was illegal.

Ecuador's counterclaim is that Glas was a fugitive wanted on corruption convictions and not for political reasons, and that therefore he was not eligible for Mexico's diplomatic protection. Ecuadorian authorities

forcibly entered the Mexican embassy in Quito to arrest the former Ecuadorian vice president hours after Mexico granted him asylum.

Mexico failed to comply with "its obligations not to grant asylum to people who are being prosecuted or on trial for common crimes or have been convicted by competent ordinary courts," Ecuador's Foreign Ministry said in a statement.

Glas, who was convicted in two corruption cases, had been living at the diplomatic compound in Ecuador's capital, Quito, since December. He is now being held at a maximum security prison at the port city of Guayaquil.

The court said in a statement that Ecuador "accuses Mexico of unlawfully granting Mr Glas political asylum and of interfering in its internal affairs."

Security camera video released by Mexico's government shows that Ecuadorian police scaled the embassy walls and broke into the building. Roberto Canseco, Mexico's head of consular affairs in Ecuador, tried to keep them from entering, even pushing a large cabinet in front of a door. But police restrained him and pushed him to the floor as they carried Glas out.

Authorities are currently investigating Glas over alleged irregularities during his management of reconstruction efforts following a powerful earthquake in 2016 that killed hundreds of people. He previously was convicted on two separate bribery and corruption cases.

Diplomatic premises are considered foreign soil and "inviolable" under the Vienna treaties and host country law enforcement agencies are not allowed to enter without permission from the ambassador.

Legal experts, Latin American presidents and diplomats swiftly condemned Ecuador's extremely rare show of force. Venezuelan President Nicolás Maduro even ordered the closure of his country's embassy and consulates in Ecuador in solidarity with Mexico.

Immediately after the raid, Mexico broke diplomatic relations with Ecuador, recalled its diplomatic staff and closed its embassy and consulates. Days later, it filed a complaint with the court.

In its case filed April 11, Mexico asked the World Court to order Ecuador to take "appropriate and immediate steps to provide full protection and security of diplomatic premises" and prevent any further intrusions. It also wants Ecuador to let Mexico clear its diplomatic premises and the homes of its diplomats in the country.

Mexico also asked the court to award reparation and suspend Ecuador from the United Nations. Hearings on Mexico's case are set to begin Tuesday.

## **How Columbia University's complex history with the student protest movement echoes into today**

By DEEPTI HAJELA Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — College students taking up space and making demands for change. University administrators facing pressure to get things back under control. Police brought in to make arrests. At other schools: students taking note, and sometimes taking action.

Columbia University, 2024. And Columbia University, 1968.

The pro-Palestinian demonstration and subsequent arrests at Columbia that have set off similar protests at campuses nationwide these days and even internationally aren't new ground for students at the Ivy League school. They're the latest in a Columbia tradition that dates back more than five decades — one that also helped provide inspiration for the anti-apartheid protest of the 1980s, the Iraq war protests, and more.

"When you're going to Columbia, you know you're going to an institution which has an honored place in the history of American protest," said Mark Naison, professor of history and African & African American Studies at Fordham University and himself a participant in the 1968 demonstrations. "Whenever there is a movement, you know Columbia is going to be right there."

STUDENTS ARE AWARE OF THE HISTORY

# Croton Daily Independent

Tuesday, April 30, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 309 ~ 59 of 70

It's part of Columbia's lore, students taking part in this month's demonstrations point out — recognized by the school itself in commemorative anniversary programming and taught about in classes.

"A lot of students here are aware of what happened in 1968," said Sofia Ongele, 23, among those who joined the encampment in response to this month's arrests.

The end of an academic year was also approaching in April of that year when students took over five campus buildings. There were multiple reasons. Some were protesting the university's connection to an institute doing weapon research for the Vietnam War; others opposed how the elite school treated Black and brown residents in the community around the school as well as the atmosphere for minority students.

After several days, Columbia's president allowed a thousand New York Police Department officers to be brought in to clear most demonstrators out. The arrests, 700 of them, were not gentle. Fists were flying, clubs swinging. Dozens of students and more than a dozen officers were injured.

It's never been forgotten history. That includes now, when pro-Palestinian students calling on the university to divest from any economic ties to Israel over the war in Gaza set up a tent encampment earlier this month and more than 100 were arrested. It helped spark similar demonstrations at campuses around the country and world.

The storied protest past is one of the reasons Ongele chose Columbia for college and came here from her native Santa Clarita, California. "I wanted to be in an environment where people were indeed socially conscious," she said.

When it comes to protest, "We have not only the privilege but the responsibility to continue in the shoes of those who came before us," Ongele said. The goal, she said: to ensure "that we're able to maintain the integrity of this university as one that is indeed socially aware, one that does have students that do care deeply about what goes on in the world, what goes on in our communities, and what goes on in the lives of the students that make up our community."

Columbia University officials did not respond to an email asking about the school's position on the legacy of the 1968 events. Those events, like the current protest, "sparked a huge increase in student activism around the country," Mark Rudd, a leader of that protest, said in an email to The Associated Press. "Myself and others spent the entire year after April 1968 traveling the country, spreading to campuses the spirit of Columbia."

## NOT EVERYONE SUPPORTS THE PROTESTS

But the echoes of the past aren't only in inspiration. Then, as now, the protest had its detractors. Naison said the disruption to campus life, and to law and order, angered many at Columbia and outside of it.

"Student protesters are not popular people in the United States of America," he said. "We weren't popular in the '60s. We accomplished a tremendous amount. But we also helped drive the country to the right."

That has a corollary these days with those critical of the protests, who have condemned what they say is a descent into antisemitism. Some Jewish students have said they have felt targeted for their identity and afraid to be on campus and university presidents have come under political pressure to clamp down and use methods like police intervention.

Columbia University President Minouche Shafik had just testified in front of a congressional panel investigating concerns about antisemitism at elite schools when the camp initially went up. Despite her requesting police action the next day for what she called a "harassing and intimidating environment," Republicans in Congress have called for her resignation.

"Freedom of speech is so important, but not beyond the right to security," said Itai Dreifuss, 25, a third-year student who grew up in the United States and Israel. He was near the encampment this past week, standing in front of posters taped to a wall of the people who were taken hostage by Hamas in the Oct 7 attack that set off the current conflagration.

That feeling among some students that personal animosity is being directed against them is a difference between 1968 and now, Naison said. That conflict between demonstrators and their decriers "is far more visceral," Naison asserts, which he says makes this time even more fraught.

"It's history repeating itself, but it's also uncharted territory," he said. "What we have here is a whole group of people who see these protests as a natural extension of fighting for justice, and a whole other

group of people who see this as a deadly attack on them and their history and tradition. And that makes it very difficult for university officials to manage.”

## Scotland’s leader resigns after conflicts over climate change, gender identity weakened government

By DANICA KIRKA Associated Press

LONDON (AP) — Scotland’s first minister, Humza Yousaf, resigned on Monday, triggering a leadership contest as the governing Scottish National Party seeks to heal internal divisions and strengthen its position ahead of U.K.-wide parliamentary elections expected later this year.

Yousaf, whose pro-independence party has been weakened by a campaign finance scandal and divisions over transgender rights, was brought down by his decision to oust the Green Party from his governing coalition because of differences over climate change goals. He was unable to persuade other parties to back his minority government in Scotland’s regional parliament.

With no prospect of victory in two confidence votes that had been scheduled for later this week, Yousaf quit rather than be forced out. He will remain first minister while the SNP tries to choose a successor who can command a majority in parliament.

“I’ve concluded that repairing our relationship across the political divide can only be done with someone else at the helm,” Yousaf told reporters in Edinburgh, Scotland’s capital.

The debacle adds to the fevered political climate in the United Kingdom, with the country preparing for parliamentary elections at a time when concerns about immigration, health care and government spending have undermined support for the governing Conservative Party.

The Conservatives and the opposition Labour Party had proposed separate no-confidence motions in Yousaf and his government amid efforts to weaken the SNP going into the general election. The SNP has been the dominant party in Scottish politics for almost two decades and currently holds 43 of Scotland’s 59 seats in the U.K. Parliament. Labour is likely to be the biggest beneficiary of the problems in the SNP because both parties share left-leaning policies.

On Thursday, England and Wales will hold local elections that are seen as a barometer of support for Prime Minister Rishi Sunak’s government.

But the SNP’s focus will be on selecting a leader who can repair the party’s image in Scotland and attract support from at least one opposition party in the regional parliament, where it is one seat short of a majority with 63 of the 128 voting seats.

That job appeared to be within reach Monday, as the Greens said they would be willing to work with the SNP now that Yousaf is out of the picture.

“The SNP is still the largest party in Parliament by some distance, and has the right to form a minority government,” the Greens’ co-leader, Patrick Harvey, said. “The Scottish Greens have a long track record of working constructively from opposition and will do so with any first minister who shares our progressive values and who can secure our confidence.”

One of the early favorites to replace Yousaf is former deputy first minister John Swinney, who said he was giving “very careful consideration” to seeking the top job. Another leading candidate is Kate Forbes, who narrowly lost to Yousaf in the last leadership contest. She is seen as unacceptable to the Greens because of her conservative religious views and opposition to gender identity reforms.

Whoever the SNP chooses, the new party leader will face the same tight electoral arithmetic that proved Yousaf’s undoing.

With all of the other parties lined up against him, Yousaf would have had to make a deal with the break-away Alba Party, which holds just one seat, to secure his job.

Founded in 2021 by former SNP leader and first minister Alex Salmond, Alba sees itself as the true voice of Scottish independence. As the price of its support, Alba demanded that Yousaf put independence at the top of his agenda, move away from divisive “identity politics” and focus on issues such as jobs, education

and investment in Scottish industry.

That proved a step too far for Yousaf.

"While a route through this week's motion of no confidence was absolutely possible, I am not willing to trade my values and principles or do deals with whomever simply for retaining power," he said.

Yousaf became the leader of the SNP and first minister of Scotland in March 2023 after former leader Nicola Sturgeon stepped down and cited the toll of more than eight years in office.

Support for the SNP in part declined after the party backed legislation to make it easier for people to change their gender and implemented a hate crime law that made transgender identity a protected characteristic, even though the same protections weren't given to all women.

Then came Yousaf's decision to scrap Scotland's goal of reducing carbon emissions by 75% by 2030.

Although he said Scotland would still achieve its goal of net-zero carbon emissions by 2045, the decision sparked tensions with coalition partners. The Green Party initially backed the change, but party leaders said they would poll the broader membership and reverse course if necessary.

Last week, Yousaf abruptly ended a power-sharing agreement with the Greens, embarrassing the party's two government ministers who had arrived for a Cabinet meeting. Although Yousaf on Monday acknowledged his mistake, it was too late to repair the damage.

"Hurt egos have destroyed countries before now, so it's not exactly surprising that they are currently leading to the mess we're in," Murray Pittock, an expert on Scottish nationalism at the University of Glasgow, told The Associated Press. "And you can't hurt people's egos any more than by chucking them straight out of ministerial office with no warning, and their entire party with them."

## Tractor-trailers with no one aboard?

### The future is near for self-driving trucks on US roads

By TOM KRISHER AP Auto Writer

PITTSBURGH (AP) — On a three-lane test track along the Monongahela River, an 18-wheel tractor-trailer rounded a curve. No one was on board.

A quarter-mile ahead, the truck's sensors spotted a trash can blocking one lane and a tire in another. In less than a second, it signaled, moved into the unobstructed lane and rumbled past the obstacles.

The self-driving semi, outfitted with 25 laser, radar and camera sensors, is owned by Pittsburgh-based Aurora Innovation. Late this year, Aurora plans to start hauling freight on Interstate 45 between the Dallas and Houston areas with 20 driverless trucks.

Within three or four years, Aurora and its competitors expect to put thousands such self-driving trucks on America's public freeways. The goal is for the trucks, which can run nearly around the clock without any breaks, to speed the flow of goods, accelerating delivery times and perhaps lowering costs. They'll travel short distances on secondary roads, too.

The companies say the autonomous trucks will save on fuel, too, because they don't have to stop and will drive at more consistent speeds. Also, Aurora says its testing has shown that if a maintenance issue arises while one of its trucks is traveling on a freeway, the vehicle will automatically pull to the side of the road and remotely call for assistance.

The image of a fully loaded, 80,000-pound driverless truck weaving around cars on a super-highway at 65 mph or more may strike a note of terror. A poll conducted in January by AAA found that a decisive majority of American drivers — 66% — said they would fear riding in an autonomous vehicle.

But in less than nine months, a seven-year science experiment by Aurora will end, and driverless trucks will start carrying loads between terminals for FedEx, Uber Freight, Werner and other partners. Aurora and most of its rivals plan to start running freight routes in Texas, where snow and ice are generally rare.

For years, it seemed as though the initial venture for autonomous vehicles would be ride hailing in large cities. But General Motors' Cruise robotaxi unit is struggling in the aftermath of a serious crash. And Alphabet's Waymo faces opposition to expanding its autonomous ride service in California. The result is that self-driving trucks are poised to become the first computer-controlled vehicles deployed in widespread

# Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, April 30, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 309 ~ 62 of 70

numbers on public roads.

The vehicles have drawn skepticism from safety advocates, who warn that with almost no federal regulation, it will be mainly up to the companies themselves to determine when the semis are safe enough to operate without humans on board. The critics complain that federal agencies, including the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, take a generally passive approach to safety, typically acting only after crashes occur. And most states provide scant regulation.

But Aurora and other companies that are developing the systems argue that years of testing show that their trucks will actually be safer than human-driven ones. They note that the vehicles' laser and radar sensors can "see" farther than human eyes can. The trucks never tire, as human drivers do. They never become distracted or impaired by alcohol or drugs.

"We want to be out there with thousands or tens of thousands of trucks on the road," said Chris Urmson, Aurora's CEO and formerly head of Google's autonomous vehicle operations. "And to do that, we have to be safe. It's the only way that the public will accept it. Frankly, it's the only way our customers will accept it."

Phil Koopman, a professor at Carnegie Mellon University who studies vehicle automation safety, said he agreed that self-driving trucks can theoretically be safer than human-driven ones — for the very reason that they lack drivers who might become distracted or impaired. But he cautioned that the vehicles' computers inevitably will make errors. And just how the trucks will fare in real-world situations, he said, will depend on the quality of their safety engineering.

With billions of dollars in investments at stake, Koopman said, he wonders how the companies will balance safety decisions against cost concerns.

"Everything I see indicates they're trying to do the right thing," he said. "But the devil is in the details."

On the test track, reporters saw Aurora's semis avoid simulations of road obstacles, including pedestrians, a blown tire, even a horse. But the trucks were running at only 35 mph (56 kilometers per hour) in a controlled environment with nothing unexpected happening. (The trucks are being tested with human safety drivers on Texas freeways at speeds of 65 mph (105 kph) or higher.)

On the track, the trucks spotted obstacles more than a quarter-mile away and acted immediately to avoid them. Urmson said the trucks' laser sensors can detect people walking on a highway at night, far beyond the distance of headlights.

Since 2021, Aurora trucks have autonomously hauled freight over 1 million miles on public highways — but with human safety drivers in the cabs. There have been only three crashes, Urmson said, all of them caused by mistakes by human drivers in other vehicles.

The crashes turned out to be minor, with no injuries. And in each case, the company said, the Aurora truck was able to safely pull to the side of the road.

A federal database that started in June 2021 shows at least 13 crashes with other vehicles involving autonomous semis, including three involving Aurora. In all the cases, the crashes were caused by other vehicles changing lanes or rear-ending the trucks. Sometimes, human safety drivers took over just before the crash.

Aurora won't compromise safety, Urmson said, even if ensuring it might delay the timetable for achieving a profit.

"If we put a vehicle on the road that isn't sufficiently safe — that we aren't confident in the safety of — then it kills everything else," he said.

Last month, when Urmson displayed the trucks to Wall Street analysts in Pittsburgh, he said the publicly held company expects to turn a profit by late 2027 or early 2028. To meet that goal, Aurora must succeed in putting thousands of the trucks on the roads, hauling freight from terminal to terminal and collecting a per-mile charge from customers.

The company's competitors — Plus.ai, Gatik, Kodiak Robotics and others — also plan soon to put driverless trucks on the roads hauling freight for customers. Gatik expects it to happen this year or next; the others haven't set timetables.

Don Burnette, CEO of Kodiak, said freeways are a better environment for autonomous vehicles than congested cities where ride-hailing robotaxis have been running. There are fewer pedestrians, and fewer

# Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, April 30, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 309 ~ 63 of 70

unexpected things happen. Still, there are higher speeds and longer braking distances.

In testing on highways with human backup drivers, Burnette said, Kodiak has never experienced a crash in which its trucks were at fault.

"At the end of the day," Burnette said, "these trucks should be much safer than human drivers."

Almost every year in the United States, a tractor-trailer plows into traffic that is stopped because of road construction, often causing deaths and injuries. By contrast, Burnette said, autonomous trucks pay attention all the time and are always watching 360 degrees.

Perhaps so. But at a Buc-ee's mega convenience store and gas station along Interstate 45 about 35 miles south of Dallas, the prospect of driverless semis struck a note of fear.

"It sounds like a disaster waiting to happen," said Kent Franz, a high school basketball coach in Chandler, Oklahoma, who was traveling to Houston for a wedding. "I've heard of the driverless cars — Tesla, what have you — and the accidents they've been having. Eighteen-wheelers? Something that heavy, relying on technology that has proven it can be faulty? Doesn't sound very comfortable to me."

Patti Pierce, a retired accountant from Plano, Texas, said she would be OK with the technology — in about a decade.

"I don't want to be on the road with them right now," she said. "I like the gadgets in my car, but I'm not sure the technology is good enough right now to have a truck that drives itself."

No federal regulations specifically cover autonomous vehicles, Koopman of Carnegie Mellon noted. Most states have no such regulations, either. Koopman said the automated-vehicle industry has persuaded many states to bar local governments from enacting such regulations. The result, he said, is that the public must trust the companies that are deploying autonomous semis.

The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration and the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration, both part of the federal Department of Transportation, lack authority to stop autonomous vehicles from going on the roads. If something goes wrong, though, they can require recalls or order trucks out of service.

"You can't expect the government to protect you here," Koopman said. "The company's going to decide when they think they're safe, and the only thing the regulator is going to do is judge them after the fact."

For the past five years, the motor carrier administration has been preparing safety standards for trucks with automated driving systems. The standards will govern inspections, maintenance and the remote monitoring of the trucks. But it's unclear when the rules will emerge from the regulatory process.

In the meantime, the autonomous semi companies say they can help address a truck driver shortage, estimated by the industry to amount to 64,000 drivers. Yet there also are worries that autonomous trucks eventually will supplant human drivers and cost them their livelihoods.

The Teamsters union, which represents about 600,000 drivers, most of them truckers, is pushing state legislatures to require human drivers to monitor the self-driving systems, contending that they are unsafe. A 2021 Transportation Department study concluded that the nationwide use of fully automated semis was years away, giving drivers time to transition to other transportation and logistics jobs that will be created.

Aurora's Urmsen said he thinks driverless semis will complement the work already done by human drivers, because many more goods will have to be moved for a growing population.

"If you're driving a truck today," he said, "my expectation is you're going to be able to retire driving a truck."

## **CBS Sports announces Matt Ryan will join NFL studio show.**

### **Longtime analysts Simms and Esiason depart**

NEW YORK (AP) — Matt Ryan, who retired last week after 15 years in the NFL, will join CBS Sports as a studio analyst on "The NFL Today" and Phil Simms and Boomer Esiason will leave after long runs on the show, the network announced Monday.

Ryan will join James Brown, Nate Burleson, Bill Cowher and JJ Watt. The 2016 NFL MVP and four-time Pro Bowl quarterback joined CBS Sports last season as an NFL game analyst and appeared in studio during the playoffs and Super Bowl.

"Matt had an outstanding first year at CBS Sports, excelling as both a studio and game analyst," CBS Sports president and CEO David Berson said. "He is the consummate team player and a Hall of Fame person. We love the chemistry he has with the studio crew and we're excited to see him entertain NFL fans and share his passion, insight and perspective alongside JB, Nate, Coach and JJ."

The contracts of Simms and Esiason expired after the Super Bowl.

Simms came to CBS in 1998 after the network won the rights to the AFC. He was the lead game analyst until he moved to the studio in 2017.

"Great 26 yrs run with CBS SPORTS. Even though that part of my career is over I look forward to what is next," Simms posted on social media.

Esiason was on "The NFL Today" for 22 years and was the show's longest-tenured analyst. Esiason will continue working on a New York sports talk radio show simulcast on CBS Sports Network.

"Phil and Boomer set the standard of excellence for NFL analysts," Berson said. "We are so grateful for their immeasurable contributions to CBS Sports. We genuinely thank them for being incredible teammates and for their passion, dedication and commitment to elevating CBS Sports' NFL coverage every season."

Ryan played for the Atlanta Falcons and Indianapolis Colts and ranks in the top 10 in NFL history in passing yards (62,792), touchdowns (381), completions (5,551) and attempts (8,464).

The change is the first significant move under Berson, who took over three weeks ago following the retirement of chairman Sean McManus.

## **Putin likely didn't order death of Russian opposition leader Navalny, US official says**

By AAMER MADHANI Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — U.S. intelligence officials have determined that Russian President Vladimir Putin likely didn't order the death of imprisoned opposition leader Alexei Navalny in February, according to an official familiar with the determination.

While U.S. officials believe Putin was ultimately responsible for the death of Navalny, who endured brutal conditions during his confinement, the intelligence community has found "no smoking gun" that Putin was aware of the timing of Navalny's death — which came soon before the Russian president's reelection — or directly ordered it, according to the official.

The official spoke on the condition of anonymity to discuss the sensitive matter.

Soon after Navalny's death, U.S. President Joe Biden said Putin was ultimately responsible but did not accuse the Russian president of directly ordering it.

At the time, Biden said the U.S. did not know exactly what had happened to Navalny but that "there is no doubt" that his death "was the consequence of something that Putin and his thugs did."

Navalny, 47, Russia's best-known opposition politician and Putin's most persistent foe, died Feb. 16 in a remote penal colony above the Arctic Circle while serving a 19-year sentence on extremism charges that he rejected as politically motivated.

He had been behind bars since January 2021 after returning to Russia from Germany, where he had been recovering from nerve-agent poisoning that he blamed on the Kremlin.

Russian officials have said only that Navalny died of natural causes and have vehemently denied involvement both in the poisoning and in his death.

In March, a month after Navalny's death, Putin won a landslide reelection for a fifth term, an outcome that was never in doubt.

The Wall Street Journal first reported about the U.S. intelligence determination.



## Horses show off in Versailles, keeping alive royal tradition at soon-to-be Olympic equestrian venue

By SYLVIE CORBET Associated Press

VERSAILLES, France (AP) — The historic Versailles Palace Gardens will soon host the Paris Olympics equestrian sports.

Meanwhile, the select riders in the National Equestrian Academy who handle the palace's famed royal stables are continuing to care for their beloved horses. Almost every day at dawn, they enjoy the quietness and splendor of the grass lawns and woods of the park of the Versailles Palace, before thousands of visitors from across the world spread in.

The elite academy, founded by French horse trainer and impresario Bartabas, who decided to revive the splendid building in 2003, has only 12 riders. After years of hard work, they take part in a prestigious show at the Great Stables of Versailles every weekend to the delight of spectators.

While the academy is open to both genders, women form the majority of applicants.

"We are only women here now," said one of the riders, Fanny Lorré, smiling as she noted how big a change it is from the once male-dominated world of equestrianism.

Lorré, 28, is known as an "ecuyères," the French word for squire or horse rider, and has a vast knowledge of the royal stables' history.

Commissioned by France's King Louis XIV, or the Sun King, the stables were built between 1679 and 1682 opposite the palace's main entrance. They housed more than 2,000 horses at one point during the 18th century. Now, the academy's riders train about 40 horses, notably including Lusitanos, a Portuguese breed known to be a favorite of Louis XIV.

The Great Stables were built "just before the king arrived here in Versailles. He wanted very big and wonderful stables because he had a lot of horses," Lorré said. "Horses at that time were very important in the court and in the everyday life."

"They built it in only three years, which is quite amazing when you see how big the building is," she said. "And it was also a school for the people at that time (who wanted to) learn how to ride ... a little bit of philosophy, mathematics and everything so they can become the best person in the kingdom."

Under the monarchy, horses were used by the royal family, its entourage and visitors to go hunting, show their equestrian skills and enjoy rides in the Versailles gardens. They were an essential part of festivities and a symbol of the king's power.

After the French Revolution, in the 19th century, the army took over the stables, using them for its cavalry regiments until World War II. They were then used as a storage facility for the Versailles district's archives and later for horse carriages until Bartabas stepped in and formed the academy.

Its members are known for their contemporary take on equestrian art. They receive fencing, dancing and Japanese archery classes to help them hone skills used in their weekly shows.

As the Paris Games approach, the palace, which will host equestrian and modern pentathlon events during the July 26-Aug. 11 Games, is starting to buzz with excitement.

The academy members, though not participating in the Games, are looking forward to seeing Olympic riders galloping in the gardens of the Versailles Palace, Lorré said.

"There's a lot of historical meaning to have those Olympics in the gardens," noted academy rider Dounia Kazzoul, 26. "The king used to organize a lot of (theater) plays and shows in those gardens. So it's really great to have that here!"

Grandstands, outdoor arenas and gallop tracks are now being set up for the Games across the park, where up to 40,000 people are expected to attend the cross-country part of the event. Olympic horses will be housed in temporary air-conditioned facilities built close to the competition site.

The palace itself will remain open to the public during the Games. To coincide with the Olympics, it will hold an exhibition dedicated to horses and equestrian civilization in Europe from July 2 to Nov. 3.

The National Equestrian Academy will continue to present its show at Versailles this summer until Aug. 7. Visitors can also discover the nearby Gallery of Coaches, which contains one of the largest collections of coaches in Europe.

## Have you heard the one about Trump? Biden tries humor on the campaign trail

By CHRIS MEGERIAN and JOSH BOAK Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Joe Biden is out to win votes by scoring some laughs at the expense of Donald Trump, unleashing mockery with the goal of getting under the former president's thin skin and reminding the country of his blunders.

Like a comic honing his routine, the Democratic president has been testing and expanding his jokes over the past few weeks. It started with jabs about his Republican opponent's financial problems, and now Biden regularly pokes fun at Trump's coiffed hair, his pampered upbringing and his attempt to make a few extra bucks by selling a special edition of the Bible.

The jokes are the latest attempt to crack the code on how to clap back at Trump, whose own insult comedy schtick has redrawn the boundaries of what is acceptable in modern politics. Few have had much luck, whether they try to take the high road or get down and dirty with Trump, the presumptive Republican nominee for president.

"This is a constant challenge," said Eric Schultz, a senior adviser to former President Barack Obama. Trump is "not someone who plays by the rules. So it's up to Biden to figure out how to adapt and play by new rules of engagement."

So far, Biden has been trying to thread a delicate needle to boost his chances of a second term. He uses humor to paint Trump as a buffoon unworthy of the Oval Office, but the president stops short of turning the election into a laughing matter.

Sometimes he finds that a few jokes can energize an audience even more than a major policy victory and draw precious attention away from an opponent who otherwise commands the spotlight even while stuck in a New York courtroom for his first criminal trial.

The latest example came at the White House Correspondents' Association dinner on Saturday night. After years of Trump constantly needling Biden as "sleepy" and mocking his age (Biden is 81, Trump is 77), Biden lobbed the insult back after Trump appeared to doze off in court. Trump's campaign disputed that he was asleep, and with no video camera in place and trained on him there's no way of knowing for sure.

Still, Biden nicknamed his rival "Sleepy Don," adding, "I kind of like that. I may use it again."

"Of course the 2024 election's in full swing and, yes, age is an issue," he said. "I'm a grown man running against a 6-year-old."

Trump didn't seem to appreciate the ribbing, posting on his social media platform that the dinner was "really bad" and Biden was "an absolute disaster."

But jokes at the annual black-tie affair, which also features a professional comedian (this year it was Colin Jost of NBC's "Saturday Night Live"), are nothing new. The real meat of Biden's routine comes during campaign speeches in which he devotes a few moments to taking digs at Trump in between recitations of policy proposals and legislative accomplishments.

"Remember when he was trying to deal with COVID? He suggested: Inject a little bleach in your vein," Biden said Wednesday to a labor union, describing Trump's guidance from the White House during the pandemic. "He missed. It all went to his hair."

In Tampa, Florida, the day before, he assailed Trump for the Supreme Court's ruling that overturned abortion protections — with three justices nominated by Trump voting in the majority of *Dobbs v. Jackson Women's Health Organization* — and then pivoted to the former president's hawking of a \$60 "God Bless the USA" Bible.

"He described the *Dobbs* decision as a 'miracle,'" Biden said of Trump. "Maybe it's coming from that Bible he's trying to sell. Whoa. I almost wanted to buy one just to see what the hell is in it."

Biden rarely references Trump's court cases, but jokes about financial problems that began soon after the former president was ordered to pay \$454 million in a civil case in New York.

"Just the other day," Biden said at a fundraiser in Dallas last month, "a defeated-looking guy came up to me and said, 'Mr. President, I need your help. I'm being crushed with debt. I'm completely wiped out.' I had to say, 'Donald, I can't help you.'"

# Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, April 30, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 309 ~ 67 of 70

Even when Biden tries his hand at humor, he rarely strays far from talking about policies. He likes to note that he signed a \$1 trillion bipartisan infrastructure law — after his opponent failed to do so despite repeatedly holding White House events to drum up support for an idea that never materialized.

“He promised ‘Infrastructure Week’ every week for four years and never built a damn thing,” Biden said this month to a group of laughing union members.

The dilemma is that Trump, who tells voters the whole American political system is hopelessly corrupt, can get away with name-calling that would backfire on other candidates. During his rallies, Trump imitates Biden as a feeble old man who cannot find the stairs after giving a brief speech, and he calls the president “crooked” and “a demented tyrant.”

The Republican’s campaign said the insults will only intensify as Biden tries to give them a taste of their own medicine.

Steven Cheung, a Trump campaign spokesman, said Biden is “shuffling his feet like a short-circuited Roomba,” referring to the robot vacuum, while failing to address the “out-of-control border” and “runaway inflation.”

Rick Tyler, who worked on the presidential campaign of Sen. Ted Cruz, R-Texas, in 2016, said voters have a double standard because expectations are different for Trump, who first became famous as a real estate developer and the star of the reality TV show “The Apprentice.”

“Celebrities don’t really have standards, and Trump is in that lane,” Tyler said. For a politician going up against Trump, “it’s like trying to play a sport with the wrong equipment.”

Sen. Marco Rubio, R-Fla., found that out the hard way in the Republican primary in 2016. After Rubio joked about Trump having “small hands” — suggesting that another part of him was small, too — Trump swung back by saying, “I guarantee you there’s no problem.”

“Nobody has ever beaten Trump by getting in the ring with him,” said Alex Conant, communications director for Rubio’s campaign.

Karen Finney, who advised Democrat Hillary Clinton in her 2016 White House run, said Trump can bait opponents into “communicating on his terms, not your terms.”

“It’s the kind of thing where you have to have a balance,” she said. “You could spend all day just responding.”

But if Trump’s humor is blunt, Biden sometimes tries to get the most mileage by staying subtle. During a Pittsburgh stop earlier this month, Biden spoke elliptically about Trump’s trial, betting his audience was already in on the joke.

Trump, he said, is “a little busy right now.”

## **Affluent Americans are driving US economy and likely delaying need for Fed rate cuts**

By CHRISTOPHER RUGABER AP Economics Writer

WASHINGTON (AP) — Since retiring two years ago, Joan Harris has upped her travel game.

Once or twice a year, she visits her two adult children in different states. She’s planning multiple other trips, including to a science fiction convention in Scotland and a Disney cruise soon after that, along with a trip next year to neolithic sites in Great Britain.

“I really have more money to spend now than when I was working,” said Harris, 64, an engineer who worked 29 years for the federal government and lives in Albuquerque, New Mexico.

Back then, she and her now-ex-husband were paying for their children’s college educations and piling money into savings accounts. Now, she’s splurging a bit and, for the first time, is willing to pay for first-class plane tickets. She plans to fly business class to Scotland and has arranged for a higher-level suite on the cruise.

“I suddenly realized, with my dad getting old and my mom dying, it’s like, ‘No, you can’t take it with you,’” she said. “I could become incapacitated to the point where I couldn’t enjoy something like going to Scotland or going on a cruise. So I better do it, right?”

# Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, April 30, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 309 ~ 68 of 70

Older Americans like Harris are fueling a sustained boost to the U.S. economy. Benefiting from outside gains in the stock and housing markets over the past several years, they are accounting for a larger share of consumer spending — the principal driver of economic growth — than ever before.

And much of their spending is going toward higher-priced services like travel, health care and entertainment, putting further upward pressure on those prices — and on inflation. Such spending is relatively immune to the Federal Reserve's push to slow growth and tame inflation through higher borrowing rates, because it rarely requires borrowing.

Affluent older Americans, if they own government bonds, may even be benefiting from the Fed's rate hikes. Those hikes have led to higher bond yields, generating more income for those who own such bonds.

The so-called "wealth effect," whereby rising home and stock values give people confidence to increase their spending, is a big reason why the economy has defied expectations of a sharp slowdown. Its unexpected strength, which is contributing to stickier inflation, has forced a shift in the Fed's plans.

As recently as March, the Fed's policymakers had projected that they would cut their benchmark rate three times this year. Since then, though, inflation measures have remained uncomfortably high, partly a consequence of brisk consumer spending. Chair Jerome Powell made clear recently that the Fed isn't confident enough that inflation is sustainably easing to cut rates.

When the Fed meets this week, it is sure to keep its benchmark rate unchanged at a 23-year high, the result of 11 rate hikes. The Fed's hikes have forced up borrowing costs across the economy — for everything from home and auto loans to credit cards and business loans.

Even as the Fed has jacked up borrowing costs, stock and home values have kept rising, enlarging the net worth of affluent households. Consider that household wealth grew by an average of 5.5% a year in the decade after the 2008-2009 Great Recession but that since 2018, it's accelerated to nearly 9%.

Stock prices, as measured by the S&P 500 index, are about 72% higher than they were five years ago. Home values soared 58% from the end of 2018 through 2023, according to the Federal Reserve.

All told, Americans' wealth has ballooned from \$98 trillion at the end of 2018 to \$147 trillion five years later. Adjusting for inflation, the gains are less dramatic, but still substantial.

"People have had significant wealth gains in stocks, significant wealth gains in fixed income, significant wealth gains in home prices, significant wealth gains even in crypto," said Torsten Slok, chief economist at the Apollo Group, an asset manager. "All that adds up to still a very significant tailwind."

The gains are hardly universal. The wealthiest one-tenth of Americans own two-thirds of all household wealth. Still, wealth for the median household — the midpoint between the richest and poorest — rose 37% from 2019 to 2022, the sharpest rise on record since the 1980s according to the Fed, to \$193,000.

Wealth is also disproportionately held by older Americans. People ages 55 and over now own nearly three-quarters of all household wealth, up from 68% in 2010, according to the Fed. In percentage terms since the pandemic, household net worth has also surged for younger households. But because younger adults started from a much lower level, their gains haven't been anywhere near enough to keep pace with older Americans.

"The baby boomers are the richest retiring generation we've ever had," said Edward Yardeni, president of Yardeni Research. "Not everybody is well-off, but we've never had a retiring generation with this much wealth. That's one of the major reasons why the economy is strong."

That said, many older Americans face significant financial challenges. One-quarter of Americans over age 50 have no retirement savings, according to a survey by the AARP.

Even so, as the huge baby boom generation has aged and, on average, has accumulated more assets, they have accounted for a rising share of consumer spending. Americans ages 65 or over supplied nearly 22% of consumer spending in 2022, the most recent year for which data is available. That's the highest such figure on records dating to 1989, up from about 16% in 2010.

One result of the Fed's higher rates has been a kind of bifurcated economy, by age. Older, wealthier Americans who already own homes and cars have been much less affected by the Fed's rate hikes. By contrast, younger Americans are enduring a combination of expensive home prices and high mortgage rates, making it much harder to buy a first home.

# Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, April 30, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 309 ~ 69 of 70

Harris, for one, sees this divide in her own family: Her home and car are paid off, and higher interest rates have had little effect on her finances. She recently visited a home in her neighborhood that she was surprised to see priced at \$500,000. She bought hers, which she thinks could fetch a higher price, for \$162,000 in 1991.

Her 25-year-old daughter, Ruby, had a vastly different experience during a recent visit to an open house near her boyfriend's apartment in the Boston area. An older two-bedroom apartment was on sale for \$800,000; it sold within a week.

Ruby considers herself fortunate to have a well-paying job as a materials engineer. But that apartment price still seemed astronomical. She loves the area, especially for its walkability, but doubts she'll ever be able to afford a house there.

"In the long term, it probably won't be affordable to stay here," she said. "Whereas the Midwest is more affordable but won't have the neighborhoods that I like."

Economists calculate that while the wealth effect generally has a relatively modest effect on spending, it may be larger now. That's because retirement-age Americans, who are more likely to spend out of their wealth, constitute a larger proportion of the nation: Americans ages 65 and over make up about 17% of the population, up from 13% in 2010. And people with stock holdings can now easily access their account balances online, increasing their awareness of increases in their net worth.

Research by Michael Brown, an economist at Visa and others has also found that significant stock market wealth typically boosts spending on discretionary items such as restaurants, travel and entertainment — sectors of the economy where spending is surging and inflation remains elevated.

The Conference Board, a business research group, asks Americans in its monthly survey of consumer confidence whether they plan an overseas vacation in the next six months. Slok noted that more than one in five households say they are — a record-high proportion on records dating to 1967.

The cruise provider Royal Caribbean just reported blowout earnings and strong demand, "leading to higher pricing for all our key products," CEO Jason Liberty told investors. "Customer sentiment remains very positive, bolstered by resilient labor markets, wage growth, stabilizing inflation and record-high household net worth."

Last week, the Fed's preferred inflation gauge, excluding volatile food and energy costs, rose 2.8% from a year earlier, a sign that inflation remains sticky. Solid consumer spending, particularly on services, was one key factor. In one measure of services inflation that the Fed watches closely, prices climbed 3.5% from a year earlier, far higher than is consistent with its 2% inflation target.

## Today in History: April 30, Vietnam War ends with fall of Saigon

By The Associated Press undefined

Today in History

Today is Tuesday, April 30, the 121st day of 2024. There are 245 days left in the year.

Today's Highlight in History:

On April 30, 1975, the Vietnam War ended as the South Vietnamese capital of Saigon fell to Communist forces.

On this date:

In 1789, George Washington took the oath of office in New York as the first president of the United States.

In 1803, the United States purchased the Louisiana Territory from France for 60 million francs, the equivalent of about \$15 million.

In 1812, Louisiana became the 18th state of the Union.

In 1900, engineer John Luther "Casey" Jones of the Illinois Central Railroad died in a train wreck near Vaughan, Mississippi, after staying at the controls in a successful effort to save the passengers.

In 1945, as Soviet troops approached his Berlin bunker, Adolf Hitler took his own life, as did his wife of one day, Eva Braun.

In 1947, President Harry S. Truman signed a resolution officially confirming the name of Hoover Dam,

# Groton Daily Independent

**Tuesday, April 30, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 309 ~ 70 of 70**

which had also come to be known as "Boulder Dam."

In 1958, Britain's Life Peerages Act 1958 allowed women to become members of the House of Lords.

In 1970, President Richard Nixon announced the U.S. was sending troops into Cambodia, an action that sparked widespread protest.

In 1973, President Richard Nixon announced the resignations of top aides H.R. Haldeman and John Ehrlichman, Attorney General Richard G. Kleindienst and White House counsel John Dean, who was actually fired.

In 1983, blues singer and guitarist Muddy Waters died in Westmont, Illinois, at age 68.

In 1993, top-ranked women's tennis player Monica Seles was stabbed in the back during a match in Hamburg, Germany, by a man who described himself as a fan of second-ranked German player Steffi Graf. (The man, convicted of causing grievous bodily harm, was given a suspended sentence.)

In 2004, Arabs expressed outrage at graphic photographs of naked Iraqi prisoners being humiliated by U.S. military police; President George W. Bush condemned the mistreatment of prisoners, saying "that's not the way we do things in America."

In 2021, Disneyland reopened its gates after a 13-month closure caused by the coronavirus; capacity was limited for the reopening, and only California residents were allowed in.

In 2022, Naomi Judd, the Kentucky-born singer of the Grammy-winning duo The Judds and mother of Wynonna and Ashley Judd, died at age 76.

Today's Birthdays: Singer Willie Nelson is 91. King Carl XVI Gustaf of Sweden is 78. Movie director Alan Arkush is 76. Actor Perry King is 76. Singer Merrill Osmond is 71. Movie director Jane Campion is 70. Movie director Lars von Trier is 68. Former Canadian Prime Minister Stephen Harper is 65. Actor Paul Gross is 65. Basketball Hall of Famer Isiah Thomas is 63. Actor Adrian Pasdar is 59. Rock singer J.R. Richards (Dishwalla) is 57. Rapper Turbo B (Snap) is 57. Rock musician Clark Vogeler (Toadies) is 55. Rock musician Chris Henderson (3 Doors Down) is 53. Country singer Carolyn Dawn Johnson is 54. Actor Lisa Dean Ryan is 53. R&B singer Akon is 52. R&B singer Jeff Timmons (98 Degrees) is 51. Actor Johnny Galecki is 49. Actor Sam Heughan is 44. Actor Kunal Nayyar is 43. Rapper Lloyd Banks is 42. Actor Kirsten Dunst is 42. Actor Dianna Agron is 38. Country singer Brandon Lancaster is 35. Rapper/producer Travis Scott is 33.