

# Groton Daily Independent

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## 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

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



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.

## 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.

## **OPEN:** Recycling Trailer in Groton

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

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# 1440

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Dozens of New York City police officers entered Columbia University's campus last night after student protesters overtook an administrative building earlier in the day. The students, who were arrested and led out of the building by police, are expected to face charges, including trespassing and criminal mischief. The development marks an escalation in campus tensions over the ongoing Israel-Hamas war.

Binance founder Changpeng Zhao was sentenced to four months in prison yesterday for violating US money laundering laws and federal sanctions at the world's largest cryptocurrency exchange. The sentence is less than the three years prosecutors had sought and the 12- to 18-month sentencing guidelines for the crime.

Eight regional daily newspapers sued OpenAI and Microsoft for copyright infringement yesterday, the latest in an industrywide reckoning with the rise of content-dependent artificial intelligence. The outlets, including the New York Daily News and the Chicago Tribune, are owned by hedge fund Alden Global Capital, the nation's second-largest newspaper operator.

## Sports, Entertainment, & Culture

"Hell's Kitchen" and "Stereophonic" haul in 13 nominations apiece for the 2024 Tony Awards (June 16); see complete list of nominations.

UEFA Champions League semifinal kicks off; see full preview and match schedule. The US and Mexico drop out of contention to jointly host 2027 Women's World Cup, will instead focus on 2031 bid.

Taylor Swift claims a record-breaking top 14 positions on the Billboard Hot 100 chart; Swift also charted 32 of the top 100 spots, a record for a female artist.

## Science & Technology

Environmental Protection Agency bans consumer use of methylene chloride, a cancer-causing compound typically found in paint stripper. Breast cancer screenings should begin at age 40 for women, down from 50, per recommendation from national advisory panel.

Researchers demonstrate first fetus-to-fetus kidney tissue transplant; carried out using kidney tissue in rats, experiment may lead to treatments for human fetuses with fatal developmental conditions.

Primordial black hole capture may explain the lack of pulsars—highly magnetized neutron stars—at the center of the Milky Way, new study suggests.

## Business & Markets

US stock markets close lower (S&P 500 -1.6%, Dow -1.5%, Nasdaq -2.0%) following higher-than-expected US wage data ahead of Federal Reserve's interest rate decision today.

Starbucks shares fall over 11% in after-hours trading after missing revenue and earnings estimates, reports 4% quarterly drop in same-store sales. Amazon tops revenue and earnings expectations as AI boom boosts cloud-computing unit. Eli Lilly shares close up nearly 6% after beating revenue and earnings estimates, raises 2024 revenue forecast by \$2B.

WeWork strikes \$450M restructuring deal to exit Chapter 11 bankruptcy by end of May, rejecting financing bid from founder and former CEO Adam Neumann.

## Politics & World Affairs

US Drug Enforcement Administration reportedly set to reclassify marijuana from a Schedule I to Schedule III drug, easing federal restrictions on the substance; will require sign-off from White House Office of Management and Budget.

House Democratic leadership announces they will vote to keep House Speaker Mike Johnson (R, LA-4) in his role if Rep. Marjorie Taylor Greene (R, GA-14) forces a vote to oust Johnson. Former President Donald Trump fined \$9K for violating gag order nine times in criminal hush money trial in New York.

Indonesia's Mount Ruang volcano erupts again, less than two weeks after its first eruption since 2002; latest eruption forces 12,000 people to evacuate, prompts tsunami warning.

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## Elementary Spring Concert



These fifth grade students received superiors at Middle School Band Contest in Aberdeen.

From left to right: Andi Iverson and Libby Johnson- Trumpet Duet, Gracie Borg- Flute, Ayce Warrington- Trombone, Lillian Davis- Alto Sax, Tori Schuster- Alto Sax, Amara Freeland- Alto Sax, and Addison Steffes- Flute. (Courtesy photo)



The fifth grade band performed, "Blazon!," Bandroom Boogie, and "Tropical Sunshine." The band is directed by Desiree Yeigh (Photo by Paul Kosel)

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**A large crowd was on hand for the elementary spring concert held Tuesday in the GHS Gym.** (Photo by Paul Kosel)



## R.O.A.R. Award

**Paraprofessional Alison Tvinnereim was presented with the R.O.A.R. Award at the elementary concert. Members of the elementary PAC presented the award and she will receive \$500. She is pictured in the middle.** (Photo by Paul Kosel)

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**It was a sea of color as the elementary spring concert was presented Tuesday. The first through fifth graders sang, "Hawaiian Beach Party."** (Photo by Paul Kosel)



**The Junior Kindergarten through first grade sang, "White Sandy Beach."** (Photo by Paul Kosel)



**The kindergarten and first grade sang, 'Over the Rainbow.' The director is Tanner Pietz.**  
(Photo by Paul Kosel)

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The second and third graders sang, "Lovely Hula Hands" and "Count on Me." (Photo by Paul Kosel)



The fourth and fifth graders sang, "Wipe Out" and "What a Wonderful World." (Photo by Paul Kosel)

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## Guthmiller places second at Mobridge-Pollock golf invite

Carly Guthmiller placed second at the Mobridge-Pollock golf meet held Monday in Mobridge. Guthmiller shot a 91 on the day, nine strokes behind the winner, Trey Speer, of Chamberlain.

Carlee Johnson placed eighth with a 103, Carly Gilbert was 12th with a 110, Mia Crank was 13th with 118 and Claire Schuelke was 16th with a 138.

Chamberlain won the team title with 410 points followed by Groton Area with 421, Selby with 435 and Mobridge-Pollock with 438.

## Gov. Noem Celebrates South Dakota's Reaffirmed AAA Credit Rating

PIERRE, S.D. – Today, Governor Kristi Noem celebrated S&P's reaffirmation of South Dakota's AAA credit rating.

The experts recognize South Dakota's economic strength and success," said Governor Noem. "Our state is thriving because of the conservative decisions we continue to make. I am proud of the work we've done here and am glad South Dakota is receiving national recognition."

S&P noted South Dakota's low debt levels, historically resilient economic profile, and strong population growth.

"Our ICR on South Dakota reflects the state's extensive history of adopting structurally balanced budgets, stable financial performance, and maintenance of what we view as very strong reserves," wrote S&P.

South Dakota's rating outlook remains stable. Our dedication to fiscal conservatism, strong money management, and continued low unemployment will ensure South Dakota's long-term economic success.

## Death Notice: Richard Anderson

Richard Anderson, 88, of Claremont passed away April 30, 2024 at Bethesda Home of Aberdeen. Services are pending with Paetznick-Garness Funeral Chapel, Groton.



**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.



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## SOUTH DAKOTA SEARCHLIGHT

<https://southdakotasearchlight.com>

### Critic says Noem's workforce ad campaign should be 'as dead as Cricket' after dog scandal

**But state official says there are 'no plans to make any changes'**

**BY: JOSHUA HAIAR - APRIL 30, 2024 7:17 PM**

South Dakota Gov. Kristi Noem's fame has powered a national workforce recruitment campaign, but some think her newfound infamy might doom it.

However, the state office managing the campaign says it will not change course.

The future of Noem's starring role in South Dakota's \$9 million Freedom Works Here ad campaign is triggering debate after she disclosed in a forthcoming book that she shot and killed her young dog named Cricket years ago. She wrote that the dog disrupted a hunting trip and displayed aggressive behavior, including killing chickens.

The incident has attracted a torrent of negative attention from both sides of the political spectrum, leading some to question the suitability of Noem's role as the face of a state effort to attract new workers.

"This has blown up in her face," said Mike Card, a political science professor at the University of South Dakota. "I think it ends the campaign as it is."

Card said making one person the face of the workforce recruitment campaign was a "dumb idea," because any problem with that person could make the ad dollars' limited life extra short-lived.

The national campaign features Noem in a series of video advertisements, working in various high-demand jobs. It was launched to bolster the state's workforce by showcasing the benefits of living and working in South Dakota, aimed at potential residents from other states.

The campaign was intended to capitalize on the nationwide name and image recognition Noem built during the COVID-19 pandemic, when she attracted praise and scorn for keeping the state largely open and for recruiting then-President Donald Trump to a fireworks show at Mount Rushmore. Prior to last week, Trump had acknowledged he was considering Noem as a running mate in this year's presidential election.

But the governor's dog-killing disclosure, which she shared in her upcoming book, "No Going Back," has affected her brand. Google Trends suggests the incident has resulted in more people Googling the governor than ever before.



**Gov. Kristi Noem recruits welders to move to South Dakota in one of her office's Freedom Works Here campaign ads.** (Courtesy of Governor's Office)

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## Noem administration responds

Yet the Governor's Office of Economic Development, which manages the Freedom Works Here campaign, is holding firm.

"Governor Noem and her commitment to our state have propelled this campaign forward at an unprecedented level," said office spokesperson Sarah Ebeling. "We currently have no plans to make any changes to Freedom Works Here."

Noem's spokesman, Ian Fury, did not immediately respond to messages Tuesday.

Sunday, while reaction to the dog story exploded across the internet, Noem tried to defend herself on X (formerly Twitter).

"What I learned from my years of public service, especially leading South Dakota through COVID, is people are looking for leaders who are authentic, willing to learn from the past, and don't shy away from tough challenges," Noem wrote. "My hope is anyone reading this book will have an understanding that I always work to make the best decisions I can for the people in my life."

She added, "South Dakota law states that dogs who attack and kill livestock can be put down."

## Republican lawmakers split on ad campaign

Critics argue the incident does not align with the welcoming image the state wants to project. One of those critics is Noem's fellow Republican state Rep. Scott Odenbach, of Spearfish, who previously criticized Noem's use of the Future Fund to pay for most of the Freedom Works Here campaign. The Future Fund is derived from a tax on employers.

"You really can't make this stuff up," Odenbach said. "This PR crisis provides the governor the perfect opportunity to pause and reflect — now that the VP slot appears to mercifully be off the table — on whether continued self-promotion with taxpayer Future Fund money benefits anybody. An immediate course correction would be advisable."

State Freedom Caucus Chairman Rep. Aaron Aylward, R-Harrisburg, agrees. He thinks people interested in moving to a tax-friendly state — a main highlight in the ad campaign — could find that information without ads starring the governor.

"People are going to move here no matter what," Aylward said. "We don't need any more of these economic development programs that are pushed using taxpayer dollars. People are going to move here based off of the great things that South Dakota already offers."

Not all Republican lawmakers are ready to give up on Freedom Works Here.

"I, like thousands of South Dakotans, consider my fur-kids to be permanent, irreplaceable members of my family," said Sen. Michael Rohl, R-Aberdeen. "I certainly hope the next phase isn't highlighting a need for veterinarians, but the Freedom Works Here campaign is designed to let skilled laborers across the country know of the endless opportunities available to them, and their families, in South Dakota. That message is true and resonates with Americans no matter the message bearer."

## 'As dead as Cricket'

Meanwhile, South Dakota Democrats are having a field day.

Drey Samuelson, who worked as Democratic former U.S. Sen. Tim Johnson's chief of staff for many years, said these are the types of public relations crises that ruin a political brand for life.

"I think it will stick," he said, explaining that people don't have to know anything about politics to have a strong opinion on a governor killing her dog. "She's become a laughingstock. Even Fox News is laughing at her."

He said having "Cruella Kristi" — a reference to the fictional dog-hater Cruella de Vil — continue selling South Dakota to American workers is not wise.

As for the future of the Freedom Works Here campaign, said Samuelson, "I think it's as dead as Cricket."

## Company earns final approval for exploratory gold drilling above Spearfish Canyon

BY: SEARCHLIGHT STAFF - APRIL 30, 2024 6:21 PM

A federal agency has issued final approval of a company's plan to conduct exploratory drilling for gold above Spearfish Canyon.

The company is Colorado-based Solitario Resources. Project maps show some of the proposed drill sites are less than a mile from the canyon rim in the Black Hills National Forest, about 15 miles southwest of Spearfish.

None of the proposed sites are inside Spearfish Canyon, according to a decision notice Monday from the U.S. Forest Service. The decision finalizes a provisional approval issued in December.

The area of the canyon below the drilling locations is a popular spot, with attractions including Roughlock Falls, Spearfish Falls, Spearfish Canyon Lodge and the Latchstring Restaurant.

Opponents of the drilling include the nonprofit Black Hills Clean Water Alliance.

"Not only does this project pose a serious risk to water quality in Lawrence County — including Spearfish Creek — it would also disrupt wildlife, add to our worsening air quality issues, and directly interrupt the recreation and tourism industry in our area," the alliance said in December.

Solitario said in a press release Tuesday that "several administrative steps remain before drilling begins," but it plans to begin drilling in June.

"There has been a lot of misinformation in the local public domain about mineral exploration, and we are extremely confident that we will be able to demonstrate that mineral exploration continues to be an environmentally safe and economically important activity on multiple-use public lands," said Solitario President and CEO Chris Herald.

The decision from the Forest Service says that based on an environmental assessment, the project "will not significantly impact the human environment," and a more comprehensive environmental impact statement will therefore not be prepared.

Additionally, the Forest Service "is only authorized to regulate, but not prohibit, lawful locatable mineral operations," the decision says. That's due to the General Mining Law of 1872, which protects the right to explore for minerals on federal public land.

Under its power to regulate exploration, the Forest Service will impose numerous restrictions on the



**A view of the Savoy area of Spearfish Canyon from atop the 76 Trail.**

(Seth Tupper/South Dakota Searchlight)

project to minimize disruptions to people, wildlife, the environment, groundwater, and cultural and archaeological resources. The company is also required to plug and cap holes, and restore drilling sites to a natural-looking condition.

Solitario's plan includes up to 25 drill sites with holes averaging 1,300 feet deep. Drilling will occur mostly from May to October over the course of five years. The company will examine core samples from the drilling to determine whether there's enough economically recoverable gold to support a mine.

The company is one of several proposing gold exploration or actively exploring for gold in the Black Hills, where exploration and mining have been ongoing since the 1870s.

The industry has brought jobs and economic growth, but also environmental damage. Before modern environmental regulations, the former Homestake Mine in Lead dumped so much pollution into White-wood Creek that the waterway became colloquially known as Cyanide Creek. Another former gold mine, the Gilt Edge near Lead, has been the site of a cleanup funded by the Environmental Protection Agency's Superfund for more than 20 years since the mine was abandoned by its bankrupt owner.

The only currently active, large-scale gold mine in the Black Hills is the Wharf Mine, near Lead and Terry Peak.

Lithium has also become a sought-after mineral in the Black Hills, with companies staking claims and exploring for deposits to mine for use in the batteries that power electric vehicles and other devices.

## Yellen touts success of IRS direct free-file pilot program, which includes SD

BY: ASHLEY MURRAY - APRIL 30, 2024 11:43 AM

WASHINGTON — The U.S. Internal Revenue Service saw a successful tax filing season, providing high levels of customer service, enforcing collection from the wealthy and launching a free filing option for taxpayers, Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen told tax writers on Capitol Hill Tuesday.

The agency "met or exceeded" goals for the filing season and "successfully" piloted IRS Direct File — the first time the government has provided a free public option for eligible taxpayers to file federal returns directly to the IRS, Yellen said.

"The modernization of the Internal Revenue Service, made possible by the (Inflation Reduction Act) and discretionary appropriations, has enabled us to combat tax evasion by the wealthiest Americans that costs our country over \$150 billion a year. And it's made it easier for taxpayers to file their taxes and get the credits they're owed," Yellen told the House Committee on Ways and Means.

Just over 140,800 taxpayers in a dozen states filed returns that were successfully accepted via the IRS Direct File pilot program, according to the agency. The completed returns were just a fraction of the 19 million taxpayers whose tax situations qualified them for the program.

The agency launched IRS Direct File, which was open to earners with simple W-2 income and limited deductions and credits, in early March and closed it April 21.



**Secretary of the Treasury Janet Yellen speaks to the Economic Club of Chicago luncheon on Jan. 25, 2024 in Chicago, Illinois. Yellen used the address to highlight the state of the U.S. economy.** (Scott Olson/Getty Images)

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Roughly 3.3 million people checked their eligibility for the program, and 423,450 actually logged in, according to the agency.

The states leading in returns filed included California with 33,328, Texas with 29,099, Florida with 20,840, New York with 14,144 and Washington with 13,954. Exact figures for other states in the pilot program were not provided by the IRS, but they included Arizona, Massachusetts, Nevada, New Hampshire, South Dakota, Tennessee and Wyoming.

The agency's survey of more than 11,000 Direct File users found that 90% of respondents ranked the experience on both the platform and with customer service as "excellent" or "above average."

The IRS has not yet announced whether it will continue or expand the pilot program next year.

## Opposition and state filing

IRS Direct File faced fierce opposition from Republicans who warned the program would steal business from the tax preparation industry.

Chief also among the critics were state officials who said that states could lose revenue because taxpayers would be confused about also filing state returns — something they're automatically prompted to do with a tax preparer or commercial tax prep software.

But supporters of free public tax filing are pointing to a "seamless" experience for Direct File users in Arizona and New York, who were able to import data from their federal to state return and file both for free.

The nonprofit Code for America built FileYourStateTaxes, a separate tool that integrated the processes.

Upon finishing their federal return with IRS Direct File, taxpayers in Arizona and New York — two of the pilot program states — were led straight to FileYourStateTaxes, where they could create an account and transfer the data onto their state return with one click, according to the nonprofit.

"Folks who have raised the question of 'How will state filing work in Direct File?' — it was a valid question to be raising. I think we've shown here that there's a really good answer," said Gabriel Zucker, the nonprofit's interim director for tax policy and partnerships.

Code for America reported follow-up survey results Tuesday that showed 96% of the tool's users were "very satisfied" or "satisfied," while 95% found the data transfer "seamless and quick."

The nonprofit reported that 90% of people in Arizona and New York who used IRS Direct File went on to use FileYourStateTaxes, and 98% of those returns were accepted.

Code for America did not provide the exact number of filers in either state.

Several states included in the IRS Direct File pilot do not collect state income taxes.

Other state governments already offer free public electronic filing for state income tax returns, including California and Massachusetts.

## Fight over Trump tax breaks

Yellen's testimony before U.S. House tax writers occurred against the backdrop of a looming tax fight in Congress as a Trump-era tax law nears its expiration at the end of 2025.

President Joe Biden told the North America's Building Trades Unions last week that the 2017 law will be "expired and dead forever if I'm reelected."

Biden and former President Donald Trump are debating their dueling tax policies as the 2024 presidential election nears.

Trump continues to vow he would raise tariffs, to more than 10%, on imports from China and Mexico. Economists have warned the increase will amount to a tax on American consumers, but Trump denies that charge.

Biden has repeatedly promised to not raise taxes on anyone making less than \$400,000, to expand the child tax credit and to institute a minimum tax for billionaires.

Biden and Democrats authorized an additional \$80 billion to modernize the IRS in 2022's so-called Inflation Reduction Act, including \$15 million earmarked for the agency to explore creating Direct File.

Defunding the IRS became a rallying cry for Republicans after the funding was approved.

The GOP clawed back \$20 billion of the funding in a budget deal with Democrats less than two years later. *Ashley Murray covers the nation's capital as a senior reporter for States Newsroom. Her coverage areas include domestic policy and appropriations.*

## U.S. House votes to kill BLM rule, delist gray wolf, end Boundary Waters mining limits

**Democrat references dogs, takes veiled shot at Noem during debate**

**BY: JACOB FISCHLER - APRIL 30, 2024 8:37 PM**

The U.S. House approved four bills focused on natural resources and land management Tuesday, promoting a Republican message of dissatisfaction with the Biden administration's approach to conservation.

The four bills would force the withdrawal of a recent Bureau of Land Management rule that would allow leases for conservation, remove mining restrictions near Minnesota's Boundary Waters, delist the gray wolf from the Endangered Species Act and block federal bans on lead ammunition.

The bills passed with few members of each party crossing the aisle. South Dakota Republican Dusty Johnson voted yes on all four measures.

They are unlikely to become law — or even receive a vote in the Democrat-controlled U.S. Senate — but their passage is an election-year message that Republicans support extractive industries in rural communities and oppose what they describe as an overreaching environmental agenda.

"Whether it's the new BLM rule that fundamentally threatens the western way of life, or the decision to lock up enormous deposits of increasingly scarce minerals, it's clear Biden and his bureaucrats have no interest in properly stewarding our federal lands or listening to local stakeholders," House Natural Resources Chairman Bruce Westerman, an Arkansas Republican, said in a statement following the votes.

Democrats blasted the bills, saying they were ideological rather than practical.

"The entire House schedule this week misses the mark," California Democrat Jared Huffman said. "It elevates right-wing ideology over the actual needs of the American people."

Huffman managed Democratic speakers during much of Tuesday's floor debate in place of House Natural Resources ranking Democrat Raúl Grijalva of Arizona, who announced a cancer diagnosis last month. Biden has signaled strong opposition to the bills.



**A gray wolf.** (Getty Images)

### BLM rule

The House voted 212-202 to pass Utah Republican John Curtis' bill to withdraw the recent BLM rule. Democrats Henry Cuellar of Texas, Jared Golden of Maine and Marie Gluesenkamp Perez of Washington voted yes, along with all Republicans except for Brian Fitzpatrick of Pennsylvania.

The rule creates a new type of lease for conservation, putting it on the same level as extractive industries like mining, energy development and livestock grazing.

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Republicans have vocally opposed it since it was first proposed last year, saying it upends the agency's decades-long multiple-use framework.

BLM lands should be reserved for productive uses, several House Republicans said Tuesday.

"Conservation is not a use," Westerman said on the House floor Tuesday. "It's a value and an outcome that can be generated by the uses" that are already in place on BLM lands.

Democrats said the rule did not block any other use, but simply elevated conservation, which they said was an important consideration.

"The rule will protect clean water, clean air and wildlife habitat," Colorado Democrat Joe Neguse said. "It'll promote the restoration of degraded landscapes. It will ensure that decisions are based on the best available science and collaboration with tribal, local and rural communities.

"But here is what the bill does not do," he added. "It does not disallow or preclude any one of the multiple uses that the chairman referenced during the opening of this particular debate."

## Boundary Waters

The House passed, 212-203, a bill to rescind an administration ban on mining operations near the Boundary Waters Canoe Area Wilderness in Northern Minnesota. Golden and Perez voted in favor along with all Republicans.

Pete Stauber, the representative from the area who introduced the measure, said it would promote the economy of the mineral-rich region.

Stauber, a Republican who chairs a mining subcommittee, criticized the Biden administration's approach to extractive industries. Boosting domestic mining would give U.S. policymakers more control over environmental and labor protections than importing critical minerals from overseas.

"Biden's mining policy of anywhere but America, any worker but American must be stopped," Stauber said. "We can find these minerals domestically under the best labor and environmental standards in the world. We know this all too well in Northern Minnesota, where mining is our past, our present and our future."

Democrats objected to the bill, saying it endangered the Boundary Waters separating Minnesota from Canada. The wilderness area is a beloved destination for many in the state.

"This piece of legislation would revoke key protections for a watershed that contains some of the purest, freshest water in the nation, in the world," Minnesota Democrat Betty McCollum said.

## Noem dog controversy referenced during gray wolf debate

The House voted 209-205 to pass a bill authored by Colorado Republican Lauren Boebert that would remove the gray wolf from the federal endangered species list.

Republicans Fitzpatrick, Matt Gaetz of Florida, Mike Garcia of California and Nancy Mace of South Carolina voted against the bill. Democrats Yadira Caraveo of Colorado, Cuellar, Golden and Perez voted in favor.

Under the bill, states would be empowered to manage wolf populations, Boebert said on the House floor.

During floor debate, Republicans said wolves have fully recovered and no longer needed federal protections. They also said the predators were a nuisance to livestock and the ranchers whose livelihoods depend on cattle and sheep.

"I stand here today celebrating the success story of the Endangered Species Act, seeing that the gray wolf has been fully recovered," Boebert said. "I also stand today ... in defense of our farmers and our ranchers."

Democrats argued that while gray wolves' numbers have increased, they are still in danger of extinction if federal protections were to disappear.

Virginia Democrat Don Beyer noted that states such as Montana, Wyoming and Idaho that have delisted wolves saw overhunting.

"We're in the midst of a biodiversity crisis," Beyer said. "We should be supporting current scientific efforts by fully funding the agencies that carry out ESA extinction preservation work."

Beyer also took a veiled shot at South Dakota Gov. Kristi Noem, a Republican who described in a recently



published memoir killing her 14-month-old hunting dog in a gravel pit.

Dogs kill twice as many cattle as wolves, Beyer said.

"Yet we don't say that all good dogs should go to the gravel pit," he said.

## Lead bullets

The House also passed, 214-201, a bill sponsored by Virginia Republican Rob Wittman to block the Department of Agriculture and Department of Interior from regulating the use of lead ammunition or lead fishing equipment on federal lands or waters.

Republicans Fitzpatrick, Gatez and Vern Buchanan of Florida voted against it.

Democrats Cuellar, Donald Davis of North Carolina, Robert Garcia of California, Golden, Vicente Gonzalez of Texas, Mary Peltola of Alaska and Perez voted in favor.

Each side accused the other of indulging special interests on the issue.

Democrats said Republicans were more concerned about blocking regulations on guns than promoting hunting and fishing.

"When it comes to guns, and now ammo, any type of restriction is too much for Republican ideology," Huffman said.

Westerman said the bill "probably is more aimed at" fending off "any kind of attack they can take on our Second Amendment rights," but said that Democrats' opposition was due to their loyalty to extreme environmentalists.

"Manage these lands for the public, not for your special interest, radical environmental groups," he said. "I think Congress has to take the lead on that."

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

## Biden administration to greatly ease marijuana regulations

BY: JACOB FISCHLER - APRIL 30, 2024 8:07 PM

The Biden administration plans to remove marijuana from a list of the most dangerous and highly regulated drugs, the Department of Justice said Tuesday night.

The Drug Enforcement Administration will propose moving the drug from a Schedule I substance, which also includes heroin and methamphetamine, to Schedule III, which is the category for regulated-but-legal drugs including testosterone and Tylenol with codeine.

"Today, the Attorney General circulated a proposal to reclassify marijuana from Schedule I to Schedule III," DOJ spokesperson Xochitl Hinojosa said in a statement to States Newsroom. "Once published by the Federal Register, it will initiate a formal rulemaking process as prescribed by Congress in the Controlled Substances Act."

Cannabis has been listed as a Schedule I drug under the Controlled Substances Act since 1971, even as many states have moved to legalize recreational use for more than a decade and medicinal use for even longer.

State-legal marijuana businesses make up a multibillion-dollar industry, but the illegal status of the drug under federal law creates barriers unseen by other industries, including a lack of access to banking and the inability to deduct business expenses from taxes.

Social justice advocates have also noted that prosecutions for marijuana-related crimes have hurt communities of color. Many of those convicted for offenses related to marijuana have not benefited from the recent decriminalization in many states.

Moving cannabis to Schedule III would allow a more permissive approach to the drug, including permitting greater study of medicinal uses and allowing related businesses to use a common tax deduction.

Schumer praises development

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Congressional leaders on the issue and other advocates of changing marijuana's status welcomed the news Tuesday afternoon, even as they called for further action.

"It is great news that DEA is finally recognizing that restrictive and Draconian cannabis laws need to change to catch up to what science and the majority of Americans have said loud and clear," Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer said in a statement.

The New York Democrat added that other legislation, including bills to provide cannabis businesses with greater access to banking and to completely delist the drug, is still needed.

"Congress must do everything we can to end the federal prohibition on cannabis and address longstanding harms caused by the war on drugs," he said.

Sen. John Hickenlooper, a Democrat from Colorado who was the state's governor when it and Washington became the first states to legalize recreational use in 2012, said the news was welcome but did not go far enough.

"Rescheduling marijuana is a step in the right direction. But – just a step," he posted to X. "Marijuana should be DEscheduled altogether."

The state's current Gov. Jared Polis, also a Democrat, cheered the move in a written statement.

"I am thrilled by the Biden Administration's decision to begin the process of finally rescheduling cannabis, following the lead of Colorado and 37 other states that have already legalized it for medical or adult use, correcting decades of outdated federal policy," Polis said.

"This action is good for Colorado businesses and our economy, it will improve public safety, and will support a more just and equitable system for all."

The U.S. Cannabis Council, a business group, applauded the expected change.

The move was based on U.S. Department of Health and Human Services research and would have myriad benefits for business, Executive Director Edward Conklin said in a written statement.

The update would put marijuana on a path to full legalization and make it easier for state-legal businesses to run profitable operations, he said.

"Moving to Schedule III represents a tectonic shift in our nation's drug laws. The US Cannabis Council is committed to ending federal cannabis prohibition, and we believe that reclassification is a necessary and critical step toward that goal," he wrote. "In the coming days, we will submit comments to the DEA in support of the proposed rule."

*Jennifer Shutt contributed to this report.*

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



**David Burr demonstrates removing leaves on marijuana plants to allow more light for growth at Essence Vegas' 54,000-square-foot marijuana cultivation facility on July 6, 2017, in Las Vegas, Nevada.** (Ethan Miller/Getty Images)

## Trump says he'd use police, National Guard and possibly the military to expel immigrants

BY: ARIANA FIGUEROA - APRIL 30, 2024 5:00 PM



**Republican presidential candidate and former U.S. President Donald Trump speaks at the Conservative Political Action Conference (CPAC) at the Gaylord National Resort Hotel And Convention Center on Feb. 24, 2024, in National Harbor, Maryland.** (Anna

MoneyMaker/Getty Images)

WASHINGTON — Former President Donald Trump in his second term would carry out mass deportations of undocumented immigrants by utilizing local law enforcement, the National Guard and potentially the U.S. military, according to a lengthy interview he conducted with Time magazine.

"When we talk military, generally speaking, I talk National Guard," the presumptive 2024 GOP nominee for president said in an interview that published Tuesday.

Trump has vowed that on his first day in office, he plans to roll out a massive deportation effort reminiscent of an immigration crackdown that took place in the 1950s.

"I would have no problem using the military, per se," he said. "We have to have law and order in our country. And

whichever gets us there, but I think the National Guard will do the job."

The interviewer, Time magazine national politics reporter Eric Cortellessa, asked how Trump could justify using the military, given the Posse Comitatus Act, an 1878 law that removed the military from civil law enforcement. "Well, these aren't civilians," Trump responded. "These are people that aren't legally in our country."

The Biden campaign on Tuesday night issued a statement slamming Trump's remarks, saying he would use the military to separate immigrant families.

"Trump repeating troubling and dangerous rhetoric goes against the very fabric of who we are as a nation," said U.S. Rep. Veronica Escobar, D-Texas, Biden-Harris 2024 campaign co-chair. "He isn't just committing to reimplement the cruel, systematic policies of ripping away mothers from their children from his time in office – he's pledging to go further by using the military and law enforcement to enact his cruel, anti-American, and ineffective immigration policies.

"I saw the dire consequences of his language and policies firsthand during my first term in Congress: my community was the victim of his continued and consistent xenophobic rhetoric when a white supremacist – who published a screed online using Trump's own words – slaughtered Latinos in El Paso on August 3rd, 2019. We cannot go back."

Trump cited using the National Guard in Minneapolis in 2020. However, it was not Trump but Democratic Minnesota Gov. Tim Walz who activated the National Guard in response to massive protests after Minneapolis police officer Derek Chauvin killed George Floyd.

Floyd, a Black man, died when Chauvin held his knee on Floyd's neck for nearly nine minutes. Chauvin

was convicted of murder in 2022.

"We will be using local law enforcement," Trump said, adding that he wants special immunity for police from prosecution.

"And we have to give the police back the power and respect that they deserve," he said. "Now, there will be some mistakes, and there are certain bad people and that's a terrible thing. And you know, police are being prosecuted all the time. And we want to give them immunity from prosecution if they're doing their job."

Trump said he would create funding incentives for local and state police departments to take part in deportations.

"Well, there's a possibility that some won't want to participate, and they won't partake in the riches, you know," Trump said.

He's likely to face pushback from Democratic-led states and municipalities, as well as legal challenges.

Trump did not go into detail about how much money he would request from Congress for his deportation plans. The control of Congress, now split between Republicans in the House and Democrats in the Senate, also could shift after this fall's elections.

Trump added that he would not rule out building mass detention centers to carry out mass deportations.

"It's possible that we'll do it to an extent, but we shouldn't have to do very much of it, because we're going to be moving them out as soon as we get to it," Trump said.

Those policies are likely to face legal challenges, and Trump said he would follow any ruling from the Supreme Court, where he picked three of the nine justices, solidifying a conservative court for decades.

"I have great respect for the Supreme Court," he said.

Even though Trump also promised mass deportations in his first term, those first four years had fewer deportations than the first term of the Obama administration.

In the first four years of the Obama administration, there were more than 1.5 million non-citizens deported and the first Trump administration deported more than 1.2 million non-citizens, according to data from the Department of Homeland Security.

However, due to the coronavirus pandemic, the Trump administration authorized the public health tool Title 42 and expelled more than 2 million migrants from claiming asylum.

*Ariana covers the nation's capital for States Newsroom. Her areas of coverage include politics and policy, lobbying, elections and campaign finance.*

## Trump leaves door open to banning medication abortion nationwide

**BY: JENNIFER SHUTT - APRIL 30, 2024 1:59 PM**

WASHINGTON — Donald Trump is planning to release more details in the weeks ahead about how his administration would regulate access to medication abortion, according to comments he made during a lengthy interview with Time magazine published Tuesday.

Trump, the Republican Party's presumptive nominee for president, said that he has "strong views" about access to mifepristone, though he declined to say exactly what those are. He did not rule out a nationwide ban, or imposing new restrictions.

"Well, I have an opinion on that, but I'm not going to explain," Trump said, according to the transcript of the interview. "I'm not gonna say it yet. But I have pretty strong views on that. And I'll be releasing it probably over the next week."

Mifepristone is one of two pharmaceuticals used in medication abortions, which make up more than 63% of abortions nationwide, according to research from the Guttmacher Institute.

The U.S. Food and Drug Administration originally approved mifepristone in 2000 before updating prescribing guidelines in 2016 and during the COVID-19 pandemic.

The changes to when and how mifepristone can be prescribed are at the center of a U.S. Supreme Court case brought by anti-abortion medical organizations and doctors. A ruling is expected this summer on whether access to mifepristone will stay as it is now or go back to what was in place before 2016.

Reverting prescribing would mean that mifepristone would be approved up to seven weeks gestation, not the current 10-week ceiling; it could no longer be prescribed via telehealth and shipped to patients; patients would need to attend three in-person doctors' office appointments; and only doctors would be able to prescribe it, not qualified health care providers with the authority to prescribe pharmaceuticals.



**Packages of Mifepristone tablets are displayed at a family planning clinic on April 13, 2023 in Rockville, Maryland.**

(Photo illustration by Anna Moneymaker/Getty Images)

## 'Big statement' coming on Comstock Act

Trump was also asked about the Comstock Act, an 1873 anti-obscenity law that conservative organizations and anti-abortion groups believe a Republican attorney general could use to ban shipping of mifepristone nationwide.

Trump said, "I will be making a statement on that over the next 14 days," when asked if his Department of Justice would try to enforce the Comstock Act to ban mailing of abortion pharmaceuticals.

The interview was on April 12, more than 14 days ago.

"I have a big statement on that," Trump said. "I feel very strongly about it. I actually think it's a very important issue."

Trump said in a video released in early April that he believed regulating abortion access should be left up to state lawmakers, infuriating anti-abortion organizations and some members of his own party who believe there should be a nationwide law setting restrictions on access.

Trump said during the interview with Time that he didn't have a strong viewpoint on states punishing women who seek abortion. Anti-abortion organizations generally have opposed penalties for women, though Trump has mentioned it in the past.

"I don't have to be comfortable or uncomfortable," Trump said of states punishing women who seek abortions. "The states are going to make that decision. The states are going to have to be comfortable or uncomfortable, not me."

Trump said he thinks that some states might monitor women's pregnancies, when asked about the issue.

Trump, who is registered to vote in Florida, repeatedly declined to say how he would vote on a ballot question this November that would add protections for abortion rights to the state's constitution.

"I don't tell you what I'm gonna vote for," Trump said. "I only tell you the state's gonna make a determination."

## Biden campaign reacts

Biden-Harris campaign manager Julie Chavez Rodriguez said in a written statement that a Trump reelection would be a threat to reproductive rights.

"Simply put: November's election will determine whether women in the United States have reproductive freedom, or whether Trump's new government will continue its assault to control women's health care decisions," Rodriguez wrote.

"With the voters on their side this November, President Biden and Vice President Harris will put an end to this chaos and ensure Americans' fundamental freedoms are protected."

Reproductive Freedom for All President and CEO Mini Timmaraju said in a written statement about Trump's latest comments on abortion access that she has "zero doubt in my mind that Trump will choose anti-abortion extremists and their horrifying agenda over American families every single chance he gets, and this new interview proves that he will ban abortion in all 50 states."

"It's imperative that we double down on our mission to reelect the Biden-Harris ticket and deliver Congressional majorities to lock our right to abortion care into federal law."

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

## Trump fined \$9,000 for violating gag order in NY hush-money trial

BY: JACOB FISCHLER - APRIL 30, 2024 11:26 AM

Former President Donald Trump defied a gag order in his New York state hush-money trial by posting attacks on likely witnesses on his social media platform and campaign website, the judge in the case ruled Tuesday.

Judge Juan M. Merchan fined Trump \$9,000 for nine violations of an order barring him from making public statements about "reasonably foreseeable witnesses" or prospective jurors in the case, in which Trump is accused of disguising payments to adult film star Stormy Daniels to conceal an alleged affair.

Merchan also ordered the offending posts to be taken down by 2:15 p.m. Eastern Tuesday.

Trump, the presumptive GOP nominee for president, had posted to his social media site, Truth Social, and to his campaign website comments about Daniels and Michael Cohen, Trump's former attorney and fixer, who prosecutors say delivered a \$130,000 payment to Daniels.

Cohen and Daniels are expected to testify for the prosecution in the criminal trial, the first involving a former U.S. president.

Trump did not deny posting any of the items, but said they were in response to political attacks by Cohen and Daniels. Merchan's order allowed Trump to respond to political attacks.

Prosecutors had asked Merchan to fine Trump for 10 statements, but the judge gave Trump a pass on the first post in question, which Merchan said could be interpreted as a response to tweets from Cohen



**Former U.S. President Donald Trump appears ahead of the start of jury selection at Manhattan Criminal Court on April 15, 2024, in New York City. Trump faced 34 felony counts of falsifying business records in the first of his criminal cases to go to trial.** (Jabin Botsford-Pool/Getty Images)

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that could be considered political attacks.

Merchan said Tuesday he was broadly interpreting political attacks out of deference to Trump's First Amendment right to free speech, which he said was especially important as Trump runs again for the White House.

"It is critically important that Defendant's legitimate free speech rights not be curtailed, that he be able to fully campaign for the office which he seeks and that he be able to respond and defend himself against political attacks," Merchan wrote. "For that reason, this Court exercised discretion when it crafted the Expanded Order and delayed issuing it until the eve of trial."

## Reposts as endorsements

Trump also argued that "reposts" from other accounts should not count as his own speech.

Merchan roundly rejected that argument, noting Trump has bragged about the size of his audience on Truth Social and fully controlled its content.

"There can be no doubt whatsoever, that Defendant's intent and purpose when reposting, is to communicate to his audience that he endorses and adopts the posted statement as his own," Merchan said. "It is counterintuitive and indeed absurd, to read the Expanded Order to not proscribe statements that Defendant intentionally selected and published to maximize exposure."

Tuesday's order also warns Trump "that the Court will not tolerate continued willful violations" of the gag order and warned that Merchan may impose jail time for further violations.

U.S. Rep. Jamie Raskin, a Maryland Democrat who is the ranking minority member on the House Oversight and Accountability Committee, told reporters in Washington Tuesday that he did not expect the ruling to lead Trump to change his behavior.

"I don't think he'll take it seriously, unless he's going to be held overnight or something like that," Raskin said. "He acts with utter contempt towards the rule of law."

Raskin, a constitutional law professor, was the lead impeachment manager during Trump's second impeachment, which dealt with the then-president's efforts to overturn his loss in the 2020 election. Raskin also was a member of the House Committee to Investigate the Jan. 6, 2021, Attack on the U.S. Capitol.

The trial resumed Tuesday with testimony from Gary Farro, a former banker of Cohen's, after a break Monday.

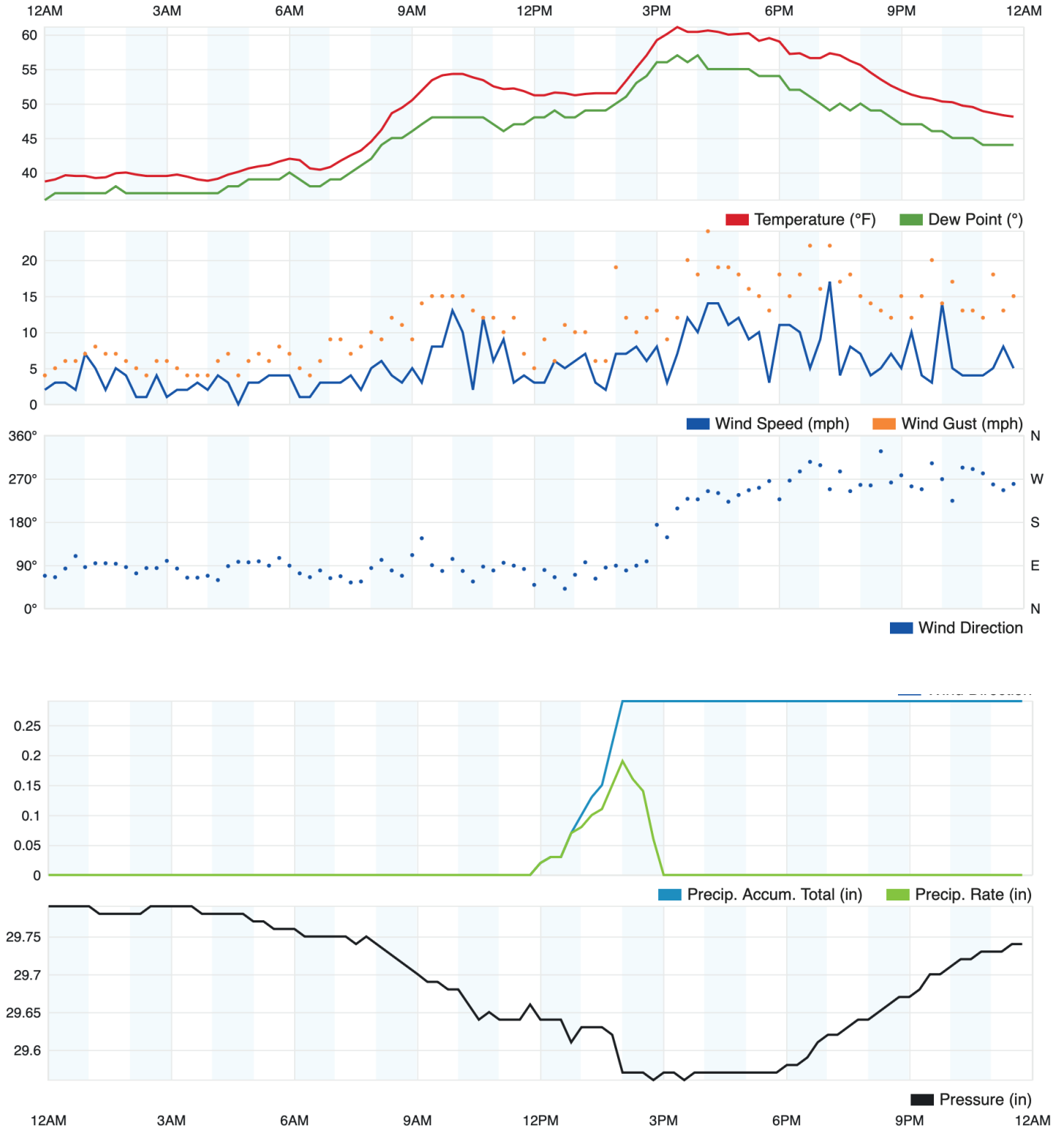
*Jennifer Shutt contributed to this report.*

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

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## Yesterday's Groton Weather Graphs





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Today



Chance  
Showers then  
Showers

High: 65 °F

Tonight



Slight Chance  
T-storms then  
Mostly Clear

Low: 36 °F

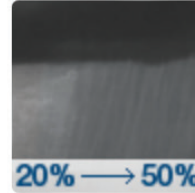
Wednesday



Increasing  
Clouds

High: 65 °F

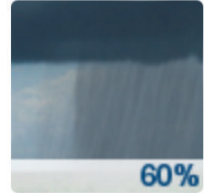
Wednesday  
Night



Slight Chance  
Showers then  
Chance  
Showers

Low: 45 °F

Thursday



Showers  
Likely

High: 56 °F

## Wednesday



20% chance of afternoon rain over mainly central SD.

Highs: 60s

## Thursday



70% chance of rain. **Breezy** over central SD, with winds gusting out of the northwest around 35 mph.

Highs: 50s

## Friday



20% chance of light rain. **Breezy** with winds gusting out of the west around 30-40 mph.

Highs: 58 to 62°

## Saturday



Highs: 60s

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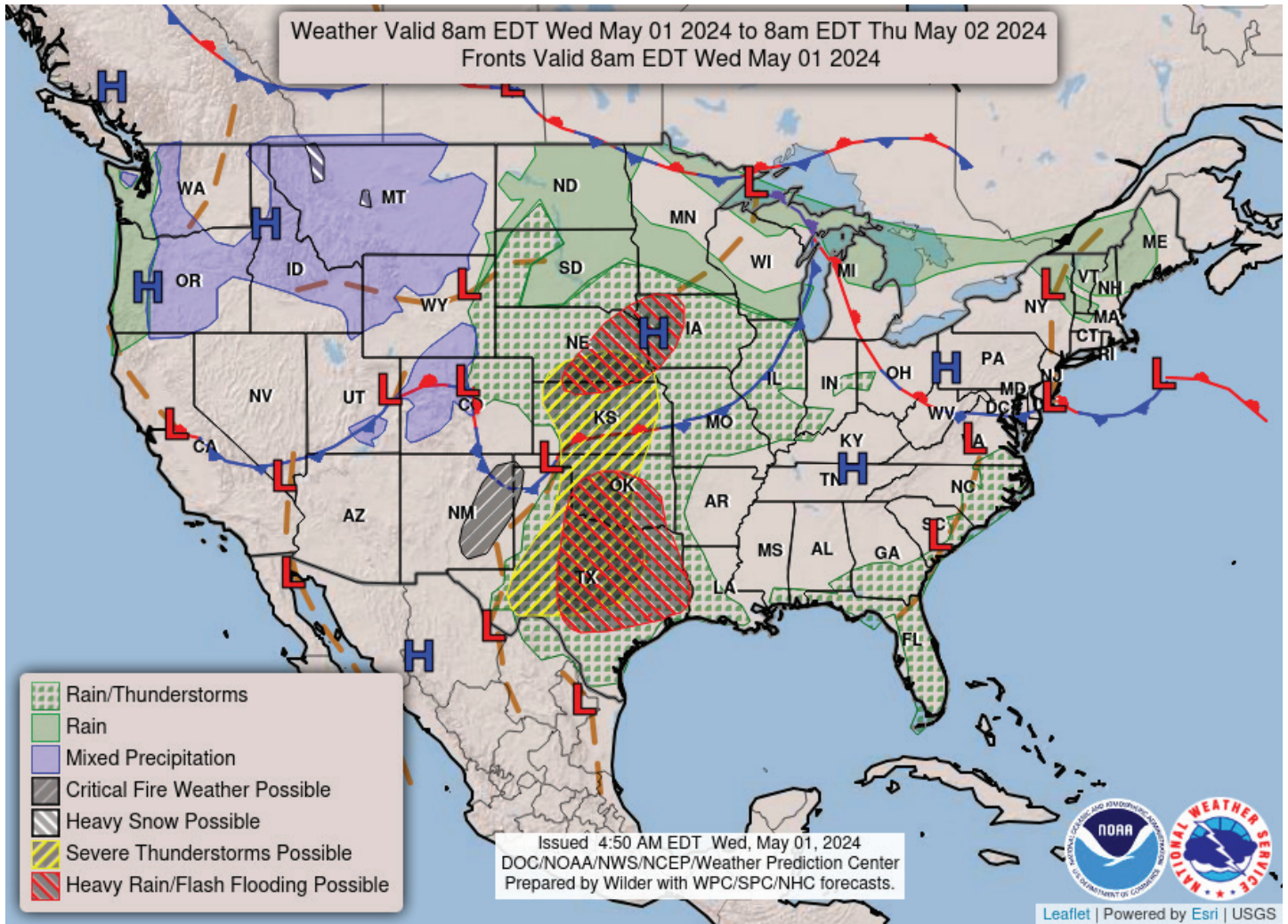
## Yesterday's Groton Weather

**High Temp: 61 °F at 3:23 PM**  
**Low Temp: 39 °F at 12:00 AM**  
**Wind: 24 mph at 4:14 PM**  
**Precip: : 0.29**

Day length: 14 hours, 23 minutes

## Today's Info

Record High: 102 in 1959  
Record Low: 19 in 1961  
Average High: 65  
Average Low: 38  
Average Precip in April: 0.11  
Precip to date in April: 3.58  
Average Precip to date: 4.08  
Precip Year to Date: 4.53  
Sunset Tonight: 8:41:10 pm  
Sunrise Tomorrow: 6:16:10 am



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## Today in Weather History

May 1, 1959: Aberdeen recorded a high temperature of 102, which is the earliest date that Aberdeen reached 100 degrees.

May 1, 1967: One of the latest blizzards on records for South Dakota ended on this day. Snowfall amounts in the west were 5 to 12 inches with a 16-inch report in Lemmon and 30 inches in the northern Black Hills. Winds of 40 to 50 mph caused blowing snow which occasionally reduced visibility to near zero and snow drifts of 4 to 5 feet. Other snowfall amounts include 5 inches in Murdo and 6 miles SE of McIntosh; and 4 inches in Timber Lake.

May 1, 1997: Torrential rains of 1.5 to 2.5 inches with a separate 4.5-inch report fell over central South Dakota and caused flooding to several creeks, streams, low-lying areas, and roads. This early May rain only aggravated the areas flooded in March and April. Lyman County experienced the most significant flooding where 4.5 inches of rain fell, north of Vivian. Part of a golf course was flooded, and some personal property was flooded along with the KOA campground near Kennebec. Some rainfall amounts include 2.5 inches 7 miles NW of Presho and 2.01 inches near Stephan.

1854 - The Connecticut River reached a level of nearly twenty-nine feet at Hartford (the highest level of record up until that time). The record height was reached in the midst of a great New England flood which followed sixty-six hours of steady rain. (David Ludlum)

1857: The Washington Evening Star publishes the first US national weather summary using observations from volunteers to the Smithsonian Institution's cooperative network.

1933: An estimated F4 tornado struck Minden, Louisiana, killing 28 people and injuring 400 others. 500 homes were damaged or destroyed with \$1.3 million in damage. Click [HERE](#) for more information from Minden Memories.org.

1935 - Snow, ice and sleet brought winter back to parts of southeast Minnesota. Minneapolis received three inches of snow to tie their May record which was established in 1892. (1st-2nd) (The Weather Channel)

1954 - The temperature at Polebridge MT dipped to 5 degrees below zero to establish a state record for the month of May. (The Weather Channel)

1987 - Thunderstorms produced large hail and heavy rain in Texas. Baseball size hail pounded Dublin, and 3.75 inches of rain soaked Brady. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1988 - Strong southerly winds ahead of a cold front crossing the Rocky Mountain Region gusted to 90 mph at Lamar CO. High winds created blinding dust storms in eastern Colorado, closing roads around Limon. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1989 - Thunderstorms produced heavy rain in the southeastern U.S. Rainfall totals of 1.84 inches at Charlotte NC and 2.86 inches at Atlanta GA were records for the date. Strong thunderstorm winds uprooted trees in Twiggs County GA. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1990 - Thunderstorms produced severe weather from northern Alabama to North Carolina. There were sixty-three reports of large hail or damaging winds, with hail four inches in diameter reported near Cartersville GA. Ten cities in the southeastern U.S. reported record high temperatures for the date as readings warmed into the 90s. Jacksonville FL reported a record high of 96 degrees. Late night thunderstorms over central Texas produced up to ten inches of rain in southern Kimble County and northern Edwards County. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1999: Record, low temperatures for the date, were broken in the Deep South. Mobile, Alabama dropped to 46 degrees. Miami fell to 58; Miami Beach bottomed out at 61, and Vero Beach dropped to 47 degrees, all new records. Other stations in Florida also set record cold maximums for the date, including 61 at Jacksonville and Daytona Beach with 66 degrees.

2003: A record-setting 516 tornadoes occurred during May 2003. In particular, during the period May 4-10, 2003, an unprecedented number of tornadoes, 393 total, affected the central and the southern United States. The tornadoes resulted in 39 deaths across four states. Six of these tornadoes were classified as violent (F4) on the Fujita Tornado Intensity Scale.

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Daily Devotionals

## Seeds of Hope

### WHO WANTS YOU?

It was the final game of the season. The team that won would receive the victor's trophy for the season. But the star running back broke the team curfew and was benched – unable to play.

It was a difficult game, and the team fell behind. However, the students began to rally support for the benched player and started to chant, "We want Roger! We want Roger!"

Looking at the benched player, the coach motioned to him. He jumped up and said, "I'm ready Coach, I'm ready!"

"Great," said the coach. "Go up into the stands. They want you more than I do."

Jesus said, "Those who come to me I will never reject." This verse should give us an assurance of how welcome we are to enter into the presence of God.

It does not matter where we have been or what we have done, none of our behaviors or beliefs will cause Him to reject us. His arms are open, His voice is calling, and His invitation is to "whosoever will."

Our coming to Christ is never conditioned by who we are but who He is and what He has done.

Prayer: We thank You, Father, that Your grace, mercy and salvation are extended to those who hear Your voice and accept Your invitation. In Jesus' Name, Amen.

Scripture For Today: However, those the Father has given me will come to me, and I will never reject them. John 6:37



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

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## WINNING NUMBERS

### MEGA MILLIONS

WINNING NUMBERS:  
04.30.24

10 18 27 37 61 5

MegaPlier: 3x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:  
**\$284,000,000**

NEXT 2 Days 16 Hrs 52  
DRAW: Mins 44 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 16 Hrs 7 Mins 44  
DRAW: Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

### LUCKY FOR LIFE

WINNING NUMBERS:  
04.30.24

7 8 19 36 41 1

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

NEXT 16 Hrs 22 Mins 43  
DRAW: Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

### DAKOTA CASH

WINNING NUMBERS:  
04.27.24

6 7 25 28 34

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

NEXT 16 Hrs 22 Mins 44  
DRAW: Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

### POWERBALL

DOUBLE PLAY

WINNING NUMBERS:  
04.29.24

11 44 50 54 59 13

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

NEXT 16 Hrs 51 Mins 43  
DRAW: 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 16 Hrs 51 Mins 44  
DRAW: Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

## News from the Associated Press

### **Police clear pro-Palestinian protesters from Columbia University while clashes break out at UCLA**

By STEFANIE DAZIO, ETHAN SWOPE, JAKE OFFENHARTZ and JOSEPH B. FREDERICK Associated Press  
NEW YORK (AP) — Dueling groups of protesters clashed Wednesday at the University of California, Los Angeles, grappling in fistfights and shoving, kicking and using sticks to beat one another. Hours earlier, police carrying riot shields burst into a building at Columbia University that pro-Palestinian protesters took over and broke up a demonstration that had paralyzed the school while inspiring others.

After a couple hours of one-and-off scuffles between pro-Palestinian and pro-Israeli demonstrators at UCLA, police wearing helmets and face shields arrived, formed lines and began to slowly corral some of the protesters. That appeared to quell the violence.

Police have swept through campuses across the U.S. over the last two weeks in response to protests calling on universities to stop doing business with Israel or companies that support the war in Gaza. There have been confrontations and more than 1,000 arrests. In rarer instances, university officials and protest leaders struck agreements to restrict the disruption to campus life and upcoming commencement ceremonies.

The clashes at UCLA took place around a tent encampment built by pro-Palestinian protesters, who erected barricades and plywood for protection — while counter-protesters tried to pull them down. People threw chairs and at one point a group piled on a person who lay on the ground, kicking and beating them with sticks until others pulled them out of the scrum.

It was not clear how many people might be injured.

Los Angeles Mayor Karen Bass called the violence “absolutely abhorrent and inexcusable” in a spot on social media platform X and said officers from the Los Angeles Police Department were on the scene. Officers from the California Highway Patrol also appeared to be there. The university said it had requested help.

Security was tightened Tuesday at the campus after officials said there were “physical altercations” between factions of protesters.

Late that same day, New York City officers entered Columbia’s campus after the university requested help, according to a statement released by a spokesperson. A tent encampment on the school’s grounds was cleared, along with Hamilton Hall where a stream of officers used a ladder to climb through a second-floor window. Protesters seized the hall at the Ivy League school about 20 hours earlier.

“After the University learned overnight that Hamilton Hall had been occupied, vandalized, and blockaded, we were left with no choice,” the school said. “The decision to reach out to the NYPD was in response to the actions of the protesters, not the cause they are championing. We have made it clear that the life of campus cannot be endlessly interrupted by protesters who violate the rules and the law.”

Police spokesman Carlos Nieves said he had no immediate reports of any injuries. The arrests occurred after protesters shrugged off an earlier ultimatum to abandon the encampment Monday or be suspended and unfolded as other universities stepped up efforts to end demonstrations that were inspired by Columbia.

Fabien Lugo, a first-year accounting student who said he was not involved in the protests, said he opposed the university’s decision to call in police.

“This is too intense,” he said. “It feels like more of an escalation than a de-escalation.”

Just blocks away from Columbia, at The City College of New York, demonstrators were in a standoff with police outside the public college’s main gate. Video posted on social media by news reporters on the scene late Tuesday showed officers putting some people to the ground and shoving others as they cleared people from the street and sidewalks.

After police arrived, officers lowered a Palestinian flag atop the City College flagpole, balled it up and tossed it to the ground before raising an American flag.

Brown University, another member of the Ivy League, reached an agreement Tuesday with protesters on its Rhode Island campus. Demonstrators said they would close their encampment in exchange for administrators taking a vote to consider divestment from Israel in October. The compromise appeared to mark the first time a U.S. college has agreed to vote on divestment in the wake of the protests.

Meanwhile, at Northern Arizona University in Flagstaff, police in riot gear closed in on an encampment late Tuesday and arrested about 20 people for trespassing, at least one of whom was thrown to the ground. University officials had warned earlier in the day that students would face criminal charges if they did not disperse.

First-year student Brayden Lang watched from the sidelines. "I still know very little about this conflict," he said. "But the deaths of thousands is something I cannot stand for."

The nationwide campus protests began at Columbia in response to Israel's offensive in Gaza after Hamas launched a deadly attack on southern Israel on Oct. 7. Militants killed about 1,200 people, most of them civilians, and took roughly 250 hostages. Vowing to stamp out Hamas, Israel has killed more than 34,000 Palestinians in the Gaza Strip, according to the Health Ministry there.

As cease-fire negotiations appeared to gain steam, it wasn't clear whether those talks would lead to an easing of protests.

Israel and its supporters have branded the university protests as antisemitic, while Israel's critics say it uses those allegations to silence opposition. Although some protesters have been caught on camera making antisemitic remarks or violent threats, organizers of the protests, some of whom are Jewish, say it is a peaceful movement aimed at defending Palestinian rights and protesting the war.

Columbia's police action happened on the 56th anniversary of a similar move to quash an occupation of Hamilton Hall by students protesting racism and the Vietnam War.

The police department earlier Tuesday said officers wouldn't enter the grounds without the college administration's request or an imminent emergency. Now, law enforcement will be there through May 17, the end of the university's commencement events.

In a letter to senior NYPD officials, Columbia President Minouche Shafik said the administration made the request that police remove protesters from the occupied building and a nearby tent encampment "with the utmost regret."

Protesters first set up a tent encampment at Columbia almost two weeks ago. The school sent in police to clear the tents the following day, arresting more than 100 people, only for the students to return.

Negotiations between the protesters and the college came to a standstill in recent days, and the school set a deadline for the activists to abandon the tent encampment Monday afternoon or be suspended.

Instead, protesters defied the ultimatum and took over Hamilton Hall early Tuesday, carrying in furniture and metal barricades.

Ilana Lewkovitch, a self-described "leftist Zionist" student at Columbia, said it's been hard to concentrate on school for weeks. Her exams have been disrupted with chants of "say it loud, say it clear, we want Zionists out of here."

Lewkovitch, who is Jewish, said she wished the current pro-Palestinian protests were more open to people like her who criticize Israel's war policies but believe there should be an Israeli state.

## **Blinken urges Israel and Hamas to move ahead with a cease-fire deal and says 'the time is now'**

By MATTHEW LEE and SAM MEDNICK Associated Press

TEL AVIV, Israel (AP) — U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken was meeting with Israeli leaders on Wednesday in his push for a cease-fire deal between Israel and Hamas, saying "the time is now" for an agreement that would free hostages and bring a pause in the nearly seven months of war in Gaza.

He said Hamas would bear the blame for any failure to get a deal off the ground.

Blinken is on his seventh visit to the region since the war erupted in October in his bid to secure what's been an elusive deal between Israel and Hamas that could avert an Israeli incursion into the southern



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Gaza city of Rafah, where hundreds of thousands of Palestinians are sheltering.

The current round of talks appears to be serious, but the sides remain far apart on one key issue — whether the war should end as part of an emerging deal.

“We are determined to get a cease-fire that brings the hostages home and to get it now, and the only reason that that wouldn’t be achieved is because of Hamas,” Blinken told Israel’s ceremonial President Isaac Herzog at a meeting in Tel Aviv.

“There is a proposal on the table, and as we’ve said, no delays, no excuses. The time is now,” he said.

Blinken said the deal would also allow much needed food, medicine and water to get into Gaza, where the war has sparked a humanitarian crisis and displaced much of the territory’s population.

After meeting with Herzog and also with families of Americans held by Hamas at his hotel, Blinken briefly greeted several dozen demonstrators calling for an immediate hostage release deal on the sidewalk outside.

Chanting “SOS, USA, only you can save the day” and “In Blinken we trust, bring them home to us,” the protesters urged him to make their case to Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu. Blinken will meet Netanyahu and also a member of the War Cabinet later on Wednesday.

Blinken told the families that there was a very strong proposal on the table and that Hamas needs to say yes to it. “That is our determination, and we will not rest, we will not stop until you’re reunited with your loved ones,” he said.

His comments came on the last leg of his regional visit, with previous stops in Saudi Arabia and Jordan, where he urged Hamas to accept the latest proposal, calling it “extraordinarily generous” on Israel’s part.

According to the State Department, he will also visit an Israeli port where aid for Gaza is entering.

The United States has staunchly supported Israel’s war since Hamas’ unprecedented attack on Oct. 7 into southern Israel. But it has grown increasingly critical of the staggering toll borne by Palestinian civilians in Gaza and has been especially outspoken against Israel’s plan to invade Rafah, Gaza’s southernmost city where some 1.5 million Palestinians have fled from fighting elsewhere in the territory, saying that any major offensive there would bring potential harm to civilians and should be avoided.

Netanyahu has repeatedly vowed to invade Rafah, which he says is Hamas’ last stronghold in the coastal strip, and on Tuesday he pledged to do so “with or without” a cease-fire deal.

The current deal that is being discussed — with brokering by the U.S., Egypt and Qatar — would see the release of dozens of hostages in exchange for a six-week halt in fighting as part of an initial phase, according to an Egyptian official and Israeli media. Hundreds of Palestinian prisoners held by Israel would also be released, including some serving long sentences.

But a sticking point remains over what happens next. 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 the first phase of the deal is over. The issue has repeatedly obstructed efforts by the mediators during months of talks.

While the talks appeared to be gaining steam, on Wednesday, an Egyptian official said that Hamas had asked Egyptian and Qatari mediators to provide clarity on the terms of the latest cease-fire proposal being discussed, a demand that could delay progress.

The official, who has close ties to the talks and who spoke on the condition of anonymity in order to freely discuss the deal, said Hamas wants clear terms for the unconditional return of displaced people to the north of Gaza and to ensure that the second stage of the deal will include discussing the gradual and complete withdrawal of all Israeli troops from the entire Gaza Strip.

The official said the current deal didn’t fully explain who would be allowed to return north and how it would be decided.

While talks are ongoing, the fighting in Gaza continues. Late Tuesday, an Israeli airstrike hit a house in central Rafah — a city Israel has struck repeatedly despite the masses that have taken refuge there — killing at least two children, according to hospital authorities. The bodies of the dead children were taken to the Abu Yousef al-Najjar hospital. An Associated Press journalist saw the bodies at the hospital morgue

as their relatives mourned the deaths.

On Wednesday, Israel's military said it was operating in central Gaza, where it said jets struck militants, including one said to be setting up explosives.

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

The war 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.

## **Drone footage shows devastation in Chasiv Yar, an eastern Ukrainian city Russia is assaulting**

By JILL LAWLESS and ILLIA NOVIKOV Associated Press

KYIV, Ukraine (AP) — Months of relentless Russian artillery pounding have devastated a strategic city in eastern Ukraine, new drone footage obtained by The Associated Press has shown, with barely a building left intact, homes and municipal offices charred, and a town that once had a population of 12,000 now left deserted.

The footage shows the community of Chasiv Yar — which is set amid green fields and woodland — pounded into an apocalyptic vista. The massive destruction is reminiscent of the cities of Bakhmut and Avdiivka, which Ukraine yielded after months of bombardment and huge losses for both sides.

The strategically important city has been under relentless attack by Russian forces for months. Capturing it would give Russia control of a hilltop from which it can attack other cities that form the backbone of Ukraine's eastern defenses.

Russia launched waves of assaults on foot and in armored vehicles at Chasiv Yar's outnumbered Ukrainian troops, who have run desperately short of ammunition while waiting for the U.S. and other allies to send in fresh supplies.

Rows of mid-rise apartment blocks in Chasiv Yar have been blackened by blasts, punched through with holes or reduced to piles of timber and masonry. Houses and civic buildings are also heavily damaged, and a gold-domed church appears to be destroyed.

No soldiers or civilians were anywhere to be seen in the footage shot Monday and exclusively obtained by the AP, apart from a lone man walking down the middle of a road between wrecked structures.

The destruction underscores Russia's scorched-earth tactics throughout more than two years of war, as its troops have sought to advance, killing and displacing thousands of civilians.

Chasiv Yar is located on high ground, offering Russia the possibility of a platform it can use to push towards larger cities that form Ukraine's defensive belt in the eastern Donetsk region.

Capturing Chasiv Yar would set the stage for a potentially broader Russian offensive that Ukrainian officials say could come as early as May.

NATO Secretary-General Jens Stoltenberg acknowledged Monday that the delayed delivery of allied countries' military aid to Ukraine had left the country at the mercy of the Kremlin's bigger and better-equipped forces.

Ukraine and its Western partners are racing to deploy critical new military aid that can help check the slow and costly but steady Russian advance across eastern areas, as well as thwart drone and missile attacks.

## **Powell likely to signal that lower inflation is needed before Fed would cut rates**

By CHRISTOPHER RUGABER AP Economics Writer

WASHINGTON (AP) — After three straight hotter-than-expected inflation reports, Federal Reserve officials have turned more cautious about the prospect of interest rate cuts this year. The big question, after they

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end their latest policy meeting Wednesday, will be: Will they still signal rate cuts at all this year?

Wall Street traders now envision just a single rate cut this year to the Fed's benchmark rate, now at a 23-year high of 5.3% after 11 hikes that ended last July. Traders have sharply downgraded their expectations since 2024 began, when they had expected up to six rate cuts.

As recently as the Fed's last meeting March 20, the policymakers themselves had projected three rate reductions in 2024. Rate cuts by the Fed would lead, over time, to lower borrowing costs for consumers and businesses, including for mortgages, auto loans and credit cards.

Most economists say they still expect two cuts this year. But many acknowledge that one or even no rate reductions are possible. The reason is that elevated inflation is proving more persistent than almost anyone had expected. According to the Fed's preferred gauge, inflation reached a 4.4% annual rate in the first three months of this year, up from 1.6% in the final quarter of 2023 and far above the Fed's 2% target.

At the same time, the economy is healthier and hiring is stronger than most economists thought it would be at this point. The unemployment rate has remained below 4% for more than two years, the longest such streak since the 1960s. During the first quarter of the year, consumers spent at a robust pace. As a result, Chair Jerome Powell and other Fed officials have made clear that they are in no hurry to cut their benchmark rate.

In his most recent remarks two weeks ago, Powell indicated that the pace of price increases had essentially undercut Fed officials' confidence that inflation was steadily heading back to their target, thereby making rate cuts anytime soon less likely. He also said the Fed would forgo any rate cuts as long as inflation remained elevated. He stopped short, though, of suggesting that any new rate increases were under consideration.

"If higher inflation does persist," the Fed chair said, "we can maintain the current level of (interest rates) for as long as needed."

Most economists expect Powell to reinforce that message during the news conference he will hold after the Fed's meeting ends Wednesday. But he could go still further.

During his last news conference in March, for example, Powell said the Fed's rate was "likely at its peak" and that, "if the economy evolves broadly as expected, it will likely be appropriate" to start cutting rates this year.

If Powell avoids repeating that sentiment this time, it could suggest that the Fed is less likely to reduce its benchmark rate this year.

"If that (message) is dropped, I think it would be a much stronger signal that we have to hold rates higher for longer," said Jonathan Pingle, chief economist at UBS.

Though economic growth reached just a 1.6% annual pace in the first three months of this year, a slowdown from the previous quarter, consumer spending grew at a robust pace, a sign that the economy will keep expanding.

That persistent strength has caused some Fed officials to speculate that the current level of interest rates may not be high enough to have the cooling effect on the economy and inflation that they need. If so, the Fed could even have to switch back to rate increases at some point.

"I continue to see the risk that at a future meeting we may need to increase (rates) further should progress on inflation stall or even reverse," Michelle Bowman, a member of the Fed's Board of Governors, said in early April.

On Wednesday, the Fed may also announce that it's slowing the pace at which it unwinds one of its biggest COVID-era policies: Its purchase of several trillion dollars in Treasury securities and mortgage-backed bonds, an effort to stabilize financial markets and keep longer-term interest rates low.

The Fed is now allowing \$95 billion of those securities to mature each month, without replacing them. Its holdings have fallen to about \$7.4 trillion, down from \$8.9 trillion in June 2022 when it began reducing them.

By cutting back its holdings, the Fed could contribute to keeping longer-term rates, including mortgage-rates, higher than they would be otherwise. That's because as it reduces its bond holdings, other buyers will have to buy the securities instead, and rates might have to rise to attract the needed buyers.

During its meeting in March, Fed official agreed to reduce the pace of its runoff to about \$65 billion a month, according to the meeting minutes.

The Fed last reduced its balance sheet in 2019, and while doing so it inadvertently disrupted financial markets and caused short-term interest rates to spike that September. Its goal in slowing the pace at which it reduces its bond ownership is to avoid a similar market disruption by moving more methodically.

## Workers and activists across Asia and Europe hold May Day rallies to call for greater labor rights

By HYUNG-JIN KIM Associated Press

SEOUL, South Korea (AP) — Workers, activists and others in Asian capitals and European cities took to the streets on Wednesday to mark May Day with protests over rising prices and government labor policies and calls for greater labor rights.

May Day, which falls on May 1, is observed in many countries to celebrate workers' rights. May Day events have also given many an opportunity to air general economic grievances or political demands.

Police in Istanbul detained dozens of people who tried to reach the central Taksim Square in defiance of a government ban on marking Labor Day at the landmark location.

President Recep Tayyip Erdogan's government has long declared Taksim off-limits for rallies and demonstrations on security grounds, but some political parties and trade unions have vowed to march to the square, which holds symbolic value for labor unions.

In 1977, unidentified gunmen opened fire on a May Day celebration at Taksim, causing a stampede and killing 34 people.

On Wednesday, police erected barricades and sealed off all routes leading to the central Istanbul square. Public transport in the area was also restricted. Only a small group of trade union representatives was permitted to enter the square to lay a wreath at a monument in memory of victims of the 1977 incident.

Riot police apprehended some 30 members of the left-wing People's Liberation Party who tried to break through the barriers.

In Indonesia, workers voiced anger at a new law they said violates their rights and hurts their welfare, and demanded protections for migrant workers abroad and a minimum wage raise.

About 50,000 workers from Jakarta's satellite cities of Bogor, Depok, Tangerang and Bekasi were expected to join May Day marches in the capital, said Said Iqbal, the president of the Confederation of Indonesian Trade Unions.

They gathered amid a tight police presence near the National Monument park, waving the colorful flags of labor groups and chanting slogans against the Job Creation Law and loosened outsourcing rules during a march to Jakarta's main sports stadium, Gelora Bung Karno.

"With the enactment of this law, our future is uncertain because many problems arise in wages, severance pay and the contract system," said Isbandi Anggono, a protester.

Indonesia's parliament last year ratified a government regulation that replaces a controversial law on job creation, but critics said it still benefits businesses. The law was intended to cut bureaucracy as part of President Joko Widodo's efforts to attract more investment to the country, which is Southeast Asia's largest economy.

In Seoul, the South Korean capital, thousands of protesters sang, waved flags and shouted pro-labor slogans at the start of their rally on Wednesday. Organizers said their rally was primarily meant to step up their criticism of what they call anti-labor policies pursued by the conservative government led by President Yoon Suk Yeol.

"In the past two years under the Yoon Suk Yeol government, the lives of our laborers have plunged into despair," Yang Kyung-soo, leader of the Korean Confederation of Trade Unions, which organized the rally, said in a speech. "We can't overlook the Yoon Suk Yeol government. We'll bring them down from power for ourselves."

KCTU union members decried Yoon's December veto of a bill aimed at limiting companies' rights to seek

compensation for damages caused by strikes by labor unions. They also accuse Yoon's government of handling the 2022 strikes by truckers too aggressively and insulting construction sector workers whom authorities believed were involved in alleged irregular activities.

Since taking office in 2022, Yoon has pushed for labor reforms to support economic growth and job creation. His government has vowed to sternly deal with illegal strikes and demand more transparent accounting records from labor unions.

"The remarkable growth of the Republic of Korea was thanks to the sweat and efforts of our workers. I thank our 28.4 million workers," Yoon said in a May Day message posted on Facebook. "My government and I will protect the precious value of labor."

Seoul rally participants later marched through downtown streets. Similar May Day rallies were held in more than 10 locations across South Korea on Wednesday. Police said they had mobilized thousands of officers to maintain order, but there were no immediate reports of violence.

In Japan, more than 10,000 people gathered at Yoyogi park in downtown Tokyo for a May Day event, demanding salary increases that they said could sufficiently set off price increases. During the rally, Masako Obata, the leader of the left-leaning National Confederation of Trade Unions, said that dwindling wages have put many workers in Japan under severe living conditions and widened income disparities.

"On this May Day, we unite with our fellow workers around the world standing up for their rights," she said, shouting "banzai!" or long life, to all workers.

In the Philippine capital, Manila, hundreds of workers and left-wing activists marched and held a rally in the scorching summer heat to demand wage increases and job security amid soaring food and oil prices.

Riot police stopped the protesting workers from getting close to the presidential palace. Waving red flags and holding up posters that read: "We work to live, not to die" and "Lower prices, increase salaries," the protesters rallied in the street, where they chanted and delivered speeches about the difficulties faced by Filipino laborers.

Poor drivers joined the protest and called to end a government modernization program they fear would eventually lead to the removal of their dilapidated jeepneys, a main mode of public transport, from Manila's streets.

## Highway collapse in China's southern Guangdong province leaves at least 24 dead

BEIJING (AP) — A section of a highway collapsed early Wednesday in southern China, sending cars tumbling and leaving at least 24 people dead, according to state media.

Eighteen cars fell down a slope after a 17.9-meter (58.7-foot) long section of the highway collapsed, according to a statement from authorities in Meizhou city in Guangdong province. The incident occurred around 2 a.m.

The death toll had risen to 24 by Wednesday afternoon, according to China's official Xinhua News agency.

Parts of Guangdong province has seen record rains and flooding in the past two weeks, as well as hail. Some villages in Meizhou had flooded in early April, and the city had seen heavy rains in recent days.

Witnesses told local media they heard a loud noise and saw a hole open up several meters wide behind them after driving past the section of the road just before it collapsed.

Video and photos in local media showed smoke and fire at the scene, with highway rails slanting downward into the flames. A pile of blackened cars could also be seen on the slope leading down from the highway.

The ground beneath the highway appeared to have caved in, along with the section of the road that had broken off.

Rescue workers have taken 30 people to the hospital, state broadcaster CCTV reported.

## Florida's 6-week abortion ban takes effect as doctors worry women will lose access to health care

By DAVID FISCHER and STEPHANY MATAT Associated Press

BOCA RATON, Fla. (AP) — Florida's ban on most abortions after six weeks of pregnancy, before many women even know they are pregnant, went into effect Wednesday, and some doctors are concerned that women in the state will no longer have access to needed health care.

Dr. Leah Roberts, a reproductive endocrinologist and fertility specialist with Boca Fertility in Boca Raton, said the anti-abortion laws being enacted by Florida and other red states are being vaguely written by people who don't understand medical science. The rules are affecting not just women who want therapeutic abortions, meaning procedures to terminate viable pregnancies because of personal choice, but also nonviable pregnancies for women who want to have babies.

"We're coming in between them and their doctors and preventing them from getting care until it's literally saving their lives, sometimes at the expense of their fertility," Roberts said.

The new ban has an exception for saving a woman's life, as well as in cases involving rape and incest, but Roberts said health care workers are still prevented from performing an abortion on a nonviable pregnancy that they know may become deadly — such as when the fetus is missing organs or implanted outside the uterus — until it actually becomes deadly.

"We're being told that we have to wait until the mother is septic to be able to intervene," Roberts said.

Besides the physical danger, there's also the psychological trauma of having to carry a fetus that the mother knows will never be a healthy baby, Roberts said.

"They're feeling the kicks for months after they're being told that they're never going to have a live birth," Roberts said. "And it's just horrifying when you could take care of it at 20 weeks, and they could move on, and they could get pregnant with their next pregnancy and be able to hold their babies that much sooner."

She said a huge issue with the ban is that the doctors who perform emergency abortions have to learn the procedures by performing therapeutic abortions. So if most abortions are banned, the next generation of doctors won't be able to develop the skills needed to perform an emergency abortion.

Roberts said she's concerned the restrictions will also prompt veteran doctors to leave Florida, as they have in other states that have enacted abortion bans.

"We're going to have less access to care for our general population, even if it's just basic maternity care and normal OB-GYN care, because people are leaving," Roberts said.

In addition, women are going to have to travel far from home to get abortions. Florida Access Network executive director Stephanie Pineiro said the organization, which helps provide funding for abortions, expects costs to increase dramatically. She estimates it will cost around \$3,000 for a woman to travel to another state for an abortion. The closest place after 12 weeks would be Virginia or Illinois, but before 12 weeks would be North Carolina.

"It's very emotionally draining and challenging to deal with these types of barriers and have to leave your home," Pineiro said.

The Florida Supreme Court, with five of its seven members appointed by Republican Gov. Ron DeSantis, ruled 6-1 last month to uphold the state's ban on most abortions after 15 weeks of pregnancy, which cleared the way for the six-week ban. The 15-week ban, signed by DeSantis in 2022, had been enforced while it was challenged in court. The six-week ban, passed by the Legislature a year later, was written so that it would not take effect until a month after the 2022 law was upheld.

Republican state Sen. Erin Grall, who sponsored the six-week ban, previously said bodily autonomy should not include abortions.

"We live in a time where the consequences of our actions are an afterthought and convenience has been substitution for responsibility," Grall said, "and this is unacceptable when it comes to the protection of the most vulnerable."

Voters may be able to enshrine abortion rights in Florida's constitution after a separate state Supreme Court ruling allowed a proposed constitutional amendment to be on the November ballot. The proposal says,

"no law shall prohibit, penalize, delay, or restrict abortion before viability or when necessary to protect the patient's health, as determined by the patient's healthcare provider." It provides for one exception that is already in the state constitution: Parents must be notified before their minor children can get an abortion.

Florida Democrats hope young voters would vote to enshrine abortion rights, as a way to combat the 900,000 voter registration edge Republicans have over Democrats in the state. They hope moderate views of the ballot initiative will turn out younger voters to vote Democrat when faced with the binary choice between a six-week abortion ban or protecting abortion until viability.

Jayden D'Onofrio, chairman of the Florida Future Leaders political action committee, said young Florida voters have a "real opportunity to shape the electoral landscape." Being that abortion rights have prevailed in elections nationwide, he thinks that Florida can engage young voters to register and vote for Democrats.

Nathan Mitchell, president of Florida Atlantic University College Republicans, said he would support a total abortion ban, and he hopes the amendment doesn't pass. Mitchell said he's seen most people want restrictions on abortion, usually for bans within 10 to 15 weeks of gestation.

Most Republican-controlled states have adopted bans or restrictions on abortions since the U.S. Supreme Court overturned *Roe v. Wade* in June 2022. A survey of abortion providers conducted for the Society of Family Planning, which advocates for abortion access, found that Florida had the second-largest increase in the total number of abortions provided since the decision. The state's data shows that more than 7,700 women from other states received abortions in Florida in 2023.

Florida Democratic leaders are encouraging women to seek help from abortion funds and resources. On Tuesday, Senate Minority Leader Lauren Book encouraged women to access abortion travel funds and urged them to avoid "taking matters into your own hands."

## Greece boosts special firefighting units to cope with its growing heat risk

By DEREK GATOPOULOS Associated Press

KRYO PIGADI, Greece (AP) — Skimming over miles of hills blackened by wildfires west of Athens, Fire Lt. Col. Ioannis Kolovos readies his elite fire crew crouched inside a helicopter.

The 10-member group from the 1st Wildfire Special Operation Unit bristles with tools needed to hold back fires: chainsaws, specialized rakes, weather gauges, computer tablets and earth-scorching drip torches to burn wildfire barriers into the hillside.

Greece's fire season officially starts May 1, but dozens of fires have already been put out over the past month after temperatures began hitting 30 degrees Celsius (86 degrees Fahrenheit) in late March — considerably higher than previous spikes recorded over the past decade.

"It's actually already summer for us," Kolovos told The Associated Press during a recent training exercise. "The truth is that the fire season has started prematurely and has been extended over the last five years."

This year, Greece is doubling the number of firefighters in specialized units to some 1,300, and adopting tactics from the United States to try and outflank fires with airborne units scrambled to build breaks in the predicted path of the flames.

Crew members include forestry experts and firefighters with varied skills, many developed in training with colleagues in France, Spain and the United States.

"We can position ourselves in optimal locations that may be difficult to reach by foot and carry out fire suppression using various specialized methods," Firefighter Dimitris "Jim" Priftis said while assisting trainees in a region near the capital ravaged by wildfires in summer 2023.

"Using water is no longer our main weapon against fires, it's our tools," he said. "We are taking a more scientific approach toward fires, measuring the humidity, the wind — it's a more planned method."

Mostly funded by the European Union, Greece has launched a 2.1 billion euro (\$2.3 billion) program to overhaul its disaster response capability, ordering new water-dropping aircraft, drones, fire trucks, training facilities, and an artificial intelligence-driven sensor network to detect early signs of smoke and flooding.

But the new equipment won't start arriving until 2025. Greek authorities are doubling down on training and new firefighting methods, with another tough season expected this year.

Fires burned an estimated 1,750 square kilometers (675 square miles) last year, including a blaze in northern Greece that was the worst fire ever recorded in the European Union.

Windy and mountainous with hard-to-reach islands, Greece faces a daunting annual challenge in defending multiple urban settlements that overlap with wooded areas at wildfire risk.

It's also getting hotter: Last winter was the warmest since modern records began in 1960, according to the National Observatory of Athens, which analyzed European Union satellite data. The six warmest Greek winters on record have occurred in the past decade.

That's against the backdrop of new data revealing that Europe is the world's fastest-warming continent, its temperatures rising at roughly twice the global average.

Standing in the main disaster response command center in Athens, Vassilis Kikilias, the minister for climate crisis and civil protection, says authorities expect annual conditions to worsen further.

"It will be a very difficult fire season, a very difficult summer," Kikilias, a towering former pro basketball player, told the AP in an interview. "We had a dry winter and fall temperatures lasting until December. So we're facing the climate crisis head on."

Throughout the month of April, firefighters stepped up exercises and training, using new facilities like the Fire Dragon, a 1.2 million euro (\$1.3 million) trailer used to simulate the inside of a burning building. Fire crews with heavy protective gear and oxygen tanks use it to practice close-quarter techniques and rescues.

Close by, Fire Service regulars and trainees crawl through a mesh maze in darkness to practice working in confined spaces. Participants in full kit first workout on treadmill climbers and other gym machines, then crawl through the maze as strobe lights, smoke and loud noises are added to disorient them.

"The firefighting maze helps firefighters in a dark environment, in an unfamiliar setting, in the presence of fire, to enter the area, investigate, possibly carry out a rescue and find a way out," said Fire Lt. Col. Vrasidas Grafakos, a training center commander.

"It's to train them effectively to be ready for building fires, for front-line activity."

Retiree Chrysoula Renieri was among those who lost their homes in the 2023 fires that tore through forests on the island of Rhodes, in northeastern Greece, and areas west of Athens.

Renieri visited her gutted house last week. As she walked through the blackened rooms, she described how her family felt helpless as the approaching fire cut off power and the water supply before the flames took over the house. "No one helped us and everything burned. It's all gone."

She said she hopes the Fire Service's new equipment and methods might make a difference to others.

"I wish that would happen, so many homes could be saved," she said. "We hope, because summer is coming again and the torment will begin."

## Nearly 50 years later, Asian American and Pacific Islander month features revelry and racial justice

By TERRY TANG Associated Press

It has been almost 50 years since the U.S. government established that Asian Americans, Native Hawaiians and Pacific Islanders and their accomplishments should be recognized annually across the nation.

What started as just one week in May has evolved over the decades into a monthlong tribute of events in cities big and small. The nature of celebrations also evolved. Asian American and Pacific Islander or Asian American, Native Hawaiian and Pacific Islander Heritage Month is not just about showcasing festive fare like food and fashion, but hard subjects like grief and social justice. The rise of anti-Asian hate during the pandemic only heightened that effort.

"I think the visibility and the level that the increased participation of organizations in Asian Pacific Heritage Month activities is also an indication of the increasing voice of Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders in civic life more generally," said Karen Umemoto, director of the UCLA Asian American Studies Center. "And also an indication of the spaces that we've come to collectively enter to be able to create those."



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Indeed, Asian American and Pacific Islander Heritage Month celebrations are not relegated just to ethnic enclaves or culturally-specific venues. Across the U.S. this year, events are planned at public libraries, parks and museums either highlighting a specific Asian culture or a myriad of them.

Many credit the observance's origin to Jeanie Jew, a co-founder of the congressional Asian-Pacific staff caucus. In 1977, the Chinese American shared a moving story with New York Republican Rep. Frank Horton about how her grandfather had helped build the transcontinental railroad in the 1800s and then was killed amid anti-Asian unrest.

Jew believed Asians should appreciate their heritage and "Americans must know about the contributions and histories of the Asian-Pacific American experience," Horton said in 1992, according to congressional archives. At that time, Black History Month and Hispanic Heritage Month had already been instituted. Yet, Asian Americans were described as the fastest growing racial group.

Horton and California Democratic Rep. Norm Mineta proposed President Jimmy Carter issue a proclamation that the first week of May be "Asian/Pacific American Heritage Week." Hawaii Senators Daniel Inouye and Spark Matsunaga, both Democrats, brought up a similar bill in the Senate.

May was chosen because of two significant events. The first Japanese immigrants to the U.S. arrived on May 7, 1843. Then on May 19, 1869, the final spike for the transcontinental railroad track, in which Chinese laborers played a crucial role, was embedded.

Umemoto recalls hearing talk of Asian Pacific Heritage Week as a college student. But it wasn't something that was mainstream.

"I think it was more of a kind of cultural celebration in the early days," she said. "And so a lot of student groups, I remember as doing programming around the different histories, cultural traditions and issues in the community."

In May 1990, President George H.W. Bush expanded the designation to the entire month. In 2009, President Barack Obama changed the name to Asian American and Pacific Islander Heritage Month. Now, President Joe Biden's administration refers to it as Asian American, Native Hawaiian, and Pacific Islander Heritage Month.

"As artists and journalists, doctors and engineers, business and community leaders, and so much more, AA and NHPI peoples have shaped the very fabric of our Nation and opened up new possibilities for all of us," Biden said in an official Asian American, Native Hawaiian, and Pacific Islanders Heritage Month proclamation issued on Tuesday.

The White House will hold a celebration in Washington on May 13 to commemorate 25 years since the inception of the White House Initiative on Asian Americans, Native Hawaiians, and Pacific Islanders.

Asian American and Pacific Islander advocacy groups have long used the month as a platform to bring resources to underserved communities and educate the public. But, the one-two punch of COVID-19 and assaults on Asian people in the U.S. really gave some a new appreciation for the heritage month's purpose.

Pre-pandemic, Amber Reed, of Montclair, New Jersey, didn't really think about Asian American and Pacific Islander Heritage Month. A Korean-American adoptee who grew up one of few Asian children in rural Michigan, she said she didn't feel a strong connection to her Asian ancestry. That changed after the March 2021 Atlanta spa shootings that left eight dead, including six Asian women.

"Certainly it jolted me out of thinking that my family could be safe and that we could just sort of muddle through without sort of reckoning with some of the very vicious currents of racism in our culture," Reed said. "And I take no pride in having needed that moment to wake me up."

In response to the shootings, Reed and around 50 others started the nonprofit AAPI New Jersey — originally AAPI Montclair. Their advocacy began with surveys of local schools and other institutions' recognition of Asian American and Pacific Islander Heritage Month.

The group then quickly organized the Lantern Festival for Justice and Remembrance for May. The Chinese tradition of lighting lanterns became a vehicle to honor victims of hate or injustice, Reed said. The event is now in its fourth year.

"I think one thing Asian cultures do so well is provide these rituals, including for collective grief," said

Reed, who still finds it surreal that the group continues to grow.

The variety of subjects and cultures feted during Asian American and Pacific Islander Heritage Month has flourished. There are events happening this month that include more narrow topics, such as a panel on the Asian American Church in Pasadena, California. There's an Asian Comedy Fest in New York City. And in Wisconsin, the state will celebrate May 14 as Hmong-Lao Veterans Day, which was signed into law in 2021. Thousands of Hmong-Lao soldiers fought alongside U.S. forces during the Vietnam war. Many Hmong and Laotian families resettled in Wisconsin.

These heritage month celebrations are helping to erode the notion that the whole population is a monolith, Umemoto said.

"I think it's important for people to visibly see from a wide range of groups that fall under the category Asian American and Pacific Islanders. There are over 70 different ethnic and national groups and over 100 languages spoken within those communities," Umemoto said. "And they're very different."

## **New era for pot regulation leaves old problem: Many cannabis companies can't find a bank**

By MICHAEL R. BLOOD Associated Press

LOS ANGELES (AP) — The Biden administration's move to reclassify marijuana as a less dangerous but still controlled drug was hailed as a monumental step in reshaping national policy. But it might do little to ease a longstanding problem in the cannabis industry — a lack of loans, checking accounts and banking services that other businesses take for granted.

"As far as financial institutions, I don't necessarily think it's going to have a demonstrable effect" on how they deal with cannabis operators, said Morgan Fox, political director for the National Organization for the Reform of Marijuana Laws, or NORML.

Similarly, a banking trade group expected no shift in the legal landscape with the proposed change.

"Any potential decision from the administration to reclassify cannabis has no bearing on the legal issues around banking cannabis," said Blair Bernstein, a spokesperson for the American Bankers Association. "Cannabis would still be illegal under federal law, and that is a line many banks in this country will not cross."

Most Americans live in states where marijuana is legally available in some form. But there's a continuing problem when it comes to banks: Many financial institutions don't want anything to do with money from the cannabis industry for fear it could expose them to legal trouble from the federal government, which still lists marijuana as illegal.

That conflict has left many growers and sellers in the burgeoning industry in a legal conundrum in which they are shut out of everyday financial services like opening a bank account or obtaining a credit card. It also has forced many businesses to operate only in cash — sometimes vast amounts — making them ripe targets for crime.

The U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration's plan would move marijuana from its current classification as a Schedule I drug, alongside heroin and LSD, to a Schedule III drug, alongside ketamine and some anabolic steroids. The plan, which was confirmed to The Associated Press on Tuesday by five people familiar with the matter who spoke on the condition of anonymity to discuss the sensitive regulatory review, follows a recommendation from the federal Health and Human Services Department.

Schedule III drugs are subject to various rules that allow for some medical uses, and for federal criminal prosecution of anyone who traffics in the drugs without permission.

It could take months for the proposal to wind through a series of regulatory hurdles in Washington. The election-year push could help steady Biden's shaky popularity, especially with younger voters who tend to have a more welcoming view of marijuana use.

The lack of banking services has created a fear-inducing ritual for many operators, who are forced to travel with large sums of cash to make tax payments.

Proposals that would allow banks to handle marijuana funds without the risk of federal prosecution have stalled in Congress for years.

Rescheduling might make some banks more willing to consider doing business with cannabis firms, said Julie A. Hill, a professor at the University of Alabama School of Law. But even then, they would face costly regulatory requirements to vet funds coming from the industry — because the federal government lists cannabis as illegal, every marijuana-related transaction is considered suspicious, Hill said in an email.

“Cannabis is still an emerging market with a lot of credit risk,” Hill added. Even with rescheduling “cannabis companies should expect that banking services will still be expensive.”

That was echoed by Dotan Y. Melech, CEO of cannabis credit rating agency CTrust, who said, “The reality is that current lending practices are unlikely to change without better understanding cannabis risk.”

A Congressional Research Service report last year said about 675 financial institutions — a fraction of the banking industry — are doing business with cannabis companies. The nonpartisan agency also noted that “the depth and breadth of financial services that depository institutions are providing to marijuana businesses is unclear.”

Adam Goers, senior vice president of multistate operator The Cannabist Company, who chairs the industry group Coalition for Cannabis Scheduling Reform, called the administration’s proposal a historic step that would open the way for research and much-needed tax changes that would benefit operators.

A perfect companion, he said, would be the latest version of a banking bill pending in Congress, the so-called SAFER Banking Act that would allow banks to provide services to the cannabis industry in those states where it’s legal.

Without the bill, it’s not clear if more banks will enter the cannabis marketplace, he said.

Morgan Paxhia, co-founder of Poseidon Investment Management, called rescheduling “a crucial move towards federal legalization” that would encourage investment.

“We anticipate a surge in liquidity as sidelined capital enters the market, drawn by the potential for legal businesses to thrive,” Paxhia said in a statement.

## **The unexpected announcement of a prime minister divides Haiti’s newly created transitional council**

By DÁNICA COTO Associated Press

PORT-AU-PRINCE, Haiti (AP) — A surprise announcement that revealed Haiti’s new prime minister is threatening to fracture a recently installed transitional council tasked with choosing new leaders for the gang-riddled Caribbean country.

Four of seven council members with voting powers said Tuesday that they had chosen Fritz Bélizaire as prime minister, taking many Haitians aback with their declaration and unexpected political alliance.

The council members who oppose Bélizaire, who served as Haiti’s sports minister during the second presidency of René Préval from 2006 to 2011, are now weighing options including fighting the decision or resigning from the council.

A person with direct knowledge of the situation who did not want to be identified because negotiations are ongoing said the council’s political accord had been violated by the unexpected move and that some council members are considering other choices as potential prime minister.

The council on Tuesday was scheduled to hold an election and choose its president. But two hours and a profuse apology later, one council member said that not only a council president had been chosen, but a prime minister as well. Murmurs rippled through the room.

The Montana Accord, a civil society group represented by a council member with voting powers, denounced in a statement late Tuesday what it called a “complot” hatched by four council members against the Haitian people “in the middle of the night.”

“The political and economic mafia forces have decided to take control of the presidential council and the government so that they can continue to control the state,” the Montana Accord said.

Haitian politics have long been characterized by secretive dealings, but many worry the country cannot afford further political instability as gangs lay siege to the capital of Port-au-Prince and beyond.

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"People change parties (like) they're changing their shirts," said François Pierre-Louis, a professor of political science at Queens College in New York and former Haitian politician.

He spoke during an online webinar on Tuesday evening.

Like others, he said he believed that Jean-Charles Moïse, a powerful politician who was a former senator and presidential candidate, was behind Bélizaire's nomination.

"Interestingly, Moïse, of all the politicians there, is the one calling the shots," Pierre-Louis said.

Moïse, however, does not sit on the council. His party, Pitit Desalin, is represented by Emmanuel Vertilaire, who is among the four council members who support Bélizaire.

The others are Louis Gérald Gilles, Smith Augustin and Edgard Leblanc Fils, the council's new president.

They could not be immediately reached for comment.

Fils represents the January 30 political group, which is made up of parties including PHTK, whose members include former President Michel Martelly and slain President Jovenel Moïse. Meanwhile, Augustin represents the EDE/RED political party, founded by former Prime Minister Claude Joseph, and Gilles represents the Dec. 21 agreement, which is associated with former Prime Minister Ariel Henry, who recently resigned.

A document shared with The Associated Press and signed by the four council members who chose the new prime minister state they have agreed to make decisions by consensus. The document is titled, "Constitution of an Indissoluble Majority Bloc within the Presidential Council."

Henry was on an official visit to Kenya to push for the U.N.-backed deployment of a police force from the East African country when gangs in Haiti launched coordinated attacks starting Feb. 29.

They have burned police stations, opened fire on the main international airport that remains closed since early March and stormed Haiti's two biggest prisons, releasing more than 4,000 inmates. The violence continues unabated in certain part of Port-au-Prince, including the area around the National Palace.

Haitians are demanding that security be a top priority for the council, which is tasked with selecting a new prime minister and Cabinet, as well as prepare for eventual general elections.

But some Haitians are wary of the council and the decisions it's taking.

Jean Selcé, a 57-year-old electrician, noted that most of the council members are longtime politicians: "Their past is not really positive."

"I hope their mentality can change, but I don't believe it will," he said. "They don't really love the country. Who's dying right now? It's Haitians like me."

Robert Fatton, a Haitian politics expert at the University of Virginia, noted that some of the parties represented on the council are responsible for the current chaos in Haiti.

"It's a contradiction," he said. "Every time we seem to be in a crisis, we reappoint the same people and hope that they change their ways, but they do not."

Raising the same criticism is Michael Deibert, author of "Notes From the Last Testament: The Struggle for Haiti," and "Haiti Will Not Perish: A Recent History."

He noted in a recent essay that the council is "dominated by the same political currents who have spent the last 25 years driving Haiti over a cliff, taking advantage of impoverished young men in the slums to be used as political bludgeons before - bloated on the proceeds from kidnapping, extortion, drug trafficking and other criminal enterprises - these groups outgrew the necessity of their patrons."

More than 2,500 people have been killed or injured across Haiti from January to March, according to the U.N.

In addition, more than 90,000 people have fled Port-au-Prince in just one month given the relentless gang violence.

## 'A step back in time': America's Catholic Church sees an immense shift toward the old ways

By TIM SULLIVAN Associated Press

MADISON, Wis. (AP) — It was the music that changed first. Or maybe that's just when many people at the pale brick Catholic church in the quiet Wisconsin neighborhood finally began to realize what was happening.

The choir director, a fixture at St. Maria Goretti for nearly 40 years, was suddenly gone. Contemporary hymns were replaced by music rooted in medieval Europe.

So much was changing. Sermons were focusing more on sin and confession. Priests were rarely seen without cassocks. Altar girls, for a time, were banned.

At the parish elementary school, students began hearing about abortion and hell.

"It was like a step back in time," said one former parishioner, still so dazed by the tumultuous changes that began in 2021 with a new pastor that he only spoke on condition of anonymity.

It's not just St. Maria Goretti.

Across the U.S., the Catholic Church is undergoing an immense shift. Generations of Catholics who embraced the modernizing tide sparked in the 1960s by Vatican II are increasingly giving way to religious conservatives who believe the church has been twisted by change, with the promise of eternal salvation replaced by guitar Masses, parish food pantries and casual indifference to church doctrine.

The shift, molded by plummeting church attendance, increasingly traditional priests and growing numbers of young Catholics searching for more orthodoxy, has reshaped parishes across the country, leaving them sometimes at odds with Pope Francis and much of the Catholic world.

The changes are not happening everywhere. There are still plenty of liberal parishes, plenty that see themselves as middle-of-the-road. Despite their growing influence, conservative Catholics remain a minority.

Yet the changes they have brought are impossible to miss.

The progressive priests who dominated the U.S. church in the years after Vatican II are now in their 70s and 80s. Many are retired. Some are dead. Younger priests, surveys show, are far more conservative.

"They say they're trying to restore what us old guys ruined," said the Rev. John Forliti, 87, a retired Twin Cities priest who fought for civil rights and reforms in Catholic school sex education.

Doug Koesel, an outspoken 72-year-old priest at Blessed Trinity Parish in Cleveland, was blunter: "They're just waiting for us to die."

At St. Maria Goretti, once steeped in the ethos of Vatican II, many parishioners saw the changes as a requiem.

"I don't want my daughter to be Catholic," said Christine Hammond, whose family left the parish when the new outlook spilled into the church's school and her daughter's classroom. "Not if this is the Roman Catholic Church that is coming."

But this is not a simple story. Because there are many who welcome this new, old church.

They often stand out in the pews, with the men in ties and the women sometimes with the lace head coverings that all but disappeared from American churches more than 50 years ago. Often, at least a couple families will arrive with four, five or even more children, signaling their adherence to the church's ban on contraception, which most American Catholics have long casually ignored.

They attend confession regularly and adhere strictly to church teachings. Many yearn for Masses that echo with medieval traditions — more Latin, more incense more Gregorian chants.

"We want this ethereal experience that is different from everything else in our lives," said Ben Rouleau, who until recently led St. Maria Goretti's young adult group, which saw membership skyrocket even as the parish shrank amid the turmoil.

They are, Rouleau said, happily out of touch with a liberal city like Madison.

"It's radical in some ways," Rouleau said. "We're returning to the roots of the church."

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If this movement emerged from anywhere, it might be a now-demolished Denver football stadium and

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a borrowed military helicopter carrying in Pope John Paul II.

Some 500,000 people descended on Denver in 1993 for the Catholic festival World Youth Day. When the pope's helicopter landed just outside Mile High Stadium, the ground shook from the stomping.

The pope, whose grandfatherly appearance belied an electric charisma, and who was beloved both for his kindness and his sternness, confronted an American church shaped by three decades of progressive change.

If the church is often best known to non-Catholics for its opposition to abortion, it had grown increasingly liberal since Vatican II. Birth control was quietly accepted in many parishes, and confession barely mentioned. Catholic social teaching on poverty suffused churches. Most priests traded in their cassocks for plain black shirts with Roman collars. Incense and Latin became increasingly rare.

On some issues, John Paul II agreed with these liberal-minded Catholics. He spoke against capital punishment and pushed for workers' rights. He preached relentlessly about forgiveness – "the oxygen that purifies the air of hatred." He forgave his own would-be assassin.

But he was also uncompromising on dogma, warning about change and cracking down on liberal theologians. He urged a return to forgotten rituals.

Catholics "are in danger of losing their faith," he told crowds at the final Denver Mass, decrying abortion, drug abuse, and what he called "sexual disorders," a barely veiled reference to growing acceptance of gay rights.

Across the nation, fervent young Catholics listened.

Newman Centers, which serve Catholic university students, became increasingly popular. So did FOCUS, a traditionalist organization working on American college campuses. Conservative Catholic media grew, particularly the cable TV network EWTN, a prominent voice for increased orthodoxy.

Today, conservative Catholic America has its own constellation of online celebrities aimed at young people. There's Sister Miriam James, an ever-smiling nun in full habit who talks openly about her hard-partying college days. There's Jackie Francois Angel, who speaks in shockingly frank detail about sex, marriage and Catholicism. There's Mike Schmitz, a movie-star handsome Minnesota priest who exudes kindness while insisting on doctrine.

Even today, surveys show most American Catholics are far from orthodox. Most support abortion rights. The vast majority use birth control.

But increasingly, those Catholics are not in church.

In 1970, more than half of America's Catholics said they went to Mass at least once a week. By 2022, that had fallen to 17%, according to CARA, a research center affiliated with Georgetown University. Among millennials, the number is just 9%.

Even as the U.S. Catholic population has jumped to more than 70 million, driven in part by immigration from Latin America, ever-fewer Catholics are involved in the church's most important rites. Infant baptisms have fallen from 1.2 million in 1965 to 440,000 in 2021, CARA says. Catholic marriages have dropped by well over two-thirds.

The shrinking numbers mean that those who remain in the church have outsized influence compared with the overall Catholic population.

On the national level, conservatives increasingly dominate the U.S. Catholic Bishops Conference and the Catholic intellectual world. They include everyone from the philanthropist founder of Domino's Pizza to six of the nine U.S. Supreme Court justices.

Then there's the priesthood.

Young priests driven by liberal politics and progressive theology, so common in the 1960s and 70s, have "all but vanished," said a 2023 report from The Catholic Project at Catholic University, based on a survey of more than 3,500 priests.

Today's young priests are far more likely to believe that the church changed too much after Vatican II, tangling itself up in America's rapidly shifting views on everything from women's roles to LGBTQ people.

"There really aren't very many liberals in the seminaries anymore," said a young, recently ordained Mid-western priest. He spoke on condition of anonymity because of the turmoil that engulfed his parish after

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he began pressing for more orthodox services. "They wouldn't feel comfortable."

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Sometimes, the shift toward orthodoxy happens slowly. Maybe there's a little more Latin sprinkled into Mass, or an occasional reminder to go to confession. Maybe guitars are relegated to Saturday evening services, or dropped completely.

And sometimes the changes come like a whirlwind, dividing parishes between those thirsting for a more reverent Catholicism and those who feel their spiritual home has been taken from them.

"You'd leave Mass thinking, 'Holy cow! What just happened?'" said another ex-parishioner at St. Maria Goretti, whose family eventually left the church, describing the 2021 promotion of a new pastor, and a sudden focus on sin and confession.

Like many former parishioners, he spoke only on condition of anonymity, worried about upsetting friends still at the church. Diocesan clergy did not respond to requests for interviews.

"I'm a lifelong Catholic. I grew up going to church every Sunday," he said. "But I'd never seen anything like this."

The new outlook has spilled across America.

In churches from Minnesota to California, parishioners have protested changes introduced by new conservative priests. In Cincinnati, it came when the new priest abandoned gospel music and African drumming. In small-town North Carolina, it was an intense focus on Latin. In east Texas, it was a right-wing bishop forced out by the Vatican after accusing Pope Francis of undermining church teachings.

Each can seem like one more skirmish in the cultural and political battles tearing at America.

But the movement, whether called conservative or orthodox or traditionalist or authentic, can be hard to define.

It ranges from Catholics who want more incense, to Latin Mass adherents who have brought back ancient prayers that mention "the perfidious Jew." There are right-wing survivalists, celebrity exorcists, environmentalists and a handful of quasi-socialists.

There's the Catholic news outlet railing against the Vatican's "wicked entourage," and the small-town Wisconsin priest who traces COVID-19 to a century-old prophecy and warns of looming dictatorship. There's the recent "Catholic Prayer for Trump," a \$1,000-a-plate dinner at the former president's Mar-a-Lago resort, featuring a string of conspiracy theorists.

Yet the orthodox movement can also seem like a tangle of forgiveness and rigidity, where insistence on mercy and kindness mingle with warnings of eternity in hell.

Looming over the American divide is Pope Francis, who has pushed the global church to be more inclusive, even as he toes the line on mostdogma.

The orthodox movement has watched him nervously from the first days of his papacy, angered by his more liberal views on issues like gay relationships and divorce. Some reject him entirely.

And the pope clearly worries about America.

The U.S. church has "a very strong reactionary attitude," he told a group of Jesuits last year. "Being backward-looking is useless."

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You can find this new vision of Catholic America at Latin Masses in Milwaukee, the pews crowded with worshippers even at noon on a weekday. It's in conferences held in California wine country, at reinvigorated parishes in Tennessee and prayer groups in Washington, D.C.

And it's at a little Kansas college built high on a bluff above the Missouri River.

At first glance, nothing seems unusual about Benedictine College.

Students worry about unfinished essays and the complexities of dating. They wear cutoff shorts on warm autumn afternoons. Football is huge. The cafeteria food is mediocre.

But look deeper.

Because at Benedictine, Catholic teaching on contraception can slip into lessons on Plato, and no one is surprised if you volunteer for 3 a.m. prayers. Pornography, pre-marital sex and sunbathing in swimsuits

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are forbidden.

If these rules seem like precepts of a bygone age, that hasn't stopped students from flocking to Benedictine and other conservative Catholic colleges.

At a time when U.S. college enrollment is shrinking, Benedictine's expansion over the last 15 years has included four new residence halls, a new dining hall and an academic center. An immense new library is being built. The roar of construction equipment never seems to stop.

Enrollment, now about 2,200, has doubled in 20 years.

Students, many of whom grew up in conservative Catholic families, jokingly call it "the Benedictine bubble." And it might be a window into the future of the Catholic Church in America.

In a deeply secular America, where an ever-churning culture provides few absolute answers, Benedictine offers the reassurance of clarity.

"We don't all agree on everything, obviously," said John Welte, a senior majoring in economics and philosophy. "But I would say everyone has an understanding of, like, truth."

"There are certain things you can just know in your mind: This is right, and this is wrong."

Sometimes, people here quietly admit, it goes too far. Like the students who loudly proclaim how often they go to Mass, or the young man who quit his classics course because he refused to read the works of ancient Greek pagans.

Very often, talk here echoes the 13th-century writings of St. Thomas Aquinas, who believed God could be found in truth, goodness and beauty. Sometimes, they say, that means finding God in strict tenets about sexuality. Sometimes in the haunting beauty of Gregorian chants.

"It's a renewal of, like, some really, really good things that we might have lost," said Madeline Hays, a pensive 22-year-old senior biology major.

She takes the church's rules seriously, from pre-marital sex to confession. She can't stand modern church architecture. She's seriously considering becoming a nun.

But she also worries about poverty and America's wastefulness and the way Americans –including herself – can find themselves slotted into the political divide without even knowing it.

She wrestles with her belief in an unerring Catholic doctrine that can see good people, including some of her own friends, as sinners.

Yet she doesn't want change.

"The church wouldn't be the church if it changed things it had set down as, 'This is infallible doctrine and this will not change through the ages,'" she said.

They understand that in Benedictine's small, mostly closeted gay community. Like the young man, once deeply religious, who suffers in silence as people on campus casually throw around anti-gay slurs.

He's thought many times of leaving, but generous financial aid keeps him here. And after many years, he's accepted his sexuality.

He's seen the joy that people can get from Benedictine, how some will move back to Atchison after graduation, just to stay close.

But not him.

"I don't think I'll come back to Atchison – not ever."

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For decades, the pews at St. Maria Goretti were filled with the families of plumbers, engineers and professors from the University of Wisconsin, just a couple miles up the road. The church is a well-kept island of Catholicism tucked into the leafy residential streets of one of America's most liberal cities.

Like so many other parishes, it had been shaped by the ideals of the 1960s and 1970s. Poverty and social justice became tightly interwoven with sermons and parish life. Gay people felt welcome. Some of the church's moral absolutes, like the contraception ban, became forgotten dogma.

Change arrived in 2003 with a new bishop, Robert C. Morlino, an outspoken conservative. Many liberals remember him as the man who lambasted the message of acceptance in the modern hymn, "All Are Welcome."

His successor, Bishop Donald J. Hying, steers clear of public battles. But in many ways, he quietly carries



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on Morlino's legacy, warning about "the tangled thinking of Modernism."

In 2021, Hying named the Rev. Scott Emerson, a onetime top Morlino aide, as pastor of the Madison church.

Parishioners watched - some pleased, some uneasily - as their spiritual home was remodeled.

There was more incense, more Latin, more talk of sin and confession.

Emerson's sermons are not all fire-and-brimstone. He speaks often about forgiveness and compassion. But his tone shocked many longtime parishioners.

Protection is needed, he said in a 2023 service, from "the spiritual corruption of worldly vices." He has warned against critics - "the atheists, journalists, politicians, the fallen-away Catholics" - he said were undermining the church.

For some, Emerson's changes were welcome.

"A lot of us were like, 'Hey, more confession! Sweet!'" said Rouleau, who ran the parish young adult group. "Better music!"

But the parish - which in mid-2023 became part of a two-church "pastorate" amid a diocese-wide restructuring - was shrinking fast.

For decades, many traditional Catholics have wondered if the church would - and perhaps should - shrink to a smaller but more faithful core.

In ways, that's how St. Maria Goretti looks today. The 6:30 a.m. Friday Mass, Rouleau says, is increasingly popular among young people. But once-packed Sunday Masses now have empty pews. Donations are down. School enrollment plunged.

Some who left have gone to more liberal parishes. Some joined Protestant churches. Some abandoned religion entirely.

"I'm not a Catholic anymore," said Hammond, the woman who left when the church's school began to change. "Not even a little bit."

But Emerson insists the Catholic Church's critics will be proven wrong.

"How many have laughed at the church, announcing that she was passe, that her days were over and that they would bury her?" he said in a 2021 Mass.

"The church," he said, "has buried every one of her undertakers."

## Police clear pro-Palestinian protesters from Columbia University's Hamilton Hall

By JAKE OFFENHARTZ, JOSEPH B. FREDERICK and STEFANIE DAZIO Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — Police officers carrying zip ties and riot shields stormed a Columbia University building being occupied by pro-Palestinian protesters, streaming in through a window late Tuesday and arresting dozens of people.

The protesters had seized the administration building, known as Hamilton Hall, more than 20 hours earlier in a major escalation as demonstrations against the Israel-Hamas war spread on college campuses nationwide.

A statement released by a Columbia spokesperson said officers entered the campus after the university requested help. A tent encampment on the school's grounds began nearly two weeks ago to protest the Israel-Hamas war.

"After the University learned overnight that Hamilton Hall had been occupied, vandalized, and blockaded, we were left with no choice," the school said. "The decision to reach out to the NYPD was in response to the actions of the protesters, not the cause they are championing. We have made it clear that the life of campus cannot be endlessly interrupted by protesters who violate the rules and the law."

NYPD spokesman Carlos Nieves said he had no immediate reports of any injuries following the melee. The arrests — where protesters had shrugged off an earlier ultimatum to abandon the encampment Monday or be suspended — unfolded as other universities stepped up efforts to end the protests.

Just blocks away at The City College of New York, demonstrators were in a standoff with police outside

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the public college's main gate. Video posted on social media by news reporters on the scene late Tuesday showed officers hauling some people to the ground and shoving others as they cleared people from the street and sidewalks. An encampment at the public college, part of the City University of New York system, has been going since Thursday.

Police have swept through other campuses across the U.S. over the last two weeks, leading to confrontations and more than 1,000 arrests nationwide. In rarer instances, university officials and protest leaders struck agreements to restrict the disruption to campus life and upcoming commencement ceremonies.

Columbia's police action happened on the 56th anniversary of a similar move to quash an occupation of Hamilton Hall by students protesting racism and the Vietnam War.

The police department earlier Tuesday said officers wouldn't enter the grounds without the college administration's request or an imminent emergency. Now, law enforcement will be there through May 17, the end of the university's commencement events.

Fabien Lugo, a first-year accounting student who said he was not involved in the protests, said he opposed the university's decision to call in police.

"They've shut down everything. This is too intense," he said. "It feels like more of an escalation than a de-escalation."

In a letter to senior NYPD officials, Columbia President Minouche Shafik said the administration was making the request that police remove protesters from the occupied building and a nearby tent encampment "with the utmost regret."

Shafik also leaned into the idea, first put forward by New York City Mayor Eric Adams earlier in the day, that the group that occupied Hamilton was "led by individuals who are not affiliated with the university."

Neither provided specific evidence to back up that contention, which was disputed by protest organizers and participants.

NYPD officials made similar claims about "outside agitators" during the huge, grassroots demonstrations against racial injustice that erupted across the city after the death of George Floyd in 2020. In some instances, top police officials falsely labeled peaceful marches organized by well-known neighborhood activists as the work of violent extremists.

Before officers arrived at Columbia, the White House condemned the standoffs there and at California State Polytechnic University, Humboldt, where protesters had occupied two buildings until officers with batons intervened overnight and arrested 25 people. Officials estimated the northern California campus' total damage to be upwards of \$1 million.

President Joe Biden believes students occupying an academic building is "absolutely the wrong approach," and "not an example of peaceful protest," said National Security Council spokesperson John Kirby.

Later, former President Donald Trump called into Sean Hannity's show on Fox News Channel to comment on Columbia's turmoil as live footage of police clearing Hamilton Hall aired. Trump praised the officers.

"But it should never have gotten to this," he told Hannity. "And they should have done it a lot sooner than before they took over the building because it would have been a lot easier if they were in tents rather than a building. And tremendous damage done, too."

Other colleges have sought to negotiate agreements with the demonstrators in the hopes of having peaceful commencement ceremonies. As cease-fire negotiations appeared to gain steam, it wasn't clear whether those talks would inspire an easing of protests.

The nationwide campus protests began at Columbia in response to Israel's offensive in Gaza after Hamas launched a deadly attack on southern Israel on Oct. 7. Militants killed about 1,200 people, most of them civilians, and took roughly 250 hostages. Vowing to stamp out Hamas, Israel has killed more than 34,000 Palestinians in the Gaza Strip, according to the local health ministry.

Israel and its supporters have branded the university protests as antisemitic, while Israel's critics say it uses those allegations to silence opposition. Although some protesters have been caught on camera making antisemitic remarks or violent threats, organizers of the protests, some of whom are Jewish, say it is a peaceful movement aimed at defending Palestinian rights and protesting the war.

On Columbia's campus, protesters first set up a tent encampment almost two weeks ago. The school sent in police to clear the tents the following day, arresting more than 100 people, only for the students to return – and inspire a wave of similar encampments at campuses across the country.

Negotiations between the protesters and the college came to a standstill in recent days, and the school set a deadline for the activists to abandon the tent encampment Monday afternoon or be suspended.

Instead, protesters defied the ultimatum and took over Hamilton Hall early Tuesday, carrying in furniture and metal barricades. The demonstrators dubbed the building Hind's Hall, honoring a young girl who was killed in Gaza under Israeli fire, and issued demands for divestment, financial transparency and amnesty.

The Columbia University Chapter of the American Association of University Professors said faculty's efforts to help defuse the situation have been repeatedly ignored by the university's administration despite school statutes that require consultation.

Ilana Lewkovitch, a self-described "leftist Zionist" student at Columbia, said it's been hard to concentrate on school for weeks, amid calls for Zionists to die or leave campus. Her exams have been punctuated with chants of "say it loud, say it clear, we want Zionists out of here" in the background, she said.

Lewkovitch, who identifies as Jewish and studied at Columbia's Tel Aviv campus, said she wished the current pro-Palestinian protests were more open to people like her who criticize Israel's war policies but believe there should be an Israeli state.

## Trump returns to campaign facing a warning of jail time if he violates a trial gag order

By ADRIANA GOMEZ LICON, SCOTT BAUER and MICHELLE L. PRICE Associated Press

WAUKESHA, Wis. (AP) — Donald Trump on Wednesday will use a one-day break from his hush money trial to rally voters in the battleground states of Wisconsin and Michigan, a day after he was held in contempt of court and threatened with jail time for violating a gag order.

His remarks will be closely watched after he received a \$9,000 fine for making public statements about people connected to the case. In imposing the fine for posts on Trump's Truth Social account and campaign website, Judge Juan M. Merchan said that if Trump continued to violate his orders, he "will impose an incarceratory punishment."

The former president is trying to achieve a balancing act unprecedented in American history by running for a second term as the presumptive Republican nominee while also fighting felony charges in New York. Trump frequently goes after Merchan, prosecutors and potential witnesses at his rallies and on social media, attack lines that play well with his supporters but that have potentially put him in legal jeopardy.

Trump insists he is merely exercising his free speech rights, but the offending posts from his Truth Social account and campaign website were taken down. Merchan is weighing other alleged gag-order violations by Trump and will hear arguments on Thursday.

Trump appeared frustrated after the ninth day of the trial came to an end, saying he should be out in Georgia and New Hampshire instead of sitting in court.

"They don't want me on the campaign trail," he told reporters.

Trump has often called this case and other criminal cases against him "election interference," saying they keep him from campaigning for the presidential election in November.

The gag order barred him from making public statements about witnesses, jurors and some others connected to his hush money case.

Manhattan prosecutors have argued Trump and his associates took part in an illegal scheme to influence the 2016 presidential campaign by purchasing and then burying stories. He has pleaded not guilty.

Trump's visits to Wisconsin and Michigan mark his second trip to the swing states in just a month. For the last rallies, the former president largely focused on immigration referring to people who are in the U.S. illegally and who are suspected of crimes as "animals."

Wisconsin and Michigan are among a handful of battleground states expected to decide the 2024 election.

For Trump to win both states, he must do well in suburban areas like the areas outside of Milwaukee and

Saginaw, Michigan, where he will hold Wednesday's rallies. He underperformed in suburban areas during this year's primary even as he dominated the Republican field overall.

Trump has repeatedly falsely said that the 2020 election was stolen from him. Trump's losses in battleground states in 2020 have withstood recounts, audits and reviews by the Justice Department and outside observers.

## Trump's comparison of student protests to Jan. 6 is part of effort to downplay Capitol attack

By ALI SWENSON Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — Donald Trump on Tuesday lamented the possibility that Columbia University's pro-Palestinian protesters could be treated more leniently than the rioters who stormed the U.S. Capitol in January 2021, marking the second time in a week the former president has invoked the ongoing campus protests to downplay past examples of right-wing violence.

Speaking in the hallway outside a Manhattan courtroom where his criminal hush money trial is taking place, Trump questioned whether student demonstrators who seized and barricaded a campus building early Tuesday, some of them vandalizing it in the process, would be treated the same way as his supporters who attacked the Capitol on Jan. 6 to stop certification of the presidential results.

"I think I can give you the answer right now," he said. "And that's why people have lost faith in our court system."

Trump's remarks demonstrate anew how he and the Republican Party have tried to minimize the deadliest assault on the seat of American power in over 200 years, arguing that violent or criminal behavior by the left is a larger threat. Trump has called the rioters "unbelievable patriots" and has talked openly about the prospect of issuing pardons if he wins a second term.

His comments come as he runs to reclaim the White House and is juggling charges in four separate criminal cases. They promote his position that the charges are being orchestrated by Democrats to keep him out of the White House and that he and his supporters are the targets of political persecution by a fundamentally corrupt justice system.

"They took over a building. That is a big deal," Trump said of the Columbia protesters. "And I wonder if what's going to happen to them will be anything comparable to what happened to J6, because they're doing a lot of destruction, a lot of damages, a lot of people getting hurt very badly. I wonder if that's going to be the same kind of treatment they gave J6. Let's see how that all works out."

More than 1,350 people have been charged with Capitol riot-related federal crimes. Over 800 of them have been sentenced, with roughly two-thirds receiving terms of imprisonment ranging from a few days to 22 years. According to the Justice Department, 89 have pleaded guilty to federal felony charges of assaulting law enforcement officers.

Legal scholars and political scientists said Trump's strategy could help his campaign but point out there are stark differences between Jan. 6 and the campus protests against the Israel-Hamas war. College students have gathered in encampments on Columbia and other campuses to call for a ceasefire and demand their universities cut financial ties to Israel.

"The Columbia protests are not aimed at stopping the peaceful transition of power following an election, so they do not threaten the functioning of U.S. democracy," said Richard Hasen, an expert in election law and professor at the University of California, Los Angeles law school.

Hakeem Jefferson, an assistant professor of political science at Stanford University, said the demonstrations at a Columbia building that also was occupied during a civil rights protest in the 1960s reflect a long tradition of college students "pushing on the conscience" of their country.

"This is a tradition of protest. Disruptive, to be sure. Annoying to university administrators, to be sure," Jefferson said. "To the contrary, what happened on January the 6th was a violent attempt to disrupt the peaceful transfer of power. There is no tradition of that in American history. It is unprecedented. And that is why we should, of course, treat it differently."

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Some of the recent campus protests have erupted into clashes with police, and hundreds of students have been arrested. Protesters in some parts of the country have hurled water bottles or other objects at officers, and police have deployed chemical agents to disperse crowds or carried them away amid screams.

Trump's remarks build on a strategy of Republicans and conservative social media influencers to reframe what constitutes an insurrection as part of an ongoing attempt to influence the public's perception of Jan. 6. They have used the term to describe public demonstrations and even the 2020 election that put Democrat Joe Biden in the White House.

Some social media users on Tuesday called the takeover of Columbia's Hamilton Hall an "insurrection," and said the media wouldn't describe it that way because the views of the protesters aligned with the political left. Fox News used the reference in an article Tuesday about the student protesters, reporting that "the insurrection began at approximately 12:30 a.m."

Legal experts say the term "insurrection" has a specific meaning — a violent uprising that targets government authority — and that protests that do not involve an attempt to dismantle or replace a government shouldn't be classified that way.

Tuesday was the second time in a week that Trump has compared the campus protests to past examples of right-wing violence.

Last week, he claimed the deadly 2017 rally in Charlottesville, Virginia, where torch-wielding white supremacists chanted "Jews will not replace us" was "nothing" compared to the antisemitism displayed at the campus protests.

"The hate wasn't the kind of hate that you have here," he said.

He returned to the reference in his comment outside court on Tuesday, saying, "Charlottesville is peanuts compared to what you're looking at now."

The campus protests have pitted students against one another, and videos show instances of demonstrators making antisemitic remarks and violent threats. Some Jewish students say the hateful rhetoric has made them afraid to set foot on campus.

Meanwhile, organizers of the protests, some of whom are Jewish, say it is a peaceful movement aimed at defending Palestinian rights and protesting the war.

Columbia University on Tuesday said students occupying Hamilton Hall would face expulsion.

"Protesters have chosen to escalate to an untenable situation — vandalizing property, breaking doors and windows, and blockading entrances — and we are following through with the consequences we outlined yesterday," said Ben Chang, the university's spokesperson.

## Google and Apple now threatened by the US antitrust laws helped build their technology empires

By MICHAEL LIEDTKE AP Technology Writer

SAN FRANCISCO (AP) — The U.S. Justice Department's double-barreled antitrust attack on Google's dominant search and Apple's trendsetting iPhone is reviving memories of the epic battle that hobbled Microsoft before it roared back to yet again become the world's most valuable company.

The parallels to the Justice Department's landmark antitrust case in 1998 could provide a window into the potential breakthroughs that could be unleashed if regulators succeed in their attempts to crack down on Google and Apple.

Federal lawyers have even gone as far as to assert Google and Apple may never have created so many popular products or become as powerful as they are now if Microsoft hadn't been reined in a quarter century ago.

In closing arguments of a Washington, D.C., trial that began last September, regulators Thursday will apply the finishing touches to a case alleging Google has turned its search engine into an illegal monopoly that stifles competition and innovation. The Apple case, which was only filed a month ago, is still years away from its resolution.

Although regulators have lodged separate complaints against Google and Apple, the two cases are

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shadowed by Microsoft's legal saga that began when both those were mere specks on the technology landscape.

When they went after Google in October 2020, regulators compared the lucrative deals that the company cut with Apple to lock its search engine into the iPhone and Safari web browser to the same tactics Microsoft deployed in its personal computer software to block competition.

And in the antitrust lawsuits that they filed against Apple last month, the Justice Department pointed back to complaints that company co-founder Steve Jobs had raised in 1998 against Microsoft's "dirty tactics" while urging regulators to take steps to force the PC software maker "to play fair."

And that is what the Justice Department did in an antitrust case against Microsoft that caused massive distractions that opened the door for Google's search engine to become the internet's main gateway. It also culminated in a series of concessions that paved the way for Apple to extend the reach of its iTunes music store that increased the popularity of the iPod that spawned the iPhone.

The Microsoft case "created new opportunities for innovation in areas that would become critical to the success of Apple's consumer devices and the company itself," the Justice Department crowed in the lawsuit that casts the iPhone as an illegal monopoly.

After years of mostly fruitless attempts to compete against Google's search engine and the iPhone under the leadership of Steve Ballmer, Microsoft began to regain its stride when Satya Nadella became CEO in 2014.

Earlier this year, Microsoft's market value hit \$3 trillion for the first time, surpassing Apple as the world's most valuable company while taking the early lead in artificial intelligence technology that's expected to reshape the world.

It's an odd juxtaposition that has thrust regulators into battling two companies they helped create when they caged a colossus now angling to seize the mantle in technology's next frontier.

But it's also a tableau that antitrust experts cite as evidence that the system is working to unlock more robust competition that hatches innovations. And then those breakthroughs sometimes serve as the building blocks for new monopolies that must eventually be challenged by regulators, even as fallen empires like Microsoft can still find ways to reinvent themselves.

"It's not about an agenda about trying to pursue and destroy companies, it's about trying to restore competition in a market," said Rebecca Haw Allensworth, a Vanderbilt University law professor who focuses on antitrust law issues. "What has happened with the Microsoft case is a success story that can also provide a blueprint for Apple and Google when people ask why is America trying to destroy its most successful companies? Microsoft has done great after it had a major antitrust claim against it."

The Justice Department's landmark case against Microsoft was not the first time an antitrust lawsuit turned into a springboard for other companies to emerge as dominant forces that eventually need to be corralled, too.

For instance, separate antitrust lawsuits filed against IBM in 1969 and AT&T in 1974 helped pave the way for Microsoft and Apple to launch the personal computer revolution that subsequently spawned the internet boom that was followed by the smartphone explosion.

Those are the kinds of innovations that have fueled economic growth and society-shifting products that might not have happened had antitrust regulators stayed on the sidelines while IBM and AT&T continued to exploit their respective monopolies, Yale University economics professor Fiona Scott Morton said.

"When you innovate successfully, you can grow like crazy but then it's 20 years later and it's hard to keep growing like you were," said Scott Morton, who once was chief economist in the Justice Department's antitrust division. "So instead of just relying on innovation, you realize, 'Hey we have a lot of market power, we could use that to raise profits.'

"It's just very natural that's what happens repeatedly and regulators have to say, 'No, that part isn't allowed, you have to compete on the merits.' And oftentimes when you succeed in forcing more competition, somebody else ends up winning the next race."

After the closing arguments in the Justice Department's antitrust case against Google wrap up this

week, U.S. District Judge Amit Mehta is expected to issue his ruling in the late summer or early autumn. Meanwhile, the case against Apple will continue to progress in New Jersey federal court while antitrust regulators examine whether Microsoft is once again crossing the line to gain an unfair advantage in the still-nascent field of AI.

## Haiti's transitional council names a new prime minister in the hopes of quelling stifling violence

By DÁNICA COTO Associated Press

PORT-AU-PRINCE, Haiti (AP) — Haiti's newly installed transitional council chose a little known former sports minister as the Caribbean country's prime minister Tuesday as part of its monumental task of trying to establish a stable new government amid stifling violence.

Fritz Bélizaire was chosen in a surprise move to replace current interim Prime Minister Michel Patrick Boisvert, gaining the support of four of the seven voting members on the nine-member panel but with other panel members saying they were unfamiliar with Bélizaire.

The council also planned to choose a Cabinet as it seeks to quell gang violence that is choking the capital, Port-au-Prince, and beyond. Heavy gunfire was reported in several of the capital's neighborhoods during the council's meeting.

More than 90,000 people have fled the capital in the span of one month, and overall, more than 360,000 people have been left homeless in recent years as gunmen raze communities in rival territories.

Earlier on Tuesday, the council chose former presidential candidate Edgard Leblanc Fils as the president of the panel.

"This is a very good choice for prime minister," Fils said of Bélizaire during a brief speech to nearly two dozen attendees. "The important thing for us is this will, this determination to go beyond divisions, to overcome conflicts and to reach a consensus."

He said the council met Monday with army and police officials to talk about Haiti's security crisis and how best to resolve it. "We are publicly recognizing the suffering," he said of the population.

The announcement of Bélizaire was unexpected. A murmur rose through the attendees as officials announced that four council members with voting powers had selected Bélizaire as prime minister.

Leslie Voltaire, one of the voting council members, told The Associated Press, "I don't know him," when asked whether he supported Bélizaire.

Bélizaire served as Haiti's sports minister during the second presidency of René Prével from 2006 to 2011.

"He's kind of an unknown figure," said Robert Fatton, a Haitian politics expert at the University of Virginia. "He doesn't seem to have his own constituency. Maybe that made him the likely prime minister so different parties can accept him as prime minister."

Council member Louis Gérald Gilles, who supported Bélizaire, told The Associated Press that the council wanted to act quickly in choosing a prime minister. "The Haitian population can no longer wait," he said. "The security issue is essential for societal calm."

Hours later, many ordinary Haitians remained in the dark.

"They chose a new prime minister?" Jean-Paul Eliason said as he shuffled through the streets of Port-au-Prince ringing a bell to advertise his shoe-shining business.

When told of Bélizaire, 70-year-old Eliason said his name sounded familiar.

"It's good news because maybe the country can embark on the right path," he said. "Security, that's priority. People are fleeing and gangs are burning their homes."

Sony Duvert, who leaned against his motorcycle parked near a makeshift barrier aimed at protecting his neighborhood from gangs, said he had never heard of the new prime minister and that he hoped he would make Haiti safer.

"Every day, we post here like soldiers," he said. "I would love to see a big change for Haiti."

After the brief announcement, which was made nearly two hours after the event was supposed to start, the council went behind closed doors again to talk about their choices for Cabinet. Voltaire, however, said

he didn't expect the council to announce Cabinet selections on Tuesday.

The majority supporting Bélizaire included Fils, the council's new president, Smith Augustin, Gilles and Emmanuel Vertilaire.

Fatton called them an "unlikely" alliance: "We'll see if it can last."

Fils represents the January 30 political group, which is made up of parties including PHTK, whose members include former President Michel Martelly and slain President Jovenel Moïse. Meanwhile, Augustin represents the EDE/RED political party, founded by former Prime Minister Claude Joseph.

Gilles represents the Dec. 21 agreement, which is associated with former Prime Minister Ariel Henry, who resigned weeks after the gang attacks began. Meanwhile, Vertilaire is linked to the Pitit Desalin party, which is led by powerful politician Jean-Charles Moïse, who celebrated Tuesday's announcement.

"He is someone very important in the country," Moïse said of Bélizaire. "He knows the state pretty well — he knows how to govern."

The transitional council will act as the country's presidency until it can arrange a presidential election some time before it disbands, which must be by February 2026.

Haitians remain divided over whether they believe a transitional government can help calm a troubled country whose capital has been under siege since gangs launched coordinated attacks on Feb. 29.

Gang members have burned police stations, opened fire on the main international airport that remains closed since early March and broke into Haiti's two biggest prisons, releasing more than 4,000 inmates. The country's biggest seaport also remains largely paralyzed by gang violence.

But one thing is certain: Haitians want security.

"Haitians are very impatient now. They want to see results," Fatton said.

The council is expected to support the U.N.-backed deployment of a Kenyan police force to help fight gangs, although it's unclear when that might happen.

Henry, the former prime minister, was on an official trip to the East African country when the coordinated gang attacks began, and he remains locked out of Haiti. He submitted his resignation last week.

## Netanyahu vows to invade Rafah 'with or without a deal' as cease-fire talks with Hamas continue

By TIA GOLDENBERG and MATTHEW LEE Associated Press

TEL AVIV, Israel (AP) — Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu pledged Tuesday to launch an incursion into the southern Gaza city of Rafah, where hundreds of thousands of Palestinians are sheltering from the almost 7-month-long war, just as cease-fire negotiations between Israel and Hamas appear to be gaining steam.

Netanyahu's comments came hours before U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken was to arrive in Israel to advance the truce talks — which appear to be one of the most serious rounds of negotiations between Israel and Hamas since the war began. The deal is meant to free hostages, bring some relief to the population and avert an Israeli offensive into Rafah and the potential harm to civilians there.

Netanyahu said Israel would enter Rafah, which Israel says is Hamas' last stronghold, regardless of whether a truce-for-hostages deal is struck. His comments appeared to be meant to appease his nationalist governing partners but it was not clear whether they would have any bearing on any emerging deal with Hamas.

"The idea that we will stop the war before achieving all of its goals is out of the question," Netanyahu said, according to a statement from his office. "We will enter Rafah and we will eliminate Hamas' battalions there — with or without a deal, to achieve the total victory."

The U.S. has repeatedly said it opposes the Rafah operation until Israel presents a credible plan for evacuating and protecting the estimated 1.5 million people seeking shelter there.

Blinken, speaking in Jordan before flying to Israel, said the "focus" right now is on improving the humanitarian situation and reaching a cease-fire deal that brings Israeli hostages home. He said Israel has offered a "strong proposal" and called on Hamas to respond.



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"No more delays. No more excuses. The time to act is now," he said. "We want to see in the coming days this agreement coming together."

Netanyahu has faced pressure from his governing partners not to proceed with a deal that might prevent Israel from invading Rafah. His government could be threatened if he agrees to a deal because hardline Cabinet members have demanded an attack on Rafah.

Netanyahu met on Tuesday with one of those partners, National Security Minister Itamar Ben-Gvir, according to the minister's office, who said Netanyahu promised him that "Israel will enter Rafah, promised that we are not stopping the war and promised that there won't be a reckless deal."

With more than half of Gaza's 2.3 million people sheltering in Rafah, the international community, including Israel's top ally, the United States, has warned Israel against any offensive that puts civilians at risk.

Netanyahu on Tuesday was addressing the Tikva Forum, a small group of families of hostages that's distinct from the main group representing the families of captive Israelis. The forum has indicated that it prefers to see Hamas crushed over the freedom of their loved ones. Most families and their supporters have demonstrated in the thousands every week for a deal that would bring the hostages home, saying it should take precedence over military action.

Netanyahu's coalition is made up of ultranationalist and conservative religious parties, and critics of the Israeli leader say his decision-making during the war has been driven by political considerations rather than national interests, a charge Netanyahu denies. His government could collapse if one of the parties opposed to a deal pulls out, a scenario Netanyahu would try to avoid considering his support has plummeted in opinion polls since the war began, although it has seen a slight gradual uptick.

Finance Minister Bezalel Smotrich, who heads the ultranationalist Religious Zionist party, said Monday that he was seeking "total annihilation" of Israel's enemies, appearing to refer to Hamas, in a recorded portion of his remarks at an event marking the end of the Passover holiday which were aired in Israeli media.

"You can't do half a job," he said.

The current deal being discussed, brokered by the U.S., Egypt and Qatar, would see the release of dozens of hostages in exchange for a six-week halt in fighting as part of an initial phase, according to an Egyptian official and Israeli media. Hundreds of Palestinian prisoners held by Israel would also be released, including some serving long sentences.

Blinken, who was meeting with regional leaders in Saudi Arabia and Jordan before landing in Tel Aviv later Tuesday, urged Hamas on Monday to accept the latest proposal, calling it "extraordinarily generous" on Israel's part.

But a sticking point remains over what happens next. 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 the first phase of the deal is over. The issue has repeatedly obstructed efforts by the mediators during months of talks.

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

The war 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.

## **Metro train collides with bus in downtown Los Angeles, injuring more than 50, 2 seriously**

By DAMIAN DOVARGANES Associated Press

LOS ANGELES (AP) — At least 55 people were hurt, two seriously, when a Metro light rail train and a University of Southern California shuttle bus collided Tuesday along a busy thoroughfare in downtown Los Angeles, officials said.

The crash happened shortly before noon along Exposition Boulevard, near the USC campus and Natural History Museum, according to the LA Fire Department.

Two victims were hospitalized with serious injuries and 16 others were transported in fair condition, the department said. Another 37 people were treated at the scene.

Dave Sotero, a spokesperson for LA Metro, said the bus crossed into the path of an E Line train. The light rail line runs from East Los Angeles to downtown Santa Monica mostly along streets, and not all of the crossings have gates.

Genesis Hernandez was transferring from a Metro bus to catch the E Line to Santa Monica, where she attends college when "all of a sudden I just saw a bunch of ambulances going by," she recalled.

The 19-year-old was able to view the crash scene from a platform at the Expo/Vermont Metro station. "The bus definitely got crunched on its front end," she said. "The train didn't look too damaged."

Television news footage showed the left side of the red and white bus smashed against the first car of the train. The front section of the bus had significant damage.

The Starcraft 40-passenger bus was traveling westbound on Exposition Boulevard with only the driver and one passenger aboard when the collision occurred, according to a statement from USC Transportation. The bus driver and passenger were the two most severely injured, according to fire department officials.

There were more than 150 passengers on the Santa Monica-bound Metro train, officials said.

Sotero said the Los Angeles Police Department would be in charge of the investigation.

"Metro offers its sympathy to those injured in the accident," Sotero said in an email.

Exposition Boulevard was closed in both directions during the initial investigation. Metro said its train service would be limited and buses would be used to get passengers through the crash area.

## **4 officers killed in North Carolina were at disadvantage as shots rained from above, police say**

By ERIK VERDUZCO and JEFFREY COLLINS Associated Press

CHARLOTTE, N.C. (AP) — Law enforcement officers with an arrest warrant demanded that a man come out of a house in North Carolina before four were killed by gunfire, the victims unable to survive shots coming from inside the dwelling, a witness and officials said Tuesday.

Still reeling from Monday's attack — the deadliest against U.S. law enforcement officers since 2016 — investigators in Charlotte said they weren't sure whether there was a second shooter and that more work was needed to determine a precise timeline of events.

"Charlotte isn't going to be the last place that this happens," Mayor Vi Lyles said, "but Charlotte will be the place that will heal — that will heal with dignity and respect for everyone."

A task force made up of officers from different agencies had arrived in the residential neighborhood to try to capture Terry Clark Hughes Jr., 39, who was wanted for possession of a firearm by an ex-felon and fleeing to elude in Lincoln County, North Carolina.

Those killed were identified as Sam Poloche and William Elliott of the North Carolina Department of Adult Corrections; Charlotte-Mecklenburg Officer Joshua Eyer; and Deputy U.S. Marshal Thomas Weeks. Four other officers were wounded in the shootout, and Hughes was also killed.

An AR-15 semi-automatic rifle, a 40-caliber handgun and ammunition were found at the scene.

An AR-15 is able to penetrate traditional body armor and allowed the shooter to "unload several rounds towards our officers within a matter of seconds," said Charlotte-Mecklenburg Police Chief Johnny Jennings.

He said more than 100 spent rounds were found, though it wasn't clear how many were fired by the suspect. At least 12 officers also fired guns.

"Even though officers were trying to take cover, they were at a disadvantage because the suspect was up at a higher level and they were returning fire from a lower position," Jennings said, noting that the gunman was "shooting from upstairs."

It was the deadliest day for U.S. law enforcement in one incident since five officers were killed by a sniper during a protest in Dallas in 2016.

Hughes' criminal record in North Carolina goes back more than a decade. It includes prison time and convictions for breaking and entering, reckless driving, eluding arrest and illegally possessing a gun as a former felon, according to state records.

Star Pulliam, a cousin of Hughes, said the pair were close and talked nearly every day. She said Hughes was an electrician for more than 15 years. He posted short videos of complex electrical wiring on his LinkedIn profile.

Despite past struggles with the law, Pulliam said it seemed to her like Hughes "had been straightening his life out," she said.

Saung Chhoeun, who lives next door, recalled hearing several demands that Hughes leave the home. There was no response, he said, but then a car alarm went off about the same time as gunfire.

He said an armored vehicle was subsequently parked between the house and the wounded officers to serve as protection during a rescue attempt. After a three-hour standoff, the home was torn open by specialty vehicles.

"I don't know how many rounds were fired. But then it got quiet," Chhoeun told The Associated Press.

Two females who were inside the house, including a minor, were cooperating and have not been charged, the police chief said, adding that investigators weren't pursuing additional suspects.

Jennings said Monday that a second shooter was suspected of firing at police. But by Tuesday, he was backing off and said that possibility was still being checked.

Before taking questions from reporters, officials expressed sorrow and awe for the slain and wounded officers.

Eyer was recently honored as a Charlotte-Mecklenburg officer of the month, partly for working to get guns off the streets. Jennings said he was killed while responding to others who were facing gunfire at the scene.

"We saw ... officers going into the line of fire to save their brothers in blue, who have gone down in the act of trying to keep our community safe," Jennings said. "To me, that's truly heroic."

Residents in the neighborhood of modest brick homes expressed fear a day later.

"We've been here such a long time — you raise your children here — and then all the sudden you have this tragedy," said Yearly Washington, who has lived in the neighborhood for 35 years.

The last marshal killed in the line of duty was in November 2018. Chase White was shot in Tucson, Arizona, by a man wanted for stalking local law enforcement.

The Carolinas Regional Fugitive Task Force, headquartered in Charlotte, is comprised of 70 federal, state and local agencies collaborating to capture crime suspects.

"This is a loss for the entire country," said Marshals Service Director Ronald Davis, who traveled to Charlotte. "Losing a deputy, losing task force officers, is like losing a family member because, quite frankly, they are family members."

## **Binance founder Changpeng Zhao sentenced to 4 months for allowing money laundering**

By GENE JOHNSON Associated Press

SEATTLE (AP) — Changpeng Zhao, founder of the world's largest cryptocurrency exchange, was sentenced Tuesday to four months in prison for looking the other way as criminals used the platform to move money connected to child sex abuse, drug trafficking and terrorism.

U.S. District Judge Richard A. Jones credited the founder and former CEO of Binance for taking responsibility for his wrongdoing. Zhao, 47, pleaded guilty in November to one count of failing to maintain an anti-money-laundering program. Binance agreed to pay \$4.3 billion to settle related allegations from the U.S. government.

"I failed here," Zhao told the court Tuesday. "I deeply regret my failure, and I am sorry."

But the judge said he was troubled by Zhao's decision to ignore U.S. banking requirements that would have slowed the company's explosive growth. "Better to ask for forgiveness than permission," is what

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Zhao told his employees about the company's approach to U.S. law, prosecutors said.

"No person — regardless of wealth — is immune from prosecution or above the laws of the United States," Jones said.

The sentence, which included a previously agreed-to \$50 million fine, was far less than the three years the Justice Department had sought, but defense attorneys had asked that Zhao spend no time in prison.

Zhao is the first person ever sentenced to prison time for such violations of the Bank Secrecy Act, which requires U.S. financial institutions to know who their customers are, to monitor transactions and to file reports of suspicious activity. Prosecutors said no one had ever violated the regulations to the extent Zhao did. If he did not receive time in custody for the offense, no one would, rendering the law toothless, they argued.

"This wasn't a mistake," Justice Department lawyer Kevin Mosley told Jones. "When Mr. Zhao violated the BSA he was well aware of the requirements."

For example, Mosley said, Zhao directed the company to disguise customers' locations in the U.S. in an effort to avoid having to comply with U.S. law.

The Justice Department on Monday sent a letter urging Congress to stiffen penalties in such cases. Violations can allow billions of dollars to flow illicitly through the U.S. financial system, but penalties under the government's sentencing guidelines are "poorly calibrated to address the severity of the crimes," the letter said.

Binance allowed more than 1.5 million virtual currency trades, totaling nearly \$900 million, that violated U.S. sanctions, including ones involving Hamas' al-Qassam Brigades, al-Qaeda and Iran, prosecutors have said.

Defense attorneys Mark Bartlett and William Burck told the judge there was no evidence Zhao knew of any specific transaction that would have been barred by U.S. regulations or sanctions. Also, they argued, Binance transactions that violated U.S. sanctions constituted a miniscule portion for a company that processed trillions of dollars per year. And they noted that Zhao began making changes to improve Binance's compliance before stepping down.

In a letter to the court, Zhao wrote that there was "no excuse for my failure to establish the necessary compliance controls at Binance."

"I wish I could change that part of Binance's story," he added. "But under my direction, Binance has now implemented the most stringent anti-money laundering controls of any non-U.S. exchange, and those controls have been in place since 2022."

Zhao, his legal team and family members left after Tuesday's hearing without speaking to reporters. Zhao will report to serve his sentence at a date yet to be determined.

The cryptocurrency industry has been marred by scandals and market meltdowns.

Zhao was perhaps best known as the chief rival to Sam Bankman-Fried, the founder of FTX, which was the second-largest crypto exchange before it collapsed in 2022. Bankman-Fried was convicted last November of fraud for stealing at least \$10 billion from customers and investors and sentenced to 25 years in prison.

Zhao and Bankman-Fried were originally friendly competitors in the industry, with Binance investing in FTX when Bankman-Fried launched the exchange in 2019. The relationship deteriorated, however, culminating in Zhao announcing that he was selling all of his cryptocurrency investments in FTX in early November 2022. FTX filed for bankruptcy a week later.

More recently, Nigeria has recently sought to try Binance and two of its executives on money laundering and tax evasion charges. The U.S. Justice Department on Tuesday charged early bitcoin investor Roger Ver, known as "bitcoin Jesus" for his avid promotion of the currency, with evading \$50 million in taxes.

The judge described Zhao's life story as remarkable: He grew up in rural China and his family immigrated to Canada following the 1989 Tiananmen Square massacre. He worked at a McDonald's beginning at age 14 and eventually became enamored of the tech industry while in college.

He founded Binance in 2017, motivated at least in part by a desire to help people in underdeveloped countries access reliable banking. The company made him a crypto celebrity and a billionaire many times over; he announced in 2021 that he intends to give away nearly all of his fortune.

Zhao's philanthropic interests include funding free online education programs for children across the globe and work by small research labs to cure diseases.

Zhao's attorneys pointed to his willingness to leave the United Arab Emirates, where he and his family live, to enter his guilty plea in the U.S., even though the two countries don't have an extradition treaty.

They also argued that he would not be safe in prison. Because he is not a U.S. citizen, he is ineligible for placement in a minimum security facility. Given his status and wealth, as well as Binance's cooperation with U.S. law enforcement in certain investigations, he might be a target for violence in a medium security prison, they suggested.

## **US poised to ease restrictions on marijuana in historic shift, but it'll remain controlled substance**

By ZEKE MILLER, JOSHUA GOODMAN, JIM MUSTIAN and LINDSAY WHITEHURST Associated Press WASHINGTON (AP) — The U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration will move to reclassify marijuana as a less dangerous drug, The Associated Press has learned, a historic shift to generations of American drug policy that could have wide ripple effects across the country.

The proposal, which still must be reviewed by the White House Office of Management and Budget, would recognize the medical uses of cannabis and acknowledge it has less potential for abuse than some of the nation's most dangerous drugs. However, it would not legalize marijuana outright for recreational use.

The agency's move, confirmed to the AP on Tuesday by five people familiar with the matter who spoke on the condition of anonymity to discuss the sensitive regulatory review, clears the last significant regulatory hurdle before the agency's biggest policy change in more than 50 years can take effect.

Once OMB signs off, the DEA will take public comment on the plan to move marijuana from its current classification as a Schedule I drug, alongside heroin and LSD. It moves pot to Schedule III, alongside ketamine and some anabolic steroids, following a recommendation from the federal Health and Human Services Department. After the public comment period and a review by an administrative judge, the agency would eventually publish the final rule.

"Today, the Attorney General circulated a proposal to reclassify marijuana from Schedule I to Schedule III," Justice Department director of public affairs Xochitl Hinojosa said in a statement. The DEA is a component of the Department of Justice. "Once published by the Federal Register, it will initiate a formal rulemaking process as prescribed by Congress in the Controlled Substances Act."

Attorney General Merrick Garland's signature throws the full weight of the Justice Department behind the move and appears to signal its importance to the Biden administration.

It comes after President Joe Biden called for a review of federal marijuana law in October 2022 and moved to pardon thousands of Americans convicted federally of simple possession of the drug. He has also called on governors and local leaders to take similar steps to erase marijuana convictions.

"Criminal records for marijuana use and possession have imposed needless barriers to employment, housing, and educational opportunities," Biden said in December. "Too many lives have been upended because of our failed approach to marijuana. It's time that we right these wrongs."

The election year announcement could help Biden, a Democrat, boost flagging support, particularly among younger voters.

Biden and a growing number of lawmakers from both major political parties have been pushing for the DEA decision as marijuana has become increasingly decriminalized and accepted, particularly by younger people. A Gallup poll last fall found 70% of adults support legalization, the highest level yet recorded by the polling firm and more than double the roughly 30% who backed it in 2000.

The DEA didn't respond to repeated requests for comment.

Schedule III drugs are still controlled substances and subject to rules and regulations, and people who traffic in them without permission could still face federal criminal prosecution.

Some critics argue the DEA shouldn't change course on marijuana, saying rescheduling isn't necessary and could lead to harmful side effects.

Jack Riley, a former deputy administrator of the DEA, said he had concerns about the proposed change because he thinks marijuana remains a possible "gateway drug," one that may lead to the use of other drugs.

"But in terms of us getting clear to use our resources to combat other major drugs, that's a positive," Riley said, noting that fentanyl alone accounts for more than 100,000 deaths in the U.S. a year.

On the other end of the spectrum, others argue marijuana should be treated the way alcohol is.

"While this rescheduling announcement is a historic step forward, I remain strongly committed to continuing to work on legislation like the SAFER Banking Act as well as the Cannabis Administration and Opportunity Act, which federally deschedules cannabis by removing it from the Controlled Substances Act," Senate Majority Leader Sen. Chuck Schumer of New York said in a statement. "Congress must do everything we can to end the federal prohibition on cannabis and address longstanding harms caused by the War on Drugs."

Federal drug policy has lagged behind many states in recent years, with 38 having already legalized medical marijuana and 24 legalizing its recreational use.

That's helped fuel fast growth in the marijuana industry, with an estimated worth of nearly \$30 billion. Easing federal regulations could reduce the tax burden that can be 70% or more for businesses, according to industry groups. It could also make it easier to research marijuana, since it's very difficult to conduct authorized clinical studies on Schedule I substances.

The immediate effect of rescheduling on the nation's criminal justice system would likely be more muted, since federal prosecutions for simple possession have been fairly rare in recent years.

But loosening restrictions could carry a host of unintended consequences in the drug war and beyond.

Critics point out that as a Schedule III drug, marijuana would remain regulated by the DEA. That means the roughly 15,000 cannabis dispensaries in the U.S. would have to register with the DEA like regular pharmacies and fulfill strict reporting requirements, something that they are loath to do and that the DEA is ill equipped to handle.

Then there's the United States' international treaty obligations, chief among them the 1961 Single Convention on Narcotic Drugs, which requires the criminalization of cannabis. In 2016, during the Obama administration, the DEA cited the U.S.' international obligations and the findings of a federal court of appeals in Washington in denying a similar request to reschedule marijuana.

## **Biden's historic marijuana shift is his latest election-year move for young voters**

By JONATHAN J. COOPER Associated Press

PHOENIX (AP) — President Joe Biden may eventually ban TikTok, but he's moving to give something back to the young people who dominate the popular social media app — a looser federal grip on marijuana.

Facing softening support from a left-leaning voting group that will be crucial to his reelection hopes in November, Biden has made a number of election-year moves intended to appeal in particular to younger voters. His move toward reclassifying marijuana as a less dangerous drug is just the latest, coming weeks after he canceled student loans for another 206,000 borrowers. He has also made abortion rights central to his case for reelection.

The push to highlight issues that resonate with younger voters comes as Biden fights to hold together the coalition that sent him to the White House in 2020.

Biden, the oldest president in U.S. history, is battling a perception among voters that he's lost a step as he's aged. Discontent with his handling of Israel's war against Hamas in Gaza has exploded into unrest on college campuses. While inflation has ebbed from its peak and the job market remains strong, polls show Americans still blame Biden for high prices and high interest rates, which are squeezing first-time buyers out of the housing market.

A proposal by the U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration would recognize the medical uses of cannabis

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and acknowledge it has less potential for abuse than some of the nation's most dangerous drugs. However, it would not legalize marijuana outright for recreational use.

Biden called for a review of federal marijuana law in October 2022 and moved to pardon thousands of Americans convicted federally of simple possession of the drug. He has also called on governors and local leaders to take similar steps to erase marijuana convictions.

"The American people have made clear in state after state that cannabis legalization is inevitable," Rep. Earl Blumenauer, an Oregon Democrat and an early proponent of easing marijuana laws, said in a statement. "The Biden-Harris administration is listening."

Biden and Vice President Kamala Harris both touted their support for marijuana law reform to mark the 4/20 cannabis holiday at exactly 4:20 p.m. Saturday.

The comments are latest sign the administration plans to continue to focus on the popular issue ahead of the November election.

"Sending people to prison just for possessing marijuana has upended too many lives and incarcerated people for conduct that many states no longer prohibit," Biden posted on the social media platform X. "It's time that we right these wrongs."

The politics of marijuana are favorable for the president.

According to AP VoteCast, 63% of voters nationally in the 2022 midterm elections said they favor legalizing recreational use of marijuana nationwide, compared with 36% who said they were opposed. Support for legalization was higher among adults under age 45, 73% of whom were in favor. About 8 in 10 Democrats, roughly two-thirds of independents and about half of Republicans were in favor.

Biden has issued pardons to thousands of people for federal marijuana possession and commuted long sentences handed down for nonviolent drug offenses. In 2022, he urged governors to pardon state offenses.

While young voters lean left, they are also less likely to vote. Biden can't afford for a reliable group of supporters to stay home or vote for a third-party candidate like independent Robert F. Kennedy Jr., who is aggressively courting young voters, or the Green Party's Jill Stein, who is leaning into her opposition to Israel's war in Gaza.

The last two elections were decided by fewer than 100,000 votes in three states.

Despite growing public acceptance, Biden's move has prominent detractors, including several former top DEA officials. Opponents say the potency of today's marijuana could lead to harmful side effects, including psychosis and anxiety.

"This is a political act — it's not following the science," said former DEA Administrator Tim Shea. "It's politics in election year. It's like forgiving student loans. It's aimed at a select group of people and the impact is going to be bad."

"Law enforcement can't believe it's happening," Shea added.

During the crack epidemic of the 1980s and '90s, then-Sen. Biden was a prominent voice in the so-called "War on Drugs."

Ethan Nadelmann, who has been advocating for drug legalization for decades, said Biden probably senses now that a more lenient stance on pot could help rally younger voters and progressive members of his party.

"It will end the hypocrisy," Nadelmann said.

Former President Donald Trump's views on marijuana are unclear. But as a resident of Florida he'll have the chance to vote on a legalization initiative on the ballot in November. In an interview last year with Newsmax, the GOP presidential nominee said pot causes "significant damage" even as he acknowledged that legalizing cannabis is a "pretty popular thing" among voters.

Federal drug policy has lagged behind much of the country, with 38 states having already legalized medical marijuana in addition to 24 that have approved its recreational use. That's helped fuel fast growth in the U.S. marijuana industry, with sales estimated to be worth \$25 billion a year.

Easing federal regulations could reduce the tax burden that can be 70% or more by allowing businesses to take tax deductions and seek loans, according to industry groups. It could also make it easier for scientists to research marijuana.

## Hush money trial judge raises threat of jail as he finds Trump violated gag order, fines him \$9K

By MICHAEL R. SISAK, JENNIFER PELTZ, JAKE OFFENHARTZ and COLLEEN LONG Associated Press  
NEW YORK (AP) — Donald Trump was held in contempt of court Tuesday and fined \$9,000 for repeatedly violating a gag order that barred him from making public statements about witnesses, jurors and some others connected to his New York hush money case. If he does it again, the judge warned, he could be jailed.

Prosecutors had alleged 10 violations, but New York Judge Juan M. Merchan found there were nine. Trump stared down at the table in front of him as the judge read the ruling, frowning slightly.

It was a stinging rebuke of the presumptive Republican presidential nominee's insistence that he was exercising his free speech rights and a reminder that he's a criminal defendant subject to the harsh realities of trial procedure. And the judge's remarkable threat to jail a former president signaled that Trump's already precarious legal standing could further spiral depending on his behavior during the remainder of the trial.

Merchan wrote that he is "keenly aware of, and protective of," Trump's First Amendment rights, "particularly given his candidacy for the office of President of the United States."

"It is critically important that defendant's legitimate free speech rights not be curtailed, that he be able to fully campaign for the office which he seeks and that he be able to respond and defend himself against political attacks," Merchan wrote.

Still, he warned that the court would not tolerate "willful violations of its lawful orders and that if necessary and appropriate under the circumstances, it will impose an incarceratory punishment."

With that statement, the judge drew nearer the specter of Trump becoming the first former president of the United States behind bars.

"This gag order is totally unconstitutional," Trump said as court adjourned after a day that included testimony from a Hollywood lawyer who negotiated two of the hush money deals at issue in the case. "I'm the Republican candidate for president of the United States ... and I'm sitting in a courthouse all day long listening to this stuff."

Trump is used to having constant access to his social media bullhorn to slam opponents and speak his mind. After he was banned from Twitter following the Jan. 6, 2021, attack on the Capitol by his supporters, Trump launched his own platform, where his posts wouldn't be blocked or restricted. He has long tried to distance himself from controversial messages he's amplified to his millions of followers by insisting they're "only retweets."

But he does have experience with gag orders, which were also imposed in other legal matters. After he was found to have violated orders in his civil fraud trial, he paid more than \$15,000 in fines.

Trump also is subject to a gag order in his federal criminal election interference case in Washington. That order limits what he can say about known or reasonably foreseeable witnesses in the case and about court staff and other lawyers, though an appeals court freed him to speak about special counsel Jack Smith, who brought the case.

Tuesday's ruling in New York came at the start of the second week of testimony in the historic case, which involves allegations that Trump and his associates took part in an illegal scheme to influence the 2016 presidential campaign by purchasing and then burying seamy stories. The payouts went to a doorman with a torrid yarn; ex-Playboy model Karen McDougal, who had accusations of an affair; and to porn performer Stormy Daniels, who alleged a sexual encounter with Trump. He has pleaded not guilty and says the stories are all fake.

Trump deleted, as ordered, the offending posts from his Truth Social account and campaign website and has until Friday to pay the fine. The judge was also weighing other alleged gag-order violations by Trump and will hear arguments Thursday. He also announced that he will halt the trial on May 17 to allow Trump to attend his son Barron's high school graduation.

Of the 10 posts, the one Merchan ruled was not a violation came on April 10, a post referring to witnesses



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Michael Cohen and Daniels as "sleaze bags." Merchan said Trump's contention that he was responding to previous posts by Cohen "is sufficient to give" him pause on whether the post was a violation.

Merchan cautioned that the gag order "not be used as a sword instead of a shield by potential witnesses" and that if people who are protected by the order, like Cohen, continue to attack Trump "it becomes apparent" they don't need the gag order's protection.

Cohen, Trump's former attorney, has said he will refrain from commenting about Trump until after he testifies. On Tuesday, he said in a text message to The Associated Press: "Judge Merchan's decision elucidates that this behavior will not be tolerated and that no one is above the law."

In other developments, testimony resumed Tuesday with a banker who helped Cohen open accounts, including one used to buy Daniels' silence. Trump's attorneys have suggested that the payments were aimed at protecting his name and his family — not influencing the outcome of the presidential election.

Jurors also began hearing from Keith Davidson, a lawyer who represented McDougal and Daniels in their negotiations with the National Enquirer and Cohen. He testified that he arranged a meeting at his Los Angeles office during the summer of 2016 to see whether the tabloid's parent company American Media, Inc. was interested in McDougal's story. At first they demurred, saying she "lacked documentary evidence of the interaction," Davidson testified.

But the tabloid at the behest of publisher David Pecker eventually bought the rights, and Davidson testified that he understood — and McDougal preferred — it would never be published. Asked why American Media Inc., would buy a story it didn't intend to run, Davidson said he was aware of two reasons.

"One explanation I was given is they were trying to build Karen into a brand and didn't want to diminish her brand," he said. "And the second was an unspoken understanding that there was an affiliation between David Pecker and Donald Trump and that AMI wouldn't run this story, any story related to Karen, because it would hurt Donald Trump."

As for Daniels, the October 2016 leak of Trump's 2005 "Access Hollywood" tape — in which Trump bragged about grabbing women sexually without asking permission — had "tremendous influence" on the marketability of her story. Before the video was made public, "there was very little if any interest" in her claims, Davidson told jurors.

A deal was reached with the tabloid for Daniels story, but the Enquirer backed out. Though Pecker testified that he had agreed to serve as the Trump campaign's "eyes and ears" by helping to squelch unflattering rumors and claims about Trump and women, he drew the line with Daniels after paying out \$180,000 to scoop up and sit on stories. Davidson began negotiating with Cohen directly, hiked up the price to \$130,000, and reached a deal.

But Daniels and Davidson grew frustrated as weeks passed and instead of the money, she got excuses from Cohen about broken computers, Secret Service "firewalls" and the Jewish holiday of Yom Kippur.

"I thought he was trying to kick the can down the road until after the election," Davidson said.

While Cohen never explicitly said he was negotiating the deal on Trump's behalf, Davidson felt the implication was clear.

"Every single time I talked to Michael Cohen, he leaned on his close affiliation with Donald Trump," Davidson said. Plus, he figured that Trump "was the beneficiary of this contract."

The GOP presidential hopeful is charged with 34 felony counts of falsifying business records in connection with the hush money payments. The detailed evidence on business transactions and bank accounts is setting the stage for testimony from Cohen, who went to federal prison after pleading guilty in 2018 to campaign finance violations and other crimes.

The trial — the first of Trump's four criminal cases to come before a jury — is expected to last for another month or more.

## United Methodists begin to reverse longstanding anti-LGBTQ policies

By PETER SMITH Associated Press

CHARLOTTE, N.C. (AP) — United Methodist delegates began making historic changes in their policies on sexuality on Tuesday — voting without debate to reverse a series of anti-LGBTQ policies.

The delegates voted to delete mandatory penalties for conducting same-sex marriages and to remove their denomination's bans on considering LGBTQ candidates for ministry and on funding for gay-friendly ministries.

The 667-54 vote, coming during their legislative General Conference, removes some of the scaffolding around the United Methodist Church's longstanding bans on LGBTQ-affirming policies regarding ordination, marriage and funding.

Still to come later this week are votes on the core of the bans on LGBTQ clergy and same-sex marriage in church law and policy, which may draw more debate. However, the large majority achieved by Tuesday's votes indicate the tenor of the General Conference. The consensus was so overwhelming that these items were rolled into the legislative "consent calendar," normally reserved for non-controversial measures.

The actions follow a historic schism in what was long the third-largest denomination in the United States. About one-quarter of U.S. congregations left between 2019 and 2023, mostly conservative churches dismayed that the denomination wasn't enforcing its longstanding LGBTQ bans. With the absence of many conservative delegates, who had been in the solid majority in previous general conferences and had steadily reinforced such bans over the decades, progressive delegates are moving quickly to reverse such policies.

Such actions could also prompt departures of some international churches, particularly in Africa, where more conservative sexual values prevail and where same-sex activity is criminalized in some countries.

United Methodist Church law still bans the ordination of "self-avowed practicing homosexuals" into ministry — a decades-old rule that will come up for a vote later this week.

However, on Tuesday, the General Conference voted to remove a related ban — on church officials considering someone for ordination who fits that category. It removed bans on bishops ordaining LGBTQ people as clergy or consecrating them as bishops.

It also removed mandatory penalties — imposed by a 2019 General Conference — on clergy who conduct ceremonies celebrating same-sex weddings or unions.

And it imposed a moratorium on any church judicial processes seeking to discipline any clergy for violating LGBTQ-related rules.

In addition, the General Conference took actions toward being openly LGBTQ-affirming.

It repealed a longstanding ban on any United Methodist entity using funds "to promote the acceptance of homosexuality." That previous ban also forbade the funding of any effort to "reject or condemn lesbian and gay members and friends" and expressly supported the funding of responses to the anti-HIV epidemic. However, the mixed wording of the old rule has been replaced with a ban on funding any effort to "reject any LGBTQIA+ person or openly discriminate against LGBTQIA+ people."

"It's a very liberating day for United Methodists who are actively involved with LGBTQ people," said the Rev. David Meredith, board chair for the Reconciling Ministries Network, a group that has long advocated for LGBTQ inclusion in the church.

Compared with past, contentious general conferences, this one is "much more upbeat," added Jan Lawrence, executive director of the network. "Yes, we're going to have things we disagree on. But the vitriol that we saw in 2019, that is not evident at all."

Other rule changes called for considering of LGBTQ people along with other demographic categories for appointments in an effort to have diversity on various church boards and entities.

The General Conference is the UMC's first legislative gathering since 2019, one that features its most progressive slate of delegates in recent memory following the departure of more than 7,600 mostly conservative congregations in the United States because it essentially stopped enforcing its bans on same-sex marriage and LGBTQ ordination.

Those departures came during a window between 2019 and 2023 allowing U.S. congregations to leave

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with their properties, held in trust for the denomination, under friendlier than normal terms. Conservatives are advocating that such terms be extended for international and U.S. churches that don't agree with the General Conference's actions.

"We get it, the United Methodist Church wants to be done with disaffiliation," said the Rev. Rob Renfroe, president of the conservative advocacy group Good News. "They want to step into this new day. We do not want to keep them from that. But how can disaffiliation be over when it never began for the majority of United Methodists?"

Still to come this week are final votes on whether to remove the bans on LGBTQ clergy and same-sex marriage, and whether to replace a longstanding document that had called the "practice of homosexuality ... incompatible with Christian teaching."

All of those proposals had overwhelming support in committee votes last week.

The changes would be historic in a denomination that has debated LGBTQ issues for more than half a century at its General Conferences, which typically meet every four years.

Last week, the conference endorsed a regionalization plan that essentially would allow the churches of the United States the same autonomy as other regions of the global church. That change – which still requires local ratification -- could create a scenario where LGBTQ clergy and same-sex marriage are allowed in the United States but not in other regions. Delegates on Tuesday approved a related measure related to regionalization.

The conference last week also approved the departure of a small group of conservative churches in the former Soviet Union.

The denomination had until recently been the third largest in the United States, present in almost every county. But its 5.4 million U.S. membership in 2022 is expected to drop once the 2023 departures are factored in.

The denomination also counts 4.6 million members in other countries, mainly in Africa, though earlier estimates have been higher.

## What marijuana reclassification means for the United States

By JENNIFER PELTZ and LINDSAY WHITEHURST Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — The U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration is moving toward reclassifying marijuana as a less dangerous drug. The Justice Department proposal would recognize the medical uses of cannabis, but wouldn't legalize it for recreational use.

The proposal would move marijuana from the "Schedule I" group to the less tightly regulated "Schedule III."

So what does that mean, and what are the implications?

WHAT HAS ACTUALLY CHANGED? WHAT HAPPENS NEXT?

Technically, nothing yet. The proposal must be reviewed by the White House Office of Management and Budget, and then undergo a public-comment period and review from an administrative judge, a potentially lengthy process.

Still, the switch is considered "paradigm-shifting, and it's very exciting," Vince Sliwoski, a Portland, Oregon-based cannabis and psychedelics attorney who runs well-known legal blogs on those topics, told The Associated Press when the federal Health and Human Services Department recommended the change.

"I can't emphasize enough how big of news it is," he said.

It came after President Joe Biden asked both HHS and the attorney general, who oversees the DEA, last year to review how marijuana was classified. Schedule I put it on par, legally, with heroin, LSD, quaaludes and ecstasy, among others.

Biden, a Democrat, supports legalizing medical marijuana for use "where appropriate, consistent with medical and scientific evidence," White House press secretary Karine Jean-Pierre said Thursday. "That is why it is important for this independent review to go through."

IF MARIJUANA GETS RECLASSIFIED, WOULD IT LEGALIZE RECREATIONAL CANNABIS NATIONWIDE?

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No. Schedule III drugs — which include ketamine, anabolic steroids and some acetaminophen-codeine combinations — are still controlled substances.

They're subject to various rules that allow for some medical uses, and for federal criminal prosecution of anyone who traffics in the drugs without permission.

No changes are expected to the medical marijuana programs now licensed in 38 states or the legal recreational cannabis markets in 23 states, but it's unlikely they would meet the federal production, record-keeping, prescribing and other requirements for Schedule III drugs.

There haven't been many federal prosecutions for simply possessing marijuana in recent years, even under marijuana's current Schedule I status, but the reclassification wouldn't have an immediate impact on people already in the criminal justice system.

"Put simple, this move from Schedule I to Schedule III is not getting people out of jail," said David Culver, senior vice president of public affairs at the U.S. Cannabis Council.

But rescheduling in itself would have some impact, particularly on research and marijuana business taxes.

## WHAT WOULD THIS MEAN FOR RESEARCH?

Because marijuana is on Schedule I, it's been very difficult to conduct authorized clinical studies that involve administering the drug. That has created something of a Catch-22: calls for more research, but barriers to doing it. (Scientists sometimes rely instead on people's own reports of their marijuana use.)

Schedule III drugs are easier to study, though the reclassification wouldn't immediately reverse all barriers to study, Culver said.

## WHAT ABOUT TAXES (AND BANKING)?

Under the federal tax code, businesses involved in "trafficking" in marijuana or any other Schedule I or II drug can't deduct rent, payroll or various other expenses that other businesses can write off. (Yes, at least some cannabis businesses, particularly state-licensed ones, do pay taxes to the federal government, despite its prohibition on marijuana.) Industry groups say the tax rate often ends up at 70% or more.

The deduction rule doesn't apply to Schedule III drugs, so the proposed change would cut cannabis companies' taxes substantially.

They say it would treat them like other industries and help them compete against illegal competitors that are frustrating licensees and officials in places such as New York.

"You're going to make these state-legal programs stronger," says Adam Goers, an executive at medical and recreational cannabis giant Columbia Care. He co-chairs a coalition of corporate and other players that's pushing for rescheduling.

It could also mean more cannabis promotion and advertising if those costs could be deducted, according to Beau Kilmer, co-director of the RAND Drug Policy Center.

Rescheduling wouldn't directly affect another marijuana business problem: difficulty accessing banks, particularly for loans, because the federally regulated institutions are wary of the drug's legal status. The industry has been looking instead to a measure called the SAFE Banking Act. It has repeatedly passed the House but stalled in the Senate.

## ARE THERE CRITICS? WHAT DO THEY SAY?

Indeed, there are, including the national anti-legalization group Smart Approaches to Marijuana. President Kevin Sabet, a former Obama administration drug policy official, said the HHS recommendation "flies in the face of science, reeks of politics" and gives a regrettable nod to an industry "desperately looking for legitimacy."

Some legalization advocates say rescheduling weed is too incremental. They want to keep the focus on removing it completely from the controlled substances list, which doesn't include such items as alcohol or tobacco (they're regulated, but that's not the same).

Paul Armentano, the deputy director of the National Organization for the Reform of Marijuana Laws, said that simply reclassifying marijuana would be "perpetuating the existing divide between state and federal marijuana policies." Minority Cannabis Business Association President Kaliko Castille said rescheduling just "re-brands prohibition," rather than giving an all-clear to state licensees and putting a definitive close to decades of arrests that disproportionately pulled in people of color.

"Schedule III is going to leave it in this kind of amorphous, mucky middle where people are not going to understand the danger of it still being federally illegal," he said.

## Trump says states should decide on prosecuting women for abortions, has no comment on abortion pill

By CHRISTINE FERNANDO Associated Press

CHICAGO (AP) — Former President Donald Trump says in a new interview it should be left to the states whether to prosecute women for abortions or whether to monitor women's pregnancies. He declined to comment on access to the abortion pill mifepristone, which has been embroiled in an intense legal battle.

In an interview published Tuesday by Time magazine, Trump responded to questions about how he would handle various abortion questions if elected by repeatedly saying it should be left up to the states.

"You don't need a federal ban," the presumptive Republican presidential nominee said. "Roe v. Wade ... wasn't about abortion so much as bringing it back to the states. So the states would negotiate deals. Florida is going to be different from Georgia and Georgia is going to be different from other places."

When asked if he would veto a bill that would impose a federal ban, he reiterated "it's about states rights" and said "there will never be that chance" because Republicans, even if they take back the Senate in November, would not have the 60 votes needed to overcome a filibuster and bring the bill to a vote.

Trump repeated his catchall states-rights response when asked if states should monitor women's pregnancies so the government would know if they had an abortion. Amid debates about criminalizing women for getting abortions, including those who self-manage with medication, experts have raised alarm over how modern surveillance technologies could help law enforcement agencies track and investigate abortions.

Trump also deferred to the states when asked if a woman should be punished for getting an abortion after a state has banned or restricted the procedure.

"The states are going to make that decision," Trump said. "The states are going to have to be comfortable or uncomfortable, not me."

Democrats have recently seized on comments Trump made in 2016, saying "there has to be some form of punishment" for women who have abortions.

Abortion is a central campaign issue in the 2024 presidential election as Trump seeks a more cautious stance on the issue, which has become a vulnerability for Republicans and has driven turnout for Democrats. Trump's deferring to individual states has drawn criticism from Democrats as well as conservatives and anti-abortion groups seeking a federal ban.

The national anti-abortion group SBA Pro-Life America said in a statement that it was "disappointed in President Trump's position of relegating a human rights issue to the states." The organization also claimed Democrats would scrap the filibuster in order to "impose their agenda of abortion without limit on the entire country."

SBA advocates for a national ban on abortions after 15 weeks of pregnancy, with exceptions for rape, incest and saving the life of the mother, but the organization has voiced support for states with stricter bans.

As president, Trump appointed three justices to the U.S. Supreme Court who helped form the majority that overturned the constitutional right to abortion, and he has taken credit for that during his campaign. Earlier this month, he said he was "proudly the person responsible for the ending" of the 50-year-old ruling, Roe v. Wade.

Meanwhile, President Joe Biden has blamed Trump for a deluge of state abortion restrictions put into effect since the ruling two years ago. His campaign also has warned that a second Trump term could lead to nationwide abortion restrictions. Most recently, Biden blamed Trump for Florida's six-week abortion ban during campaign events in the state last week.

"Donald Trump's latest comments leave little doubt: If elected he'll sign a national abortion ban, allow women who have an abortion to be prosecuted and punished, allow the government to invade women's privacy to monitor their pregnancies, and put IVF and contraception in jeopardy nationwide," Biden's campaign manager, Julie Chavez Rodriguez, said in a statement responding to the Time interview.

Mini Timmaraju, president of Reproductive Freedom for All, also expressed doubts about Trump's emphasis on moderation by leaving the issue up to the states.

"There is zero doubt in my mind that Trump will choose anti-abortion extremists and their horrifying agenda over American families every single chance he gets," she said.

Trump declined to speak with Time about mifepristone as access to the abortion pill has been thrown into uncertainty amid a legal battle that's made its way to the Supreme Court.

Advocates on both sides of the abortion debate also have long pressed Trump to make clear his views on the Comstock Act, a 19th Century law that has been revived by anti-abortion groups seeking to block the mailing of mifepristone. Trump declined to comment on the act, saying only that he has "pretty strong views" on the matter and would make a statement on it over the next 14 days.

"In Trump's America, people will be punished for having abortions, the government will monitor women's pregnancies, and he'll weaponize and misuse the 19th-Century Comstock laws to try and criminalize doctors and outlaw abortion nationwide," Jenny Lawson, executive director, Planned Parenthood Votes, said in a statement.

Trump's comments were consistent with his recent strategy to show more moderation on abortion rights as he seeks to appeal to a general electorate. Trump has previously voiced disagreement with abortion restrictions in individual states, including Arizona's Civil War-era ban and Florida's six-week ban. In the Time interview, Trump repeated that he "thought six weeks is too severe."

## Democrats say they will save Speaker Mike Johnson's job if Republicans try to oust him

By KEVIN FREKING Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — House Democrats will vote to save Republican Speaker Mike Johnson's job should some of his fellow Republican lawmakers seek to remove him from the position, Democratic leaders said Tuesday, likely assuring for now that Johnson will avoid being ousted from office like his predecessor, former Rep. Kevin McCarthy.

Johnson, R-La., has come under heavy criticism from some Republicans for moving forward with aid for Ukraine as part of a \$95 billion emergency spending package that passed this month. It would take only a handful of Republicans to remove Johnson from the speakership if the Democratic caucus went along with the effort.

But Democratic leaders took that possibility off the table.

"At this moment, upon completion of our national security work, the time has come to turn the page on this chapter of Pro-Putin Republican obstruction," said a statement from the top three House Democrats, Reps. Hakeem Jeffries, Katherine Clark and Pete Aguilar. "We will vote to table Rep. Marjorie Taylor Greene's Motion to Vacate the Chair. If she invokes the motion, it will not succeed."

The announcement from Democrats ensures that Johnson will survive the most difficult stretch of his tenure so far, which saw him struggle through internal GOP divisions to pass government funding, the renewal of a key surveillance program and aid for Ukraine, Israel and Taiwan. To do so, Johnson was often forced to rely on votes from Democrats, creating an unusual governing coalition that has angered hard-right members who say their majority is being squandered.

Greene, R-Ga., filed a resolution with the House clerk last month — called a motion to vacate — that would remove Johnson from office if approved by the House. And while Greene did not force the resolution to be taken up immediately, she told reporters she was laying the groundwork for future consideration. She had two co-sponsors, Reps. Thomas Massie, R-Ky., and Paul Gosar, R-Ariz.

Johnson was quick to distance himself from Democrats on the issue, saying he had no conversations with Jeffries or anyone else about saving his job.

"I was laser-focused on getting the supplemental done," Johnson said, referring to the aid package. "I've had colleagues from both parties come up to me on the floor, of course, and say we won't stand for this. ... I've not requested assistance from anyone. I'm not focused on that at all."

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Many House Republicans are eager to move past the divisions that have tormented their ranks ever since taking the majority last January. At a closed-door session Tuesday morning, much of the discussion focused on how to create unity in the party heading into the November elections.

Rep. Andy Barr, R-Ky., said Republicans heard from Michael Whatley, the new chairman of the Republican National Committee, who emphasized that Donald Trump, the presumptive GOP presidential nominee, wants to unify the majority in the House. He said that's a message that certainly helps Johnson.

"What he wants is a unified Republican majority, so my message is singing from the same song sheet as President Trump," Barr said.

Still, Greene indicated she may move forward with the effort to remove Johnson, tweeting on X that she believes in recorded votes to put "Congress on record." She also called Johnson "officially the Democratic Speaker of the House" and questioned "what slimy deal" he made for Democratic support.

"Americans deserve to see the Uniparty on full display. I'm about to give them their coming out party!" Greene tweeted. "Uniparty" is a derisive term some Republicans use to describe cooperation between some fellow Republicans and Democrats.

Greene announced a press conference on the issue for Wednesday. During votes Tuesday, she held an extensive conversation with House Majority Leader Steve Scalise, R-La., who said afterward that he had stressed the work Republicans were trying to accomplish as she weighs her next move.

"In the end, it's her decision, but we had a conversation about it," Scalise said.

The removal of McCarthy in October left the House adrift for nearly a month, unable to take up legislation as Republicans struggled to select a replacement. Republicans were anxious to avoid a repeat going into November.

"It's huge, it's huge, especially for the presidential election but all of us up and down the ballot," said Rep. Vern Buchanan, R-Fla. "They don't want another 30 days of a dysfunctional Congress, and that's what you would get."

Many Democrats, even before Tuesday's announcement, had said they would consider helping Johnson, but they were also looking for direction from their leadership and emphasized that in order for Johnson to gain their support, he would need to allow for the vote on an emergency aid package focused on Ukraine and Israel.

Democrats made clear that their approach would be to table Greene's motion, rather than take an affirmative vote for Johnson, particularly because of his role leading Trump's 2020 election challenge in the runup to the Jan. 6, 2021, attack on the Capitol.

Democrats were also wary of repeating the disorder that occurred during McCarthy's removal. The Democratic leaders in their statement of opposition to Greene's effort, emphasized their willingness to work across party lines on national priorities.

"We're not looking for chaos. We're the adults in the room," said Rep. Ann Kuster, D-N.H.

Some Republican lawmakers, however, said the Democratic change in tactics was a sign of remorse over helping to oust McCarthy.

"I think that Democrats are realizing that they voted with the wrong, small group of individuals last time around," said Rep. Anthony D'Esposito, R-N.Y. "Mike Johnson has shown he's a leader. He has the ability to garner support from both sides of the aisle on issues that matter most to the American people."

## Takeaways from the start of week 2 of testimony in Trump's hush money trial

By MICHAEL R. SISAK, JAKE OFFENHARTZ, COLLEEN LONG and ALANNA DURKIN RICHER Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — The first week of testimony in Donald Trump's hush money trial was the scene-setter for jurors. This week, prosecutors are working on filling in the details of how they say he pulled off a scheme to bury damaging stories to protect his 2016 presidential campaign.

Prosecutors are setting the stage for crucial testimony from Trump's former attorney Michael Cohen, who

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arranged hush money payments on Trump's behalf before going to prison for campaign finance violations and other crimes.

Trump denies any wrongdoing and has pleaded not guilty.

Here's a look at how things are shaping up so far this week at the historic trial:

## JAIL THREAT

Six months before the 2024 presidential election, the presumptive Republican nominee is being threatened with possible jail time — even before jurors decide whether he is guilty in the hush money case.

Judge Juan Merchan raised the specter of time behind bars if Trump continues to violate a gag order barring him from making public statements about witnesses, jurors and others connected with the case.

In a ruling Tuesday fining Trump \$9,000 for repeated violations of the gag order, Merchan wrote that as a judge he was "keenly aware of, and protective of" Trump's First Amendment rights, "particularly given his candidacy for the office of President of the United States."

But Merchan said that the court would not tolerate "willful violations of its lawful orders and that if necessary and appropriate under the circumstances, it will impose an incarceratory punishment."

Trump was ordered to pay the fine by the close of business Friday. Ahead of a separate Tuesday deadline set by the judge, Trump deleted his posts that the judge ruled violated the order. The judge will hear arguments on Thursday on other alleged gag order violations by Trump.

## NUTS & BOLTS

Prosecutors are using detailed testimony on email exchanges, business transactions and bank accounts to form the foundation of their argument that Trump is guilty of 34 felony counts of falsifying business records in connection with the hush money payments.

Jurors heard from Gary Farro, a banker who helped Cohen open the account Cohen used to buy the silence of porn actor Stormy Daniels in the weeks before the 2016 election. Daniels was threatening to go public with claims of a sexual encounter with Trump.

Farro also testified about helping Cohen create another account, which Cohen planned to use to buy the rights of former Playboy model Karen McDougal's story about an alleged affair with Trump. Trump denies both Daniels' and McDougal's claims.

Cross-examining Farro, Blanche, the defense lawyer, underscored that Cohen made no mention that the accounts he opened in October 2016 had anything to do with deals involving then-candidate Trump or his company.

If Cohen had done so, "I would have asked questions," Farro said.

Cohen told Farro the accounts were related to real estate. Farro testified that he might not have opened an account if he had known their intended purpose.

## TRUMP VIDEOS

During the trial, Trump is being increasingly confronted with images and testimony on the very stories he tried to bury.

The judge has ruled that jurors won't get to see the infamous "Access Hollywood" tape in which Trump was caught on a hot mic describing grabbing women sexually without their permission. The tape from 2005 didn't become public until Oct. 7, 2016, just weeks before election day.

That video is important because prosecutors are trying to make the case that Trump paid hush money to Daniels because he feared her claims about a sex encounter could further hurt him with female voters after the video leaked.

Prosecutors worked around that limitation on Tuesday by showing jurors C-SPAN clips of Trump on the campaign trail in 2016 forcefully denying allegations made by several women after the video became public. The prosecutors also asked witnesses to generally describe the "Access Hollywood" video.

"The stories are total fiction. They're 100% made up, they never happened, they never would happen," Trump said at a Oct. 14, 2016, rally in North Carolina.

## THE DEAL MAKER

Keith Davidson, a lawyer who represented McDougal and Daniels in their negotiations with Cohen and the National Enquirer, took the witness stand Tuesday. The tabloid bought McDougal's story to prevent



her from going public with the claims about Trump.

Davidson's testimony provided jurors with an inside look at the negotiations behind the two deals to keep the women quiet.

Davidson testified that the National Enquirer initially wasn't keen on the idea of buying McDougal's story because she "lacked documentary evidence of the interaction."

But the talks between the tabloid and McDougal's camp restarted weeks later. Eventually Davidson said they agreed that McDougal would receive \$150,000 payment as well as the promise of magazine covers and regular columns for publications owned by the National Enquirer's parent company American Media Inc.

Soon after the "Access Hollywood" tape leaked, Daniels' agent reached out to the National Enquirer about buying the rights to Daniels' story for \$120,000. The tabloid, however, didn't want to go through with the deal and told Daniels' agent to call Cohen to deal with him directly, Davidson said.

Davidson said he stepped in to negotiate the deal, and raised the price to \$130,000 to build in a fee for his work.

"In essence, Michael Cohen stepped into AMI's shoes," Davidson said, referring to the name of the Enquirer's parent company at the time.

## THE COURT CALENDAR

The trial is expected to last another month or more, with jurors hearing testimony four days a week. Trump — who has cast the prosecution as an effort to hurt his 2024 campaign — is required to be there, much to his stated dismay.

"They don't want me on the campaign trail," he said Tuesday.

The judge said Tuesday that there will be no court on May 17 so Trump can attend his son Barron's high school graduation.

Court also won't be in session on Friday, May 24 to accommodate a juror who has a flight that morning, the judge said. That means the trial will be off for four straight days for the Memorial Day weekend, resuming on Tuesday, May 28.

## Mammograms should start at 40 to address rising breast cancer rates at younger ages, panel says

By CARLA K. JOHNSON AP Medical Writer

Regular mammograms to screen for breast cancer should start younger, at age 40, according to an influential U.S. task force. Women ages 40 to 74 should get screened every other year, the group said.

Previously, the task force had said women could choose to start breast cancer screening as young as 40, with a stronger recommendation that they get the exams every two years from age 50 through 74.

The announcement Tuesday from the U.S. Preventive Services Task Force makes official a draft recommendation announced last year. The recommendations were published in the Journal of the American Medical Association.

"It's a win that they are now recognizing the benefits of screening women in their 40s," said Dr. Therese Bevers of MD Anderson Cancer Center in Houston. She was not involved in the guidance.

Other medical groups, including the American College of Radiology and the American Cancer Society, suggest mammograms every year — instead of every other year — starting at age 40 or 45, which may cause confusion, Bevers said, but "now the starting age will align with what many other organizations are saying."

Breast cancer death rates have fallen as treatment continues to improve. But breast cancer is still the second-most common cause of cancer death for U.S. women. About 240,000 cases are diagnosed annually and nearly 43,000 women die from breast cancer.

The nudge toward earlier screening is meant to address two vexing issues: the increasing incidence of breast cancer among women in their 40s — it's risen 2% annually since 2015 — and the higher breast cancer death rate among Black women compared to white women, said task force vice chair Dr. John Wong of Tufts Medical Center in Boston.

"Sadly, we know all too well that Black women are 40% more likely to die from breast cancer than white women," Wong said. Modeling studies predict that earlier screening may help all women, and have "even more benefit for women who are Black," he said.

Here are more details on what's changed, why it's important and who should pay attention.

#### WHEN SHOULD I GET MY FIRST MAMMOGRAM?

Age 40 is when mammograms should start for women, transgender men and nonbinary people at average risk. They should have the X-ray exam every other year, according to the new guidance. Other groups recommend annual mammograms, starting at 40 or 45.

The advice does not apply to women who've had breast cancer or those at very high risk of breast cancer because of genetic markers. It also does not apply to women who had high-dose radiation therapy to the chest when they were young, or to women who've had a lesion on previous biopsies.

#### WHAT ABOUT WOMEN 75 AND OLDER?

It's not clear whether older women should continue getting regular mammograms. Studies rarely include women 75 and older, so the task force is calling for more research.

Beverly suggests that older women talk with their doctors about the benefits of screening, as well as harms like false alarms and unnecessary biopsies.

#### WHAT ABOUT WOMEN WITH DENSE BREASTS?

Mammograms don't work as well for women with dense breasts, but they should still get the exams.

The task force would like to see more evidence about additional tests such as ultrasounds or MRIs for women with dense breasts. It's not yet clear whether those types of tests would help detect cancer at an earlier, more treatable stage, Wong said.

#### DOES THIS AFFECT INSURANCE COVERAGE?

Congress already passed legislation requiring insurers to pay for mammograms for women 40 and older without copays or deductibles. In addition, the Affordable Care Act requires insurers to cover task force recommendations with an "A" or "B" letter grade. The mammography recommendation has a "B" grade, meaning it has moderate net benefit.

## How Columbia University became the driving force behind protests over the war in Gaza

By The Associated Press undefined

As the two-week standoff between pro-Palestinian protesters and college administrators at Columbia University in New York came to a head Tuesday, officials anxiously monitored whether the fallout would spark more protests on college campuses around the country or quell what has been a growing movement.

Protesters at Columbia appeared to be digging in, taking over an academic building that has a history of being occupied by student protesters going back nearly 60 years to the Civil Rights Movement and Vietnam War. The escalation came after the passage of a Monday deadline issued by the university's administration for protesters to leave an encampment.

A timeline illustrating how Columbia University became the driving force behind protests on college campuses across the country:

#### APRIL 17

Students set up an encampment at Columbia University the same day university president Nemat Shafik is called for questioning before Congress. Shafik is heavily criticized by Republicans who accuse her of not doing enough to combat concerns about antisemitism on Columbia's campus. Allegations of antisemitism arose during Pro-Palestinian protests against Israel's actions in the war in Gaza.

The public grilling session comes four months after a similarly contentious congressional hearing led to the resignations of two Ivy League presidents. Unlike her counterparts, who focused their responses on protecting free speech, Shafik strongly denounced antisemitism, saying it "has no place on our campus."

#### APRIL 18

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New York City police are called to Columbia's campus to disband the pro-Palestinian protest encampment and arrest more than 100 protesters. Those detained include the daughter of Democratic U.S. Rep. Ilhan Omar, who a day earlier had questioned Shafik about the school's treatment of pro-Palestinian protesters.

The arrests, which New York Mayor Eric Adams said were requested by Columbia officials, garner national attention and inflame college protests across the country. A day later, the University of Southern California will announce that it has canceled the keynote commencement speech by filmmaker Jon M. Chu. USC had already disallowed its student valedictorian, who is Muslim, from speaking at the May 10 commencement.

In coming days, pro-Palestinian encampments will be set up at the University of Michigan, the Massachusetts Institute of Technology and the University of North Carolina.

APRIL 22

Columbia cancels in-person classes, and an encampment set up at New York University swells to hundreds of protesters. NYU officials call in police after warning the crowd to leave and saying the scene has become disorderly. Police arrest dozens of protesters at NYU and at Yale in New Haven, Connecticut. The gates to Harvard Yard in Cambridge, Massachusetts, are closed to the public.

President Joe Biden addresses the unrest and seeks to find a narrow middle ground by condemning "antisemitic protests" but adding that he also condemns "those who don't understand what's going on with the Palestinians."

APRIL 24

Columbia administrators set a new midnight deadline for protesters to clear the encampment. While some do leave, others dig in and refuse to disband until the school agrees to stop doing business with Israel or any companies that support the ongoing war in Gaza.

Elsewhere, police make more arrests on other university campuses. At the University of Texas at Austin, hundreds of local and state police — including some on horseback and holding batons — aggressively clash with protesters, pushing them off campus grounds, and arrest more than 30 demonstrators. At the University of Southern California, police peacefully arrest student protesters.

APRIL 26

Columbia University students say they're at an impasse after exhaustive negotiations with administrators, and intend to continue their encampment until their divestment demands are met. That comes after hundreds of protesters have been arrested nationwide over the previous nine days. The school sends an email to students saying that bringing back police "at this time" would be counterproductive.

Meanwhile, schools across the country where protests have taken root prepare to shut down encampments over reports of antisemitic activity and concerns the protests will mar upcoming commencement ceremonies.

APRIL 29

Columbia makes good on its promise to suspend students who defy a 2 p.m. deadline to leave the encampment of more than 100 tents. Instead of vacating, hundreds of protesters remain, marching around the quad and weaving around piles of temporary flooring and green carpeting meant for graduation ceremonies that are scheduled to begin next week.

Around the country, the number of arrests at campuses nationwide is approaching 1,000 as the final days of class wrap up.

APRIL 30

Dozens of protesters take over Hamilton Hall on Columbia's campus, barricading entrances and hanging a "Free Palestine" banner from a window as administrators warn that they face expulsion for doing so. Protesters insist they will remain at the hall until the university agrees to three demands: divestment from Israel and companies supporting the war in Gaza, financial transparency and amnesty for protesters.

## Summer Movies: 5 breakout stars to watch in 'Sing Sing,' 'Quiet Place,' 'Horizon' and more

By LINDSEY BAHR AP Film Writer

A breakout moment in Hollywood can happen at any age and stage. This summer at the movies, there are plenty of talents to discover, from the formerly incarcerated man whose story inspired the film he stars in to the "It" bully whose childhood dream of playing an ape in a movie came true.

Here are five actors audiences are sure to be buzzing about this summer.

### CLARENCE MACLIN IN "SING SING"

Clarence Maclin didn't know he had knack for acting until he was in prison, where he found the Rehabilitation Through the Arts Program and an appreciation for Shakespeare. His experience provided the inspiration for "Sing Sing," where he plays himself in a cast that includes Oscar nominees Colman Domingo and Paul Raci as well as a group of formerly incarcerated men.

"It almost was overwhelming when I had to go back and put the greens on again and go back into that mindset of being in prison," Maclin, 58, said. "However the purpose of what we were doing outweighed the apprehension."

After working on the idea for years, he loved being on set and said there were "no butterflies" when it came to acting in front of the camera. Domingo, he said, helped him appreciate the nuance that the camera can capture.

A breakout film from last fall's Toronto Film Festival, more than a few "Sing Sing" reviews have called Maclin's performance starmaking. He's read them and still can't believe it. But mostly, he's excited to take the film on the road and get the message out.

"I've made a lot of mistakes in my life, but luckily I got an opportunity to redirect and try to correct some of those," said Maclin, who was incarcerated for more than 15 years for armed robbery. "I would like to be able to show this in every prison in the country and do a question and answer. Sometimes a little bit of hope is all you need."

"Sing Sing" opens in limited release on July 12 and an expansion will follow in August.

### JOSEPH QUINN IN "A QUIET PLACE: DAY ONE"

Nobody comes out of "Stranger Things" anonymously, but Joseph Quinn, who played Hellfire Club leader Eddie Munson, was a little surprised by the attention. On vacation with friends on a small island in Italy, one looky-loo in the morning multiplied into a big crowd by the end of the day. Still, not everyone knew who he was.

"The manager of the hotel was like 'who are you?'" Quinn recalled, laughing.

But mainly it's led to life-changing opportunities for the 30-year-old British actor who is starring alongside Oscar-winner Lupita Nyong'o in "A Quiet Place: Day One" (June 28) and later this year will be sharing the screen with Denzel Washington and Paul Mescal in "Gladiator II" (Nov. 22). He's also been tapped to help restart the Fantastic Four franchise in the Marvel Cinematic Universe as the Human Torch.

"When you go and you see ancient Rome and you see Denzel Washington inhabit it and watch Ridley Scott make a film, those things have a profound change in you," Quinn said. "It expands your idea of what's possible."

But first up is the highly anticipated "Quiet Place" prequel, which focuses on a new pair of characters in New York on that first day of the invasion.

"The whole experience was great fun," Quinn said. "I learned a lot from Lupita and the way to conduct oneself in an environment like that. She's punctual, brave, fearless and knows exactly what she wants and what she doesn't want."

UK audiences can also see him soon in the independent film "Hoard."

### ABBEY LEE IN "HORIZON: AN AMERICAN SAGA"

Abbey Lee remembers being in New Mexico when she got an email from her agent saying that Kevin Costner wanted to send her a script and speak with her. The idea that Costner even knew who she was, she said, was shocking.

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The project was "Horizon: An American Saga," his Civil War era epic about the Westward expansion in America that Warner Bros. is releasing in two parts this summer (June 28 and Aug. 16). Her character, Marigold, is a woman without a family or a home who is fighting for a better life.

"She uses sex work as a means to survive," Lee, 36, said. "Like everyone in this film, she's somewhat broken and worn down but she's also a very hopeful person and a very resilient woman with a strong will to live."

The Australia native worked as a model for years before she had a few big acting breakthroughs, notably in "Mad Max: Fury Road." Modeling gave her opportunities to travel, and get a paycheck, but it always felt like a job, she said.

"My passion is the craft of acting," she said. "You get to utilize not just your body, but your brain and your heart and your emotional capacity. And you keep changing and growing: Each role shifts your perspective on the world and your life."

Filming "Horizon," Lee fell in love with riding horses and was overwhelmed by not just the beauty of Utah but also the scope of the film.

"It's such an epic piece," she said.

IZAAC WANG IN "DIDI"

Izaak Wang had been on some big films before "Dìdi," including "Good Boys" and "Clifford the Big Red Dog," but it wasn't until he looked at his schedule that he realized just how big of a commitment a leading role was.

"I was like 'wait, I'm working every day?'" Wang laughed. "My mom was like, 'Yeah, you're working every day.'"

In "Dìdi" he plays a 13-year-old Taiwanese American boy on the summer before high school in the Bay Area in 2008. The film was one of the big discoveries of the Sundance Film Festival, winning the audience award and a special jury award for its ensemble. It's getting a theatrical release from Focus Features on July 26.

Wang was born in Minnesota, moved to Los Angeles with his family when he was 3 and started acting around age 8. While he's thought about giving it up in the past, "Dìdi" was a turning point because it was such a fun experience. He's considering studying theater in college too.

"I love acting in general because I get to be a goofy, silly, imaginative guy," he said. "I play with my stuffed animals still. I'm 16-years-old, I still do it."

OWEN TEAGUE IN "KINGDOM OF THE PLANET OF THE APES"

Unlike the other actors on this list, audiences will not see Owen Teague's face on the big screen. Well, not exactly. He's the star of "Kingdom of the Planet of the Apes," a new film set many years after Caesar's reign when the apes have become the dominant species. He plays an ape named Noa.

"I've wanted to play a performance capture ape since I was a little kid," Teague said. "This was one of those auditions where I was like 'God, I'd give anything to do this movie.'"

The 25-year-old from Tampa, Florida, got his first big break on the television series "Bloodline," which led to playing one of the bullies in "It" and Julia Louis-Dreyfus' son in "You Hurt My Feelings" among other credits. Teague said he worried early on that he was only playing "bad guys." Villains are fun, he said, but he wanted the chance to do everything.

For this movie, he went to ape school and worked closely with a movement coach so that it would feel second-nature by the time they started filming. His character, Noa, is the sheltered son of their clan's leader who has to go on an eye-opening journey to save his family.

"There's a lot of pressure on him to live up to his father's expectations." Teague said. "There's this part of him that wants to know what's out there."

And he recommends seeing it on the big screen: "It's one of the most astounding things I've ever seen."

## **EPA bans consumer use of a toxic chemical widely used as a paint stripper but known to cause cancer**

By MATTHEW DALY Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — The Environmental Protection Agency said Tuesday it has finalized a ban on consumer uses of methylene chloride, a chemical that is widely used as a paint stripper but is known to cause liver cancer and other health problems.

The EPA said its action will protect Americans from health risks while allowing certain commercial uses to continue with robust worker protections.

The rule banning methylene chloride is the second risk management rule to be finalized by President Joe Biden's administration under landmark 2016 amendments to the Toxic Substances Control Act. The first was an action last month to ban asbestos, a carcinogen that kills tens of thousands of Americans every year but is still used in some chlorine bleach, brake pads and other products.

"Exposure to methylene chloride has devastated families across this country for too long, including some who saw loved ones go to work and never come home," EPA Administrator Michael Regan said in a statement. The new rule, he said, "brings an end to unsafe methylene chloride practices and implements the strongest worker protections possible for the few remaining industrial uses, ensuring no one in this country is put in harm's way by this dangerous chemical."

Methylene chloride, also called dichloromethane, is a colorless liquid that emits a toxic vapor that has killed at least 88 workers since 1980, the EPA said. Long-term health effects include a variety of cancers, including liver cancer and lung cancer, and damage to the nervous, immune and reproductive systems.

The EPA rule would ban all consumer uses but allow certain "critical" uses in the military and industrial processing, with worker protections in place, said Michal Freedhoff, assistant administrator for the EPA's Office of Chemical Safety and Pollution Prevention.

Methylene chloride will continue to be allowed to make refrigerants as an alternative to other chemicals that produce greenhouse gases and contribute to climate change, Freedhoff said. It also will be allowed for use in electric vehicle batteries and for critical military functions.

"The uses we think can safely continue (all) happen in sophisticated industrial settings, and in some cases there are no real substitutes available," Freedhoff said.

The chemical industry has argued that the EPA is overstating the risks of methylene chloride and that adequate protections have mitigated health risks.

The American Chemistry Council, the industry's top lobbying group, called methylene chloride "an essential compound" used to make many products and goods Americans rely on every day, including paint stripping, pharmaceutical manufacturing and metal cleaning and degreasing.

An EPA proposal last year could introduce "regulatory uncertainty and confusion" with existing exposure limits set by the federal Occupational Safety and Health Administration, the group said.

The chemical council also said it was concerned that the EPA had not fully evaluated the rule's impacts on the domestic supply chain and could end up prohibiting up to half of all end uses subject to regulation under the Toxic Substances Control Act.

While the EPA banned one consumer use of methylene chloride in 2019, use of the chemical has remained widespread and continues to pose significant and sometimes fatal danger to workers, the agency said. The EPA's final risk management rule requires companies to rapidly phase down manufacturing, processing and distribution of methylene chloride for all consumer uses and most industrial and commercial uses, including in home renovations.

Consumer use will be phased out within a year, and most industrial and commercial uses will be prohibited within two years.

Liz Hitchcock, director of a safer chemicals program for the advocacy group Toxic-Free Future, praised the new rule but added: "As glad as we are to see today's rule banning all consumer and most commercial uses, we are concerned that limits to its scope will allow continued exposure for too many workers to methylene chloride's dangerous and deadly effects."

Consumers should look for labels indicating that a product is free from methylene chloride, said the toxic-free group, which has published a list of paint and varnish strippers and removers sold by major U.S. retailers that do not contain it.

Wendy Hartley, whose son Kevin died from methylene chloride poisoning after refinishing a bathtub at work, called the new rule "a huge step that will protect vulnerable workers."

Kevin Hartley, 21, of Tennessee, died in 2017. He was an organ donor, Wendy Hartley said, adding that because of the EPA's actions, "Kevin's death will continue to save lives."

## **Why Israel is so determined to launch an offensive in Rafah. And why so many oppose it**

By The Associated Press undefined

JERUSALEM (AP) — Israel is determined to launch a ground offensive against Hamas in Rafah, Gaza's southernmost town, a plan that has raised global alarm because of the potential for harm to more than a million Palestinian civilians sheltering there.

Even as the U.S., Egypt and Qatar pushed for a cease-fire deal they hope would avert an assault on Rafah, Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu repeated on Tuesday that the military would move on the town "with or without a deal" to achieve its goal of destroying the Hamas militant group.

"We will enter Rafah because we have no other choice. We will destroy the Hamas battalions there, we will complete all the objectives of the war, including the return of all our hostages," he said.

Israel has approved military plans for its offensive and has moved troops and tanks to southern Israel in apparent preparation — though it's still unknown when or if it will happen.

About 1.4 million Palestinians — more than half of Gaza's population — are jammed into the town and its surroundings. Most of them fled their homes elsewhere in the territory to escape Israel's onslaught and now face another wrenching move, or the danger of facing the brunt of a new assault. They live in densely packed tent camps, overflowing U.N. shelters or crowded apartments, and are dependent on international aid for food, with sanitation systems and medical facilities infrastructure crippled.

### **WHY RAFAH IS SO CRITICAL**

Since Israel declared war in response to Hamas' deadly cross-border attack on Oct. 7, Netanyahu has said a central goal is to destroy its military capabilities.

Israel says Rafah is Hamas' last major stronghold in the Gaza Strip, after operations elsewhere dismantled 18 out of the militant group's 24 battalions, according to the military. But even in northern Gaza, the first target of the offensive, Hamas has regrouped in some areas and continued to launch attacks.

Israel says Hamas has four battalions in Rafah and that it must send in ground forces to topple them. Some senior militants could also be hiding in the city.

### **WHY THERE IS SO MUCH OPPOSITION TO ISRAEL'S PLAN**

The U.S. has urged Israel not to carry out the operation without a "credible" plan to evacuate civilians. Egypt, a strategic partner of Israel, has said that an Israeli military seizure of the Gaza-Egypt border — which is supposed to be demilitarized — or any move to push Palestinians into Egypt would threaten its four-decade-old peace agreement with Israel.

Israel's previous ground assaults, backed by devastating bombardment since October, leveled huge parts of northern Gaza and the southern city of Khan Younis and caused widespread civilian deaths, even after evacuation orders were given for those areas.

Israel's military says it plans to direct the civilians in Rafah to "humanitarian islands" in central Gaza before the planned offensive. It says it has ordered thousands of tents to shelter people. But it hasn't given details on its plan. It's unclear if it's logistically possible to move such a large population all at once without widespread suffering among a population already exhausted by multiple moves and months of bombardment.

Moreover, U.N. officials say an attack on Rafah will collapse the aid operation that is keeping the popula-

tion across the Gaza Strip alive, and potentially push Palestinians into greater starvation and mass death. Some entry points have been opened in the north, and the U.S. has promised that a port to bring in supplies by sea will be ready in weeks. But the majority of food, medicine and other material enters Gaza from Egypt through Rafah or the nearby Kerem Shalom crossing — traffic that is likely to be impossible during an invasion.

The U.S. has said that Israel should use pinpoint operations against Hamas inside Rafah without a major ground assault.

After Netanyahu's latest comments, U.S. National Security spokesperson John Kirby said, "We don't want to see a major ground operation in Rafah. Certainly, we don't want to see operations that haven't factored in the safety, security of" those taking refuge in the town.

#### POLITICAL CALCULATIONS

The question of attacking Rafah has heavy political repercussions for Netanyahu. His government could be threatened with collapse if he doesn't go through with it. Some of his ultranationalist and conservative religious governing partners could pull out of the coalition, if he signs onto a cease-fire deal that prevents an assault.

Critics of Netanyahu say that he's more concerned with keeping his government intact and staying in power than national interest, an accusation he denies.

One of his coalition members, Finance Minister Bezalel Smotrich, said Tuesday that accepting a cease-fire deal and not carrying out a Rafah operation would amount to Israel "raising a white flag" and giving victory to Hamas.

On the other hand, Netanyahu risks increasing Israel's international isolation — and alienating its top ally, the United States — if it does attack Rafah. His vocal refusals to be swayed by world pressure and his promises to launch the operation could be aimed at placating his political allies even as he considers a deal.

Or he could bet that international anger will remain largely rhetorical if he goes ahead with the attack. The Biden administration has used progressively tougher language to express concerns over Netanyahu's conduct of the war, but it has also continued to provide weapons to Israel's military and diplomatic support.

## Alicia Keys, Brian d'Arcy James, Daniel Radcliffe and more react to earning Tony Award nominations

By The Associated Press undefined

Singer Alicia Keys says she was unable to speak after her semi-autobiographical show "Hell's Kitchen" earned 13 nods when the nominations for the 2024 Tony Awards were announced Tuesday.

"These are very, very special moments," said nominee and veteran star Brian d'Arcy James, who is nominated for actor in a leading role for "Days of Wine and Roses."

The Tony Awards ceremony will be June 16. Academy Award winner and Tony Award-nominee Ariana DeBose, who hosted both the 2023 and 2022 ceremonies, will be back this year and will produce and choreograph the opening number.

These were some of the reactions Tuesday from nominees:

"It is an exciting morning. I feel great. This is a very special thing. I've had the good fortune of being in this position before, but it does not get old, and I do not take this stuff for granted, especially the further I go down the road. These, are very, very special moments." — "Days of Wine and Roses" star Brian d'Arcy James in an interview.

"I am so grateful for this nomination and for the historic recognition of our entire show. As a kid from Long Island who took the train in to see Broadway shows from 7 years old this is the fulfillment of a life-long dream." — "Stereophonic" star Tom Pecinka in a statement.

"Ah, oh my god! I haven't caught my breath. I was sitting on the couch watching the nominations live with my husband, Matt, and when they said our show, I knocked over my glass of water all over the couch



and started crying. I grew up in Waitsfield, Vermont, watching the Tonys every year with my mom, so this has been a childhood dream of mine. — “Suffs” book and music writer Shaina Taub in a statement.

“I am absolutely stunned. This season is proof that Broadway is back and the renaissance is here. Thank you to the Tonys for listening to our stories and seeing our hearts. All my love to the other shows and nominees.” — “The Outsiders” star Sky Lakota-Lynch in a statement.

“I have always felt like doing stage and particularly doing it here has been such a huge part of my career and sort of like finding out who I was as an actor outside of Harry Potter.” — “Merrily We Roll Along” star Daniel Radcliffe in an interview.

“This is unbelievable. This is so special. All of the collaborators that have been a part of this process, everybody being able to get recognized for their beautiful brilliance. I am totally at a loss for words. Don’t ask me to write a song.” — Alicia Keys in an interview.

“I am completely overwhelmed and beyond proud of this show and of the work that all the humans who have touched it have done to bring this story to life.” — “Suffs” star Nikki M. James in a statement.

“I am absolutely honored and thrilled to receive this nomination for my work on ‘Hell’s Kitchen.’ To celebrate being born and raised in NYC and create movement to Alicia Keys music was a dream and to be acknowledged is really special. Shoutout to my hometown, Queens, NY!” — “Hell’s Kitchen” choreographer Camille A Brown in a statement.

“What a wonderful morning! ‘Stereophonic’ is a play about a tortuous creative process but the experience of making it has been one of the most joyful experiences imaginable. I’m proud of my colleagues and castmates whose work was recognized this morning and grateful to be nominated alongside them and many other brilliant performers.” — “Stereophonic” star Juliana Canfield in a statement.

“I’m thrilled to be nominated for two plays I care so deeply about — ‘An Enemy of the People’ and ‘Mary Jane.’ I salute my extraordinary leading actors, Tony nominees Jeremy Strong and Rachel McAdams, for carrying the hell out of these plays eight times a week.” — Playwright Amy Herzog in a statement.

“This production of ‘Cabaret’ has been the journey of a lifetime. It means a huge amount that the show has been recognized across so many aspects of the production, and personally, to be considered alongside the immense talent in this category is a wonder.” — star Eddie Redmayne in a statement.

“I am deeply moved and extremely honored to be recognized alongside this incredible group of women. I had the time of my life in ‘Spamalot.’ I love to make people laugh. I have looked up to the great comedic actresses of our time, hoping I would get a moment like this. It’s a dream come true.” — “Spamalot” star Leslie Rodriguez Kritzer in a statement.

## Sword-wielding man attacks passersby in London, killing a 14-year-old boy and injuring 4 others

By SYLVIA HUI Associated Press

LONDON (AP) — A man wielding a sword attacked members of the public and police officers in a northeast London suburb Tuesday, killing a 14-year-old boy and injuring four other people, British authorities said.

A 36-year-old man was subdued with a stun gun and arrested on suspicion of murder in a residential area near Hainault subway station, police said. The violence wasn’t being treated as terror-related or a “targeted attack.”

Police said that the 14-year-old died at a hospital from his injuries. Two police officers were hospitalized for stab wounds. Two other people were also injured.

Chief Supt. Stuart Bell described the incident as “truly horrific.”

“I cannot even begin to imagine how those affected must be feeling,” he said outside the homes in east London where the attack happened.

The Metropolitan Police said they were called early Tuesday to reports of a vehicle being driven into a house in a residential street and people being stabbed.

Witness videos broadcast on British media showed a man in a yellow hoodie holding a long sword or

knife walking near houses in the area. One video showed police officers yelling "Drop the sword" and "Lock your doors!" as they chased the suspect, who was seen climbing over fences and into people's gardens.

Deputy Assistant Commissioner Ade Adelekan said police don't believe there was a threat to the wider community.

"We are not looking for more suspects," he said. "This incident does not appear to be terror-related."

Prime Minister Rishi Sunak said the incident was "shocking," adding: "Such violence has no place on our streets."

King Charles III said his thoughts and prayers were with the family of the young victim, and he saluted the courage of emergency workers, Buckingham Palace said.

Transport for London said that Hainault station was closed because of a police investigation in the area.

## 'Hell's Kitchen' and 'Stereophonic' lead Tony Award nominations, 2 shows honoring creativity's spark

By MARK KENNEDY AP Entertainment Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — Two Broadway shows celebrating the spark of sonic creativity — the semi-autobiographical Alicia Keys musical "Hell's Kitchen," and the play "Stereophonic" about a '70s rock band recording a star-making album — each earned a leading 13 Tony Award nominations Tuesday, a list that also saw a record number of women nominated for best director.

"This is totally crazy. It took me about an hour to get myself together. I couldn't even formulate words," Keys said after a morning where the show loosely based on her life was nominated for best new musical and four acting awards as well as best scenic design, costumes, lighting, sound design, direction, choreography and orchestrations. "I am totally at a loss for words. Don't ask me to write a song."

A total of 28 shows earned a Tony nod or more, with the musical "The Outsiders," an adaptation of the beloved S. E. Hinton novel and the Francis Ford Coppola film, earning 12 nominations; a starry revival of "Cabaret" starring Eddie Redmayne, nabbing nine; and "Appropriate," Branden Jacobs-Jenkins' searing play about a family reunion in Arkansas where everyone has competing motivations and grievances, grabbing eight.

The nominations marked a smashing of the Tony record for most women directors named in a single season. The 2022 Tony Awards had held the record, with four total across the two races — musical and play. Only 10 women have gone on to win a directing crown.

This year, seven women took the 10 directing slots. Three women were nominated for best play direction — Lila Neugebauer ("Appropriate"), Anne Kauffman ("Mary Jane") and Whitney White ("Jaja's African Hair Braiding") — while four were nominated in the musical category — Maria Friedman ("Merrily We Roll Along"), Leigh Silverman ("Suffs") Jessica Stone ("Water for Elephants") and Danya Taymor ("The Outsiders").

"The one thing I feel is it's starting to feel less remarkable, which is great news," Stone said after her nomination. "We are directors and not women directors. I'm noticing it more and more and that's a wonderful thing to think about. It's a wonderful place to be."

"Stereophonic," which became the most-nominated play in Tony history, earned nominations for playwright David Adjmi and for its songs by Will Butler, formerly of Arcade Fire. It's the story of a Fleetwood Mac-like band over a life-changing year, with personal rifts opening and closing and then reopening. Butler says it is about art's "horror and its beauty."

An album of the rock-roots music heard during the play will be available next month and Butler has high hopes: "We wanted it to stand up against Tom Petty and 'Rumors' and the new Beyoncé country record," he said. "Making it was its own reward."

Rachel McAdams, making her Broadway debut in "Mary Jane," earned a best actress in a play nomination, while "Succession" star Jeremy Strong, got his first ever nomination, for a revival of "An Enemy of the People" and Liev Schreiber of "Ray Donovan" fame nabbed one for leading "Doubt." Jessica Lange in "Mother Play," Sarah Paulson in "Appropriate" and Amy Ryan, who stepped in at the last minute for a

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revival of "Doubt," also earned nominations in the best actress in a play category.

"The Big Bang Theory" star Jim Parsons earned a supporting nod for "Mother Play," and Daniel Radcliffe on his fifth Broadway show, a revival of Stephen Sondheim's "Merrily We Roll Along," won his first nomination.

Radcliffe, caring for his infant son on Tony nominations morning, said he felt incredibly lucky and called being in the musical alongside Jonathan Groff and Lindsay Mendez — both also nominated — "one of the most special experiences of my professional career."

"I have always felt like doing stage and particularly doing it here has been such a huge part of my career and sort of like finding out who I was as an actor outside of Harry Potter," he said. "I think it's kind of been the making of me."

Redmayne in his second show on Broadway got a nod as best lead actor in a musical, as did Brian d'Arcy James for "Days of Wine and Roses," Brody Grant in "The Outsiders," Jonathan Groff in "Merrily We Roll Along" and 73-year-old Dorian Harewood in "The Notebook," the adaptation of Nicholas Sparks romantic tearjerker. Harewood, in his first Broadway show in 46 years, landed his first Tony nomination.

It was one of three nominations for "The Notebook," but the musical's composer, Ingrid Michaelson, didn't earn a nomination, nor did Barry Manilow for his show "Harmony." A revival of "The Wiz" also failed to garner any nominations, nor did the Huey Lewis jukebox "The Heart of Rock and Roll."

Redmayne's "Cabaret" co-star Gayle Rankin earned a nomination for best actress in a musical, as did Eden Espinosa in "Lempicka," Maleah Joi Moon in "Hell's Kitchen," Kelli O'Hara in "Days of Wine and Roses" and 71-year-old Maryann Plunkett, who plays the elderly wife at the heart of "The Notebook."

Steve Carell in his Broadway debut in a poorly received revival of the classic play "Uncle Vanya" and "Sopranos" star Michael Imperioli in "An Enemy of the People" both failed to secure nods, but starry producers who did include Keys, Angelina Jolie (for "The Outsiders") and Hillary Rodham Clinton (for "Suffs").

The best new musical crown will be a battle between "Hell's Kitchen," "The Outsiders," the dance-heavy, dialogue-less stage adaptation of Sufjan Stevens' 2005 album "Illinois," "Suffs," based on the American suffragists of the early 20th century, and "Water for Elephants," which combines Sara Green's 2006 best-seller with circus elements.

The best new play Tony will pit "Stereophonic" against "Mother Play," Paula Vogel's look at a mother and her kids spanning 1964 to the 21st century; "Mary Jane," Amy Herzog's humanistic portrait of a divorced mother of a young boy with health issues; "Prayer for the French Republic," Joshua Harmon's sprawling family comedy-drama that deals with Zionism, religious fervency and antisemitism; and "Jaja's African Hair Braiding," Jocelyn Bioh's comedy about the lives of West African women working at a salon.

Lamar Richardson, an actor-turned-producer, had many reasons to smile Tuesday. He helped produce the three new revivals of "The Wiz," "Merrily We Roll Along" and "Appropriate."

"I really think this is Broadway at its best," he said. "There's really something for everyone. There's the quintessential big jukebox musical. There's the niche moving three-hander plays. I think that this really is a smorgasbord of what Broadway can offer up, and showing it still, of course, is a major player on the art scene. And it's here to stay."

A spring barrage of new shows — 14 shows opened in an 11-day span this year — is not unusual these days as producers hope their work will be fresh in the mind of voters ahead of the Tony Awards ceremony on June 16.

There were some firsts this season, including "Here Lies Love" with Broadway's first all-Filipino cast, which earned four nominations, including best original score for David Byrne and Fat Boy Slim. And seven openly autistic actors starred in "How to Dance in Ohio," a first for Broadway but which got no Tony love.

Academy Award winner and Tony Award-nominee Ariana DeBose, who hosted both the 2023 and 2022 ceremonies, will be back this year and will produce and choreograph the opening number.

Like last year, the three-hour main telecast will air on CBS and stream on Paramount+ from 8 p.m.-11 p.m. EDT/5 p.m.-8 p.m. PDT with a pre-show on Pluto TV, and some Tony Awards handed out there.

## Florida Democrats hope abortion and marijuana questions 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 is set to take effect Wednesday. Vassallo says the ban 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.

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."

## Scammers stole more than \$3.4 billion from older Americans last year, an FBI report says

By ALANNA DURKIN RICHER Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Scammers stole more than \$3.4 billion from older Americans last year, according to an FBI report released Tuesday that shows a rise in losses through increasingly sophisticated criminal tactics to trick the vulnerable into giving up their life savings.

Losses from scams reported by Americans over the age of 60 last year were up 11% over the year before, according to the FBI's report. Investigators are warning of a rise in brazen schemes to drain bank accounts that involve sending couriers in person to collect cash or gold from victims.

"It can be a devastating impact to older Americans who lack the ability to go out and make money," said Deputy Assistant Director James Barnacle of the FBI's Criminal Investigative Division. "People lose all their money. Some people become destitute."

The FBI received more than 100,000 complaints by victims of scams over the age of 60 last year, with nearly 6,000 people losing more than \$100,000. It follows a sharp rise in reported losses by older Americans in the two years after the 2020 coronavirus pandemic, when people were stuck at home and easier for scammers to reach over the phone.

Barnacle said investigators are seeing organized, transnational criminal enterprises targeting older Americans through a variety of schemes, like romance scams and investment frauds.

The most commonly reported fraud among older adults last year was tech support scams, in which criminals pose over the phone as technical or customer service representatives. In one such scam authorities say is rising in popularity, criminals impersonate technology, banking and government officials to convince

victims that foreign hackers have infiltrated their bank accounts and instruct them that to protect their money they should move it to a new account — one secretly controlled by the scammers.

Federal investigators saw an uptick between May and December of scammers using live couriers to take money from victims duped into believing their accounts had been compromised, according to the FBI. In those cases, scammers tell victims that their bank accounts have been hacked and that they need to liquidate their assets into cash or buy gold or other precious metals to protect their funds. Then the fraudsters arrange for a courier to pick it up in person.

"A lot of the the fraud schemes are asking victims to send money via a wire transfer, or a cryptocurrency transfer. When the victim is reluctant to do that, they're given an alternative," Barnacle said. "And so the bad guy will use courier services."

Earlier this month, an 81-year-old Ohio man fatally shot an Uber driver he thought was trying to rob him after receiving scam phone calls, according to authorities.

The man had been receiving calls from someone pretending to be an officer from the local court who demanded money. The Uber driver had been told to retrieve a package from the man's home, a request authorities say was possibly made by the same scam caller or an accomplice.

The staggering losses to older Americans are likely an undercount. Only about half of the more than 880,000 complaints reported to the FBI's Internet Crime Complaint Center last year included information on the age of the victim.

## **At plastics treaty talks in Canada, sharp disagreements on whether to limit plastic production**

By JENNIFER McDERMOTT Associated Press

OTTAWA, Ontario (AP) — Nations made progress on a treaty to end plastic pollution, finishing the latest round of negotiations in Canada early Tuesday amid sharp disagreements about whether to put global limits on plastic production.

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 the chemicals of concern in plastic products and look at product design. Rwanda's representative said negotiators 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."

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 was 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 research 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

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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.

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."

## Today in History

### May 1, Obama announces killing of Osama bin Laden

By The Associated Press undefined

Today in History

Today is Wednesday, May 1, the 122nd day of 2024. There are 244 days left in the year.

Today's Highlight in History:

On May 1, 2011, President Barack Obama announced the death of Osama bin Laden during a U.S. commando operation. (Because of the time difference, it was early May 2 in Pakistan, where the al-Qaida

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leader met his end.)

On this date:

In 1707, the Kingdom of Great Britain was created as a treaty merging England and Scotland took effect.

In 1866, three days of race-related rioting erupted in Memphis, Tennessee, as white mobs targeted Black people, 46 of whom were killed, along with two whites. (The violence spurred passage of the 14th Amendment to the U.S. Constitution defining American citizenship and equal protection under the law.)

In 1960, the Soviet Union shot down an American U-2 reconnaissance plane over Sverdlovsk and captured its pilot, Francis Gary Powers.

In 1963, James W. Whittaker became the first American to conquer Mount Everest as he and Sherpa guide Nawang Gombu reached the summit.

In 1964, the computer programming language BASIC (Beginner's All-Purpose Symbolic Instruction Code) was created by Dartmouth College professors John G. Kemeny and Thomas E. Kurtz.

In 1971, the intercity passenger rail service Amtrak went into operation.

In 1991, Nolan Ryan of the Texas Rangers threw his seventh no-hitter at age 44, shutting out the Toronto Blue Jays 3-0.

In 1992, on the third day of the Los Angeles riots, a visibly shaken Rodney King appeared in public to appeal for calm, pleading, "Can we all get along?"

In 2009, Supreme Court Justice David Souter announced his retirement effective at the end of the court's term in late June. (President Barack Obama chose federal judge Sonia Sotomayor to succeed him.)

In 2011, Pope Benedict XVI beatified Pope John Paul II, moving his predecessor a step closer to sainthood in a Vatican Mass attended by some 1.5 million pilgrims.

In 2015, Baltimore's top prosecutor charged six police officers with felonies ranging from assault to murder in the death of Freddie Gray, a Black man who'd suffered a spinal injury while riding in a police van. (None of the officers would be convicted.)

In 2020, U.S. regulators allowed emergency use of remdesivir, the first drug that appeared to help some COVID-19 patients recover faster.

In 2013, Chris Kelly, half of the 1990s kid rap duo Kris Kross, died in Atlanta at age 34.

In 2021, Medina Spirit, trained by Bob Baffert, won the Kentucky Derby by a half-length over Mandaloun. (A post-race drug test was positive for a banned steroid, which would lead to the horse's disqualification and Baffert's suspension. Medina Spirit collapsed and died in December 2021 after a workout.)

In 2022, a long-awaited effort to evacuate people from a sprawling steel plant in the Ukrainian city of Mariupol began. The United Nations said the operation was being carried out by the International Committee of the Red Cross and in coordination with Ukrainian and Russian officials.

In 2023, regulators seized troubled First Republic Bank in the second-largest bank failure in U.S. history.

Today's Birthdays: Singer Judy Collins is 85. Actor Stephen Macht is 82. Singer Rita Coolidge is 79. Pop singer Nick Fortuna (The Buckingham) is 78. Actor-director Douglas Barr is 75. Actor Dann Florek is 73. Singer-songwriter Ray Parker Jr. is 70. Actor Byron Stewart is 68. Hall of Fame jockey Steve Cauthen is 64. Actor Maia Morgenstern is 62. Actor Scott Coffey is 60. Country singer Wayne Hancock is 59. Actor Charlie Schlatter is 58. Country singer Tim McGraw is 57. Rock musician Johnny Colt is 56. Rock musician D'Arcy Wretzky is 56. Movie director Wes Anderson is 55. Actor Julie Benz is 52. Actor Bailey Chase is 52. Country singer Cory Morrow is 52. Gospel/R&B singer Tina Campbell (Mary Mary) is 50. Actor Darius McCrary is 48. Actor Jamie Dornan is 42. Actor Kerry Bishe is 40. TV personality Abby Huntsman is 38. Actor Lizzy Greene is 21.